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**Title:** Report of a discussion between the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, and the British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, in Brussels, Belgium, on 23 January, 1972.

Topics discussed included the establishment of an internment camp near Derry; the growing unemployment situation in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and its potential impact upon IRA [Irish Republican Army] recruitment; new efforts to find political solutions in Northern Ireland; a speech made by Desmond O'Malley, Minister for Justice, in the European Parliament in Strasbourg; British government efforts to negotiate with the SDLP [Social Democratic and Labour Party]; talks between Edward Heath and Harold Wilson, leader of the British Labour Party; internment; proposed efforts by the Taoiseach to give encouragement to moderate Protestant opinion in Northern Ireland; Border controls; extradition; and the potential for a spread of violence into the Republic of Ireland and Britain.

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Report of discussion between the Taoiseach  
and the British Prime Minister, Mr. Heath,  
in Brussels on Sunday, 23rd January, 1972

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At Mr. Heath's request the Taoiseach agreed to meet him at the residence of the British Ambassador to the European Economic Communities in Brussels at 10.45 a.m. on Sunday, 23rd January, 1972. The start of the meeting was delayed until 11.00 a.m. because of an over-spill of a previous meeting of Mr. Heath with Signor Colombo of Italy. The Taoiseach's meeting lasted about an hour.

The Taoiseach began by saying that he had recently called in the British Ambassador, Sir John Peck, as he was genuinely worried about the trend of events in relation to the North. He referred to the setting up of the new internment camp in a provocative situation near Derry. There was the growing unemployment situation in both countries. On the basis of the last in, first out, rule, it would be mostly the young who would become idle and their frustration with the present policies in the North could lead them into dangerous paths.

Mr. Heath had said to the Taoiseach at Chequers that the two countries should not bring the problem of the North into Europe with them. We are now on the way into the EEC and the problem is still there. The Taoiseach thought that the time had come to reappraise the whole situation. There could not continue to be a confrontation on the old stands. Mr. Heath and he should try and work out something between them to arrive at a peaceful solution such as a growing number of people on both islands are now hoping for. The Taoiseach warned that even if the IRA are beaten by the present efforts at securing a military solution that will not be the end of the matter. The kids on the streets, who are already involved in the conflict, will be 18 and 19 years of age before too long and trouble will inevitably break out again if there is no political solution. The Taoiseach was wondering whether he could provide some new angle, some leadership to all the moderate Protestants in the island which might help to release the grip of the status quo. This would be in the interests of all.

The Taoiseach went on to say that Stormont will never be accepted again as it has been up to now. He wondered whether it would be possible to persuade Mr. Brian Faulkner to take action. The Taoiseach wants to produce a situation where, in any future talks, they are not confined to restating existing hardline positions.

Mr. Heath's reply was that he was prepared to talk at any time. He has never stopped reappraising the situation to see what progress can be made. He said that it was important to keep the temperature down and, in this connection, he referred to what he described as the unfortunate remarks of the Minister for Justice,



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Mr. O'Malley, at Strasbourg, particularly after Ambassador Peck had expressed the hope that he would not make a provocative speech. The Taoiseach intervened here to say that he had seen Mr. O'Malley's script and it contained nothing that he would not say himself. Mr. O'Malley was, however, typical of many of the bright young people in Ireland to-day and what he had said, supplementing his script, reflected the concern and frustration the young people felt about present policies in relation to the North. Mr. Heath said that the matter might come up again in Strasbourg on Monday and he had told his people in Strasbourg to keep the temperature as low as possible.

Turning to the question of the future Mr. Heath referred to the difficulties they are faced with. Talks had been offered to the SDLP and they refused to participate. Mr. Heath referred to the regrettable BBC broadcast in the course of which Mr. Fitt put himself firmly on a hook which he cannot get off. Mr. Wilson had put forward his plan and the SDLP refused to participate. In the circumstances Mr. Heath thought that there was not much point in trying to talk to the SDLP.

Mr. Heath said that he had three private talks with Mr. Wilson. The first one was aimed at initiating talks. At the second meeting Mr. Wilson said that he did not want talks in Westminster as contemplated in the first phase of his proposals. What he then wanted was to have talks with the Parties in Northern Ireland to begin with. At the third meeting Mr. Wilson indicated that he had changed his mind and would be prepared to have initial inter-Party talks in Westminster. The whole matter had not gone much further.

