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8th September 1971

The following statement was issued to-day by the Government Information Bureau on behalf of the Taoiseach.

I have received confirmation through the Embassy at London that a Downing Street official spokesman said this morning that what Mr. Heath said to me at Chequers about a meeting between himself, Mr. Faulkner and myself was intended to be an offer to convene such a meeting. My record of the meeting shows that while the subject was mentioned no specific offer to convene a tripartite meeting was made. Mr. Heath said that he had not previously consulted Mr. Faulkner in the matter and I pointed out that Mr. Faulkner had earlier refused to consider tripartite meetings.

I indicated a preference for a meeting of all interested parties - meaning by this the heads of the two sovereign Governments concerned (Mr. Heath and myself) and elected representatives of the Unionist and non-Unionist communities in Northern Ireland.

If, as it now appears, it was Mr. Heath's intention to suggest a tripartite meeting I am prepared to consider his offer seriously because of the continuing grave situation in the North and because every effort needs to be made to obtain progress through political means.

I still consider that it would be preferable to have elected representatives of the non-Unionist community present at such a meeting. I propose shortly to have discussions with them.