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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
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6 July 1979

The Hon Michael O'Kennedy
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Iveagh House
DUBLIN

Underlining to
be ignored

Dear Mr O'Kennedy

I must tell you how much I enjoyed visiting Dublin to talk to you last week. I wanted to delay writing to you about it until I had been through the long debate on Northern Ireland matters on Monday and our Parliamentary Question session yesterday, since these are clear indicators of political opinion on this side.

Both in Monday's debate, and again at Question Time yesterday, I made clear to the House of Commons what my approach is to the political problem in Northern Ireland. As I explained to you when we met, I believe quiet, patient but determined talking to all the major parties offers the best hope of progress; and this I have already begun. I am grateful to you for your recognition that this is a continuing programme aimed at producing real results.

There is still a lot of honest concern here about the amount of violence, but I have been at great pains to get the message across that we are both totally committed to the elimination of terrorism and that we are agreed that our combined efforts - both separately and in co-operation - need to be more successful.

The operational details are not of course matters suitable for public discussion, but it does seem to me necessary to put a little flesh on the bare bones of "security co-operation" if the public is to be reassured, and that is what I have tried to do since our meeting and in Parliament this week. This balance between reassuring the public and the need for confidentiality is not easy to strike, and I should be very happy for it to be discussed further, so that between us we get it right in the coming weeks and months, when there will inevitably be continuing interest in the subject.



May I say finally how pleased I was to have established such a friendly and confident relationship with members of the Irish Government at this early stage of our administration here. Fruitful co-operation between us is essential, and I shall always be working to maintain and improve this.

I include Gerry Collins in this message of thanks for our meeting and suggestions for the future. I hope I can meet you both again in the near future.

HUMPHREY ATKINS