



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/47/18

Creator(s): Department of Foreign Affairs

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland.
May only be reproduced with
the written permission of the
Director of the National
Archives.

FROM JAMES LEE FOR COI RADIO TECHNICAL SERVICES

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY
THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF IRELAND, MR. DICK SPRING,
AT STORMONT
ON TUESDAY, 23 MARCH 1993

MR. SPRING:

I would like to welcome you to a short press conference. I was very glad to have the opportunity of attending the Anglo-Irish Conference today with my ministerial colleagues, the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Trade and Tourism. We had a full agenda and we dealt with a wide range of issues and concerns of the two governments.

We discussed first of all the prospects of political dialogue. The violence which we have seen here and in Britain over the last few days is a vivid reminder, if any was needed, of the urgency of political progress which can bring peace and stability. The two governments are unwavering in their commitment to a process of political dialogue. We wish to see the parties return to the negotiation table and resume the process of seeking a political solution. There is quite simply no alternative to dialogue and negotiation. There is an onus on all of us, the two governments and the parties, to sit down together, talk through our difficulties and hopefully reach agreement. The two governments

and some of the other participants are ready to begin talks immediately. I hope that our sense of the urgency of political progress will be shared by all participants and that talks can be launched without further delay.

We considered developments in the security situation in Northern Ireland and reviewed our ongoing security co-operation. In this respect, we noted recent successes by the security forces on both sides of the border in relation to arms and explosives finds.

We noted with concern the continuing heavy loss of life attributable to paramilitaries from both sides of the community. I took the opportunity to reiterate the Government's sense of shock and revulsion at the appalling outrage committed in Warrington and to express to the family of the young boy who died and those who were injured and their families our deepest sympathy and condolences.

We reviewed the overall situation in regard to confidence in the security forces and the administration of justice. This is the area of the work of the Conference to which the Government attaches particular priority within the framework established by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It was noted that while there have been improvements in a number of areas, there was a need for further progress if the continued difficulties in this regard are to be resolved.

We were very pleased to be joined at our meeting today by the Minister for Tourism and Trade, Charlie McCreavy (phon) and his opposite number on the northern side, Robert Atkins, for a discussion of trade and business co-operation and tourism co-operation between North and South. In addition, we discussed the progress being made in relation to the Ballymore-Ballycollan (phon) Canal which is being restored with assistance from the International Fund and the EC Structural Funds and we considered arrangements for the opening of the Canal in May of next year. These discussions formed part of a continued programme of work designed to stimulate North-South co-operation in the major economic and social sectors. We reviewed today a range of current initiatives which aim to increase co-operation in the field of trade, business and tourism and we considered ways in which this activity might be further strengthened and expanded. I would like the Minister for Trade and Tourism to give a short account of his meeting with Mr. Atkins.

MINISTER FOR TRADE & TOURISM: (ACCENT DIFFICULT TO TRANSCRIBE)
Mr. Atkins and myself discussed various matters relating to the tourism and trade areas. We feel that both are areas where it can be seen that there can co-operation to the mutual benefit of both communities, North and South. The Shannon, Eire and Ballymore Valley in Ireland were discussed to open it official in the summer of 1994. We see this as one area where we can have a joint management of that particular stretch of water. We discussed matters relating on the trade side to the holding of a

seminar/meeting in 1993 sponsored by the two governments, organised by the respective trade boards and the would be the North and South. In Chicago a joint trade conference organised by the Southern Trade Board and the Northern Ireland equivalent which will have small and medium-sized enterprises represented there.

On the tourism side, we saw great areas for co-operation. We continue to have a joint programmes. I also said that I would liaise with and the Irish Federation with regard to the possibility of an all-Ireland accommodation guide-book which would be of benefit to both sides, particularly to our friends in Northern Ireland. I would put this matter .. and they would discuss it with ... federations....

