

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Roinn an Taoisigh
Department of the Taoiseach

19 February, 1998

Mr James McIntyre
Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear James,

The attached letter from Sir Edward Heath to Mr Canning in Derry, with a note from Don Mullan was received here on Monday, 16 February, 1998. Don Mullan said that Mr Canning was sending this letter to the Derry Journal.

I had been in contact with Sean Donlon after Mr Heath raised this issue on Channel 4 News and he faxed me a note of his recollection of events at that time (copy attached). I am also looking at our files here. Perhaps you could have a look at relevant files in the Department of Foreign Affairs that might cast some light on contacts between the British Prime Minister and the Taoiseach and also contacts between the two Governments in the weeks before and after Bloody Sunday.

Yours sincerely

Paul McGarry

Paul McGarry

c.c. Eamonn McKee

Tithe an Rialtais, Baile Átha Cliath 2.
Government Buildings, Dublin 2.

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The Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Heath, K.G., M.B.E., M.P.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

9th February 1998

Dear Mr Canning,

Further to my secretary's letter to you of 5th February 1998, my mention of Mr Lynch in my interview was to the effect that he had pressed me and the British Government to ban all marches, in order to avoid possible troubles culminating in violence.

I hope this information is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely,

Edward Heath

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Response to
Edward Heath
comments

Sir Edward Heath's comments, as expressed to Mr. M. Canning in his letter dated 9th February 1998, clearly require an official Irish Government response.

Mr. Heath's insinuation, however, is mischievous to say the least. His attempt to implicate an Irish Taoiseach in the decision to politically murder unarmed civilian demonstrators in Derry, is a clear attempt to muddy the waters and deflect from his own involvement and responsibility at British Prime Minister at the time.

If and when the Bloody Sunday families and wounded decide to co-operate with the Saville Inquiry, we can all look forward to Mr. Heath giving a full and thorough clarification on these comments. Equally, we will look forward to clarification of his comments to Lord Widgery on 31 January 1972, when it would appear he exerted undue political influence as to his Government's desired 'propaganda' outcome of the discredited and now discarded Widgery Tribunal Report.

Don Mullan.
16 February 1998

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FROM : SEAN DONLON INIS LUA KILLALOE PHONE NO. : 061 376624 Jan. 22 1998 07:09PM P2

Jack Lynch, Taoiseach and Bloody Sunday 1972

2. The following notes are written entirely from memory. I was, at the time, a First Secretary in the DFA. There was no Anglo-Irish Division, either in that Department or in the Department of the Taoiseach. (I had been brought back from Boston, where I had been serving as Consul General, in August 1971 for the specific purpose of collecting information in Northern Ireland relating to the circumstances surrounding the introduction of internment there that month.)

2. In September 1971, there were two summit meetings in Chequers, one

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involving Heath and Lynch and the other involving Heath, Lynch and the NI Prime Ministers, Faulkner. My recollection is that they did not go well, because Heath was not prepared to reform the Stormont system of governing NI. From then on, a key objective of Irish government policy was the abolition of Stormont.

3. The contact between Lynch and Heath was infrequent and generally unfriendly. Heath confined himself to demanding that the Irish government deal with the IRA. Lynch consistently reminded Heath of the need for serious political reforms in NI.

4. Early in 1972, we became aware that a series of civil rights marches, including ones in Derry and Newry, were likely to be major events. Our information

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came from our usual sources, including SDLP people, priests, editors, doctors and community leaders on the nationalist side. There was a fear that, once more, the security forces, the British (then represented in NI by a senior official, I think, named Frank Steele) and Stormont would get it wrong as they had done the previous August when internment was introduced.

5. While I am certain that our fears were conveyed to the British, I cannot be certain as to the channel used. It is possible, but unlikely, that Lynch telephoned Heath. It is more likely that he spoke to the ~~the~~ British Ambassador in Dublin (? John Peck) or that he instructed that the Irish Ambassador in London (Donal O Sullivan) should convey our concerns.

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6. What I can say with certainty is that within hours of the shootings in Derry, Lynch spoke to Heath on the telephone. He did so on foot of information which Heath had telephoned to him from Derry. It is possible that he also received a 'phone call from Raymond McClean. The Lynch/Heath 'phone call was, according to Lynch's own account to officials later that evening, heated and hostile. Heath disputed all the facts which Lynch had and returned to his familiar theme & demanding that the Irish Government deal with the IRA

7. Next day, Lynch and relevant Ministers decided to turn up the heat. Killeny, MFA, was sent to New York, Washington (? and Ottawa),

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The Irish Ambassador was withdrawn from London, an Anglo-Irish Division was created in DFA and we were instructed to collect every scrap of information about the shootings in Derry with a view to taking a case under the European Convention of Human Rights. (For political reasons, following the Sunningdale Agreement, it was decided not to take the case.)

END

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Roinn an Taoisigh
Department of the Taoiseach

Mr Fitzsimons
Could you please check our files/ the period to establish if there was any Secretariat to Government contact.
Thanks

FAX COVER SHEET

NORTHERN IRELAND DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF THE TAOISEACH

DATE: 19/2/98 TIME: 5.35pm

FAX NO: _____ PAGES: 9 (including cover sheet)

FOR: James McIntyre

FROM: Paul McGarry

MESSAGE: _____

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