

867/2

AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT

BÉAL FEIRSTE

BELFAST

29 August 1996

Mr Colm O Floinn  
Anglo-Irish Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs

PST, PSS  
S/S Ó hUiginn  
Counsellors A-I Section  
Messrs. Teahon, Donlon & Dalton  
Ambassadors London & Washington  
~~Joint Secretary~~

*Read 30/8*  
Dear Colm,

**"Black Saturday" parades and related**

Under Secretary John Steele came to the Secretariat this afternoon to brief us on developments in relation to the preparations/negotiations for the different Royal Black Preceptory ("Black Saturday") parades scheduled for this weekend. We also availed of the opportunity to ask him for his assessment, with hindsight, of the Apprentice Boys' parade/ceremonies in Derry on 9/10 August.

Steele was accompanied by Walter Myles of his office and John Fisher and Ruth Osborne of the British side of the Secretariat were also present, as was Christy O' Shea on our side.

(The discussions with Steele also covered other areas - Independent Review of Parades and Marches; Review of the Use of Plastic Baton Rounds; David Ervine's remarks this week on the fragility of the Loyalist ceasefire, on which we are reporting separately.)

**Outcome of the Apprentice Boys parade/ceremonies in Derry on 9/10 August**

Steele said that, with hindsight, he would have to judge events in Derry as having gone very well. There had been "some intelligence" in regard to the prospect (admittedly in what he described as a "worst-case scenario" situation) of "major confrontation" and resultant injury and damage, in that Sinn Fein were believed to have been regarding the occasion as "their Drumcree" (they had been planning to show that they could do in Derry what the Orangemen had done in Drumcree). It was believed that, acting through the Bogside Residents' Group, the intention would have been for marchers to occupy the walls following the Friday night (BRG) parade (which, unusually, was being planned to end in the Diamond rather than at the Guildhall) and that the plan would also have involved blocking Craigavon Bridge on the Saturday, to prevent the 10,000 Apprentice Boys from entering the city.

Such a scenario had not happened because of (i) the leadership and generosity demonstrated by Alistair Simpson and the Apprentice Boys in their willingness to enter into genuine negotiations with the BRG under John Hume's chairmanship and (ii) the SECRETARY OF STATE "acting decisively" in regard to the blocking-off of the walls. As regards the negotiations, Steele again questioned the bona fides of the BRG, suggesting that there was absolutely no evidence that MacNiallais either wished, or had any authority, to agree to any negotiated settlement, given that he had been unable to accept even the compromise proposals

867/3

as put forward by John Hume which, by contrast, had been acceptable to Simpson. As part of this strategy, the BRG had deliberately kept "changing the goal posts" whenever it seemed that a settlement might be in sight.

Steele remains convinced that Martin McGuinness, and McGuinness only, had the say in regard to whether there was to be an agreed settlement or confrontation in Derry that weekend. Sinn Fein's aim to create a Drumcree-type situation on that occasion had been thwarted by the combination of the Apprentice Boys not acting intransigently and the decisive action of the Secretary of State. As regards the latter, he said it had been helpful, in a way, that the negotiations had broken down earlier in the week rather than closer to the weekend since this had enabled the banning order to be announced and the necessary military/logistical operation to be put into action in good time. Sinn Fein, in the end, had assessed that "the playing field was too difficult" and, seeing that they were not going to win in their goal of creating a Drumcree-type situation, McGuinness, as he put it, had "gone for a draw".

In agreeing with Steele that it would not have been within Simpson's giving to agree to any settlement which embraced the "feeder" parades from other areas/towns (the demand had also been for "consent" in relation to all such future marches), we suggested that it would be equally wrong to dismiss the legitimacy of the fears and concerns felt in regard to those parades in the communities concerned, as voiced by the BRG. In taking this point, Steele said that neither did he under-estimate the "strength of feeling" and widespread "disgust" which nationalists generally felt in relation to Drumcree.

