

NATIONAL ARCHIVES**IRELAND**

Reference Code: 2004/15/25

Title: Copy letter from Prime Minister Edward Heath to Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave, regarding the chairmanship of the negotiations at Sunningdale.

Creation Date(s): 30 November, 1973

Level of description: Item

Extent and medium: 1 page

Creator(s): Department of Foreign Affairs

Access Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.



SECRET

PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE RT. HON. EDWARD HEATH MP
TO MR LIAM COSGRAVE TD

Thank you for your message of 28 November. I am glad that the date is settled. I suggest that we should neither confirm nor deny the venue. I hope we can move steadily forward together to make the meeting a success.

On the question of chairmanship, I find the suggestion that Gaston Thorn should be invited to chair the meeting very difficult. To interpolate at this crucial and decisive stage a new figure would be widely misinterpreted and, to speak frankly, unhelpful. I believe too that it would cast serious doubt on our own ability to bring matters to a successful conclusion and that it could be very damaging.

Moreover, the impact in Northern Ireland would be serious in a number of ways. The Unionists would find it difficult and even perhaps impossible for them to attend. The "Loyalists" would be incensed, and the very real risk of further violence from them would be increased. So would the scope for damaging political activity. As you will know, we are still in very considerable difficulty, which is not yet resolved, about the exclusion of Dr Paisley and Mr Craig.

Nevertheless, I am anxious to help. There is, of course, no intention of playing up the question of chairmanship or indeed that of sponsorship, and I see no reason to mention either point. We would be meeting together as sovereign countries, and we would make no bones about saying so.

I look forward to our meeting next week.

30 November, 1973

SECRET