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**Title:** Letter from Donal O’Sullivan, Ambassador of Ireland in London, to HJ McCann, Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs, regarding his attendance of a reception at 10 Downing Street given by the Prime Minister, Edward Heath, at which he discussed the current situation in Northern Ireland with numerous politicians.

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Strictly Confidential

October 27th 1971

Dear Secretary

My wife and I attended last evening a reception given at 10 Downing Street by the Prime Minister for the Lions Rugby Team. There was an attendance of approximately two hundred, made up mainly of prominent people in the rugby world with their ladies. Most of the Irish members of this year's Lions Team were present.

The Prime Minister received us in a very friendly way and said he was glad we were able to come because he was aware of the important contribution made by the Irish players to the success of this year's Lions tour. He then talked about all the time he has to give to Common Market matters especially during the current Parliamentary Debate and he remarked that a six day Debate is much too long. I said it must be a comfort to him, nevertheless, that a favourable vote at the end of the Debate now seems to be a foregone conclusion. He replied that, while this is so, "the main headache and the main uncertainty" will arise at the legislation stage and he concluded with the comment "thank God we do not have to have a referendum as in that case we would never get in."

I then remarked on the worsening position in the North and his only observation was "it is a terrible situation". We were unable to talk further as other guests were queuing up.

Sir Harry Jones, the Northern Ireland Agent, joined me shortly after my arrival at the reception. He said he had looked forward to meeting me there as "it would probably be a bit embarrassing for us to get together in one another's homes

in the present deteriorating situation." Now that his home and mine are under police guard "our comings and goings would be observed and talked about." We had quite a long exchange of views in the course of which I stressed the need for an immediate and significant initiative on the political front as the only hope of establishing a basis for peace. Sir Harry's line throughout was that the two communities in the North are now so alienated that there is no hope of any worthwhile advance on the political front or any reconciliation until violence has been effectively crushed. Without saying so in as many words, he hinted broadly that until that stage is reached, further tripartite meetings could serve little purpose and he added that there is, in any event, uncertainty as to how long Mr. Faulkner can last.

The Prime Minister made quite a long speech of welcome to the Lions team. At the end of it, he said it was for him a matter of particular satisfaction to find that here is an area in which the Irish, North and South co-operate to such good effect and in such a friendly atmosphere. It was his earnest hope that this friendly co-operation could extend over the whole area of relations between the two parts of the Island. This part of his speech was received with tremendous applause.

I had a brief talk with James Callaghan, M.P. He expressed himself as increasingly worried about the Northern situation and said he understood that I would be talking to Mr. Wilson about it over lunch next week. He went on to say that the Labour Party wants to see worthwhile progress towards a solution of the problem. He would like an early meeting with me. I said I would 'phone him to fix a luncheon appointment after my meeting with Mr. Wilson.

Before leaving, my wife and I had a further brief chat with the Prime Minister but he seemed careful to avoid any reference to the situation in the North.

Yours sincerely

BONAL O'SULLIVAN

Ambassador

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