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ARCHDIOCESE OF ARMAGH

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July 28, 1996

Dear Prime Minister,

I was very glad to meet with Brian Mawhinney on 18 July last, and I feel that his visit to Northern Ireland was timely and was valuable. I had a meeting with Michael Ancram on 22nd July, and this too was useful. I appreciated the opportunity of speaking with both of these Ministers.

In the grave situation facing us, I believe that the two Governments must act together on the foundations of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Downing Street Declaration, the Framework Documents. The analysis of the Northern Ireland situation embodied in these documents is the correct one; it is the only one which accords with justice and fairness and equality of rights and parity of esteem between the two historical traditions and loyalties in Northern Ireland, and which therefore gives hope of lasting peace. You played a major role in the drafting of these documents. I wish to assure you that your work was not in vain, that these documents contain the key, indeed the only key, to a peaceful future, and that progress along the lines which they set down is necessary and right and is still possible. Acting unitedly, and acting firmly, on the basis of these documents, the two Governments can still retrieve the situation.

I am grateful for the letter which you wrote to me on the occasion of Brian Mawhinney's visit.

I have in honesty to say, however, that I cannot agree that I made a mistake in the remarks which I made following the events at Drumcree, or that those remarks would have been better left unsaid. I still stand over those remarks. I still believe that the Chief Constable's decision to allow (or, more exactly, to force) the Orange march through the Garvaghy Road route, was a disastrous decision and had disastrous consequences. We have, alas, not yet seen the full extent of the damage done to the credibility of the RUC in the eyes of the entire Catholic community. We have not seen the full extent of damage done to confidence in the rule of law and to the commitment, or indeed the capacity, of the RUC to uphold the rule of law in a manner totally non-partisan as between the two political traditions in Northern Ireland. Reform of the RUC now becomes more than ever imperative, and that reform has to be more radical than has yet been admitted.

Since my meetings with Brian Mawhinney and with Michael Ancram, further things have come to light which are deeply disturbing. I enumerate some of them here:

- (1) the acknowledged involvement of loyalist paramilitaries with Orange Order members during the Drumcree "stand-off";
- (2) the fact that a notorious loyalist terrorist from Portadown reportedly had a meeting with the Ulster Unionist Party leader, David Trimble, on the day before the Chief Constable's decision of Thursday, 11th July;
- (3) the fact that this terrorist is reported to have made a threat that there could be loyalist paramilitary "retaliation" unless the RUC and the Army "backed off";
- (4) the fact that this threat was reportedly conveyed by Mr Trimble to the Secretary of State on Wednesday, 10th July.

I fear that the events surrounding "Drumcree" and its aftermath give grounds for great pessimism about the current political talks and about the future prospects for agreement and peaceful settlement in Northern Ireland.

However, I know that you are not by nature a pessimist. Neither am I. Like you, I believe that we must look forward in hope and that we must continue resolutely along the only road which offers hope, that of dialogue, that of seeking accommodation and consent on the part of both communities. It is, however, imperative that each side be open to accommodation with "the other" and that each be ready to accept the changes in traditional attitudes which this demands.

I assure you that I remain totally committed to the condemnation of all violence, republican or loyalist, as morally evil and repulsive, and to the pursuit of reconciliation, mutual understanding and parity of esteem and of respect between both traditions and both loyalties in Northern Ireland.

I believe in your personal commitment to working to the same ends. I believe in your will and in your ability to achieve a settlement. I assure you of my prayers for success in achieving it.

I thank you again for writing and I assure you of my sincere regards and of my good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

+ Cahal B. Carol - Daly

Archbishop of Armagh

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