Mr. Heath posed the question as to who now represents the Catholics in Northern Ireland. He thought that the SDLP do so less and less. He said that Mr. Brian Faulkner is prepared to enter into talks but only on the clear understanding that there can be no change in the Border. Mr. Heath said that one must take account of the limits within which one can operate in order to get a political solution. The IRA are certainly taking hard knocks now. At some stage they may give up violence and look at the situation in another way. Mr. Heath added that, as he had already indicated to Ambassador O'Sullivan, if there is any worry about the keeping of agreements arrived at in relation to the North the British Government will be able to guarantee them through legislation in Westminster and they have the power to do so. The Taoiseach saw Mr. Heath's difficulty about the IRA. If one seemed to be giving in to the Provisionals it could be said that one was giving into violence. On the other hand, merely putting down violence is no solution as then the Unionists would say they had won and there would be no give on their part towards arriving at a political solution. Now that



the IRA are still active might be the opportune moment for loosening the Unionist grip. There are some indications that the IRA are talking about a political solution.

Speaking about internment the Taoiseach said that, while it is there now and no doubt many of those interned would carry guns, there are also a lot of people interned who would never touch a gun. The Taoiseach said that the early timing of a move on political talks in conjunction with some concession on internment might get the IRA off the streets and the 40% minority community might move away from supporting the IRA. This might also enable the SDLP to enter into talks. The Taoiseach pointed out that the SDLP are there and cannot be written off. There are also the old-style Nationalists who are not as rigid as the SDLP. As, in industrial disputes, there is between the different groups the problem that neither can accept less than the other. If internment were to end and talks were to begin there could be a significant move forward. The IRA now realises that they cannot achieve a united Ireland at one fell swoop and they are realistic enough to see a slow movement towards this goal.

The Taoiseach indicated that he was prepared to talk to all the people in Ireland urging them to get together and to try to stop the present deteriorating situation. He would be prepared to tell the people in the South that they cannot be expected to hang on to everything to suit themselves and that they must change in order to secure progress. He would hope thereby to give encouragement to moderate Protestant opinion in the North.

The Taoiseach reiterated the hope expressed at the first Chequers meeting that the two countries should not have the problem of the North around their necks going into Europe.

The Taoiseach told Mr. Heath that he would be seeing Mr. Wilson in London on his way back to Dublin. He had already spoken to Mr. Jeremy Thorpe in Brussels. The latter thought that it would be impossible to get the SDLP into talks. He said that they feared the charge of "sell out" if they were prepared to talk. The Taoiseach's broad strategy is to get the people to think again and to move towards a new situation. Business people in the North are very worried. They are naturally anxious for a continuance of outside investment in the North and they may now be more receptive towards a reasonable solution.

The Taoiseach referred to the deteriorating employment situation in Ireland like that in Britain. For the first time we have a net inward movement of 1,000 persons instead of net emigration. The Government would be blamed for the unemployment, not the Unions. Because of the last in, first out rule it is the young people who will be idle and many of them will not have enough stamps to draw unemployment benefit. There is a danger that these young and unemployed would be taken up by the IRA who enjoy passive support within the country because of the situation in the North. There could be an



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increased sense of frustration. The Taoiseach had adopted a moderate line and had entered into two serious talks in Chequers but nothing positive had emerged - in fact the reverse. Internment orders had been made and the crazy policy of road cratering at the Border embarked upon.

Mr. Heath commented that he could not say that the IRA had been stopped from crossing the Border nor the movement of gelignite and firearms. He agreed that the Dublin Government were stepping up their controls but went on to mention the case of the young soldier just killed where the wires setting off the explosion had lain across the Border. Mr. Heath also referred to their unsatisfactory experience of extradition procedures.

On the question of gelignite the Taoiseach said that more recent regulations require stringent safeguards and regular inspections. Previously with the precautions taken for the storing of gelignite near the Border it required four hours at least to break into a store and this enabled the police to take adequate precautions. There had, however, very recently, been two daring cases whether those stealing gelignite had used oxy-acetylene torches which enabled them to break in in half an hour. As a result of this stores must be brought back further from the Border much to the annoyance of the local users. Up to now it had been thought that there would have been greater risk in bringing the gelignite back and forth to the point of use than to have it near the point of use close to the Border.

With regard to extradition the Taoiseach referred to the case in Donegal about which Ambassador Peck had spoken to him. There is a complete separation between the Judiciary and the Executive in Ireland and, in that case, the District Justice thought that there was not sufficient evidence of identification. The Justice is not bound to give reasons for his decision. Even if he had granted the order there could have been a move for habeas corpus in the High Court and the outcome might be a reversal of the order in any event. The Taoiseach would have another look at the matter to see whether anything could be appropriately done. One must not overlook the fact, however, that extradition in some of these cases would incite public sympathy and make a hero of the individual involved. The Taoiseach made it clear that he was not condoning the IRA but actions which appear to bolster up Brian Faulkner in the absence of any progress towards a just political solution would not be tolerated by our people but they don't want the IRA to take over either. The Taoiseach urged that Mr. Heath should give very serious thought to the whole situation and say to Mr. Faulkner that he cannot win out and maintain the status quo. Mr. Faulkner's Green Paper proposals are just not enough.



