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Title: Letter from Conor Cruise O'Brien, Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, to Liam Cosgrave, Taoiseach, stating that in relation to Northern Ireland, the Irish Government acts in accordance with 'the will of the great majority of the people, who clearly support the Sunningdale Agreement'.

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OIFIG AN AIRE POIST AGUS TELEGRAFA
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS
BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH I
DUBLIN I

16 Jan '74

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Mr. L. Cosgrave TD
Taoiseach

Dear Taoiseach,

I enclose a copy of a letter I have sent to Pat Cooney, urging that in present circumstances the practice of using the GPO portico for purposes of IRA propoganda be brought to an end by the Gardai.

In relation to this and other matters the Government is - and indeed has already been - accused of acting at the behest of Mr. Faulkner.

I suggest that it is important to meet this point in the policy statement you will be making after your talk with Mr. Faulkner.

The point should be made I think that you are not acting at the behest of any individual, but that the Government is determined that the will of the great majority of the people, who clearly support the Sunningdale Agreement, will not be frustrated by anti-democratic armed bands and their sympathisers. As far as the North is concerned we are concerned not with individuals but with the collective success of all who are committed to power-sharing - SDLP, Faulkner's Unionists, Alliance and the N.I.L.P. - as against their enemies, the people who have practised, and continue to practise, political and sectarian murder. We want democracy, justice and peace to flourish both North and South of the border and we make no apologies to anyone for being prepared to co-operate fully with our Sunningdale partners for these ends

Something like that I think, if included in your speech might meet "the appeasing Faulkner" charge

Yours sincerely,

Conor Cruise O'Brien

16 Jan '74

Mr. P. Cooney TD
Minister for Justice.

Dear Paddy,

I tried to ring you this morning but, failing to contact you, felt I should write. First I want to congratulate you on the substance and manner and the reception of your speech at Moate.

Secondly the point was made to me by way of a quip - that you might well now be closing down the Post Office because of the use which is made of its portico for the purposes of IRA propoganda " under the usual guise of Sinn Fein".

Thinking the matter over however it seems to me that there is more in this than just a quip. Ever since I took office here - and indeed before that, though less continuously - I have been concerned about the use of this site for these purposes. I am aware of course that it will be rather widely felt that this organisation have established a prescriptive right to the use of this site ; that it is a fairly harmless out let for them on "Hyde Park corner lines" ; that the banner of "Civil Right" and "Freedom of Speech" would be likely to be unfolded and that generally speaking there is "more trouble" involved in bringing this practice to an end than in letting it go on.

This last consideration is certainly true. Other considerations have also to be allowed some weight. On the whole however I think the balance of the argument tilts decisively in favour of clearing these people out. The enemies of democracy and practitioners of violence in what is known as the republican movement have a very good instinct for symbols and the symbolism of their stance at the portals of the Post Office is very far from accidental. They thereby claim to be the legitimate heirs of the men of 1916 : A claim which in terms of a long dominant ideology constitutes also a claim to be , in a spiritual sense at least the legitimate Government of the country. That they should make that claim is not surprising. But the really damaging thing is that, by allowing them to use this site we appear to be condoning their claim and extending a kind of half recognition to them.

Conversely, granted the power of the symbols, by turning them out of this hallowed area we would be driving home - perhaps more clearly than we could ever do by words - the fact that they are no longer regarded as having any legitimate or semi-legitimate role in our country. To my mind both the action itself - and perhaps even more - the uproar that would be raised against it would do a very great deal to consolidate the bases of support in the North for the Sunningdale Agreement and thereby enable us to move forward on the Council of Ireland, as well as ensuring that power sharing will be a lasting reality.

Yours sincerely

Conor Cruise O'Brien