We also availed of the meeting to express again our unhappiness at not having been given some advance notice by the NIO of the SECRETARY OF STATE's banning decision in relation to Derry. We appreciated that the time-scale had been tight (the decision was made earlier that day and we received a briefing on the matter from Steele in the Secretariat at 6 pm just as the announcement was being made), but it would have been appropriate for us to have been given at least one or two hours advance notice, on the normal confidential basis. Reiterating that the NIO had been under strict orders from the security forces not to tell anyone in advance, Steele acknowledged that our complaint was however valid, and one that he would note for the future.

#### **Intention of the Apprentice Boys to parade on the walls**

We asked Steele about media suggestions that the Apprentice Boys might intend to parade on the walls in Derry within the next fortnight. In recalling that Simpson had stated publicly that the Apprentice Boys would intend to walk the walls at a time of their own choosing, he said that the only thing he could say with certainty was that nobody would walk the walls until, at least, the banning order expired at midnight on 31 August. He could not rule out the prospect that the Apprentice Boys would endeavour to walk the full length of the walls thereafter and "sooner rather than later". He also felt that they would not wish to do this "in the dead of night". While it would be illegal for them to march without first seeking and being granted the necessary approval, there was no guarantee that they would intend to comply with this requirement.

867/4

"Black Saturday" Parades

Steele's general assessment is that, while it cannot be ruled out absolutely that some trouble will not erupt at one or two of the contentious feeder parades, overall he feels confident that the parades will go off smoothly. His overall assessment in this regard was based in part on the fact that the Royal Black Preceptory (given their deeply religious basis as compared with the Apprentice Boys or the Orangemen) could in general be relied on to avoid confrontation. While stressing that the police, as always, would exercise operational responsibility in relation to the individual parades, it would be his "guess" that, in the case of a protest at any of this weekend's parades, the police, "generally speaking", would be inclined to re-route, on the day, and that the "Blackmen" would accept any such decisions.

A further significant factor was that Sir James Molyneaux, the Grand Master of the Royal Black Preceptory - with whom the Security Minister, Sir John Wheeler, had had a meeting in the matter - was exerting a positive influence on events. As to whether, beyond that one meeting, Wheeler was keeping in touch with Molyneaux on an ongoing basis in the run-up to this weekend, Steele said that there was no need. Suggesting that Molyneaux enjoys considerably more influence and authority than Martin Smyth does in relation to the Orange Order, he said Molyneaux - who would not countenance any conflict with the security forces - was in active discussion with the individual RBP lodges involved in this weekend's (contentious) parades. It was not widely known, but Molyneaux had been present throughout the night at the stand-off in Bellaghy earlier this month.

As to what other mediation might be underway, Steele said that the RUC were using their influence to mediate with residents and the Black institutions where they were not talking directly to each other.

In welcoming the reasonableness which was evidently being demonstrated by the Royal Black Preceptory, we expressed the hope that all of this weekend's parades would go off peacefully. The agreement which had been worked out in relation to this weekend's parade in Bellaghy was particularly welcome and it was to be hoped that the spirit of compromise which had operated there could also be followed in the other centres (and Newry and Pomeroy in particular) where there was still contention.

We recalled our general view that the right to march had also to take account of the rights of residents that marchers should not go where they are not wanted. Steele responded that the issue was a complex one in that "one man's agreement is another man's veto". Even in the case of towns/villages which were one hundred per cent nationalist, there was often the problem of what to do in cases where the Protestant church or Orange Hall was located in the centre of the town or village.

He added that accommodation was always possible where there was good-will on both sides. In accepting that the agreement at Bellaghy had been "very important", he said that Alistair Simpson's willingness to talk to the BRG had also been a welcome development in this year's marching season, even if the outcome had not been satisfactory. It was also a "good thing" that he was still talking to the SDLP and others in Derry.

