

S E C R E T

ANNEX AAPPRENTICE BOYS PARADES IN LONDONDERRY - 10 AUGUST 1996

1. On 10 August 1996 the Apprentice Boys of Derry intend to hold five marches in Londonderry to commemorate the 307th anniversary of the lifting of the siege of the city.

Background

2. The Apprentice Boys parade in 1969 resulted in serious disorder and is generally regarded as the event which marks the beginning of the 'Troubles'. Prior to 1970, the parade route included the city walls. Between 1970 and 1994 access by marchers to the walls was generally not permitted on security grounds. Limited access was allowed in 1985, 1986 and 1990. In 1994, following representations from local councillors, public access to the walls was allowed.

3. In 1995 the Apprentice Boys again made application to parade on the walls. On the day of the parade, 300 nationalist objectors staged a sit down protest on the walls, but were removed by police. Although there were no major incidents during the removal of the protesters, there was serious rioting later that evening.

Opposition to the Parade

4. Opposition to the Apprentice Boys has been orchestrated largely by the Bogside Residents' Group which is dominated by Sinn Fein. Its main spokesman, Donncha MacNiallais, was convicted in 1976 of possession of firearms and ammunition with intent to endanger life, and membership of a proscribed organisation. However, opposition to the march is widespread amongst Nationalists in the area. This opposition has focused on two issues; use of the walls and the presence of the Apprentice Boys on the west bank of the Foyle:

(a) Use of the walls. The intention of the Apprentice Boys is that their Parent Clubs should parade around the city walls at 9.30 am on 10 August. This parade would comprise some 300 marchers, accompanied by eight bands. The Bogside Residents' Group and other nationalist opinion object to the parade along the walls on the grounds that it is triumphalist. They particularly object to the use of the section of the walls between Double Bastion and Coward's Bastion. This area, known as the West Wall, overlooks the Bogside.

(b) Presence of the Apprentice Boys on the west bank of the Foyle. Since the events in Portadown and the resultant serious rioting in Londonderry, opposition to allowing the main Apprentice Boys parade onto the west bank at all has



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From the Private Source

4 August 1966

hardened. It is believed that opponents of the parade have considered bringing in very large numbers of protesters to block the main parade route, and that consideration has been given to preventing the parade from entering the west bank of the Foyle by a mass blockade of the Craigavon Bridge.

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