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Title: Copy letter from Ambassador of Ireland to Great Britain Donal O'Sullivan to Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs HJ McCann, reporting a conversation with Sir Stewart Crawford of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, mainly regarding British army activities in border areas and alleged incursions, and criticism of Northern Ireland Prime Minister Brian Faulkner by members of the Republic of Ireland government.

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STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

1st November 1971

Dear Secretary

I gave you on Friday last on the telephone the gist of my talk earlier that afternoon with Sir Stewart Crawford about the incident at Dooard. After recounting details of the incident I expressed the Government's deep concern and said I had been instructed by the Taoiseach to protest in the strongest possible terms. I then went on to stress the extreme danger involved in the current activities of the British Army.

Sir Stewart said that, if the position about Dooard was as stated by me, then the incident was one to be deeply regretted. They would have to investigate the matter on their side. He would lose no time in bringing details of my protest to the Ministry of Defence.

Sir Stewart continued by saying that our record of cross-Border incursions by the British Army did not tally with theirs. There are bound to be accidental incursions because of genuine doubt as to where the Border line is. He referred to a recent case in which the Taoiseach had said that the Army had deliberately crossed the Border and mentioned that he is awaiting receipt of a map from us in connection with this incident. He could, however, assure me that at no time had there been a deliberate incursion.

Sir Stewart concluded by saying that he agreed with me that cross-Border incursions "could be highly inflammatory in the South and could lead to serious confrontations".

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This is something the Government here wants at all costs to avoid.

I then said that the whole exercise of the cratering of roads is a most futile one. Apart altogether from the inconvenience aspect of it, it is looked upon by many in the South as an effort to create a physical division between the two parts of the Island. Even if there had been a significant illegal movement of arms and explosives across the Border, which I was satisfied was not the case, the cratering of unapproved roads would not stop the movement. There is plenty of rough country over which such traffic could continue. Anyhow, my information is that the craters are in many cases being immediately filled in. Sir Stewart conceded that "the operation has not been a very successful one".

He then said that he finds it difficult to understand the constant personal sniping by the Dublin Government at Mr Faulkner. Mr Faulkner is really trying his best to improve the situation, and his appointing of Dr Newe to a Ministerial post was a significant gesture. I said I could not accept the charge of "personal sniping" by members of my Government. There has been a lot of strong and legitimate criticism by us of the regime which Mr Faulkner now heads. After all, what ^{more} ~~very~~ convincing justification could there be for such criticism than the fact that the so-called reform programme in the North was really an acknowledgement that there had been 50 years of grave discrimination against 40% of the population there. Personally, I would attach no

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worthwhile significance to the appointing of Dr Newe. He is not an agreed representative of the minority and surely it is time that London and Stormont realised that something far more than gestures to the long suffering minority is now required.

Sir Stewart again returned to the question of our attitude to Mr Faulkner and asked would we want to see him replaced by Paisley or Craig. I said I realised that Mr Faulkner's position may be shaky, and if he did fall it was, with all respect, for Westminster to show a higher degree of statesmanship in relation to Ireland than it has in the past. The only hope of peace is a substantial advance on the political front - an advance which will provide for the minority in the North an effective voice in affairs at all levels and which additionally will provide for increasingly close co-operation between the two parts of the Island. The precise form this takes is a matter on which Westminster should take an early initiative, as we may at this moment be at the start of what could prove to be a revolution.

Sir Stewart said that real progress at the political end will be possible only with the ending of violence. This, I told him, is one of the major blind spots in Westminster thinking. What, in fact, is needed is a genuine political advance now as a step towards removing the cause of violence. Politicians here and in the North have in recent weeks been saying that the Army is getting on top of the IRA. The reality I believed was entirely different. If anything, violence has been escalating since these assertions were made. Sir Stewart said he

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thought that "these generalisations about being on top of the IRA" were, to say the least, unwise.

He then touched ^{somewhat} ~~somehow~~ obliquely on the question of a possible take-over by Westminster and said this could only be a development of last resort. It would create enormous problems for London and might even worsen the situation in the North. He hoped, in the circumstances, that Mr Faulkner could continue in office. I said that, whether it was to be Faulkner or direct rule, seemed to me to be a matter in the first instance for Westminster. My personal conviction, however, was that, if Mr Faulkner was to have any hope of success in the direction of reconciliation, he would, for a start, have to go a lot further than the proposals in his consultative document. Minority representatives would, as of right, have to be involved in actual Government. Mr Faulkner's attitude on PR in Government is just one further indication of how *closed* his mind is to progress.

Sir Stewart then said he found our general chat very interesting and added that he would like to talk further to me on the broader aspects of the situation.

Yours sincerely

BONAL O'SULLIVAN

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