

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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**Title:** Carbon copy letter from Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave, TD, in response to letter of revulsion received concerning crimes of violence in Ireland and Britain, including the killing of Messrs Thompson, Doyle and Preshaw [David Thompson, Alfred Doyle and John Presha, shot in Killeen, County Armagh]. Letter quotes from summary statements by Government and Dáil Éireann repudiating politically motivated violence.

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S.10585<sup>I</sup>

Mr Nally (on return)  
To see, W.L.

8<sup>th</sup> August, 1975.

W.L.

8.8.75

Dear Mr. Hunter,

I have been asked by the Taoiseach, Mr. Liam Cosgrave, T.D., who is on holiday, to acknowledge receipt of a letter received here on 5th August and signed by you and two others. The Taoiseach wishes me to assure you that he has been revolted by all the crimes of violence committed in both parts of Ireland and in Britain in recent years, including the killing of Messrs. Thompson, Doyle and Preshaw.

It is fair to say that a dominant theme running through all the Taoiseach's statements on Northern Ireland matters has been stress on the evil and futility of politically motivated violence and utter condemnation and repudiation of such violence, regardless of whether the victims were Irish or British, Catholic or Protestant, soldier, policeman or civilian or from what side or group the perpetrators, admitted or suspected, came. These sentiments have also been given frequent expression by other members of the Government. They are shared by the Dáil which passed the following motion in February, 1974:

"Dáil Éireann recognises that the Irish people comprise different elements all of which contribute to Irish life and culture, and each of which has the right to pursue its legitimate aspirations,

- recalls the efforts of successive Governments over the past twenty five years to bring about a spirit of harmony, understanding and co-operation between these different elements in the interest of the common welfare,
- declares that the use of advocacy of violence to secure unity is abhorrent to it and,
- affirms that the aspiration towards a united Ireland can be achieved only by peaceful means and with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland."

That they are also shared by the people here is evident from many letters received by the Taoiseach.

I am enclosing copies of a number of statements made by the Taoiseach in recent years which show clearly his attitude of abhorrence to all violence, without distinction. However, for easy reference, the following are some quotations:-

"Part of the amendment in my name, before the House, is a condemnation of the use or advocacy of violence. In this the amendment reflects the views expressed in the earlier motion moved by me in this House in March, 1971.

It is indeed a sad and regrettable commentary on our times that such a condemnation is necessary. Surely by now the effects of violence are clear for all to see. It hardens divisions. It entrenches hatreds. It perpetuates the partition of minds which has kept our people apart. Its effects will not pass away with the lives of those responsible. For generations, the memory of a son, a father, a brother, a sister, a child or mother killed or maimed in the name of an abstraction will breed its own bitterness and make that abstraction - whether it is loyalist, nationalist or republican in its purpose - abhorrent to those who survive.

I want to make it clear that we do not see action to deal with violence as something which we must do on our part in return for agreement on other issues of more direct concern to us, such as, for example, the Council of Ireland. It is quite clearly in the interests of all of us to ensure that those who insist on having their way by violence will find no refuge anywhere in this country, North or South. That must be accepted and asserted by every Member of this House and by everyone in the community who wants to see peace in Ireland. There cannot be any escape from that reality and there cannot be any escape from accepting the consequences that flow from it."

- The Taoiseach speaking in the Dáil on 26 February, 1974.

"Six years ago who could say that <sup>the</sup> taking of life in this island might become a casual event or that the executioners might claim to have some kind of mandate from the dead generations to secure what they consider to be "dissolution". *"the solution" ?*

If dying in Dublin or Monaghan be not the solution, can death in Belfast or Antrim be so?

Is one the more acceptable to us because it is farthest from us?

There are some people in this country who have <sup>an</sup> ambivalent attitude to violence and the use of force. They express sympathy and regret for perpetrators of violence who have been caught and imprisoned. They should ask themselves why such people are in jail.

As one of my constituents put to me recently in a letter "the vast majority of Irish people do not in any way sympathise with them. Our sympathies are for the innocent victims of any bomb blast."

Let us for a moment look behind the words and see what this violence really means to the community which suffers from it. Those who practice it seem to imagine that, in some way or other, it is directed against Government or the institutions of Government. While in theory, this may be so, the practice is different. It is directed against people and its victims

are people. Let there be no mistake about this. An explosion in a busy city kills men, women and children. It destroys property and jobs and the possibility of jobs. It may have some influence on those in authority. What sort of influence it will have is open to debate. What is certain, however, is that the people it kills and maims are dead or injured. The property and jobs it destroys are destroyed beyond question.

The second point I would make is that in the North today violence is counter-productive. It creates among the majority community there an antipathy - a deep and abiding revulsion - against the ideas which the men of violence profess to believe. What violence has already achieved is a division between the communities there deeper and more bitter than anything experienced before."

- The Taoiseach, speaking in Dun Laoghaire, on 13th June, 1974.

"Our policy on Northern Ireland is based on a few simple principles. First, we utterly repudiate violence to attain political ends. The suffering it causes is matched only by its futility. One cannot convince a man by killing him - or his friends. Terror may be a form of propaganda - but it is, on all the evidence in the North in recent years, totally counter-productive and totally divisive. It can wreck the very basis on which society is built. The Government here will continue, with determination, their actions against those who practice violence or who break our laws."

- The Taoiseach, speaking at the Annual Conference of the Fine Gael Party in Dublin on 22nd March, 1975.

In general, it has been the Taoiseach's practice not to make statements on individual atrocities, except in the most exceptional circumstances. The fact that he did not make a statement on the killing of the men returning from the Cork Dog Show, does not indicate, in any way, that he was less concerned about this incident than about the murder of the members of the Miami Showband.

The issue of a statement, jointly with Mr. Wilson, in relation to the Miami Showband incident, is explained by the fact that the Taoiseach and the British Prime Minister, whose Government is responsible for the maintenance of law and order in Northern Ireland, were in Helsinki at the same time. The Government has made known its concern to the British Government on many occasions about the continuing sectarian killings in Northern Ireland. This concern is not limited to the killing of members of any one religion but to all such killings. It was considered desirable to seize the occasion of Mr. Wilson's presence in Helsinki, to again express this concern at the highest level.