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AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH

BÉAL FEIRSTE

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT

BELFAST

14 June 1989

Mr. Declan O'Donovan
Counsellor
Anglo-Irish Division
Department of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Declan
Could we have a
word please.

el
15/6

Dear Declan

I had had an extensive discussion with the British side in relation to the forthcoming marching season in advance of receipt of your recent letter. The British side are now preparing for our usual annual discussion on parades. For the record, I submitted the attached aide memoire which, with some minor changes for presentation purposes, is based on the document you sent me.

Yours sincerely

Padraic Collins

Padraic Collins

THE MARCHING SEASON

AIDE MEMOIRE

General

Improved policing in recent years has led to relatively peaceful marching seasons. The improved policing is acknowledged and deeply appreciated by nationalists throughout Northern Ireland, as will be seen from the comments under. Insofar as the layman can see, one of the lessons of last year is that proper and sensitive policing, and rerouting parades away from nationalist areas, works very well and enables the Unionist community to exercise its right to march in a peaceful way. The paragraphs under set out the current state of information available to the Irish Government from the nationalist community in relation to the parades in the various towns in Northern Ireland.

Belfast

While the main march in Belfast (on 12 July) has passed off quietly in recent years, its potential as a flashpoint remains very real and concern about it has been repeated to us this year by representatives of the nationalist community.

This concern focusses particularly on two locations - viz - the Crumlin Road and the Lower Ormeau Road area. The Lower Ormeau Road has seen significant demographic changes in recent years, and is now almost entirely nationalist. Parades now involve screening off the area, thus creating major problems in terms of access since it backs on to the river. Consideration should now be given to the question of possible alternative routes (e.g. Ravenhill Road). In respect of the Crumlin Road, the flashpoint is particularly the section which runs between the Monastery and the Ardoyne. Up to 6 or 7 years ago, buses were provided to take marchers through this section as far as Cambrai Street but, for some reason, that practice lapsed. A considerable number of marches use this route, and each time this involves fencing in the Ardoyne and the deployment of large numbers of security force personnel. It would seem much more sensible to consider alternatives, e.g. Woodvale Road, Shankill Road, Tennant Street - this would avoid a very sensitive section of the Crumlin Road.

The Duncairn Gardens area of North Belfast has also been a particular trouble-spot for the last few years. Owing to demographic changes, the area is now largely nationalist. Being on the sectarian interface of North Belfast, it is a particularly sensitive area. It is our understanding that parades are held here every two years in the third week of June. Such parades were held in accordance with this pattern in 1986 and 1988. However, in 1987 a parade was held on an exceptional basis (commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Covenant) and was deeply resented by nationalists in the area. Given the traditional pattern, there will, presumably, be no parade on this route in 1989.

Portadown

The routing of marches away from Obins Street/the Tunnel area has been welcomed by nationalists, but the new route through Garvaghy Road remains unacceptable. The rationale behind allowing its use is that it is a main thoroughfare. In our view, this is outweighed (a) by the fact that the area is 80% Catholic and (b) by the fact that there is a shorter and less contentious route to the Orange Hall. Nationalists in the Garvaghy Road area are confined to their houses for seven/eight hours on marching days, and this, understandably, causes resentment.

Last year a UDR officer was among the security forces patrolling on bonfire night in the town. The deployment of the UDR in nationalist areas during the marching season is a matter of serious concern.

We understand that the recent controversy over St. Peter's GAA Club in Lurgan could have repercussions for this year's marches in Portadown and Lurgan, with the possibility that hardliners will use the occasion to exact "revenge".

Lurgan

Practice marches are already taking place on a weekly basis and the use of the predominantly nationalist William Street for

these is giving rise to concern in the nationalist community. There is also some resentment among the latter at the inconvenience being caused (on a weekly basis) by the blocking off of the centre of the town.

Saintfield/Crossgar/Killilea/Ballinahinch

Bands have been practising in these towns on Friday nights (alternating between the locations) and causing disruption to traffic. The major march on the Twelfth will be in Killilea. There is apprehension in the nationalist community in the town which has a unionist majority. There is also concern about bonfires in these towns on the night of 11 July. In relation to Ballinahinch, the main concern is to route marches away from the nationalist Hillcrest Drive estate which has been a focus of difficulty in recent years.

Rasharkin/Annalong/Kilkeel

These remain potential flashpoints. Smaller marches are held here. There is particular concern about bonfires on 11 July in Annalong and Kilkeel. There has been such trouble in Rasharkin in recent years as to warrant banning marches there.

Dunloy

Again, a potential flashpoint. The village is now almost totally nationalist.

Keady

Nationalists feel that there is no justification for allowing marchers through the centre of the town and that the parade should be confined to the loyalist end. We understand from Seamus Mallon that the RUC has had this in mind for the past few years.

Derry

The major concern here relates once again to the Apprentice Boys march in August. The main complaint relates to the policy of hemming in nationalists for 7/8 hours and preventing access from these areas to the centre of the city.

*NB
The Apprentice Boys parade included in the Travellers' paper was not permitted on 12 June and was, therefore, not included in this and was done
cl*

Limavady

Last year, permission for a midnight march was refused and was scheduled instead for 8.00 p.m. on 11 July, with the marchers being confined to the centre of the town. In the event, however, the marchers ignored the police advice and the march did not commence until 23.00. In general, however, the march last year passed off satisfactorily and was well policed. Nationalists were particularly appreciative of the local RUC Superintendent, Bob Ballantine, who played a very helpful role. The one concern was about the lateness of the start of the march. Nationalists, generally, feel that marches early in the evening cause less trouble. This year, there is concern that the very success of last year's handling of the parade could lead to a backlash this year, with the possibility that a "mob" will be brought in from outside to stir up trouble.

Garvagh

The bonfire march on 11 July passed off relatively quietly last year and was well policed, but in a town that is 80% unionist, the nationalist minority remains concerned about the march's potential for trouble.

Magherafelt

This had been a trouble-spot in the past but there were no difficulties last year.

Castledawson

The difficulties here have centred around the bonfire on the 11th. Last year the occasion was well policed and there was no trouble.

Bellaughy

Also remains a potential flashpoint. The main difficulty here is the construction of an Orange Arch at the entry to the mixed Beatrice Villas estate. Last year good policing ensured that there was little trouble.

Cookstown

The weekly practice marches on Fridays are already causing inconvenience and resentment. There is particular concern about the routing of the Twelfth march through Gurtnalowry, a nationalist estate. Nationalist leaders have made their concern in this respect known to the local RUC.

Pomeroy

The parade was kept to a restricted route in the centre last year, was very well policed and there was no trouble.

Dungannon

The main concern is about the annual Black March in August and, in particular, the routing of the march along the Ballygawley Road which skirts a large nationalist housing estate. In recent years there has been much "skirmishing" between marchers and local nationalists.

Kilrea

The practice marches here, with the centre of the town being sealed off, are already causing some difficulties and there is concern about the night of the 11th in particular. Last year, the local RUC station was manned overnight during this period and this proved very helpful and was very much appreciated by nationalists.

Coleraine

Good policing last year prevented attacks on nationalist areas. However, it remains a potential flashpoint.

Bessbrook

The major difficulty in Bessbrook in recent years has centred around the putting up of bunting close to nationalist areas. This remains a concern for this year.

14 June 1989