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SECRETMESSAGE RECEIVED FROM AMBASSADOR, LONDON

I delivered to the Prime Minister at 6.30 p.m. the Taoiseach's message and I emphasised to him in rather forceful terms the main points in it. The Prime Minister then read the message carefully after which he said he would like to offer some preliminary comments. He will be replying in a more considered way in a few days.

He started off by saying that he and his colleagues in the Government have nothing but praise for the reaction shown by the Taoiseach in his statement of yesterday. The Prime Minister fully realised that it was not easy for the Taoiseach to take the line he had taken. It represented statesmanship of a very high order.

At the same time the consensus reached by the Executive yesterday cannot have come entirely as a surprise to us. He understood that Mr. Faulkner in a letter to the Taoiseach had indicated that full implementation of Sunningdale at this stage was not on. I said that, while that may be the case, I doubted if the Government had any expectation that the consensus would be as insubstantial as it proved to be.

The Prime Minister then said that he very much resented the present handling of the consensus by the British press. They are entirely wrong in suggesting that this amounts to a yielding to the UWC. The fact of the matter is that the Executive was almost agreed a week ago on the final outcome. He understood too that the SDLP had been making known in Dublin that a phasing of Sunningdale would have to be agreed but he conceded that the type of phasing which the SDLP had envisaged was different from what

came out of the Executive yesterday. Anyhow the question of phasing was well under discussion before the UWC came to the forefront and he hoped that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland would make this clear in the very near future. He thought it would also be helpful to the situation if the Taoiseach could say something on the subject.

At this point I pressed him again on the strike and asked if he could give me an idea as to how soon steps will be taken to deal effectively with the UWC. His reply was not particularly helpful. He said that as soon as the strike began the Government had flown over a number of technicians. While those technicians are well qualified in their particular fields of activity it would be wrong to think that they necessarily have the expertise to enable them to operate the power stations effectively. The power stations are kept going at reduced capacity through the co-operation of workers at middle and lower management levels. These people are the subject of serious threats and intimidation. If the technicians were to be put in as a show of strength the situation could well be worsened. I remarked to the Prime Minister that what he had said to me was surely a dismal prognosis. He agreed that this was the case but added that the Government is dealing with the matter on a day-to-day basis and that on the basis of new advice he could well adopt a different attitude tomorrow. The Prime Minister then went on to talk about the barricades. He said that on his instructions the troops have taken a very strong line on these and he now thinks that the problem with the barricades has been considerably reduced.

During our conversation I repeatedly laid strong emphasis on the need to ensure that the Executive is put in a position to carry on with its job. This to my mind imposed an important obligation on the Government to kill as quickly as possible the idea which

seems to be gaining ground that the UWC is, in fact, in control. If this was not done, not only was the Executive unlikely to be able to hang together but there could be a serious swing of support in a dangerous direction from the SDLP. At this point he said that it may be necessary to put the technicians in quickly and that this is a matter which he will take up with his experts.

The Prime Minister then said that a crunch situation has now been reached in the North. It is conceivable that, given the damage which the Northern economy is now suffering, members of Parliament may increasingly come out with the suggestion that Westminster should be very slow to come forward with financial aid to offset the damage which the strike was causing. The refusal to give five million pounds to Harland and Wolff if repeated in other instances might be a very effective way of bringing those responsible for the trouble to their senses.

About the Taoiseach's suggestion for a very early conference and for a very early meeting of the Council of Ministers the Prime Minister said he would have to consult with the Secretary of State on this.

At the end of our talk the Prime Minister again repeated that he will be sending a considered reply to the Taoiseach very soon.

23 May 1974