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## RUC decision to ban Easter Monday parade on Lower Ormeau

RUC Deputy Chief Constable, Ronnie Flanagan, announced yesterday evening (3 April 1996) that he was banning the controversial Easter Monday Apprentice Boys parade along Belfast's Lower Ormeau Road. We had had indications from some sources that this decision was taken some time ago but would not be announced until close to the date. As the Joint Secretary has already reported, Sir Patrick Mayhew informed him on Tuesday night that the Chief Constable had told him, in confidence, that the parade would not be allowed down the Ormeau Road. He also made clear that the police "will continue as they have begun during the rest of the marching season".

Yesterday's decision was welcomed by the Lower Ormeau Concerned Community (LOCC) who had threatened that they would seek a judicial review at 5.30pm yesterday of any decision to allow the parade to go ahead. They said it was the only sensible decision in the circumstances. Their response to the decision has largely been restrained. I spoke with Gerard Rice of LOCC this morning and urged that the group continue to give a non-triumphalist and restrained reaction in the days ahead and, as they had done in the past, dissuade people from behaving in a triumphalist manner on Easter Monday.

The Apprentice Boys have not provided a definitive response to the RUC decision. Castlereagh Councillor Sandy Geddis (DUP) who is a member of the Belfast Walker Club of the Apprentice Boys said the ban was "anathema to us". He was emphatic, however, that the Apprentice Boys would not be out for confrontation on Easter Monday. He said he hoped there would be no Drumcree-style scenes at the Ormeau Bridge.

Janet Quilley of the Quakers, who played a mediation role last year, has heard from sources close to the Apprentice Boys that, while angry at the decision, they will seek to avoid any confrontation or trouble. It is likely that the Walker Club may stage a token protest by marching to the bridge which will be blocked off by the RUC. She said it can't be ruled out, however, that some maverick Loyalists may turn up at the bridge on Monday morning in an effort to stoke things up.

*James Mc Intyre*

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Anglo-Irish Division  
4 April 1996

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