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cc Secretary O'Halloran
Mr O'Flaherty
cc d 10/4

in Paradise '96

Secure Fax: 338

8 April 1996

No of pages including this one: 2

To: HQ *JMS*
For: James McIntyre

From: Belfast
From: F. Boughton

Ominous signs from the Ormeau Road

1. It now transpires that the hopes of a relatively incident free start to the marching season were ill founded. Despite earlier media reports of a token protest by the Ballinafeigh Walkers, signalling that a letter of protest would be handed over at the RUC blockade and that they would then proceed to Portadown, it now seems that the first Ormeau Road parade will be used as a stand-off between Loyalists and the RUC. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this was a pre-arranged strategy, with the intention being that more and more orange groups will join the ranks of the Ballinafeigh group (originally about 60 in number). It seems likely that the main event in Portadown with over 5,000 participants may be cut short with the marchers proceeding to the Ormeau Road during the early afternoon. It is possible that the RUC will move to head off any attempts in that direction.

2. A significant feature this morning is the fact that the Nationalists residing on the Ormeau Road have stayed away from the conflict - but this may have been based on a belief that the incident would be short lived. As the day goes on the potential for serious confrontation between Loyalists and Nationalists in the area will increase. The possibility that the RUC may call in the army at some stage during the day is also a prospect.

3. As of now (midday) a tense situation has developed between the Apprentice Boys and the RUC. The number of Loyalists has risen from 60 to over 200. There were scuffles between police and protesters earlier when the police cordon had to let two fire brigades through. Fireworks were thrown by the protesters and news camera crews were intimidated by angry Loyalists.

4. The Minister for Education Niamh Breathnach TD is due to arrive at the city airport at 5.00 p.m. later today and her official driver is driving up to meet her and take her to a private address in Dunmurry. Bill Nolan will be meeting the driver and the Minister and will take them to their destination avoiding any potential trouble spots on the way.

5. We had already alerted the duty officer on the other side at the weekend to keep us informed of developments. As arranged earlier this morning, I spoke to her to register our concerns at the serious developments in the Ormeau Road and our fears that the protest there may have been organised deliberately to arrive at a Drumcree type situation. Our worries have been duly noted.

cc. Secretary O Hllighan
Mr O Flinn
cc of 10
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12 Parades 96.

Secure Fax: 339

8 April 1996

No of pages including this one: 1

To: HQ
For: James McIntyre

From: Belfast
From: F. Boughton

Ormeau Road - developments as at mid-afternoon

1. The situation on the Ormeau Road still looks as if it has the potential for serious trouble. One of the Loyalist protesters has been hit by a bottle thrown by his own side at RUC lines on the bridge. He is now in hospital.
2. The leader of the DUP, Ian Paisley, has arrived at the scene and he is engaged in trying to work out some sort of compromise with the RUC. Earlier attempts by the Mediation Network for Northern Ireland seemed to have failed.
3. There is a large but discreet RUC presence in Portadown for the main parade of the day. The Apprentice Boys and their supporters are expected to leave the field at the Loughgall Road shortly. It remains to be seen whether they will go home peacefully or head for the Ormeau Road and prepare the way for an appearance by the leader of the UUP.

*Cl Seantay o Allijohn
Mr o Flinn cc d 10
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191 Parades 96

Secure Fax: 340

8 April 1996

No of pages including this one: 1

To: HQ
For: James McIntyre

From: Belfast
From: F. Boughton

Ormeau Road - developments as at late afternoon

1. The worst of the trouble began shortly before 5 pm as Apprentice Boys, returning from the demonstration at Portadown, approached the police cordon at the Ormeau Bridge. As they did so a section of the crowd unleashed a barrage of bottles and stones at the RUC.
2. Police in full riot gear then moved in and, backed by two rows of landrovers, succeeded in moving the crowd some 100 yards back along the Ormeau Road.
3. For a time an uneasy calm existed but a short time later several petrol bombs were thrown at police who replied with plastic baton rounds.
4. There are no up-to-date figures for the number of people injured - prior to the altercation at 5 pm it had been put at 3 RUC (minor injuries) and 2 civilians who sustained more serious injuries.
5. Ulster Unionist Councillor, Michael McGimpsey, is said to be attempting to mediate but the stand-off shows little sign of ending.
6. Gerard Rice, Lr Ormeau Action Group, said the community in the area welcomed the police action and had no complaints about their presence at the bridge.