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*Extract from "7 Days" Interview with*  
*Mr Lynch 30/11/1971.* *R.A 5/71*

Interviewer: Taoiseach, one of the things that Mr. Wilson said, Mr. Paisley said, people in the North have said and people in the South are saying I think is what action does this Government propose to take in respect of the I.R.A. It is not even clear whether the I.R.A. in this part of the country is an illegal organisation.

Taoiseach: Well of course I am not going to debate the legality of this but we regard them as an illegal organisation, certainly as far as the Government is concerned we treat them as such. Now first let me say since we have been talking about reunification and the constitutional terms and <sup>in</sup> Mr. Wilson's proposal terms the I.R.A. at the present time as you know causing what I think is havoc towards our reunification aspirations in this country. First of all I rule out violence for the attainment of any cause, violence will not only make that cause ~~more~~ difficult to achieve but certainly will lengthen the period in which it can be achieved. At the moment the I.R.A. are operating in the Six Counties allegedly <sup>say</sup> for the purpose of uniting the country. I don't have to repeat again what national policy is, that reunification should come about by peaceful means and by agreement. I believe myself that the I.R.A. by their campaign are postponing that day, every bomb that is exploded, every innocent life that is taken postpones the day when we can achieve reunification. I am not suggesting that all bombs and all lives taken are ~~by~~ the actions of the I.R.A. but I will admit, I will accept that they genuinely seek the reunification of the country. So do we but I would suggest to them now at this stage and especially in the period coming up to Christmas that they might impose on themselves a truce, I believe they could do that, in fact I believe it would be to their credit to establish that they could impose a truce and withdraw. At the same time I would suggest that the British army might withdraw from the streets of Belfast and Derry and let the people live a reasonably normal life and above all to let the political means of finding a solution have a chance.

Interviewer: Well Mr. Lynch you say that the I.R.A. are pushing back the possibility of reunification, would you now at this stage, as the leader of the Opposition in the British House of Commons, say ~~in~~ talking, demanding that reunification should be considered as the long term ultimate solution if all were peaceful in the North over the past year?

Taoiseach: Well now again one must not be confused about this. The attitude of Mr. Heath and Mr. Maudling obviously attitude of <sup>that</sup> Government and apparently of Mr. Wilson even though I must say that I welcomed his proposals seem to be that violence must first be eliminated but violence is not the root cause. Violence is one of the side issues

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in all this and irrespective of violence, irrespective of what is happening now in the streets of Belfast and Derry and in some places along the Border, there must be a worthwhile political initiative. I know that is difficult at the present time particularly because of the attitude of the S.D.L.P. and I can understand their attitude in this respect, but the question of putting violence as the first and main issue in the ultimate solution of our problems I think is completely wrong, it is short sighted on the part of the British Government.

Interviewer: Taoiseach, isn't there nevertheless a responsibility on your Government in respect of violence and in respect of the I.R.A. If you say this is an illegal body how come that there are meetings held, there are collections taken up, there are arms carried, they are in public funerals, with obvious I.R.A. activity and apparently no action taken by the Government?

Taoiseach: Well apparently no action, that is too facile a statement. Prosecutions are brought everywhere arms are found whether in the possession of a person on his person or under his control. Unfortunately we can't always direct the course of law once it gets into the courts. Our courts are absolutely independent our judiciary is independent and if they hadn't taken effective action it is not the Government's fault. We have put the legislation there. When people come across the Border if they ~~apparently~~ <sup>apparently</sup> had been active on the other side of the Border there is no charge that we can bring against him, if he is not in possession of arms at that particular time and I can assure you that insofar as we can enforce the law against these people we do it on every possible occasion, these are our instructions to the Gardaí to enforce the law to the fullest possible extent and they carry out their instructions. May I say in one respect there was an article in one of to-day's newspapers about activities near the Border, I think it was Killyclogher, Co. Leitrim, and the suggestion appeared to be that the Guards knew what was happening. The Guards had a good idea what was happening but all the activity took place on the other side of the Border, cars that approached the Border were searched, minutely searched, when they came back across the Border again they were minutely searched but nothing was found. Obviously whatever happened, there were spikes blown up, the ammunition was available on the other side of the Border, was probably dumped on the other side of the Border, but as far as our forces are concerned we took every precaution to ensure that ammunition was neither brought across the border or brought back after the operation.

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Interviewer: And now Mr. Lynch to get back to a point we were dealing with earlier. Consistently on many many occasions you have condemned violence as you have done so to-night and you say the I.R.A. are creating havoc but is it not a fact that we have come nearer now to reunification than we had. Everyone is talking about it, it is accepted as a question for serious political discussion. Mr. Wilson says it is essential, now that has happened for some reason. Is it not because of the bombing and the shooting that went on in the North?

Taoiseach: No. I think, well one would not say that it has not had some effect but when we talk about reunification we are not just talking about reunification of territories we are talking about reunification of the people and I am suggesting that the activities of the I.R.A. are driving the people further and further apart. <sup>original</sup> The border was imposed as you know against the will of the majority of the people. As long as it is there the Irish people will not be satisfied with it and we know now and I think this has been borne in on the British Government, that 40% of the population in the North of Ireland refuse to accept the administration as it now stands and if violence ceased to-day and if nothing was done, nothing more was done, about the present situation almost inevitably it would start, maybe not in ten years probably much less than ten years, five or three years time again. I think the British people realise this now, realise that this settlement, so-called settlement of 50 years ago was not a valid settlement it was an unjust settlement and they realise that reunification is the goal, reunification by peaceful means and that I think more than any violent activities has brought this realisation home to the British people.

Interviewer: To get down to purely domestic politics you are now leader of minority Government. Do you think that that is a satisfactory <sup>base</sup> ~~executive~~ operation?

Taoiseach: Well I am leader of a party that has still more members than the combined strength of the two Opposition parties. There are some Independents who continue to support us and a minority Government isn't unknown in this country, we have had many terms of Government in the country and these Government's have operated satisfactorily. I naturally would prefer to have a reasonably secure majority, five or six seats, but I still think I have a safe enough majority in effect.

Interviewer: But are you not to a certain extent curtailed in your activities, are there not certain things you might possibly like to do you cannot do because of the possibility that support would not be forthcoming?

Taoiseach: I want to assure you that there is nothing that our Government <sup>will</sup> ~~would~~ want to do that it will ~~desist~~ <sup>refrain</sup> from doing by reason of any feeling of insecurity in the Dáil, on the contrary, I would be only willing to bring forward proposals if they were good for the country and if they might be jeopardised by reason of the representation in the Dáil at the present time I would do it all the more quickly for that reason.