

INTERVIEW WITH DODDIE McGUINNESS, SINN FEIN
RADIO ULSTER - THURSDAY 8 AUGUST 1996

Seamus McKee: Doddie McGuinness, good morning.

Doddie McGuinness: Good morning, Seamus.

Seamus McKee: How do you see the closing off of part of the walls in Derry?

Doddie McGuinness: Well, I think that it probably heightens tension in and around Derry, and the fact that heavy-handed tactics have been used by the British Government to stop people marching on a section of the walls doesn't ease the confusion and the tension that's out there.

Seamus McKee: Well, Unionists of course see this as part of a campaign which, or the result of a campaign, which purports to be opposition by residents but is actually being orchestrated by republicans.

Doddie McGuinness: Well, I think that I have said this on the radio and through media channels very many times: the Apprentice Boys have met with the Bogside Residents on an ongoing basis to try and resolve the situation, and they represent their own community and speak for their own community. I would be a political activist in Derry, I actually have lived in Derry all my life and I do have some views on this issue, but I think that language which heightens the tension in and around the incoming days from Unionist politicians does not help to create a calm atmosphere.

Seamus McKee: Do you belong to the Bogside Residents Group?

Doddie McGuinness: No, I don't. As you know, I'm a member of Sinn Fein. I actually live in the Creggan Estate which is farther out from the Bogside.

Seamus McKee: Will you be taking part in tomorrow night's march organised by the residents?

Doddie McGuinness: Yes, I will, and I think very many people from within the nationalist community will take part in the marches which are organised from five different areas in Derry. And their view is that there should be equality of treatment for all the citizens of Derry, and for all the citizens of the six counties.

Seamus McKee: There are those who would argue that that march should now be called off, given that the Apprentice Boys will not be parading now on that section of the Walls overlooking the Bogside, at least that is the intention of the action of the Secretary of State has ordered.

Doddie McGuinness: Yes, that seems to be the intention that they will not allow them to walk on that section of the walls, but that was not the issue. The section of the walls was not the issue. The Bogside Residents offered in discussion with the Apprentice Boys for those people who wanted to march, to march the full section of the walls. There's a greater problem, which is where the host community, the nationalist community in particular in Derry, needed to be involved in consultation if we were to avert any tension, and any potential protest ...

Seamus McKee: Weren't you being involved in those discussions?

Doddie McGuinness: Sorry?

Seamus McKee:

Weren't you being involved, given that there were discussions being chaired by Mr Hume between residents representatives and the Apprentice Boys?

Doddie McGuinness:

Yes, we were involved in discussions, but what happened with the discussions and where they broke down was that the negotiations fell down on the part of the Apprentice Boys where they couldn't give a guarantee, and I have to say that the two people who were involved in those discussions were some of the top members of the Apprentice Boys organisation. That they couldn't give a guarantee that, such as Dunloy, such as Keady, Rosslea and Newtownbutler, where people march very early in the morning to get on buses to travel to march in Derry, that the consent of those communities would not be looked for. That those communities were not involved in the consultations. I know that Derry is the focus point, that there is a broader issue of other marches throughout the six counties which are causing, I think, tension and problems within the nationalist community.

Seamus McKee:

And that remains to be talked about, whatever happens in Derry at the weekend. But in the meantime, Doddie McGuinness, we have to leave it there. Thank you very much.

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