

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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cc PSS  
PSM

Mr. Murray (Dept. Taoiseach)  
Mr. Colwell (Justice)

H. Swift

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3 July 1979

London  
Ambassador

HQ  
Swift

On instructions, I have asked Mr. Staples, deputy head of the British Embassy, to call on me and this he did this morning. (Our instructions originated with the Minister for Justice and were confirmed by the Taoiseach.)

I told Mr. Staples that Ministers here were surprised and concerned at the reports which they have seen which, basing themselves on Mr. Atkins' press conference in Belfast on 27 June, set out in detail matters discussed in the context of Garda/RUC co-operation. Ministers here are of the opinion that disclosing the detail of interpolice co-operation is not helpful to such co-operation and it is for this reason that such details have always in the past been regarded as confidential. I also referred to the embarrassment that such disclosure gives rise to and to the fact that it can make future discussions more difficult. Finally, I told Mr. Staples that we had no wish to carry the matter any further. (It had already been discussed briefly between the British Ambassador and the Secretary.)

Mr. Staples made clear that there was no desire on the part of the Secretary of State either to misrepresent or to embarrass Irish Ministers. He also referred to the tendency of journalists to select and distort what Ministers said but said that there was no full record of what Mr. Atkins had said. However, he left me a transcript of Mr. Atkins television interview, a copy of which is annexed.

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I concluded the discussion by referring again to the fact that the disclosure of details, whether accurate or not, could constitute a cause of embarrassment and inhibit developments in co-operation.

We expect to communicate with you again shortly about conveying to the British a response to the request, made by Mr. Atkins to Mr. Collins, for mutual assistance during interrogation. The response will, of course, add nothing to existing arrangements.

He pointed particularly, Mr Mason did that is, to the growing support for what he saw as the moderate official Unionist party and as he saw it, diminishing support for the extremist position of Ian Paisley. Both the general election and the recent elections I pointed out were clear evidence of the fact that that opinion was wrong and therefore there was a need not to allow situations to drift but to obviously, as I do believe the Secretary of State is very committed to doing, to search for a basis for the political movement.

INTERVIEWER

It was - he is a new man to the job and his first visit to talk to you since taking office. Did you take the opportunity to restate Irish Government policy?

MR O'BRIEN

Not formally at this point because our meeting was even briefer than we would have wished it to be because I unfortunately arrived very late from Brussels this afternoon. But nonetheless I did give him, I hope, a clear analysis of the reasoning behind our policy and the belief that we have - the conviction that we have - that it is only in reconciliation and in moves towards reconciliation either in the North or between North and South that the long term economic and social interests of all communities can be secured.

INTERVIEWER

In his very first question time in the Commons he faced questions from Unionist MPs claiming that there had been an increase in terrorist attacks which originated on this side of the border. Did he raise that question at all?

MR O'BRIEN

No, he didn't raise it in that sense at all. In fact I would like to say that I myself raised those questions with him and acknowledged that - I would like now to acknowledge the nature of the response that he gave, the Secretary of State to those questions, because he did recognise on that occasion our interest in dealing with this problem as a commitment on our part and in cooperation with their