

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code:	2021/52/555
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH
BÉAL FEIRSTE

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT
BELFAST

Secure Fax: 1037SF

DATE : 7 September 1998 **NO. OF PAGES (including this one):**

TO: Colm O Floinn
Anglo-Irish Division

FROM: Pat Folan

SUBJ: **Situation in Portadown**

1. Brid Rodgers of the SDLP again contacted the Secretariat regarding the above. She confirmed that things were quiet in Portadown but said that Catholic shopkeepers were still worried about threats to their premises.

2. As a background to the trouble on Saturday, she said that, following the trouble at the shopping mall earlier in the week, she had contacted the local Superintendent on Friday who acknowledged that the police had been caught somewhat unawares by the earlier Loyalist demonstration at the shopping mall. They had assured her they would be fully prepared this weekend. However, she felt that the police had still adopted a containment policy on Saturday and to an extent, handled the Loyalists with kid-gloves (an approach she felt would not have been applied if the focus of the trouble had been from the Nationalist side).

3. Rodgers also mentioned that she had, earlier in the week, met the Chief Constable at the Waterfront Hall and had raised with him the police approach to these Loyalist demonstrations in Portadown. He had accepted her concerns and indicated that senior RUC management were meeting on Friday to reassess policing policy in Portadown.

4. She had received an outline of events leading up to the burning of the Catholic business premises on Saturday afternoon from an adjoining shopkeeper whose premises was also damaged. It appeared that earlier in the afternoon, a Loyalist mob went into the shopping mall creating what she described as "mayhem" and

©DFA/2021/52/555

leading to the closure of most of the shops in the mall. Subsequently, in the region of half a dozen Loyalists had threatened the owner of McCabes (the premises burned down) who at 3.50 had rung the police, indicating that he was closing up due to the threats. The premises was subsequently attacked between 4.30 and 5.00 pm by five to six unmasked Loyalists who burned it out with petrol bombs. Her reports were that the police were not at the scene at that stage.

5. She said that Catholics in Portadown were being very restrained with just a few responding to Loyalist confrontation.

6. Rodgers felt that the situation was getting out of hand and that Catholics felt that the police were not dealing effectively with it and that Catholics and Catholic business premises were not being adequately protected. She acknowledged that, following our representations on Saturday night, there had been an increased policing presence - evident by the fact that no further Catholic business premises were damaged on Saturday night.

7. She also mentioned that Monday was signing-on day in Portadown, in terms of the "dole" and that with the signing-on centre being located at Jervis Street in a Loyalist area, Catholics would be afraid to go up to sign-on. She felt that an alternative should be provided. She will be taking this up with Seamus Mallon.

8. I assured her that I would again take up with the British side, this morning, her concerns regarding policing in Portadown and in regard to Catholic anxieties in regard to the signing-on location.

©DFA/2021/52/555

1/2

AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH
BÉAL FEIRSTE

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT
BELFAST

Secure Fax: 1039SF

DATE : 7 September 1998 **NO. OF PAGES (including this one):** 2

TO: Eamonn McKee/Alan Gibbons
Anglo-Irish Division

ccd 7/9.

FROM: G Keown

Copied directly to the D/Justice

The attached further information has been received from the British side relating to the disturbances at Portadown on 5 September and the Loyalist Band March at Crumlin on 6 September. They should be read in conjunction with the security report conveyed earlier today in SF 1038.

©DFA/2021/52/555

2/2

INCIDENT REPORT UPDATE

The police have provided some further information to the comprehensive report issued by Mr Watson this morning.

Portadown - Saturday 5 September

At approximately 1630 hours on Saturday, during the ongoing disturbances in Portadown, the owner of Slumbertime Towel Rail, a Catholic, was subjected to sectarian remarks by a loyalist crowd. He closed his shop but it was later attacked with petrol bombs causing extensive damage to the building and stock.

Crumlin - Sunday 6 September

A number of bandsmen congregated in Crumlin Orange Hall at 1500 hrs on Sunday. Occasionally they came to the door, played their music and returned inside. Three further bands arrived at the police cordon points at various times and were turned away without incident. At 2039 hours, RUC Mobile Support Unit personnel made two arrests at the Orange Hall after bandsmen attempted to parade. They then made a request to walk through the town to the War Memorial to lay a wreath but this was refused. At 2320 hours police cleared the Orange Hall and the town centre and by 0300 hours this morning the area was quiet. During the police operation, however, one officer was struck by a car at a checkpoint but was not badly injured. The driver of the car was arrested for driving offences.

©DFA/2021/52/555

AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH
BÉAL FEIRSTE

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT
BELFAST

Secure Fax: 1035

DATE : 6 September 1998 **NO. OF PAGES (including this one): 2**

TO: Colm O Floinn
Anglo-Irish Division

cc'd Secretary Gallagher

FROM: Pat Folan

SUBJ: **Disturbances in Portadown, Saturday 5 September 1998**

1. There were disturbances in Portadown yesterday afternoon and last night following a Loyalist band parade. A Catholic owned shop was burnt out following a petrol bomb attack by Loyalists. There were clashes between rioting groups near the car park where the band parade assembled. Petrol bombs were thrown mainly from the Loyalist side. In a subsequent police follow-up operation, petrol bombs were recovered in the Carton Street area.

2. Brid Rodgers of the SDLP contacted the Secretariat last night to express concern about the attacks on Catholic businesses and indicated that she was aware of threats by Loyalist to attack the eight to nine other Catholic owned business premises in the town centre area. She was concerned that the level of RUC protection in this particular area was inadequate. I undertook to make immediate contact with the British side in regard to the concerns she had expressed.

3. I contacted the British side and expressed to them the importance of police protection for Catholic premises in the area and emphasised the importance of an immediate response in terms of additional security presence in view of the concerns expressed. They subsequently reverted to me that the concerns had been passed on to the RUC and that extra police were being drafted in and that those resources would remain available for a longer period than earlier planned for.

©DFA/2021/52/555

4. The British side confirmed this morning that there was no further damage to Catholic business premises in the town overnight but that two RUC officers had been injured in confrontations in a Loyalist estate with what they described as "Loyalist thugs". It appears that up to seven pipe bombs were thrown at the RUC and one officer received shrapnel wounds while the other was concussed. The most seriously injured officer was initially described as being critical but I understand that his condition has improved somewhat this morning and his condition is now described as serious.

Crumlin Band Parade

5. The Parades Commission ruling in terms of the Crumlin Band Parade yesterday was enforced by the RUC. Local bands participated. The input from outside was small. The situation passed off without any incident of note.

©DFA/2021/52/555

CC 7/9/98 HL

AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH
BÉAL FEIRSTE

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT
BELFAST

Secure Fax: 1036

DATE : 6 September 1998 **NO. OF PAGES (including this one):**

GI Section cc 7/9.

TO: Colm O Floinn
Anglo-Irish Division

copied to Secretary Gallagher

FROM: Pat Folan

SUBJ: **Disturbances in Portadown, Saturday 5 September, 1998**

(attached)

1. Further to my secure fax 1035 of today regarding the above, I have just received an update from the other side on the condition of the other officer seriously injured by Loyalists.

2. It appears that his condition has again deteriorated and is now described as very critical. I gather, informally, that there are very serious concerns as to his prospects of recovery.

©DFA/2021/52/555