

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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Meeting between Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, T.D. and British Prime Minister, James Callaghan, 7 April 1978

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European Council, Copenhagen

Northern Ireland

1. The meeting began at 8.15 pm. It concluded at 9.50 pm. The Prime Minister was accompanied by Mr. Brian Cartledge and by Mr. Tom McCaffrey. The Taoiseach was accompanied by Mr. Nally.
2. The meeting opened with a question by the Prime Minister as to whether there were objections to Mr. McCaffrey's presence. The Taoiseach indicated, with some reservation, that it was alright. If we had known that he was to be there we might have made other arrangements as well.
3. The Taoiseach then went on to say that in the recent past relations had been a bit ruffled. He said that on the 8 January he had given an interview on television, dealing principally with the impending wage agreement. As was natural in these affairs, the interviewer had turned to Northern Ireland and the Taoiseach had reiterated his well known views on powersharing as a pre-condition of devolution. In doing this he referred specifically to what he had said immediately following the meeting with Mr. Callaghan in September. His views then had been given great prominence at the press conference.
4. This had been followed by statements from Mr. Mason to the effect that we were getting soft on security. This just was not in accordance with the facts. He would emphasise strongly that if there were complaints about our security effort that the usual procedures should be adopted for letting us know, before any announcement was made. He was more than anxious that harmonious relations should obtain as between the two countries. We had the ultimate objective of having the Irish people come together under agreed structures. We believed that a statement by the British Government of their interest in Irish unity would represent considerable progress but he accepted that this just was not on at present. This, however, should not and did not inhibit progress on the economic and security areas. All the main aspects of



cooperation, political, security, and economic seemed to be working reasonably well.

5. We accept the British Government policy on devolution in Northern Ireland in which there was power-sharing, participation, or partnership, on an agreed basis. He was not concerned now with the semantics but the central issue was clear.
6. On security, the September communique had indicated satisfaction at the degree of security cooperation. If this position did not now obtain, we were completely open to discuss other aspects. However, on our information, all the security arrangements were working well, particularly, as between the police forces on the two sides. The Taoiseach said he hoped that Mr. Callaghan would accept his assurance that there was complete backing on the security side and on our bona fides on the issue.
7. The economic cooperation work had borne some fruit. His understanding was that the very wide range of projects had been identified in the talks between officials from the North and South. The next step seemed to be to transfer the issue to Ministers, as agreed in September.
8. He thought that Roy Mason and Michael O'Kennedy should get together but this meeting could not be on security only. If it were, there would be considerable difficulties. The two men must discuss political progress also. The meeting had been arranged but the arrangements had been upset by the death of the former President. The Taoiseach said that he hoped that the two could come together on an agreed basis for discussion on economic, security, and political issues.
9. It was not his intention here to take Mr. Mason to task on particular issues. He must make it clear to the Prime Minister that statements like that of the Secretary of State on the La Mon bombing were particularly dangerous. We were apprehensive as to the effects of this type of statement <sup>in the Republic</sup> and there was no point in concealing the depth of our feeling on this matter.



10. The Taoiseach said that his basic purpose in seeking this meeting was to resume "where we had left off last September". We were anxious to maintain cooperation on security. He wanted to say, once again, that if there were difficulties, the ordinary channels of communication should be used.

11. On extradition, he understood the British position. However, he was not sure that our position was properly understood.

12. He would like to mention also the damage being done by British army briefings. There had been references to training centres in the 26 counties used by the provisional IRA. These references were, in turn, used by Airey Neave and others in a most irresponsible way. He realised that the Prime Minister could not control this type of statement but it was important to recognise their source and origin. What these people were saying was not true at all. While, of course, he would not claim that the Government were on top of the IRA in the State, Mr. Callaghan could be assured that we were on their heels everywhere. If we were given information as to the existence of a training camp, Mr. Callaghan could be assured that quick action would follow. This information had not been given. What had happened was that there were references to particular places which, when checked, might have indicated that these places had been used but that the user had ceased a long time ago.

