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OIFIG AN AIRE GNOTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ATHA CLIATH 2
DUBLIN 2

2 July, 1990.

Mr. Michael McCooe,
Chairperson,
Drumcree Faith and Justice,
c/o Iona House,
211 Churchill Park,
Portadown,
Co. Armagh.

Dear Mr. McCooe,

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gerard Collins, T.D., has asked me to refer again to your recent letter concerning the routing of marches in Portadown this year. The Minister has noted your concerns and the specific queries you have raised concerning the situation, and he has asked that these be raised with the British authorities through the Anglo-Irish Secretariat in Belfast.

The Minister has also asked me to point out that the objections to the use of the Garvaghy Road route for the Portadown parades have already been conveyed to the British authorities in the strongest possible terms. It has been pointed out to them that there is no justification for these parades to pass through a predominantly nationalist area where they clearly increase tension and give rise to major security restrictions and inconvenience for the local community. It has been conveyed to the British authorities that it should be possible to divert the Church parade along a less confrontational route and that the Twelfth parade to the railway station could go through the town centre without going anywhere near a nationalist area.

The overall negative impact of the parades on relations between the nationalist community and the police has been emphasised, together with their frustrating effect on progress towards a more positive climate.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN KIRWAN

John Kirwan,
Private Secretary.



OIFIG AN AIRE GNOTHAI EACHTRACHA
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ATHA CLIATH 2
DUBLIN 2

18 July, 1990.

Mr. Dick Spring, T.D.,
Labour Party,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2.

Dear Dick,

With reference to your letter of 19th June in which you enclosed a copy of a letter you received from Mr. Michael McCooe of the Drumcree Faith and Justice Group, I should say that I subsequently received a letter in identical text from Mr. McCooe. I am now enclosing copy of the reply which has issued to Mr. McCooe and I trust this will prove helpful to you.

Yours sincerely,

GERARD COLLINS T.D.

Gerard Collins, T.D.,
Minister for Foreign Affairs.

21/6 B. McMurton

A/S

J. Hughes

Letter No.

685

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Draft reply please before 8.7.90
(Original plus 3 copies of draft reply should
be returned to this office)

☐

Direct reply in Section

☐

Any action deemed necessary

☐

Your information

☐

Any obs. please before _____

If a reply is considered unnecessary please notify this office.

P.S.M.

J. McMurton

Date

18/6/90

June, 1990

Mr. Michael McCooe
Chairperson
Drumcree Faith and Justice
c/o Iona House
211 Churchill Park
Portadown
Co. Armagh

Dear Mr. McCooe,

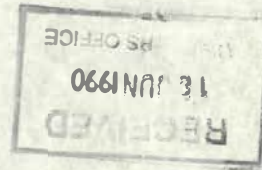
On behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gerard Collins T.D., I wish to acknowledge receipt of your recent letter.

I will bring your letter to the Minister's attention at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

John Kirwan
Private Secretary

Drumcree Faith and Justice
c/o Iona House
211 Churchill Park
Portadown
Co. Armagh



Td Gerry Collins
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Dublin

Dear Sir

I would like to raise the issue of marches with you as the season is approaching again. I would be grateful if you would write to the Chief Constable about the situation here. I'm afraid it has not changed since the re-routing of parades in 1986. An Orange parade is still put down the Garvaghy Road on the Sunday before the 12th. Last year 93 R.U.C landrovers were used during this exercise. That is not counting army vehicles that were kept in reserve. The Orangemen refused to march down Garvaghy Road in 1987 because they were refused Obins Street. This was in our opinion a golden opportunity for the R.U.C to end the march but they allowed it again in 1988 and last year.

They also allowed an early morning parade on the morning of the 12th. This is a new parade that was introduced as compensation for routing the parades away from Obins Street. The irony is that there are only about 500 Catholics in Obins Street and about 4500 on the Garvaghy Road.

The Drumcree Faith and Justice group requested permission last year to march through the town centre. We are the group who organise the tea party on the Garvaghy Road during the orange parades. We are totally committed to non-violence and to respecting the rights of Protestants as well as Catholics. Our request to parade was refused on the grounds that this parade might lead to serious public disorder. This was because the Protestant Action Force had threatened to attack the parade.

The implication of this is clearly seen by Catholics. If they want the parades to be re-routed they will succeed if they engage in major disorder. That is a message our group is opposing as vigorously as possible.

As you know Article 7 (c) of the Anglo Irish Agreement commits the British government to work for a better relationship between the Security Forces and the Nationalist community. I think it would help if you wrote to the Chief Constable and asked the following questions.

a) how many permits were granted for parades in Portadown town centre from 1st April 1989 to 31st March 1990?

b) how many of these were Nationalist parades?

c) why was the Drumcree group refused permission to march last June?

d) what steps did he take during the Summer last year to help the development of a better relationships between the Nationalist community and the Security Forces?

e) what steps does he intend to take this year towards that aim and towards the aim of seeing that both communities are treated equally by the Security Forces?

It would also help if you could write to the Secretary of State asking him the same questions. I think he should not be allowed to get away with the argument that parades are an operational matter for the R.U.C. to decide. If parades are operational and not policy, are there any practical steps that the government has to take to fulfill its obligations under Article 7 (c) of the Agreement.

Yours sincerely

Michael McCooe
Michael McCooe
Chairperson