

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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SECRET

Message from the Taoiseach to the British  
Prime Minister

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I have received your message of yesterday concerning your further talks with Mr. Brian Faulkner.

The first and third paragraphs of your message refer to the work of the Advisory Committee on internees and to details of changes that the Northern Ireland Government might put forward in relation to the operation of Parliament, the electoral system and so on.

We have discussed these matters and you know my views. In regard to the latter subject it would be misleading if I were to refrain from commenting on the futility of counting on the Northern Ireland Government to find the bases for establishing peace, justice and progress in the North. To try to do things in this way, while discussion with the elected representatives of the non-unionist community is barred by the existence of selective and politically motivated internment, is, as I have said to you, a futile exercise and I am disappointed that you should continue to think otherwise.

Even since we spoke together Mr. Faulkner has seen fit to repeat more than once that the only kind of government he can envisage in the North is one in which participation will never be granted except to unionists. This is the plain meaning of what he has recently been saying. Apart from the issue of internment and, as I pointed out to you, the unsatisfactory terms of reference of the Advisory Committee can it reasonably be expected that the SDLP will enter discussions while Mr. Faulkner's stated terms remain unchallenged by you. }



I cannot therefore regard your references in the first and third paragraphs as adding to the momentum of necessary political change which is now vital.

The rest of your letter reflects the continuance of the policy of seeking solutions to the problems of the North by further military means. Violence in the North is a direct product of the determination of Unionism to govern as it pleases. The further steps envisaged in relation to the Border distract attention from the fundamental fact that their capacity to govern fairly and honestly is itself the sole cause of the breakdown of Northern society. No solution can be found to this by increasing military pressure on the dispossessed.

Lord Windlesham admitted in the House of Lords recently that there were "relatively few crossings (of the Border) by terrorists". Violence in Belfast and elsewhere in the North is indigenous to the area and receives its main support within the area. It is dishonest on the part of the Stormont Government to pretend otherwise and I regret that you should feel obliged, through the measures now proposed, to lend your authority and prestige to such propaganda against a Government which has consistently sought to reduce tensions in the North and to urge political solutions by peaceful means. It is also dishonest on the part of Mr. John Taylor to leave the implication, as he did on Thursday, at Stormont, that gelignite of southern origin found in the North necessarily enters the area illegally. He must know very well that a high proportion of commercially imported gelignite in the North is supplied from here legitimately. If he were



intent, as I have shown myself to be, on reducing tensions in the North he might be expected to deal truthfully with such a matter.

I must protest against the proposal to block a large number of Border crossings and to "hump" others. Not alone are such measures directed at the wrong problem, in the wrong place, and not alone are they unlikely to succeed in their overt intention but, in my opinion, they will aggravate a deteriorating situation. They will subvert the influence exercised by men of moderation, such as the leaders of the SDLP, among the non-unionist community; they will convince even further that community that there is nothing to be hoped for even from the goodwill of the British Government - they have long ceased to hope for anything <sup>of value</sup> from Mr. Faulkner; <sub>1</sub> public opinion here will be substantially disturbed; people living in the Border area, on both sides, will resent and resist the inconvenience caused to them; incidents along the Border by way of local countering of the methods it is proposed to introduce will increase, probably at the expense of innocent people as well as of the reputation of the British Army which has had to shoulder the unenviable burden of being seen to support a thoroughly discredited regime.

This attempt now to create a physical division in Ireland, while it will please the Unionist authorities and serve to spur further demands from them for the repression of the minority behind a military barrier, will also serve as a milestone in the already long history of failures by British Governments to realise the nature of this island. Nothing could be more remote from the present and future interests of the Irish and British peoples; nothing less in harmony with our aspirations to an ever closer union among European peoples.



Our recent meetings, which moderate opinion everywhere welcomed, encouraged me to believe that the restoration of harmony in Anglo-Irish relations might have begun to take precedence in British policy over the impertinent demand of a very small minority in these islands to dictate the policies of British Government in their own sectional interests. The present steps contemplated contradict my expectations. So also does the continuing trend to local organisation of the UDR notwithstanding that it remains under Westminster control; this is a frightening omen to the non-unionist community with their experience of the B Specials. Your message foreshadows further steps, presumably in the same direction.

In your final paragraph you say that an improvement in the security situation is a necessary accompaniment to the progress you hope to make in developing political life in Northern Ireland. I see no such progress since our recent meetings. Mr. Faulkner's attitude, reaffirmed in what he is reported to have told the Unionist Council ~~was~~ *only* yesterday, *it* runs directly counter to your expressed aim to provide an active, permanent and guaranteed part to be played by the minority.

All this is a grave disappointment to me. I trust that you will reconsider your whole approach to the subject.