We feel that the one area where people can see visible things happening is the trade and economic area and that this will lead to greater understanding on both sides of the divide.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

QUESTION:

The leader of the largest party involved in the last round of talks said at the weekend that the framework was no longer valid and that the talks were dead. What is your reaction to that?

MR. SPRING:

I was very disappointed at those remarks and I studied them carefully and obviously we will have to consider the implications of those.

QUESTION:

What do you think the implications are?

MR. SPRING:

We are considering what the implications are at the present time. I believe that all politicians have a responsibility to get back to the talks. I think that we have to have dialogue, we have to have negotiation, otherwise there are obviously serious problems for everybody.

QUESTION:

Both sides have said that they are optimistic about the talks starting or the possibility of them starting. Given the Unionist stance, does this mean that you are prepared to tackle the key issue of Articles 2 and 3?

MR. SPRING:

I have made the position very clear in relations to Articles 2 and 3. I made a major statement on them two weeks ago and I think it is important that people come to the table, people come and have dialogue, people have talks and we would look and see what has to be done.

QUESTION:

Mr. Spring, isn't it the reality that the only way that you were able to implement and bring the Anglo-Irish Agreement into being was by going over the heads of people? If you cannot bring Jim Molyneux and Ian Paisley onside for these talks, what are you basing your optimism on?

MR. SPRING:

I would say, Eamonn, that we have a responsibility - indeed all politicians have a responsibility - and I would hope that the leaders of the Unionists Parties would further consider my remarks in recent weeks. I believe there is room for dialogue, I believe there is room for negotiation and I think the sooner we sit down and address the opportunities that are there, the better for everybody.

QUESTION:

Your counterpart here, Sir Patrick Mayhew, said he detects this mood among ordinary people but the reality is that at the upper echelon, Jim Molyneux and Ian Paisley said: "We don't want to know Dick Spring! We want nothing to do with him!" How do you get across that barrier?

MR. SPRING:

I think ultimately we have to get across the barrier by having dialogue by having an exchange of views. I have made my views very clear. I think there is a responsibility on all politicians

and I would hope that politicians would see it that way and the sooner we can get around the table the better for everybody and I would reiterate what the Secretary of State has said in relation to the views of many people who want dialogue, who want their leaders to show that leadership, have dialogue and get down to negotiations.

QUESTION:

Prime Minister, regularly after these meetings, there is a paragraph in the Statement which says that Ministers reaffirmed their rejection of violence and their appreciation of the high level of security co-operation. If you continue to make these statements, and at the same time the violence continues and we have the bombing for example in Warrington the other day, what more do you think can be done to prevent this?

MR. SPRING:

The level of co-operation, I think, is as good as it has ever been. We are determined to pursue the level of co-operation to the highest possible level. There is no room in our estimation for violence. Violence will not solve the problems and we will do everything in our power to eliminate violence; it should not be part of the agenda. We want to have political dialogue and discussion.

QUESTION:

Does it take political dialogue and discussion to in the end stop it?

MR. SPRING:

One can appeal to those people who are pursuing violence and we have done this on many occasions and I would like to take the opportunity again today because we all saw the horror and havoc that was wreaked upon innocent people, people living their normal lives in Warrington last week. I have already expressed my sense of outrage and anger at that bombing. It was an assault on humanity quite frankly and I wish those people would stop the violence. It is not going to solve the problems that we have and I think there is responsibility on all the politicians on the other hand to set about having the dialogue.

QUESTION:

Prime Minister, what concerns did you raise with the Secretary of State about the Caterham Three case? Did you ask him to refer that back to the Court of Appeal?

MR. SPRING:

I did raise that matter with the Secretary of State, I did raise our concerns in relation to it. Obviously the murder of the two British soldiers was a horrific act of violence and stands

condemned and those who perpetrated that murder should be brought to justice but I did raise our concerns because there are concerns in relation to the three individuals involved.

QUESTION:

Will it be back with the Court of Appeal in the near future, do you think?

MR. SPRING:

That is a matter for the Secretary of State. I conveyed my concerns to him and he is reviewing it.

