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TEXTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH MR O'KENNEDY AND MR ATKINS,
BROADCAST ON RTE RADIO NEWS: 27 JUNE 1979

MR O'KENNEDY

The Secretary of State reported to me on the discussions he has been having with all the political parties and he indicated to me that his first priority would be to analyse these discussions and the political developments as he sees them currently in the North of Ireland. I pointed out to him that his predecessor had taken the view some months before he left office that direct rule was having what he called a moderating influence in Northern political developments. 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'KENNEDY

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'KENNEDY

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

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security forces and I told the Secretary of State that I thought that response had been very helpful and would be in fact a further encouragement to us to continue effective cooperation.

INTERVIEWER

After the meeting it's normally for both sides to express satisfaction with cross border cooperation? And that's the case again. Is it genuinely the case that both governments really are satisfied or is this something which comes out for public consumption?

MR O'KENNEDY

Obviously with each new development - when you say cross border cooperation there's the economic cooperation but perhaps you are thinking of security cooperation - but on security cooperation obviously I'm not an expert in the security area and the Minister for Justice attended for this element of the talks. It's the responsibility of those appropriate Ministers and particularly the police forces to look to these matters but they were satisfied that the police authorities on both sides are very effectively taking all possible steps to deal with it, are cooperating as effectively as possible, and indeed are looking to further ways and means of increasing their effective cooperation.

INTERVIEWER

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Michael O'Kennedy.

But what did Mr Atkins think of the discussion? The Secretary of State gave his views a short time ago to Jim Dougal in Belfast.

SSONI

There were four points I made, four areas, to do with the cross border cooperation: the collection and exchange of information, the planning of operations between the RUC and the Garda simultaneously on either side of the border, and of course followed up the suggestion which has been made before of a special force of anti-terrorist Garda in border areas. Well now, of course, this has already been established and is operating and that is a great help. And of course operations away from the border in areas where terrorists train or manufacture explosives and the like and I understand that an increased effort is being made in those areas too. Now this is all encouraging.

INTERVIEWER

You made some suggestion about the RUC being involved in interrogation South of the border.

SSONI

That's right I did. Because when a terrorist crime is committed in the North and somebody is apprehended in the South and interrogated about it, obviously the RUC who have investigated the scene of the

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crime have got quite a contribution to make towards the interrogation of the suspect, and it seems to me that with the Criminal Jurisdiction Act, if it's being operated by both sides, it would be a sensible reciprocal arrangement for RUC to go and assist in the interrogation in the South, and the Garda of course in the North in the reverse situation and Mr Collins promised to study that one.

INTERVIEWER

Do you believe that the Irish Government is doing its best on this issue of security?

SOSNI

Well, I was assured, as I said, of its total commitment and its willingness to provide the resources and to follow up and put into effect any suggestions coming out of the regular meetings which as you know take place between the Chief Constable and the Garda Commissioner. Now this does seem to me to be as much as I can ask for and if it produces the results and the eradication of terrorism that's first class.

INTERVIEWER

On the political front were there any suggestions put to you about a possible British Government initiative?

SOSNI

No, because I explained the situation as I saw it and my own intentions, which are to make steady determined but patient progress and I think the setting of targets for making initiatives by certain dates is not in the least bit helpful and this the Irish Government accepted.

INTERVIEWER

A good meeting then.

SOSNI

Yes, I thought it very useful.