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## NOTE:

The British Ambassador telephoned me at 2.45 to report on an incident which had taken place at the British Embassy during lunch hour. He said that a group had assembled in front of the Embassy and a few of them had climbed up on the outside of the building, had taken down the British flag, burned it, and had replaced it by the Irish flag. Some windows had been broken and the Ambassador had been hit with a stone. He trusted there would be no recurrence of this type of incident but he greatly suspected there would be.

I expressed regret to the Ambassador for the incident.

In the course of his very brief account of what had taken place, the Ambassador mentioned at one stage that the *Gárdaí* were "incapable" of doing anything about what was happening and later mentioned that they were "unwilling" to do anything. I inquired if there were many *Gárdaí* present and the Ambassador's reply to this was that there were "about half as many demonstrators as there were *Gárdaí*". I asked the Ambassador if he intended me to interpret his references to the *Gárdaí* as implying a criticism of them. He replied, somewhat testily, that this was not his intention: that he realised, in fact, that it would have been difficult for them to do anything.

*D. O'S.*

15th August, 1969.

DOS/mc

*Dept. of External Affairs*

CONFIDENTIAL

Incident at British Embassy on Friday, 15th August, 1969

At about 12.45 p.m. today, Deputy Michael O'Leary telephoned me from the British Embassy. He said that a number of demonstrators were outside the Embassy in an ugly mood and wanted the British flag taken down. He had seen the Ambassador who said that he was in a difficulty about taking down the flag as today was Princess Anne's birthday and the British flag would be flown from all British Embassies. According to Deputy O'Leary, he was not prepared to take down the flag unless requested to do so by the Department of External Affairs. Deputy O'Leary asked me to request the British Ambassador to take down the flag in order to avoid trouble and damage to the Embassy which would almost certainly ensue if the flag were not taken down.

I discussed the matter with Mr. Brian Gallagher, Assistant Secretary, and it was agreed that I should advise the Secretary of the Department of Justice about the situation and inform Deputy O'Leary that it was a matter to be worked out between the police and the British Ambassador and that in accordance with international practice we could not ask any Embassy not to fly their flag especially on some sort of a national occasion. If D/Justice advised that the police could not handle the situation, then we would consider the matter again.

I contacted Mr. Berry and informed him of the foregoing. Mr Berry said that according to his information there were as many police as demonstrators at the Embassy and he was satisfied with the course of action we proposed.

I then gave the reply to Deputy O'Leary who seemed disturbed that we could not request the Ambassador to take down the flag. He seemed quite sure that the Embassy would be damaged. He said that he would seek another interview with the British Ambassador.

Up to that point we were not contacted by the British Ambassador.

15th August, 1969 *Set*  
Department of External Affairs  
SGR/mb

CC. Taoiseach's P.S.  
Mr. P. Berry  
Mr. P. Gallagher