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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 discussions with Lord O’Neill of the Maine [Terence O’Neill, former Prime Minister of Northern Ireland], and British Prime Minister Edward Heath, regarding Northern Ireland Protestant reaction to political events there, and the prospects for the Irish Republican Army ceasefire.

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Personal and Confidential

June 28th, 1972

Dear Secretary

We had Lord O'Neill of the Maine for lunch yesterday. There were no other guests as I thought the present may not be the best time for it to become known outside that he had visited us. He expressed himself as most grateful to be received alone as if the news of his visit at this time got around, it could be embarrassing. He stayed until after 4 p.m.

Lord O'Neill reminisced at great length about his own time as Prime Minister and about the problems he had to face with the hard-liners. For the first time in my many conversations with him, he really let his hair down about Mr. Faulkner whom, he described, in uncharacteristically vulgar language. He derives the greatest satisfaction from the fact that Faulkner's political star is waning and that the Prime Minister and Mr. Whitelaw are determined to do everything they can to push him out of the political scene. He regards John Taylor as no better than Faulkner and expressed himself as very disappointed with the "two-faced behaviour" in recent times of Bradford. One of Lord O'Neill's big worries is that the Reverend Paisley is becoming increasingly regarded in London as a politician of astuteness and moderation. This, he tells everybody, is a serious misjudgement because, deep down, Paisley has not changed.

My experience from my previous conversations with Lord O'Neill is that he tends, if anything, to be somewhat over-pessimistic. Pessimism was very obvious in his remarks ~~at~~ yesterday. He thinks the next few weeks will be crucial. During the past weekend, he talked to a large number of Protestants in the North and the question foremost in the mind of every one of them is "will Westminster sell us down the drain". There is a genuine and quite widespread fear among the majority that this may happen, and this fear is being

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encouraged by the view being expressed in some Catholic quarters that "we will have a united Ireland in a couple of years".

In the present tense atmosphere, a serious Protestant outburst is a real danger. If it comes, it will be impossible to avoid widespread civil war. A confrontation between the Protestants and the Army could mean the end of the North.

What we in the South must realise is that there are no Wolfe Tones among the Northern Protestants and we should, therefore, do everything we can to discourage any idea that there is a speedy path towards reunification. It will come but in its own time. The Taoiseach's recent statements in the matter were "eminently reasonable and most helpful to Whitelaw". More statements of the same type from public figures in the South are now urgently needed. Lord O'Neill had agreed to be interviewed on Radio 4 before coming to us for lunch as he felt the time was opportune for him to come out in public in view of the dangers of the situation.

Mr. Whitelaw is now at the start of his moves on the political front. There must be a strong temptation on the part of the minority to look for too much. While Lord O'Neill would not in any way commit himself as to what he saw to be a possible solution, it must be one confined to the North "with the possibility of some machinery for increased North/South co-operation".

The Prime Minister and Mr. Whitelaw are convinced that once there is a real prospect of peace, there will have to be a massive input of financial aid in the North. Mr. Whitelaw places particular reliance on the provision of substantial employment opportunities, particularly in Belfast and Derry, as a means of bringing stability.

I emphasised many times to Lord O'Neill during our conversation the need to bring Dublin into the political discussions at an early stage not only because of our direct concern but equally because of the influence which we can bring to bear. He fully agreed with this and said he would put the idea around in the right quarters. When talks come, we must be reasonable in the attitude we take. People

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even in the SDLP may have reservations about giving us too much of a say. Apart altogether from this, we will have to bear in mind that the Government and the Labour Party will be working hand-in-glove in their search for a solution.

Lord O'Neill expressed himself as very angry with Mr. Maudling for the way in which he is behaving. He is going around London telling everybody "that Willy will fail". This may be due to jealousy on Maudling's part but his action could be highly damaging and Lord O'Neill intends to make his feelings in the matter known at the highest level.

Yesterday evening, I attended the dinner of the European Institute of Business Management. The Prime Minister was the guest of honour. I had a brief private chat with him before dinner. The early part of our conversation had to do with his problems about the ^{Peace}North. At the end of this, he put on one of his most ^{Sullen}solemn faces and said "do you think these subnormal maniacs on the minority side will observe the ceasefire?" I said that the North is probably at a most crucial stage these days and that the risk of further violence was hardly confined to one side only. We could, I said, only hope that "the misguided human beings" on both sides would see reason. His comment was "your description is more charitable than mine and you may be right". I then told him that I had lunched with Lord O'Neill, whose view was that the next few weeks would be a serious danger period and that the possibility of an outburst on the majority side was not at all to be excluded. The Prime Minister said that this was also his impression. He expressed considerable interest in the fact that I had lunched with Lord O'Neill and added "what a pity we have not some more decent men like him in Northern Ireland!" This ended my chat with the Prime Minister.

Yours sincerely

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Ambassador

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