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Prime Minister Lynch, interviewed on
Ulster T.V. - January, 1970.

- Questions:** Mr. Lynch, relationships between North and South have been rather strained over the past year. How do you assess them now?
- Answer:** I must agree that they were strained, ever since the Civil Rights Movement gave rise to these troubles. Naturally there were statements and counter statements and there were differences, so that now that the Civil Rights Movement seems to have achieved success in that certain measures have been introduced to get rid of these discriminations that they complained of, I think the way is open now for improved relations.
- Questions:** In your estimation therefore you now think that all the necessary reforms have been complete in the North and you think it is a just society?
- Answer:** I am not saying all necessary reforms have been completed. I say that most of them if not all, are already on the statute book but I am not naive enough to think that all these reforms can be effected over night. I have no doubt about the sincerity of the Government in the North to effect these reforms but they have to be done quickly and as quickly as possible and I am not satisfied that they have been effected.
- Questions:** So there's a warmer climate anyway but can you see any positive moves either by yourself or Major Chichester Clark to try and improve things even more?
- Answer:** Well I don't envisage any positive moves just at the moment. I think we would want to see the reforms much further along the way because unless these reforms are effected I don't think the ground work will have been done, the climate will have been created, for closer contacts.

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Question: Now yesterday you laid great emphasis, or so it appeared, on the fact that you believe that there could only be a peaceful solution to the end of Partition. Who were you in fact really talking to there? Were you talking to your own party where there do appear to be some dissidents or were you talking to the North to try and quieten fears.

Answer: I was talking to the country, to everybody, and of course naturally to some of the people who expressed themselves in rather strong terms yesterday at the party conference, at the Ard-Fheis, but I was doing no more than reiterating the policy of our party ever since its foundation as originally adumbrated by Mr. de Valera, followed by Mr Lemass, and being pursued by me. That is what I was doing yesterday.

Question: But in fact it is said that you have ticked off one Cabinet Minister on this score and there were certainly some very strong speeches at yesterday's conference.

Answer: When I came out four-square and met this challenge - if there was a challenge - The entire Ard-Fheis, the entire attendance rose in approval of what I had to say, which I regarded as accepting entirely my approach.

Question: One of your key phrases yesterday in terms of relations with the North was amity rather than enmity but how in fact can you persuade people of the North that there is something in it for them to join a federation?

Answer: Well when I put forward the suggestion of a federation I did not mean that was going to be the end. What I want and what everybody in this part of the country wants is complete reunification and you can't have complete reunification if enmity exists and therefore that is why I did propose amity. You can't have a united Ireland unless everybody is going to live at peace because I want a peaceful united Ireland.

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Therefore what I would like to see is greater tolerance, greater understanding, greater goodwill, greater brotherhood between all people in the North of Ireland and not only there but all people throughout the whole of Ireland. That is the only way that we can have a kind of unity, reunification that I think is necessary and I think will be permanent.

Question:

If in fact this is your approach have you not in fact hindered it by your actions immediately after the troubles in August when we had this public relations campaign throughout the world against the Ulster Government, you had the United Nations initiative, you had the call up of reserves. Surely this must have hindered.

Answer:

Well it probably did irritate or irk some people in the North but nevertheless we weren't only, we weren't indeed at all, trying to castigate the Northern Ireland Government. What we were doing was indicating to the world that there were about one-third of the population something over 500,000 people who were living without full Civil Rights. We wanted to highlight this in order to ensure that these people would get their full rights and it wasn't in any wise at all to be vindictive towards anybody.

Question:

There was reports in fact that there were members of your Government who wanted to invade the North at that time. Were you under strong pressures?

Answer:

No that was not true at all. There was no question of invasion - none whatever.

Question:

Could I ask you about your personal relationship with political leaders in the North? This time last year you would have been dealing with Captain O'Neill. He of course is now gone. What is your reaction to his departure?

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Answer: I was very sorry that the hard liners in the Stormont regime and the Unionist Party caused Captain O'Neill to go, I never doubted Captain O'Neill's principles. I knew that he too was a Unionist but I accepted entirely that he wanted to promote good-will, that he wanted to ensure fair play all round for everybody in the Six Counties. I thought his going was a great pity and a great set-back.

Question: What about Major Chichester Clark - do you know him well?

Answer: I don't know him well. I met him on at least one occasion when I visited Stormont. He was at the lunch and at the meeting that we had. I met him also in London subsequently, but casually, at the centenary celebrations at the Smithfield Meat Market.

Question: What is your estimation of him?

Answer: I think he is a sincere man too. I think he is trying to do his best and I know he has tremendous difficulties.

Question: Could I ask you finally about two other points that could affect North-South relations. First the series of explosions you are having down here apparently by the U.V.F. what is your reaction to these?

Answer: Well I think these are completely senseless. They are achieving nothing and the kind of targets they are going for, Wolfe Tone's grave, Daniel O'Connell's monument, these are senseless, but the other ones putting a bomb in a car near Dublin Castle, these are positively dangerous. I abhor this activity no matter on what side of the Border it takes place.

Question: What about the I.R.A. now we have had reports of the split there. What sort of strength do you think the I.R.A. has Now?

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Answers: I don't think their strength is great. I don't think their strength either physically or morally is great and I don't think they have any great influence at all on the present situation.

Question: Do you think that there is any danger that with this split that there might be a return to some form of militancy?

Answers: I don't know and I don't think there will be because I think the I.R.A., some years ago abandoned militancy, they decided to adopt other measures. I think that they will have learned their lesson, time will have shown them that the form of militancy in this day and age was not advancing their cause but rather retarding it.

Question: If in fact though they did return what would be your attitude?

Answers: Well our attitude is that there is only one army and one Government here and only one Government entitled to act and speak for all the people and any other kind of military or other action is a usurpation of power, a usurpation of democracy that I and my Government intend to resist.

Question: On the wider question of militancy we had a court case about a week ago where seven young men in Co. Donegal were released on arms charges. This had caused some reaction in some quarters in the North. Will you say anything about this?

Answers: Well I knew about that - I knew that these men had been found in a cottage somewhere near Buncrana and there was no question of not charging them. They were charged before our courts, our courts are completely independent. There was no suggestion whatever of directing the Justice as to how to deal with that case. He dealt with the case on its merits. They were charged and they were given the full course of our law.

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As I understand it there were two charges that could have been brought against them, carrying arms without a licence or carrying arms with intent. It was obvious that there could not be a conviction on the second charge with intent to commit murder or do other damage, that obviously was not their intention, therefore they were charged for carrying arms without a licence and the Justice dealt with that charge as he saw fit.

Questions: Finally Mr. Lynch how do you see the progress of Ireland North and South over the next couple of years?

Answer: Well I hope at least that conditions will improve economically on both sides because unless we can have economic development then we won't have happy people. I hope as well that the political climate will improve and above all I hope and I put no tooth in this that the improvement will take place in order to achieve reunification, that is our hope, that is our cause and that is one that we will always strive for on this side of the Border.

Mr. Lynch, Thank you very much indeed.

(End.)