

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

CONFIDENTIAL

cc Mr. Nelligan ✓  
PS 5 ✓  
PS 01 ✓  
Amb. Doulton ✓

23 October, 1979

Smith of the British  
Embassy also raised  
the gunner question with  
me earlier in the week,  
in the context of the  
Taoiseach's visit  
Hugh Swift 24/10

Dear Hugh

In the course of a conversation with Mr. Newington of the FCO he raised a few matters relating to security, political developments and relations with the United States.

On security he said that the British proposed to give us in the near future what they regard as a summary of what had been agreed at the recent meeting between Ministers, as the British feel it would be important that there be no misunderstandings. He claimed that the piece of paper would be uncontroversial. He said that the British side understood that the Gardai proposed to station a helicopter in the Dundalk area and he hoped that occasion would be found to fly it across the border to emphasise the fact that all the agreements reached were reciprocal. He said it continued to be British policy to maximise the role of the RUC and as far as possible to move towards normal police procedures.

As regards political developments he said that the British would inform us in advance of what they proposed in relation to devolved politics in Northern Ireland as soon as they had finalized their plans. He said the difficulty is not to establish an Assembly in Northern Ireland, the difficulty is to decide what powers to give the Assembly because a mere talking shop without powers would serve no purpose. The British do not propose, I gather, to consult us or inform us before they have finalized their preparations. While they hope to have our support, Newington said that a warm endorsement from Dublin for the proposals would probably be the 'kiss-of-death'.

He went on to talk about the recently published results of the ESRI survey. He said they did not tally with Britain's own assessment of Irish views but said that rigid attitudes were a problem both in Britain and in Ireland and that both Governments had a job to do in educating public opinion. He paid tribute to the work the Taoiseach is doing on this in Ireland.

What concerned him most during our conversation were developments connected with the United States. The British are extremely concerned at the suspension

of the supply of weapons to the RUC. He said that the RUC like other police forces was not "lily white", but that to equate it with the IRA, as the American move had done, was grotesque. He blames Mr. Tip O'Neill for the move and said that while he understood that we might be reluctant to intervene on the matter it would nonetheless be very helpful if the Irish Embassy in Washington could say something to Mr. O'Neill which might help in having the ban lifted. I made little comment on this or any of the other matters Mr. Newington raised as I was mainly interested in hearing what he had to say.

Yours sincerely

*Royal Clarke*

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