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Title: Copy letter from Donal O’Sullivan, Ambassador of Ireland to Great Britain, to HJ McCann, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, reporting a lunch meeting with Lord Terence O’Neill, mainly regarding the conduct of Northern Ireland Prime Minister Brian Faulkner.

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17 Grosvenor Place

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Confidential

April 28th 1971

Dear Secretary

We had Lord and Lady O'Neill for lunch yesterday. You will recall that when I had dinner with him in January I mentioned a possible visit to the Embassy and he asked if I could arrange it at a time when his wife was in London. We had hoped to have them for dinner instead of lunch but an evening engagement would have been inconvenient for Lady O'Neill who is staying with her mother in the country.

I tried to get the Marquess of Hamilton and his wife but unfortunately he is on a business visit to the North at present. As you know he was formerly the Westminster M.P. for Fermanagh and he is very well disposed to us. The other guests were Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, Lady Kelly and Mr. and Mrs. Sheehy, Bord Failte.

The lunch was an entirely informal and gay occasion and the O'Neills were curiously enough the last to leave. I was able to have a brief private chat with Lord O'Neill about the situation in the North. He was far less restrained in his comments on Faulkner than when we last met. Faulkner, he said, is so devious that it will be difficult for him to avoid falling foul of his own Party and of the Opposition. He has made one serious blunder already in his failure in the early days of office to ban all parades for the present year. He could have got away with it then but can do nothing at this stage as a ban now would affect mainly Orange parades.

A serious aspect of Faulkner's advent to power is that it has given extreme elements as well as hitherto not-so-extreme

elements on the Protestant side a false confidence. Lord O'Neill expressed himself as very disturbed by evidence he is receiving of growing anxiety among these elements to have a go at the minority. Some of them would at this stage like nothing better than to see the Army withdraw so that they could take the law into their own hands. He has no doubt that there will be a lot of serious trouble in the months ahead.

Ulster '71 should have been cancelled, even though this would have meant a loss of face for Stormont. There is every possibility of serious incidents and anyhow the whole thing will be a flop. He told me that Lady O'Neill is on a local committee which has been trying to get women's groups from this country to Belfast for Ulster '71. They are all suggesting the postponement of their visit until times are more peaceful.

Lord O'Neill brought up the question of James Callaghan's visit to Ireland and was severely critical of Callaghan's move to establish a regional branch of the British Labour Party in the North. I told Lord O'Neill quite honestly what our attitude on this move is and that our view had been made known not only to Callaghan himself but also to the leader of his Party. He said he was glad to hear this. According to Lord O'Neill, Callaghan's move in relation to the North is nothing more than part of an over-all effort to ingratiate himself in Labour circles with a view to securing the leadership. Lord O'Neill concluded by saying that Callaghan had let him down more than once and added "As I know from sad experience, he is a man to be deeply distrusted".

Lord O'Neill said he wished Mr. Faulkner well and hoped he could bring peace to the area but on this he is

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extremely doubtful. If Faulkner fails, direct rule from Westminster is the next obvious step and it would not surprise him to find that this may not be too far off.

Lord O'Neill will be attending a Council of Europe meeting in Paris in the fairly near future and he told me how happy he was to accept an invitation from Ambassador Kennedy to a lunch or dinner in his honour on that occasion.

Both Lord and Lady O'Neill asked me to convey their warmest greetings to the Taoiseach and Mrs. Lynch and said they very much hope that it will be possible to meet them again before too long.

Yours sincerely

DONAL O'SULLIVAN

Ambassador

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