13. Mr. Callaghan said that he was very glad to have had the opportunity of this talk. If he had sought it, <sup>it was</sup> not for "tremendous quarrels". The press seemed to have taken it in that way. There seemed to be a suggestion that the meeting was, in some way, a confrontation. It would be most important that they should be sorted out on this. Relations between himself and the Taoiseach had always been good and that was the way he wanted to maintain it. It would be extremely important that the way in which the meeting was presented in the press afterwards should be agreed and carefully watched.

14. He agreed that relations had deteriorated through utterances on both sides. We wanted to make it clear now that the Secretary of State, Mr. Mason, had his complete confidence as he was sure



the Foreign Minister, Mr. O'Kennedy had the Taoiseach's complete confidence. What was important now was to stop the ping-pong. He knew the Taoiseach's attitude on these issues and was particularly appreciative of his statement after the Lanyon bombing and of his letter to Mr. Biaggi. He too wanted to get back to the position where they had been in September.

15. He thought that in doing this it was important to recognise that there were differences of view. One of these was on the question of declaring an interest in Irish unity. The British assessment was different from the Irish assessment and he thought that it was clear that both sides accepted this. However, the main point was that the two sides had a common interest in preventing terrorism. They regarded the IRA as terrorists. He did not think that there could be objection either to the statement that the border must be a factor in the fight against terrorism. He did not want to go into any further detail on this issue and thought that doing so would be unproductive.
16. He was particularly anxious that this meeting should not be taken as a criticism of the Secretary of State in any way. What they wanted was maximum cooperation across the border. He agreed that if things go wrong we could talk privately about it. What was important was that any permanent solution must be acceptable to both sides. They were interested in creating structures of Government in Northern Ireland and the semantics did not interest them. Whether the words used was partnership or participation or ~~part~~ sharing did not matter greatly to him but some of these words had unfortunate implications for some people. The central point was that they would not tolerate a situation in Northern Ireland where there was domination of one group by another.
17. He thought that the Irish Government had considerable influence with the SDLP. His information was that some of the comments made in recent months had led to a cooling off on the part of that party in their attitudes to devolution. It might be that the Irish Government could influence them to participate constructively in the discussion on devolution in Northern Ireland. He was fully in agreement with the Taoiseach's suggestion that Mr. Mason and Mr. O'Kennedy should



come together and to the idea that we should go back to the spirit of the September Communique.

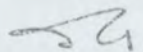
18. The Taoiseach said that he wished to reiterate the conditions as to participation or powersharing. The absence of a specific reference to this in the September Communique had led to criticism by the leader of the opposition, who said that some reference of this sort had been included in every previous communique. He wanted to make it quite clear that the Irish policy was still in favour of devolution with powersharing, participation, or partnership on a basis agreed by both communities in Northern Ireland. Again, he was not particularly interested in the semantics of the issue.
19. Mr. Callaghan said that it must be recognised that unity could not be thrust on the people in Northern Ireland. He had the impression that since the Taoiseach's January interview there had been a considerable stirring in Ireland and that all parties now seem to be moving in what he would call the Fianna Fail direction and using Fianna Fail language. He noted the change in the policies pursued now by the leader of the opposition and it seemed quite possible that the Labour Party would follow along the same lines. The Taoiseach intervened to say that the Labour Party conference was taking place this weekend and his understanding was that the leader of the party would spend a considerable part of his time in talking about Northern Ireland. What he wanted to underline was that the aspiration to unity remained in all parts of the Republic and that it was common to all parties. Mr. Callaghan said that his belief was that we could get political progress in Northern Ireland by ensuring a form of Government in which there was partnership in the administration, whether this had to be full devolution or interim devolution. There could be economic cooperation without getting involved in this particular aspect.
20. At this point the Taoiseach read the statement prepared in advance of the briefing, as a basis for the press briefing. Mr. Callaghan said that the statement appeared to be a bit long and went outside the limited objective he saw for the meeting, which, in their view, was a private matter. He wanted to make it clear that they did not wish to give the Republic any particular status. It was simply common sense that when difficulties arose they could get



together to talk privately.

