



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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PA-UDA/UFF
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Loyalist Violence
Background Note

1. The trend of increased Loyalist violence continues. So far this year, thirteen people have died as a result of political violence in Northern Ireland of whom seven have been killed by Loyalist paramilitaries, and six have been killed by the IRA or INLA. The UDA and UVF have issued general threats against the "Republican" (effectively, the Catholic) community and against what they call "the pan-nationalist front of the SDLP, the Dublin Government and the cutting edge of the Provisional IRA". This threat has since been extended to embrace constitutional nationalist parties throughout Ireland and the GAA. Threats, taken seriously by the RUC, have been made against specific SDLP representatives and incendiary devices placed at the homes of two SDLP Councillors.

"Loyalist Alienation"

2. The view has grown within the Unionist community that Loyalist paramilitaries have benefitted, both in terms of support and recruitment, from an upsurge of doubt and uncertainty as to their position within the United Kingdom and the British Government's commitment to that position. Suspicions in particular have been expressed by Unionist spokesmen about the British Government's "neutrality" on the issue. John Alderdice has attacked not only the British Government but also the Irish Government and the SDLP over their alleged inflexibility in the talks process and has alleged nationalist inclinations towards a "winner take all" strategy. Superimposed on this message is a warning of increasing Loyalist alienation and Loyalist paramilitary violence.

3. Peter Robinson, taking up a theme he has propounded in the past has warned, in dramatic tones, that Loyalist

alienation exists and has pointed to a "Protestant backlash", arguing that "everything is going in one direction", i. e. in the direction of nationalists. SDLP representatives have criticised Robinson for speaking irresponsibly and in a way which could make his prophecies of increasing Loyalist violence self-fulfilling. Other Unionist politicians including the UUP's Cecil Walker and Willie Ross have echoed Robinson's views. Clearly, there is an element of political opportunism in these prophecies, not least in view of forthcoming local elections.

4. In a number of respects, the arguments and points of view being put forward along these lines have been advanced on numerous occasions in the past and draw on established self-perceptions of a nervous Unionist population which perceives burgeoning Catholic population growth and expansion into heretofore Protestant areas, and increasing economic and employment uncertainties which have been relatively unfamiliar to the Unionist population. It seems clear that the concept of "Loyalist alienation" and the parallel with nationalist alienation which the concept invites, and on which it appears to be modelled by Peter Robinson in particular, has achieved some currency within the larger Unionist community and may be adverted to, albeit in a milder form, by the Presbyterian Churchmen.

5. There is a feeling in nationalist circles that the concept of Loyalist alienation is being seized on and inflated in an opportunistic way by Unionist politicians. Certainly, any incautious use of the term and its relationship to the specific threats posed by Loyalist paramilitaries should be avoided.

Presbyterian contacts with UDA and Sinn Fein

UDA

6. In early 1992, former Moderators Jack Weir and Godfrey Browne, along with Roy Magee (a Presbyterian Minister from a Loyalist area of East Belfast, who is sympathetic to Loyalist concerns) arranged to meet with the Inner Council of the UDA, essentially out of a wish by the Presbyterian Church's Government Committee to do something to stop the paramilitary violence. The meeting took place in February 1992 and little appears to have resulted from it. The Revd. Magee has recently met UDA members on a personal basis in a so far unsuccessful effort to persuade them to stop their violence.

Sinn Fein

7. In April 1992, Drs. Weir and Browne, acting personally, met with Gerry Adams and Tom Hartley of Sinn Fein, again with the aim of bringing violence to an end and with no desire to enter or substitute for political discussions. These meetings have occurred from time to time since then. According to Dr. Weir (with whom an official of the Department maintains discreet periodic contact), the contacts have been low-key and have revealed no change in the basic Sinn Fein position.

Anglo-Irish Division

17 February 1993

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