

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2014/105/726
Creation Date(s):	17 October 1984
Extent and medium:	4 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Pl. cs. S11575

cc : Prol
PSS
Lia Lillis
A-1 Section
'Box'

17/10/84

cl
12/10

Editorial reaction to the Brighton bombing
in the English newspapers

The most striking aspect of the editorial comments on the Brighton bombs is the absence of polemical attacks upon the Irish government. The Irish Government's total opposition to the IRA and the use of violence, and the considerable financial and manpower resources that the Irish Government has assigned to fighting terrorism, have clearly been noted and accepted by the British press.

Thus, even the Daily Mail accepted that co-ordination between the security forces in 'Eire and Ulster' was 'already close', though it did press for such cooperation to be extended to include direct communication between the British and Irish armies. Equally, though it made a pointed reference to the need for 'our other western partners' not to be too 'fussy' about extradition laws, the Mail did not refer specifically to Ireland, as it has done in the past.

There was, not surprisingly, a tendency among the right wing press to lay greater stress upon security and the need to maintain present policy unchanged, rather than upon the need for a genuine political initiative. The Sun led the way calling on the Government to take up the challenge posed by the IRA bombers - 'They must be hunted remorselessly and exterminated like rats.' The Daily Telegraph saw the prime needs to be to

improve security both north and south of the border; to soothe the perennial Unionist anxiety about a sell-out by the British government; to seek ways of placating Catholic nationalist opinion; and to avoid any act which looks like a concession to IRA

plain to the Unionists

that the Union is a two-way process and that under it Westminster has the right to decide how the province shall be governed in the best interest of the United Kingdom. That interest includes a freedom from violence and a cordial relationship with Dublin.

He concluded:

if Mrs Thatcher were to act with half the resolution she showed on Friday she might then make her contribution to the long-term diminution of the carnage. That intention now, with the rubble still being searched, would redound greatly to her credit.

The Financial Times argued that the lesson from the bombing was clear:

the Irish question is a piece of unfinished business which should be placed at the top of the Government's agenda... Never were the circumstances more ripe for a concerted search for a settlement. The Irish Government is ready and able, the British Government has been warned of the perils of sticking to the status quo, and the bulk of opinion in both islands must now be behind them. Failure to act would be unforgivable.

Two leader writers mentioned the need to make a 'unified propaganda assault on public opinion in the United States' - seen as the major source for IRA funds and weapons. The Daily Mail referred to the condemnation of those who contribute to NOTAID by the major American newspapers. The Daily Mirror also referred to US newspaper comments: but went on to condemn US

violence. In practical terms this means that no political initiative can succeed if it seems to be a stealthy step towards unopposed Irish unity.

Similarly, the Daily Mail emphasised the need not to give in to terrorists -

That was why it was so important that... Mr Douglas Hurd reaffirmed... only hours after the bomb went off, that the Union will be maintained for as long as the people of the province want it.

The Sunday Times quoted both the Taoiseach's statement and The Irish Times's editorial on the bombing, but was dismissive of the possibility of a political initiative, seeing it as a proposal favoured by 'liberals' but likely only to delight the IRA by giving evidence of that political concessions can be extracted through violence.

A more positive approach was taken by The Financial Times and The Guardian. The latter quoted the Taoiseach as stating that the British and Irish people would be more united than ever against IRA terrorism. The Guardian went on to urge that the Government should not let the atrocity disrupt or interrupt the search for a political solution, and to propose as the best option for progress, some kind of confederal union between Britain and Ireland,

leaving the sovereignty of each intact but blurring the sharp and provocative edges of constitutional definition in Northern Ireland.

It followed naturally from Mr Prior's assertion that the Government of the South had a right to speak on behalf of the minority in Northern Ireland that that Government should be directly involved in security north of the border. The leader writer went on to call for the British Government to make it

politicians who sympathise with 'the cause' to win votes. The politicians singled out for comment were; somewhat illogically, Edward Kennedy and 'Tip' O'Neill.

A.Ford

Anglo Irish Section

17.October 1984