

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES****IRELAND**

<b>Reference Code:</b>	2003/16/466
<b>Title:</b>	Copy letter from Donal O'Sullivan, Ambassador of Ireland to Great Britain, to HJ McCann, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, reporting on a meeting with British Prime Minister Edward Heath held to discuss the Northern Ireland situation
<b>Creation Date(s):</b>	2 August, 1972
<b>Level of description:</b>	Item
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	2 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of the Taoiseach
<b>Access Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.



17 Grosvenor Place

SW1X 7HR

Personal and Confidential

August 2nd 1972

Dear Secretary

This will confirm what I told you on the telephone last night. The Prime Minister received me around 10.30 p.m. and I was with him for about twenty-five minutes. He interrupted a dinner party for our talk. I found him very friendly throughout.

First of all, I covered in a general way the contents of the Taoiseach's message, laying special emphasis on the need to move rapidly towards political actions and decisions. I put particular stress on the point that no solution of the Northern problem is possible without our being given the opportunity of playing an adequate role. Our involvement in discussions need not, I said, have to take place in an atmosphere of full publicity but, naturally, there would have to be some.

Mr Heath said he greatly welcomed the helpful attitude shown by the Taoiseach since the military occupation of the Bogside and Creggan. He agreed there must now be rapid movement on the political front, adding that it was not possible to envisage what solution will be arrived at until consultations with the various political interests in the North have been completed. I interjected to say that I assumed there could, in any event, be no question of a return to the type of Unionist domination which previously existed. Mr Heath was quite specific in saying that that would certainly not happen.



I then made the point that now is the time to disarm the North completely by dealing fully and impartially with all those with and without licensed guns. The disarming operation should not be confined to the minority side. Mr Heath assured me that there would be no question of a one-sided operation. The firm intention of the Government is to deal fully with all the extremists.

He then talked freely about reunification, which he is confident must come about. The British Government will put no obstacle in the way of reunification once the will for it exists. He would not be drawn on the question of the 1949 guarantee. He recalled that he had mentioned to the Taoiseach at the Chequers meeting his long held personal view that membership of the EEC will inevitably help in the direction of reunification and he added "I believe that after even five years of EEC membership, there could be a substantial change in attitudes."

I had to come back several times on the question of consultation with us. In the process, I made a number of points. I said the problem of the North is one which affects the whole of Ireland. We are in a position and willing to make a constructive contribution towards finding a solution and we can bring important influence to bear on the subsequent working of that solution. We have considerable influence with the minority political representatives in the North and a meeting is, in fact, in progress in Dublin between members of my Government and of the SDLP. There could be no doubt as to the Taoiseach's abhorrence of violence and as to his genuine wish for the restoration of peace in the North and the establishment there of an Administration which would ensure just and fair treatment for all.



It was only after repeated efforts by me to press the consultation point that he showed any semblance of a positive reaction. Even then, he would go no further than to say "let me think about it." He hinted at the risk of a strong reaction on the majority side if we were too obviously involved and I remarked that excessive deference to this element was one of the factors which had bedevilled British policy in relation to Ireland over the years.

He then turned to the question of the Cork Bye-Election, on which he seemed to be well informed, and he asked if I thought the Government would win the seat. I gave him the constituency figures in the last General Election and said it was hard to say what the result would be. I thought it no harm to mention that there is an Aontacht Éireann candidate, that the military operation in the Bogside and Greggan coming so soon before the Bye-Election might increase the sympathy vote for him and that if this were to happen it might be damaging to the Fianna Fáil candidate.

As I was leaving I apologised to the Prime Minister for bringing him away from his dinner party. He said he was very happy to see me and would always be available to me whenever I wanted to talk to him.

As he saw me out, he asked me to convey warmest regards to the Taoiseach. He wished him well in the Bye-Election and said he knew that "Jack Lynch is a good friend."

Yours sincerely

DONAL O'SULLIVAN

Ambassador

H J McCann Esq  
Secretary  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
Dublin 2