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NUACHT RAIRÍOAS/News release

For immediate release: 8/8/96

McGuinness meets Bogside Group

Sinn Féin Ard Chomhairle member Martin McGuinness this afternoon met the Bogside residents' Group for a detailed discussion on the current situation.

Mr McGuinness said:

"I have been impressed by the positive efforts of the Bogside Residents' Group to reach an accommodation with the Apprentice Boys organisation.

I pledge my continuing support for a resolution which harmonises the rights of small, isolated catholic communities and the rights of the Apprentice Boys to march.

At this sensitive and difficult time I would appeal to nationalists to remain calm and disciplined.

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Nuacht na nGael/News release

For immediate release: 9/8/96

Sinn Féin Party President Gerry Adams speaking at a press conference this morning said:

"What I want to do today is to repeat my appeal for calm and restraint.

In this post Garvaghy Road and Lower Ormeau curfew situation, with the issue of contentious parades apparently no closer to being resolved, there is a great deal of anger and frustration around. We should not underestimate the effect on nationalist opinion of the Garvaghy Road cave in and of David Trimble and Ian Paisley's role in this. It is important that everyone exerts the strongest possible efforts to control those emotions and that nationalists exercise the greatest possible discipline and restraint.

Two years ago this month there was an IRA cessation. That was a unique and historic opportunity which lasted for 18 months and which collapsed over the British government's failure to engage positively in the peace process.

When we reflect on the great hope of that period and today's tension it is clear that this failure to make real progress is the cause of the crisis over a small number of marches by the various loyal institutions which seek at this time of the year to parade through catholic areas.

The primary responsibility for resolving this issue rests with the British government. There is also an onerous responsibility on the Irish government. It has to ensure that the rights of all sections of our people are upheld at this difficult time.

The events at Drumcree, the capitulation of the British government to the use and threat of greater force by unionists, and the language and behaviour of the unionist leaderships have all made a difficult situation much worse.

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There is therefore an onus on Unionist leaders to reflect on this and to use their influence to ensure that the various loyal institutions talk to the people from the areas through which they want to walk and seek their consent.

There are over 3,000 parades by the loyal institutions. Less than 1% of these marches are a source of contention. Is it beyond our ability to find an accommodation?

I have always believed that the Siege of Derry, like the Battle of the Boyne and the various loyal institutions are as much a part of the diversity of our people as the United Irish Movement or the Easter Rising.

Sinn Féin accepts the right of the loyal institutions to march.

There is no plot, or conspiracy, or desire to deny unionists their tradition or culture.

However, there is a demand that all citizens have a right to equality of treatment and parity of esteem.

The Apprentice Boys talked to the Bogside residents. They were right to do so. Why could they not talk to the people of the Lower Ormeau, Dunloy, Keady, Castlederg, Armagh? Why can the Black Preceptory not talk to the nationalists of Newtownbutler and Roslea?

Dialogue is the way, the only way to resolve these problems.

For my part I will continue to use my influence to appeal to nationalists and republicans for discipline and restraint. I make the same appeal to loyalists and unionists.

What is clearly needed now is an overall comprehensive settlement which puts behind us the annual crisis created by the marching season. That would make a significant contribution to the climate in which the search for a lasting peace is conducted.

All of us have to see beyond this difficult period so that the challenging task of rebuilding a real peace process can be accomplished.