



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Draft Press Line on Lower Ormeau

PA Orange  
Parades 95.

- The Government believe that the right to march carries a responsibility to respect the principle that parades should not take place in an area, or along a route where they are not welcome;
- The Government, on a number of occasions, have raised the implications of this principle, including with reference to the Lower Ormeau, in discussions with the British Government in the framework of the Anglo-Irish Agreement;
- The Government remain of the view that voluntary rerouting of parades away from areas where they are not welcome is the most desirable way forward in the first instance;
- Both Governments have agreed in joint statements of the Anglo-Irish Conference that the right to march and to demonstrate should be exercised with respect for the rights and sensitivities of others and with regard for the maintenance of public order.
- We will be raising with the British Government the handling of today's parade in the light of this principle.
- In view of the importance of consolidating a climate of peace the Government emphasise the importance of restraint on all sides during the marching season.

12 July 1995

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Secure Fax: 778

IMMEDIATE

12 July 1995

COPY TO:
PST
PSS
MR. F MURRAY
MR. P TEAHON
MR. S. DONLON
MR. T DALTON

To: HQ  
For: Second Secretary O hUiginn

From: Belfast  
From: S. Farrell

Lower Ormeau Road

To Confirm:

1. I have had a number of conversations with Williams from early this morning re the Lower Ormeau Road.
2. In my initial contact, I referred to media reports that the police had sealed off side roads leading onto the Lower Ormeau. I stressed to him our concern that it appeared that a parade was being let go through an area where the residents did not wish it to go and expressed a hope that even at this late stage an acceptable compromise solution could be reached.
3. I referred to yesterday's events in Portadown when an acceptable compromise had been found. Despite this, following the march, we had witnessed a display of triumphalism from Trimble and others quite at odds with any spirit of compromise. We now appeared to face on the Ormeau a situation where the police had decided that the march would go through despite the wishes of the local residents.
4. Williams initially reported back that decisions with regard to this parade and others were being taken at a meeting in RUC HQ, involving the Chief Constable. He reiterated the usual line that decisions were operational matters for the RUC. He acknowledged our concerns and confirmed that they had been passed on.
5. He then came back to advise me that the decision has been taken to allow the parade to go through, beginning shortly after 9.30 am. Some roads were blocked off owing, as he said, to RUC concerns that there might be trouble over whether or not there had been a deal re



6. I reiterated our views and concerns on the decision and said that I wished to put on record our view that the decision to let the parade proceed was a very unwise one. I pointed again to what had been achieved in Portadown where the Garvaghy Road residents had been willing to compromise. It had been possible to work out a compromise in Portadown and it should have been possible to work out one regarding the Lower Ormeau as well, particularly since there had been negotiations which had seemed to leave an agreement very close. I went on to remind Williams of what had happened during previous marches along the Ormeau on the Twelfth when abusive and sectarian outbursts by marchers had taken place, particularly in the vicinity of the Graham bookies shop. I observed also that the RUC were well aware of the views of the local residents as witness their actions earlier in the year in preventing a number of marches penetrating the Lower Ormeau. Despite this, the RUC appear to have decided to ignore local views.
7. Williams came back subsequently to me to note that it appeared that the parade had passed off peacefully. He had received reports that, while there had been some stone and bottle throwing, members of the Lower Ormeau Road Residents Committee had been seen attempting to prevent trouble and deter any incidents. I responded that that demonstrated all the more clearly their reasonableness and reiterated that it should have been possible to effect an acceptable compromise. Williams rather lamely reiterated that the decisions were for the RUC and that the situations in Portadown and the Lower Ormeau were different. I put it to him that, in effect, the RUC had simply caved in and that this did not bode well.
8. It would appear that the RUC acted to pre-empt any possibility of a repetition on the Ormeau of the Garvaghy Road protest. In this connection I recall that Annesley, when in here for dinner several months ago, was privately critical of the local RUC Commander in Derry after the demonstrations which had occurred during Major's visit. Annesley commented to us that the correct strategy in such situations should be for the police to get in and seize the ground at an early (stage as happened here this morning).
9. Williams and the other side have been left in no doubt of our views on this morning's events. We shall be monitoring the rest of the day and other parades closely and will take up the matter again with the British side when reviewing the whole day's happenings.

END



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12 July 1995

No of pages including this one: 1

To: HQ  
For: Declan Kelleher

From: Belfast  
From: Sean Farrell

Lower Ormeau Road

1. Further to our telephone conversation I wish to confirm that, after watching the news bulletins at 12.55 on BBC and 13.00 on RTE I telephoned Williams to get a read-out on the situation on the Lower Ormeau Road. I drew his attention to the television reports, which he had not seen, which spoke of some scuffles between protestors and police and which had featured footage of police in full riot gear in confrontational pose towards the protestors, who appeared to be peacefully sitting down on the bridge. I stressed to Williams to convey our advice on the necessity for the police to behave with the utmost sensitivity in the light of the provocations which the Nationalist residents had suffered already today.
2. Williams phoned me back some time later with what he had found out (not much). He reported that the present situation (as at 13.45) was that, following this morning's parade, which had passed off peacefully enough, some local residents were currently mounting a sit-down protest in the Lower Ormeau area. Per Williams, the police were currently monitoring the situation. He confirmed to me that the planned route for the returning parade will not take it into the Lower Ormeau Road area. The RUC were not clear as to whether those sitting down and protesting were aware of this. I stressed again our view on the need for particularly sensitive policing.