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Mable (G) Rafferty (knows)
[Robert McDonagh - SF link person]

Secure Fax: 913

29 August 1995

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To: HQ

From: Belfast

For: Second Secretary O hUiginn

From: Kieran Dowling

Please cc Mr James McIntyre

Subject: Study on Quaker House

At the meeting I had with him today, Clem McCartney indicated that he is currently completing a study on Quaker House (including its future role/direction of the work) and is very anxious in this regard to have the views of various outside organisations, including the Department, on its present work, possible future directions etc.

Since he would wish to complete the study by 15 September, he would welcome discussions with the Department (preferably including Declan Kelleher, given that he is familiar with the background) in advance of this. He would be quite happy to go to Dublin for such discussion.

Please advise if meeting can be arranged. McCartney will be back to me for a response early next week but asked me to telephone him if I had any information on the matter in advance of this.

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To: HQ
For: Second Secretary S. O hUiginn

From: Belfast
From: K. Dowling

Subject: discussions with Mr Clem McCartney

1. Shortly after I took up duty here two weeks ago, I had a call from Alan Quilley of Quaker House in Belfast who said that, in his absence on holidays, Clem McCartney had been closely monitoring developments in the run up to and during the Apprentice Boys' parade on the Lower Ormeau Road on Saturday 12 August. Noting that the Tanaiste had called for a full report on the events surrounding the parade in question, he suggested that I might usefully speak to McCartney for his observations on the events in question. As background he indicated that McCartney is an economic consultant who works closely with Quaker House (run by Quilley and his wife): while married to a Quaker, he said that McCartney is himself an "Attender" (rather than a fully paid-up Quaker). McCartney arranged to call on me when he was next in Belfast (he lives in the Coleraine area). We had discussions on the matter here in the Secretariat today (29 August) - he had been unable to come last week.
2. Prior to offering his observations on the events on the Lower Ormeau Road on 12 August, McCartney commented more generally that, in the context of the peace process, parades had assumed even greater focus and importance; both sides saw them as one of the tests of what the cease-fires were delivering to each side and as a test of the goodwill or otherwise being displayed by the other side. As such they affected the mood of whether things were going well or badly at the wider level.
3. He saw the situation in which the police are left to take all decisions on parades as not just unfair to the police but also as "politically dangerous". The police, operating strictly from the "law and order" approach, would obviously tend to judge matters purely in terms of the degree to which the peace might be breached. They might be inclined, for instance, to deem that say ten minutes of disorder (arising from allowing a particular parade to proceed) might be preferable to the greater threat and tension of say twenty four hours of potential confrontation which might be judged to be the alternative scenario. In acting in this way they were operating purely in policing terms without taking account of the damage such decisions could cause to the wider peace process; they were considering the security consequences, but not the very different political consequences of their actions. Another problem was that the police cannot say openly in advance what action they may intend to take in relation to particular parades. As regards the 12 August parade on the Lower Ormeau Road, his belief was that the police thinking had been not to allow the parade to take place but that, on the day, the decision was taken that it was the easier option to let it go through.

4. As they had made clear, the police preference would be for the two communities to come to an arrangement in advance in relation to individual parades (including peaceful protests as necessary), which would in turn allow the RUC to agree to police such events "lightly". The problem was that in many cases neither side wished to be seen as agreeing/consenting on the issue (not least given that was involved was a "test" of the other side); in such a situation it was much easier to be seen to be acting on the basis of a police "writ" in the matter.
5. As to how the police might react to the establishment of a tribunal which might lessen the political burden on them of taking what were essentially political decisions in regard to parades, McCartney felt that in this respect the police "liked things well enough" as they were at present: the police could not be sure that they would be able to "deliver" on the actual enforcing of a decision which such a tribunal might take several days in advance, either allowing or disallowing/re-routing individual parades; at least now they had the operational freedom to proceed with or to change their decisions on individual parades right up to the last minute. In the same way, they would probably see any code of practice drawn up in relation to parades as likely to tie their hands/limit their room for manoeuvre in regard to taking operational decisions in relation to each individual parade.
6. McCartney said a senior police officer had told him that the outcome of the Drumcree parade had been a very poor one for the RUC: he understood him to mean that Drumcree (despite the "superficial" agreement arrived at on that occasion) had basically shown that people, through escalating the situation sufficiently, can get what they want (he referred in this regard to the triumphalism exhibited by David Trimble at Drumcree). For the police, it was now a case of what was possible rather than what was just.

