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'My father died a very sad and disappointed man' – Irish family's five-decade fight over ship bombed by Germans in 1940

<https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/my-father-died-a-very-sad-and-disappointed-man-irish-familys-five-decade-fight-over-ship-bombed-by-germans-in-1940/a1234079968.html>

Family believed then taoiseach, Éamon de Valera, repeated the German timeline of events despite the fact it was incorrect.

By Ralph Riegel

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An Irish seafaring family waged a five-decade battle with the German authorities for compensation arising out of an attack on a Cork-registered schooner by the Luftwaffe during World War II.

Details of the MV Loch Ryan compensation campaign were revealed in confidential documents released as part of the State Papers.

On August 16, 1940, three Luftwaffe aircraft attacked the Skibbereen-registered vessel MV Loch Ryan. The boat was in international waters en route from Cornwall in England to Arklow in Co Wicklow.

Three German aircraft bombed and strafed the Irish ship during an attack that lasted for more than 30 minutes. Miraculously, none of the crew were killed though substantial damage was caused to the boat. Newspapers in the 1940s described the fishing vessel as "the ship the Nazis could not sink".

James Nolan, captain and owner of the vessel, did not have adequate insurance to cover the attack and the financial repercussions were felt for decades by his family.

They were told that the Germans had no record of the attack

During the war, a total of 27 Irish commercial ships came under attack from German planes and 17 were sunk. **Compensation terms were agreed for all but the MV Loch Ryan. (UNTRUE)**

German authorities insisted the vessel was in a declared blockade zone when the attack occurred.

Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) subsequently realised that the attack had taken place the day before the blockade zone was declared by the Germans.

Ireland's embassy in Berlin made a fresh approach on that basis but were told that the Germans had no record of the attack and could not, therefore, take responsibility.

Over the years, the Nolan family alleged that then taoiseach, Éamon de Valera, simply repeated the German timeline of events despite the fact it was incorrect.

A claim for compensation on behalf of the Nolan family was reactivated by the DFA in 1994.

Family believed then taoiseach, Éamon de Valera, repeated the German timeline of events despite the fact it was incorrect.

State Papers Day 2 - 1995 and its place in Irish history

Eileen Twomey wrote to the department on June 7, 1994, and expressed hope that a "satisfactory conclusion" is finally brought in the case.

"It is long past the appropriate time to present my father's claim for compensation to the German government in respect of the bombing of his vessel during World War II," she wrote.

"As a result my father lost his livelihood at a crucial time in his life, when he had a wife and a large family to support. There is no need for me to tell you how that affected his life, my mother's life and their family.

"I do know my father died a very sad and disappointed man in 1962, as did my mother in 1976. Both had hoped that the Irish government would have received his claim in their lifetime."

A fax sent by the Irish embassy in Bonn, Germany, to the secretary general of the DFA just two weeks after Ms Twomey's letter outlined how unlikely it was that any such claim would be successful.

It said the issue was that Germany did not accept responsibility for the attack, unlike in other incidents such as the bombing of the North Strand in Dublin in 1941.

"The major obstacle is the refusal of the Germans to accept responsibility for the attack. If this was not accepted in 1940, it seems very unlikely that it would be in 1994, without additional proof from our side," the DFA's Bonn counsellor wrote.