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8 April 1980

Mr. Proinnsias O Murchu
Runai
Cumann Luthchleas Gael
Páirc Uí Chaoimh
Baile an Teampaill
Corcaigh

Dear Mr. O Murchu

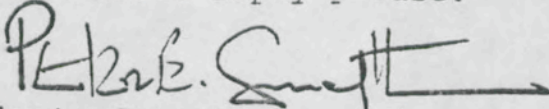
On behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Brian Lenihan T.D., I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 2 April 1980 in connection with the GAA grounds at Crossmaglen.

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

Yours sincerely

Private Secretary

cc Mr. Nelligan
For draft reply please.



Private Secretary
8 April 1980

CUMANN LÚTH-CHLEAS GAEL.

Cathaoirleach—Pádraig Ó Drisceoil
Leas-Cathaoirleach—Diarmuid Mac Gabhann
Cisteoir—Diarmuid Ó Meachair
Rúnaí—Proinnsias Ó Murchú
Claraí—Donncha Mac Conraoi
Oifigeach Oige—Brian de Baróid
Oifigeach na Gaeilge—Caoimhin Ó Cuimin
Oifigeach Poiblíochta—Tadhg Ó Niatháin

Guthán: (021) 25592

Páirc Uí Chaoimh,

2^u Abrain, 1980.
Baile An Teampaill,

Mr. Brian Lenihan, T.D.,
Cork Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Dail Eireann,
ATH CLIATH.

Do

A Dhuine Uasail,

I have been directed by the Cork Co. Board of the Gaelic Athletic Association to bring the following urgent and important matters to your attention:-

- (1) At the Meeting of the Cork County Board G.A.A. held at Páirc Uí Chaoimh on 1st April, 1980 the occupation and destruction of the Crossmaglen Rangers G.A.A. Club's Grounds in Co. Armagh by British forces, and a reported recent statement by your goodself to the effect that a solution that would "minimise inconvenience" might be arranged, was considered.

Your reference to minimising inconvenience has been interpreted by the Crossmaglen Rangers Club as meaning that an arrangement was being considered that would include the British Army retaining portion of the Club's property and partitioning it from the remainder of the Grounds, by the construction of a 20 foot wall.

Such an arrangement is totally unacceptable to Crossmaglen Rangers Club. It is likewise totally unacceptable to the Cork County Board of the G.A.A. and the following resolution was passed at its Meeting on 1/4/1980.

"The Cork County Board of the G.A.A. calls on Mr. Brian Lenihan, T.D., Minister for Foreign Affairs, to demand of Mr. Atkins at the earliest opportunity, that British Forces be withdrawn from all areas of the Crossmaglen Rangers G.A.A. Club's Property in Co. Armagh, and that it be made positively clear to Mr. Atkins that retention of any portion of that property is unacceptable".

- (2) The second matter concerns an incident in Crossmaglen on Monday March 31st 1980. The Official Cork delegation to the Annual Congress of the G.A.A. held on the weekend 29th/30th March 1980 at Newcastle, Co. Down on their return journey visited Crossmaglen G.A.A. Grounds for the purpose of viewing the destruction caused by the British Army to this property, and to note at first hand the effects of stated future plans of the British Authorities in these Grounds, owned by a unit of our Association,

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Baile An Teampaill,

Corcaigh19.....

Guthán: (021) 25592

Do.

The delegation, which included all the Senior Officers of the County Executive Committee, were deeply shocked at the wanton damage caused, even to areas of property not included in vesting orders issued by The British Authorities. Our opposition to the proposed future plans of the British Army in this property is conveyed in the Resolution passed by our Board on 1/4/'80 as stated above.

Following the inspection of the Grounds, the delegation went to a local licensed premises for some refreshments, before continuing its journey home.

One group of the delegation had no sooner entered the premises than members of the British Forces, who had not been apparent up to then, surrounded it. The members of the delegation in a second car made their way past soldiers in the doorway. A saracen car stopped at the premises and four members of the British Army, armed with automatic rifles, entered the premises and came directly to the lounge area in which our members were. Two of the soldiers entered the room, one stood in the doorway of the room, and the other remained outside the door. One of the soldiers suggested he be included in the round of refreshments being called and when a member of our delegation said that they should'nt drink on duty he replied that they could fit a bottle of whiskey under the tunic. This soldier, who was in contact by a communication system with apparently his Command Base, questioned members of our delegation at intervals, in a sneering fashion. The members were interrogated concerning their names, addresses, where they had come from, what their business had been in Newcastle and what was their reason for being in Crossmaglen. When replies were given in Irish there was a demand that replies be given in English. A very serious incident could have occurred as a consequence of the attitude adopted by the interrogating soldier to a young man who had a speech difficulty - a son of one of our Officers. The intervention of two of our members led to the soldier realising the position and he desisted but it did lead to strongly worded replies being given to the soldier when the father of the young man was himself questioned.

The soldiers then left the room with one saying "we will see yez". There was no further direct interference but the Saracen car passed the premises a number of times subsequently and the soldier in the turret looked in.

The Cork delegation was fully satisfied that the action of the British forces concerned was not a routine check, but was a direct consequence of the delegation's visit and inspection of the G.A.A. Grounds, and a serious and deliberate attempt at intimidation of the members concerned.

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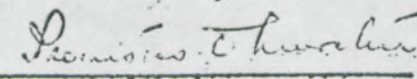
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The Cork County Board at its Meeting on April 1st, 1980 decided to acquaint you with these details and to respectfully request you to lodge a protest with the British Authorities concerning this incident.

My Board sincerely thanks you in anticipation of you giving these two issues your serious and urgent attention, and looks forward to hearing from you at an early date on the outcome of your representations.

Is mise,
Le mor mheas,


Proinnsias O'Murchu
Runai.

ENCLOSURES - NEWSCLIPPINGS