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Mr. Heath wondered what is going to convince the Unionists and our people to agree to talk the matter over quietly. He said that three Catholic Members of Parliament who had been over in the North recently could not ascertain what the minority want. The minority say that Stormont is finished but what does this mean? Does it mean that there should be no elected members to Stormont and that there should be elected members to Westminster only? Or does it mean that the Stormont Parliament should be reformed with different boundaries and an element of proportional representation to give the minority increased representation? Or does it mean that there must be no more Cabinet Government or a Cabinet Government with appropriate proportions of representatives of the majority and the minority participating therein? Mr. Heath just does not know what Mr. Fitt wants.

The Taoiseach replied that he thought that there should be community government in the North involving both communities with some sort of proportional representation. Mr. Faulkner, however, maintains that he will not have participating in his Cabinet anyone who aspires to a united Ireland. The Taoiseach realised of course that Mr. Faulkner may fear that if he yields on this, Mr. Paisley might move in and take over. Mr. Heath said that it is not even clear what is meant when one talks about a change in the constitutional position. If this means a united Ireland neither Mr. Faulkner nor himself nor the Westminster Parliament would agree to a change unless this was wanted in the North. If, however, one is talking about the constitutional position within the North, Mr. Heath and Mr. Faulkner could discuss it in all its aspects. The Taoiseach commented that if the minority could have some real share of responsibility - some seats in the Cabinet - that might go some distance to satisfy them. He did not know however - there must be talks to establish this.

Mr. Heath agreed that there should be talks but he commented that the minority keep changing their position. He said that with the new Local Government elections the Catholics will get control of some Local Authorities. It is complained, however, that the functions of these Local Authorities are now fewer. This was because Boards have been set up with Catholic representatives on them. These Boards were formed under the reforms agreed to avoid gerrymandering. It is difficult for the minority to have it both ways.

On the question of detention Mr. Heath said that Judge Browne's Committee has released some 30 individuals. They have looked at all cases in the course of their review. Mr. Heath thought that there was little doubt but that those interned are those who were carrying on the battle. The Taoiseach commented that for each person interned ten more replace them outside. This could provide an accommodation problem but the location of the second internment camp was both dangerous and provocative. He said that Mr. Ivan Cooper intends to lead a march on the camp and harass the military. It was a great pity that



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this retrograde step of a second internment camp should have been taken and, worse still, that it should have been located where it is. Mr. Heath explained that the second camp had been provided to endeavour to provide better standards as recommended by the Red Cross and also had been located to make it nearer for visits of relatives and friends. If the second camp had been located out in the wilds they would have been criticised for its inhumane location. He affirmed that there was no intention to be provocative in determining the location. The Taoiseach said that, while he did not believe that the trouble in the North would spill over into the South yet, Cardinal Conway believes that the crust of peace down here is very thin and violence could spread South. Nevertheless, if there is not political progress the trouble could spread and could be carried across the Channel into Britain. We would then have an awful situation such as the 1939 bombing campaign in Britain. If constructive policies on the political front are not evolved soon violence could spread in both islands.

Mr. Heath said that he had told Ambassador O'Sullivan to come to talk to him as often as he wants to and he hopes Ambassador Peck will similarly be able to talk to the Taoiseach.

The Taoiseach expressed the hope that he had got across to Mr. Heath that the current policy in relation to the North would provide no solution. If Mr. Heath and himself will not provide a political solution others will seek to provide their own solution. It is commonly said that Mr. Faulkner is calling the tune in relation to current policy and that Mr. Heath is concentrating on Europe. The Taoiseach repeated that he called Ambassador Peck in because of the growing feeling of frustration and fear that was developing. He reaffirmed that he was prepared to talk to all the Irish people about a solution and to endeavour to get Unionist minds moving towards thinking of a solution. He proposed to tell Mr. Wilson of his broad thinking in this matter and to urge all concerned to make a special effort to get the talks moving. Mr. Heath replied that he would be naturally interested in any major speech of this nature which the Taoiseach would make and he wondered whether the Taoiseach could give Ambassador Peck some advance notice of what he might intend to say. The Taoiseach said that when he had finally decided on his course of action he would probably be able to give some indication to Ambassador Peck.

The meeting then concluded as the British staff in Brussels had been assembled outside to meet Mr. Heath.

26 Eanáir 1972