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Note on press reaction to Ambassador O'Sullivan's
call to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 20th May

1. The GIB telephoned me at home around 8 p.m. on 20th May to say that RTE wished to know if we had any comment on the following statement which they received from their Belfast office:-

"Mr. R. Burroughs, British Government Special Representative in Northern Ireland, in Belfast tonight stated - The Irish Ambassador called at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office this evening at 5.30 p.m. As a result of discussions between the Government of Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom Government, appropriate representations were made to the Government in Dublin concerning Mr. Lynch's statement in the Dáil on May 14th about the presence of Irish intelligence officers in Northern Ireland."

2. I immediately telephoned Ambassador O'Sullivan and he told me that he had been to the F.C.O at 5.30 p.m. that evening in accordance with an appointment made for him the previous day by Mr. K. White an FCO official, in connection with another matter i.e. information on gun running which Mr. Thompson had promised to give him during a luncheon at the Embassy some time previously. Amb. O'Sullivan said that at the end of the conversation Sir Edward Peck referred to the presence of Captain Kelly in the North and said that this had caused some embarrassment to Major Chichester Clark and he asked that this view to conveyed to Dublin. The reference was rather casual and Sir Edward Peck emphasized that it was in no sense a protest.

3. A few minutes later Mr. O'Dowd telephoned me about the press reports and I gave him the foregoing information. He mentioned that he would pass it on to the Minister who was in with the Taoiseach at the time.

4. The Minister telephoned me very shortly afterwards and we agreed to issue the following statement through the GIB:-

"Commenting on Mr. Burroughs' statement, the Department of External Affairs said - The Ambassador at London called to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at 5.30 p.m. this evening in accordance with an appointment made yesterday about another matter. In the course of the conversation a view was expressed to him on the subject mentioned by Mr. Burroughs."

I gave this statement to the GIB. A short while later, GIB came back to me to say that there was some doubt about the source of the British statement and that Mr. Burroughs might not be involved. We therefore agreed to omit reference to Mr. Burroughs in the short statement above.

5. The following day, Mr. Piper of the British Embassy telephoned me to express regret about the news report and to say that the leakage did not occur at the FCO. The FCO conveyed a similar message to Dr. O'Sullivan. It seems quite clear now that the statement was issued by Mr. Burrough's office in Belfast where, during the evening, Major Chichester Clark had been under some further pressure at Stormont from Mr. Paisley on the question of making a protest about the presence of Irish Army intelligence officers in the North. It would seem that the statement from Mr. Burrough's office was intended "to take the heat off Major Chichester Clark".

25th May, 1970 
SGR