21. The Taoiseach said that a repetition of this attitude could be most dangerous. He referred to the Sunningdale arrangements where the Republic had a very definite and open status. Mr. Callaghan said that things had happened since then. He could give no encouragement on prospects for a new Sunningdale. At the same time, he wished to keep things together, as at present. The Taoiseach said again that any suggestion of a change on this particular issue, emerging from this meeting, could have the most dangerous consequences.
22. Mr. Callaghan then asked if he could have the Taoiseach's assurance that there was a strong political drive behind the Garda and the army, in the security efforts. The Taoiseach said that he could give this assurance completely. There was no passive support for the IRA in the Republic. They had alienated themselves completely from the main stream of public opinion. There was no suggestion whatsoever of support for the group among any worthwhile section of the population.
23. The meeting then returned to the text of the statement which the Taoiseach said he would use as the basis for his press briefing. It was agreed finally that a statement would be drawn up by officials, which the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister would approve, afterwards. This would be used as an agreed basis for the press briefing. At the same time, the Taoiseach would be free to use the text, as it was, in his briefing of the Irish press but there should not be an implication in it that it was, in any way, a joint statement. The Taoiseach reiterated, that finally, that there should be no suggestion of any lessening in the degree of security cooperation as between the two countries.

The meeting then concluded.

  
8 April 1978.



1. We believe that the only basis for permanent peace and stability and harmonious relationship between Britain and Ireland is the coming together of the people of Ireland under agreed political structures and we believe that progress towards that objective would be facilitated if the British Government were to declare its interest in Irish unity and join with us in working towards that end. British policy to date has not accepted that objective.
2. The absence of agreement as to the long-term objectives should not and does not inhibit north-south co-operation between the British authorities and ourselves on all matters of common concern. The main aspects of this co-operation are in the political, security and economic areas and all three are regularly discussed at political, diplomatic and official level.
3. On the political side, the Prime Minister told me that their proposals for a system of limited devolution of powers to a Northern Ireland elected body are still on the table. I reiterated my view that any powers that are devolved would have to be shared and I am satisfied that the Prime Minister shares my view on this. We will support any effort to advance the idea of devolution on the principle of power-sharing.
4. On the security side, we did not go into any great detail but satisfaction was expressed again, as it was after our Downing Street meeting in September last, at the degree of co-operation under the present arrangements. It was agreed that any problems that might arise on either side from time to time would be the subject of consultations through the normal confidential channels.
5. On economic co-operation, again we did not go into detail but both of us are happy with the progress made at the official level meetings which were instituted following our Downing Street meeting. You will recall that these referred particularly to arrangements and opportunities for north-south economic co-operation.
6. In the normal course of events, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and NI Secretary of State are in contact on all these matters. As you know they had hoped to meet just before Easter but plans for that meeting fell through following the sudden death of the former President. The Minister and NI Secretary then decided there would be little point in meeting at more or less the same time as my meeting with the Prime Minister but I assume they will be in touch again shortly to work out suitable arrangements.



Meeting between the Taoiseach, Mr. J. Lynch, T.D.  
and the British Prime Minister, Mr. Callaghan at  
European Council, Copenhagen.

Agreed Basis for Briefing

The Taoiseach and Prime Minister had a private talk - one  
of a series of meetings to exchange views on matters of  
common interest.

They looked back to their discussion in September, reaffirmed  
the views expressed in the communique following that meeting,  
and reviewed progress since then in the political, economic  
and security areas.

They agreed that there should be further meetings between  
Ministers, as necessary.

The talk was informed<sup>2</sup> and friendly.

April 7, 1978.