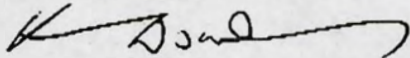
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**Individual Black Saturday marches**

Steele confirmed that no trouble is expected at the main Black Saturday parades tomorrow. These will take place at Carrickfergus, Ballyclare, Sion Mills, Killyleagh, Portrush and Portadown. I attach a note by Christy O' Shea setting out Steele's remarks on the individual feeder parades. As indicated above, Steele is hopeful, barring any unforeseen developments, that most, if not all, of the marches will go off without trouble.

Yours sincerely,



Kieran Dowling  
Counsellor

867/6

**Under Secretary Steele's comments in relation to the individual "feeder" parades****Lower Ormeau Road march**

1. Steele confirmed that this parade had now been prohibited from marching down that section of the Ormeau Road between the Ormeau Bridge and Havelock House. He said that he expects that the Ballynafeigh Royal Black Preceptory will march down the Ormeau Road, as far as the Ormeau Bridge and hand over a letter of protest to the police. They will then board buses at the Lagan Embankment and travel by a "circuitous route" to Havelock House, where they will "adjust their collarets" and march down a small section of the Lower Ormeau Road, turning left into Donegall Pass.

This was somewhat similar to what occurred last weekend except that last Sunday's march had commenced at Havelock House.

It was unlikely that the counter demonstration, planned by the Lr Ormeau Residents Group, would now take place.

**Bellaghy**

2. Agreement had already been reached on this march between the local residents and the local Black Preceptory and no trouble was anticipated. He saw this as quite a significant development where genuine accommodation had been reached.

**Dunloy**

- 3 Residents had put forward proposals at a meeting with the local Black Preceptory the previous day. The situation was "not entirely hopeful" but at least the two sides were still talking. As to what action would be taken if there was no agreement, he said that if there was a protest by the residents, the RUC

867/7

would re-route the march on the day and he expected that the Black Preceptory would accept the situation and not engage in a stand-off.

### Strabane

- 4 Negotiations were taking place (indirectly through the police) - the local Black Preceptory were unwilling to speak directly to the residents whom they saw as a front for Sinn Fein. In the event of a protest, he believed the RUC would turn away the parade and the Blackmen would accept this.

### Ballycastle and Rasharkin

- 5 Steele said no opposition to these marches had emerged and he foresaw no difficulties.

### Newry

6. Residents were still opposed to the march and no direct discussion was taking place between the two sides. A meeting was however scheduled for that evening between local councillors and others with a view to brokering an agreement. While the potential for trouble existed, if the local Black Preceptory obeyed the police, then the opportunity for confrontation would be limited. He pointed out that this parade, which went through the commercial area of the town, had taken place in the past without controversy.

(also told  
free view)

### Keady

7. Notice of intention in regard to this march had been served involving a voluntary re-routing by the Blackmen. It involved a non-controversial route and he foresaw no difficulties.

867/8

Armagh

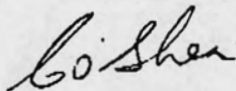
8. The Black Institution have served notice regarding this parade which is through the predominantly nationalist area of the Shambles - it was somewhere through which they should not, in his view, be marching. A voluntary re-routing by the Blackmen seemed probable. Otherwise, given the likelihood of a protest by residents, the RUC would likely re-route the parade on the day and he hoped there would be no adverse reaction from the Black Institution to this.

Pomeroy

9. The Black Institution have shortened their route to some 300 metres in what police believe is a non-contentious area. Given that the Blackmen had already voluntarily re-routed this parade, they took the view that nothing further could be gained from discussions with the residents (who are seeking a further re-routing), seeing such a request as little more than an act of (Sinn Fein-manipulated) humiliation. He also said that there was speculation that people from across the border would join in the protest.

Cookstown

10. The RUC are not expecting any trouble here and no problems are envisaged.



C O'Shea

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D.C.C.

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Ambassadors London & Washington  
~~Joint Secretary~~ M. O'Brien

Recd 30.8

2pm

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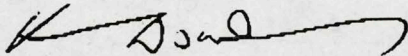
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(also John Fee view)

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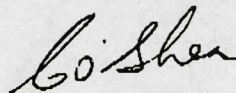
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