



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2021/44/114
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

143/2

SECURE FAX 143 - 21 JUNE 1990

TO: H.Q.
FOR: B. MCMAHON

FROM: BELFAST
FROM: P. COLLINS

We had a meeting today with the British side (Peter Bell and Christine Collins) on the marching season. We handed over a paper (copy being sent to you separately) based on the material you sent us. We used such material as was excluded from the formal paper in the oral discussion. In general, the British side took the view that, based on their own intelligence and police advice, there were no particular trouble spots this year. Up to the 19th of June, 750 marches had taken place - most of them in a peaceful fashion. Before the end of the marching season, 3,000 marches would have taken place. The RUC took the view that they would only reroute a march if they were convinced that there was a serious risk of public disorder.

We made the point that apart altogether from the "coat trailing" aspects of marching, the fact was that where marches went through nationalist areas people were prevented from going to and from their homes for periods of up to 8 to 10 hours and this caused deep resentment. We expressed particular concern about the march in Duncairn Gardens (which, incidentally, is scheduled to take place tomorrow evening, Friday, 22 June) on which we had made a number of submissions over the past several months.

The British replied that, while they noted our concern about Portadown, and while they were always concerned about the Portadown march, they had to strike a balance between the right to march and the offence and inconvenience to the nationalist community. They acknowledged that there was undoubtedly (and not only in Portadown) considerable inconvenience to people during the marching season. In the case of Portadown, they felt that the present routes for both the church parade and the parade on the Twelfth were the best routes consistent with

143/3

maintaining public order, avoiding offence to nationalists and taking into account the right to march.

They replied in detail to the points we made about Duncairn Gardens. They said that the RUC had concluded that there were no sound reasons for ordering a rerouting or for changing the march. Either of these actions would provoke considerable public disorder. They said that past experience had shown that there was no great problem of public disorder during previous marches. They contested vigorously the various points made in the papers we had submitted to them. They maintain that the route of the parade was mostly loyalist with limited areas containing a nationalist majority. In fact, they maintained that the worst disorder in the Duncairn Gardens area took place during anniversary marches on internment. They contested strongly our view that a republican nationalist march would not be allowed in the area and felt that an Orange march was more comparable to an AOH march than to a Provisional IRA/Sinn Fein march. The counterpart of Provisional IRA/Sinn Fein, namely, the UDA/UVF, would not be allowed to march in the area. The AOH, on the other hand, were allowed to march in ~~nationalist~~ ^{Mixed} areas.

We contested their view on Duncairn Gardens strongly and said that our information was based on data and judgement by local politicians of proven sound judgement. We would be surprised if they had their basic facts wrong. We let it be known that we had put our point of view on record and that we were taking careful note of the response so that, if, as predicted, there was trouble in the area, we would have some serious things to say in relation to the British assessment that there would be no problems of public disorder.

In general discussion, the British said that there was intelligence to the effect that the Provisional IRA were planning to attack police guarding marches this year - Bell described it as a "gloomy" threat assessment. We said we would make a further submission on marches before the end of June.