QUESTION:

Is there a question about this being a miscarriage of justice?

MR. SPRING:

It has been raised by some individuals and human rights groups that there may be a miscarriage of justice in this case and we brought those concerns to the Secretary of State's attention.

QUESTION:

What arrangements have been made for the funeral in Warrington and do you plan to be there yourself?

MR. SPRING:

I did express the view that I would attend. We have had a communication from the family that they want it to be private and as I said at the outset we respect the views of the family. They have our deepest sympathy in this situation in what is a terrible tragedy to befall any family.

QUESTION:

Mr. Spring, given the history of the troubles in Northern Ireland and the fact that we have seen little white coffins in this country for 25 years, do you think one will make any difference at all to the attitude of the IRA or any other terrorist group?

MR. SPRING:

I certainly hope it does. I have to say to you that I have felt a sense of outrage in relation to what has happened in Warrington. Perhaps we had that outrage before but I can only give it to you from my own personal experience and I hope that sense of outrage reaches people who will stop the violence. It is unacceptable, it is unwarranted and will achieve nothing and I think we all share the grief of the families involved.

QUESTION:

But these people are as committed as the war lords in Bosnia to their cause. How can it make any difference? The withdrawal of support perhaps?

MR. SPRING:

Perhaps some people might think again when they have seen what happened in Warrington in last week and I would hope that people who are supporting the terrorists would in fact withdraw their support.

QUESTION:

Can you clarify your answer about the representation of the Irish Government at the funeral? Does the family's wish that the funeral be private mean that a Irish Minister will not attend and the Government won't be represented because the family don't want it?

MR. SPRING:

My understanding is that the family wish for a private funeral and as I have said from the outset, we would obviously be very careful in relation to the family's desires and my understanding is that they do not want Government involvement, either the Irish or British Government, so that has to be respected in their tragedy.

QUESTION:

Mr. Spring, if the reality is that the political approach to date has not eroded the Warringtons of this world, the West Belfast and North Belfast bombings etc., is there anything more radical that you can do politically within the framework of democracy to actually try and undermine this?

MR. SPRING:

I think all constitutional politicians have a responsibility to undermine what has been happening and I believe we are trying to do that in terms of our security co-operation, in terms of our search for dialogue amongst the parties here in Northern Ireland and we will continue to work for that and I would like to think we can make progress in that direction.

QUESTION:

Do you not think that you are part of the problem possibly, Sir, because of the attitude of Unionists towards you here?

MR. SPRING:

I would hope that I am not part of the problem. I am going out of my way to ensure that I am not in fact part of the problem. Perhaps I can become part of the solution.

QUESTION:

Unionists say that the presence of Articles 2 and 3 does provide oxygen for the IRA.

MR. SPRING:

I have discussed Articles 2 and 3, David, on many occasions. There are different views on them and there probably always will be different views on them. I am encouraging politicians to take their responsibility seriously and come to the table for dialogue. I think that is what is most important.

QUESTION:

You have met the SPLD and the Alliance Party, the Unionists say they won't meet you. Are you doing anything other than making public appeals to them, meeting privately together for some talks?

MR. SPRING:

I think at this stage what is important is that I will have a careful and detailed study of what they have been saying in recent days and that is what I intend to do.

QUESTION:

Will you respond to that, do you think?

MR. SPRING:

You know me in the past, Jim. I will always respond.

QUESTION:

In the gulf between you and the Unionists in this type of simple text dealing with Articles 2 and 3 in the context of an overall package but the overall package which is for a ... which is anathema to them... would you consider at all acting arbitrarily on Articles 2 and 3?

MR. SPRING:

I think what we have to see, Eamonn, is that we want to meet people who have difficulties in relation to any of the constitutional issues affecting our relationship and we should s

round and discuss those issues and look at what we can do to bring about peace and reconciliation on this island for all of our futures and the sooner we can do that the better.

(END OF TRANSCRIPT):