



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/97/3

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

3 copies

Secret

Copy

(26) + (27)

PST, PSS, S/S Ó hI
Counsellors A-I, Sec
Messrs Teahon, Dor
Dalton, Amba
London & Washingto
Secretary

Meeting with PUP, 10 July 1996

1. We met with David Ervine and Dawn Purvis of the PUP in Castle Buildings this morning. **We undertook not to reveal details of our meeting or even the fact that it had taken place .**
2. Ervine confirmed that the situation was extremely dangerous and that if the stand-off at Drumcree was not resolved before Friday things could get seriously out of hand. He nevertheless pointed to the restraint shown by the paramilitary organisations on both sides of the divide. He was adamant that recent disturbances were not orchestrated and pointed to the fact that there had been no trouble on the Shankill. This, he attributed to the greater sense of community and the tighter control exercised by the paramilitaries. However, he expressed concern about the situation in East Belfast, where there had been serious trouble over the last two days.
3. Ervine pointed out that, in most instances, members of the Orange Order were not responsible for the street violence; they came out, marched and then went home. However, they provided a focus for others who caused the trouble. He was critical of the actions of the leadership of the 'mainstream' unionist parties, pointing out that unionism was effectively being held hostage to its most extreme elements. That said, he argued that it was essential for Trimble's ability to do a deal at the multi-party negotiations that he emerge from Drumcree in strong position.
4. Ervine argued that the parades issue had to be dealt with in two stages. First, there had to be an immediate resolution to the Drumcree stand-off from which both sides could emerge as having given ground but without being humiliated. Secondly, the longer term issue had to be addressed and, in his view, a moratorium agreed on controversial parades.
5. As regards a way out of the immediate problem, he felt that what he described as the "principled" route, under which the local Orangemen would march, without bands and banners, along part of their intended route before diverting. However, he did not dismiss the difficulties that this would represent for the Orange Order, and stressed that it would be viable only if it were perceived that both sides were involved in a partial climb-down.
6. He drew a distinction between the situation on the Ormeau Bridge, where Unionists had recognised that the number of parades over the bridge (which Purvis said had at one time numbered 17 per year) had been excessive, and the situation on Garvaghy Road where the church parade was a one-off event which would have taken only 7 minutes to pass down that part of the main road running through the nationalist area.
7. In relation to the Ormeau Road, he expressed considerable regret that the compromise which had virtually been agreed last year had been destroyed by "two minutes of

television"portraying Trimble and Paisley dancing down the Garvaghy Road. He claimed that Purvis, who is from the Ormeau Road, had played a significant part in putting together that compromise. He was critical of the role played by Deputy Chief Constable, Ronnie Flanagan, who he accused of having lied to both sides.

8. Referring back to the damage done by news reports of last year's display of triumphalism on the Garvaghy Road, he recalled that unionists too had been affected by television sound-bites, citing Alex Maskey's threat of a long, hot summer. He emphasised that the main reason for unionist anger in relation to the Garvaghy Road and the Ormeau Bridge was that they believed that resistance to Orange marches was being orchestrated by Sinn Féin.
9. Ervine described the murder of Michael McGoldrick as "a personal tragedy". Despite the UVF statement, issued later in the day, denying involvement, Ervine made no effort to counter the widely accepted view that the murder had been the work of elements in the UVF's Mid-Ulster Division. He referred to a "problem" and a determination to resolve it, although he stressed that he had no influence on precisely how this would be done. He asserted emphatically that the UVF ceasefire was intact.



David Cooney
10 July 1996