Lower Ormeau Parade on 12 August

7. As indicated, his impression had been that the police had initially intended not to allow the 12 August parade on the Lower Ormeau Road to proceed (partly, he felt, as a possible trade-off between the Belfast and Derry parades on that day). In changing their mind and allowing the parade to proceed, he felt that the RUC may have been influenced in part by the fact that only 100 "protestors" had been present at first, looking "subdued and quiet"; he himself from talking to one of those present had however established that a further hundred had gone away but would "be back later". The RUC may also have been influenced by being told by the 20 Apprentice Boys present (with whom they were able to have discussions in the relative calm of the Orange Lodge some half a mile away) that if they were not allowed to march, they would simply sit there all day and await being joined by other Apprentice Boys in the evening on their return from Derry. As he himself was located on the parade side (I got the impression he was the only monitor the Quakers had present), McCartney said he could not see to what extent the RUC may have engaged in discussions/negotiations with the protestors present; he felt however that they may not have fully explained all the options to them (and in particular the option ultimately exercised of allowing the 20 Apprentice Boys to march, using some of the road). More generally, he felt that communications with the local community had been "poor" in the few days leading up to the parade,

adding that the RUC did not have the mechanisms to handle such communications. His own belief had been that the marchers were to be detained at one side while the police negotiated with the protestors further on. Instead, the Apprentice Boys had continued straight through; the leader of the Apprentice Boys had told him in this respect that their instructions from the RUC had been "not to stop".

8. Confirming that matters had escalated quickly once the parade had passed through, McCartney was critical that a senior RUC officer may not have been present to direct the police operations in response to the disturbances which broke out in the wake of the parade (including with the participation of the "hangers-on" from the side-streets, who threw bottles and other missiles). As far as he could see from his vantage point (on the footpath parallel to the parade), all three senior RUC officers present had been to the front of the parade, which could have meant that there was no officer higher than inspector rank to direct operations at the back. More generally, he pointed to the importance of having mediators (such as the Quakers, presumably) present at future parades who, if things started to break down, would be in a position to have a word with one side or the other.
9. Indicating that An Phoblacht had reported that a Quaker-mediator (meaning himself) had seen certain of the marchers making machine-gun gestures as they passed the site of Sean Graham's Bookmaker's shop, he said it was not true he had witnessed any such behaviour. All he could say was that a band had struck up some ten yards before arriving at the site in question.
10. More generally, speaking of the (courageous) decision of the Royal Black Preceptory to re-route the parades which had been scheduled for the Lower Ormeau Road for the last two weekends, he agreed that Gerard Rice had been conciliatory in welcoming the decision as a huge step and as having "opened a door" to discussions with the Orange Order on future parades. While the local community might differ as to the tactics/strategy (if any) to be followed in regard to objecting to Orange parades along the Lower Ormeau Road, the fact that 90 per cent of residents did not want such parades was not in dispute. The reality was that the Orange Order had to deal with people "who could put people on the street". The difficulty was that while the Orange Order might take the view that the local community has to have a say in the matter, the Lower Ormeau Concerned Community (LOCC) Group seemed to be working on the basis that all parades had to be stopped before new relationships could be spoken of. It seemed to be less a matter of how good an agreement could be reached with the "Orange" but rather simply that you "cannot trust the Orange".
11. As regards British claims in relation to SF manipulation/orchestration of protests, he said it was hard for the local community not to go where it can get help; in such circumstances it would be difficult for SF to stand idly by and do nothing. The important thing was not whether there was SF involvement: it was whether there was "legitimacy" in the individual case or not. McCartney contrasted the greater control exercised by SF in Derry (during the parade proper) in keeping the protest peaceful, and the situation in Belfast, where SF's influence had not been as solid.