



British Embassy
Washington

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The Honorable
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From The Ambassador

Mr. Richard E Neal,

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 23 July about the recent disorder in Northern Ireland, and to say that he entirely agrees with you that it was shocking and saddening. He, his Government, and the vast majority of the people of my country regard what happened as "completely unacceptable" - in the words of the Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew, on 15 July. We very much hope that those responsible, on both sides of the community, will now recognise the damage their actions do to the fabric of society, to Northern Ireland's economic prospects, and to the peace process.

You mentioned specifically the Orange Order march in Drumcree. It may help if I set out the facts.

Marches and parades form part of the traditional way of life of both communities in Northern Ireland. About 3,000 take place each year, most without any difficulty or disturbance. It is for the Chief Constable to assess the likelihood of disorder if a particular march takes place. That judgement is for him alone: as the present Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Annesley, said on 14 July about Drumcree: "the allegation that there was political interference is unadulterated rubbish". Thus on 6 July, he decided that the return stage of the Portadown Orange Parade, due to take place the following day, should not be along the Garvaghy Road. Similar restrictions were placed on a planned counter-march by local residents.

Over the next four days, there were serious disturbances in many parts of Northern Ireland. Threats were made against police officers and their families; and numerous other people were intimidated. Roads were blocked; and there were widespread attacks on property. Meanwhile, unprecedented efforts were made by the Government, Church leaders, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and community leaders to secure a compromise agreement on the parade's route.

By the morning of 11 July, when it was clear to him that all mediation efforts had failed, Sir Hugh concluded that there would be a serious risk of loss of life if the parade were disallowed completely, and that, by that evening,



60,000-70,000 Orange marchers would converge on Drumcree. He therefore decided to permit a limited parade down the Garvaghy Road.

I recognise, of course, that many members of the Nationalist community were extremely unhappy with the decision. But I should like to emphasise that it was a decision taken in good faith, in difficult circumstances, and with the safety of the Garvaghy Road residents very much in mind. And the fact is that the violence which followed in many Nationalist areas was no more justified or acceptable than that fomented by "Loyalists" earlier in the week.

The underlying issue isn't easy to resolve. We all recognise a community's right not to feel threatened in its own neighbourhood. But all democratic societies also recognise the First Amendment right to demonstrate. It is to address this dilemma that the Northern Ireland Secretary has announced the establishment of an independent review of the arrangements for marches and parades, to which everyone will be free to submit evidence: his purpose is to try to ensure that there is no recurrence of this month's deplorable episode.

The task now facing the British and Irish Governments, and the political leaders of Northern Ireland, is to re-establish trust and dialogue. The Prime Minister has stressed his determination to press on with the political process, working for peace through negotiation and reconciliation with all those committed to exclusively peaceful methods. It is a process to which Senator Mitchell is making a major contribution; and it is a policy to which Mr Major's Government remains absolutely committed.

For my part, I remain wholly convinced that the yearning for peace, and the exhilaration at the absence of conflict, which I sensed when I was there with the President last year, represents the real Northern Ireland; and that recent events do not.

I am writing in similar terms to your co-signatories.

Yours sincerely,
John Kerr.

John Kerr



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20543

bcc: Minister
H/BDS
Mr Westmacott
Mr Alexander
Mr McDonald
Mr Bean
All US Consuls-General
Mr Oakden, No 10
Mr Lamont, RID, FCO
Mr Pellew, NAD, FCO
Miss Checksfield, NIO(L)

[Similar signed letters to the other 50 signatories]

The Right Honorable John Major
Prime Minister
The British Embassy
3100 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C.

Dear Prime Minister Major:

We are writing to express our deep concern over the most recent events in Northern Ireland which have placed the peace process in grave jeopardy. The issue of sectarian violence has saddened those on both sides of the Atlantic who have worked tirelessly to bring peace and justice to that troubled island. While we remain hopeful that both governments and all parties can restore confidence and trust, we do have serious questions over decisions that preceded and followed the start-off at Drumcree.

While we condemn in the strongest possible terms, the actions of the British Loyalist Volunteer Force (BLVF) to allow Orange Order marches to proceed through public neighborhoods in Portadown and to allow the worst violence in Northern Ireland to erupt. At best, the march was a provocation to the Orange Order and the Catholic community and its supporters. At worst, they are provocative displays of triumphalism which have inevitably led to confrontation and violence. It is our belief that those who forced the government and the RUC to respond to the demands of the Orangemen, including Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) leader David Trimble, must be held accountable for their shameful actions.

We are equally concerned about the appalling lack of police protection in the nationalist neighborhoods following the Orange marches, that resulted in many Catholic families being intimidated, harassed and turned out of their homes. Quite simply, the British government and the RUC over the past ten days have reinforced nationalist's fears of discrimination, lack of democratic and human rights and overall clear wrongdoing. We join the Trades Union Congress, Social Democrats and Labor Party in expressing our concerns and we join the Irish Daily in expressing our feelings over the RUC's failure to