

CONFIDENTIAL

Ireland

PRIME MINISTER

NORTHERN IRELAND

When I saw Ken Stowe at lunch today, he told me that the Sunday Times are doing a major piece this weekend on Northern Ireland. The Managing Editor of the Sunday Times yesterday sent a reporter called Michael Jones to see Mr. Atkins to tell him that the newspaper had been given a full-scale briefing for the article by "a high level Irish diplomatic source". Mr. Jones left with the Secretary of State the Sunday Times' record of their discussion with their source. The NIO believe that the briefing probably took place in London rather than in Dublin, but they are not certain whether it was given by somebody from Mr. Haughey's office or by a senior member of the Irish Embassy in London.

Ken Stowe said that it was abundantly clear that the Irish Government intended that the British Government should be told about the briefing. He thought that the general message which the Irish wanted us to get from this incident was that their expectations with regard to your forthcoming meeting with Mr. Haughey were very high. This, of course, is consistent with information about Mr. Haughey's thinking which you have recently seen from quite different sources. Ken Stowe also told me that he had been told by Mr. Bill Craig, the Ulster Unionist, who apparently is close to Mr. Haughey (!), that there is a real possibility of Mr. Haughey calling a General Election as early as September of this year: again, if that is something he is seriously considering, he would want to be able to show that he had been substantially more successful than Mr. Lynch in getting things moving on Northern Ireland.

This is exactly what
I feared - and he can
only be disappointed
mt. AMH.

16 May 1980

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