



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Parades
Speaking Points

- We were pleased to note that the parades at Easter went off reasonably quietly, helped by the re-routing of the main Apprentice Boys Parade in Belfast away from the Lower Ormeau Road. I welcome the role played by the RUC in this regard and am pleased to acknowledge their efforts in recent years to police parades in a fair and even-handed way.

- However the potential for serious disturbances will remain so long as parades are permitted to pass through areas where they are not welcome. Last year's parade at Pomeroy, a 97% nationalist town, was an obvious example.

- In the context of the forthcoming July/August marches we believe it would be useful for the Secretariat, with the assistance of the RUC, to review in good time the likely schedule of events and anticipate where trouble may arise.

- By way of example, and because it illustrates a wider point, I would mention the proposed parade in Duncairn Gardens in North Belfast. This is an area where demographic changes have altered the balance in the community. This is a factor which needs to be kept in mind when considering so-called "traditional" parades.

W8727

Parades
Background Note

1. The principal Loyalist parades take place over Easter and during the July and August marching season. The issue of the routing and handling of parades is a sensitive one and is of importance to nationalist perceptions of the efficacy of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The parades issue is in a sense a test of the capacity and willingness of the RUC to police in an evenhanded way.

2. In recent years, there has been an improvement in the policing of Orange marches and greater sensitivity to our concerns as to the routing of marches. We insist on the general principle that parades should not take place in an area, or along a route where they are not welcome - a principle which was reflected clearly in former Secretary of State King's remarks in the House of Commons on 19 June 1986: "How does it benefit anyone to march through an area where the inhabitants do not support the views being expressed by the members and where the only result is to exacerbate communal tensions?". We are aware of the Chief Constable's view that decisions on the routing and handling of parades are, in the final analysis, matters for the judgment of the local RUC Commander, but this view must not obscure the principle referred to above, or the objectives of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

3. Easter Orange parades were discussed in advance at a dinner in the Secretariat with the Chief Constable on 14 April. The Chief Constable was personally more sympathetic to our concerns than had previously been the case and indicated that he had given instructions that the Apprentice Boys Parade was to be prevented from passing down the mainly Catholic Lower Ormeau Road, past the bookies shop where Loyalists murdered a number of

Catholics earlier this year. In the event, a single local lodge and band did pass down that road. In general, the Easter parades passed off relatively peacefully. Disturbances, involving altercations between nationalists and young Orangemen returning from a day-trip to Bangor occurred in the nationalist Markets area of Belfast on Tuesday 21 April i.e. the day after the main parade. A young child was injured in these incidents.

4. The perception that last year's July and August marching periods passed off without major problems should not lead to any complacency about the future. Accordingly we will continue to press our concerns in relation to the forthcoming marching season and request from the RUC early indications of planned parade routes. Two points are of particular importance:

- the RUC's approach should take full account of areas where demographics have altered the balance in the community. Lower Ormeau Road is one example. Another is Duncairn Gardens in North Belfast. A biennial Orange march is scheduled for Duncairn Gardens this June. North Belfast has been the location for many sectarian killings in recent months. (Indeed, the RUC have set up a new unit to prevent such killings in that area). Previous such marches have been the causes of substantial rioting. This is in addition to the substantial dislocation and inconvenience caused to local residents by the security measures required to police the march. The 1990 parade led to considerable local unhappiness. We were told by the British side at the time that the parade had passed off without major incidents, but this was at the cost of considerable impositions on the local nationalist population.

We wish to ensure that unnecessary flashpoints are avoided. The Orange Parade at Pomeroy last year is an obvious example. It is self-evident that allowing a parade through a 97% nationalist town is a recipe for trouble. We will continue to glean information on likely trouble spots from our own contacts in the North.

Anglo-Irish Division

23 April, 1992

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