



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Review of 1993 Loyalist Marching Season

Background Note

1. Our assessment of the 1993 marching season is that, on the whole, it went reasonably well. Several advances were recorded. The following points in particular are noteworthy:
 - the mini-Twelfth parade (on 7 July) on the Ormeau Road (which led to major disturbances and arrests in 1992) was rerouted away from the Lower Ormeau. The smaller "feeder" parades on the 12th July and at the end of August continued along the Lower Ormeau but with little controversy;
 - a contentious parade to the Whiterock Orange Hall in West Belfast on 26 June was rerouted in a way which minimised exposure to nationalist areas. The violent Loyalist response to the rerouting (in which a UVF member blew himself up) and opportunistic references to "Dublin's interference" by Unionist politicians and Orange Order functionaries raised the temperature for the marching season. Fortunately the aftermath did not spill over into large scale violence despite locally orchestrated riots by Loyalist paramilitaries. It is unfortunate, however, that, despite our entreaties that no concessions or retreats be made by the RUC in the face of the threat of Loyalist violence, a subsequent "feeder" parade on 12 July was allowed by the RUC to use the objectionable route not permitted on 26 June;
 - we found it unfortunate that the RUC, during a major Orange parade in Dungannon which passed a nationalist estate, felt it necessary to charge into a nationalist house to remove a single tricolour, while hundreds of Union Jacks were being carried by

Orange members in the parade.

2. As usual, we conveyed in advance of the 12th July to the British side our concerns at possible flashpoints. A regrettable development was the refusal of the British side, at the behest of the Secretary of State, to share with us the RUC's internal schedule of parades. (In recent years, we have received this a day or two prior to the 12th, on an informal basis).
3. Over the past eight years, there has been a process of incremental improvements in the routing and control of parades, even if it has not been as speedy as we would like. Progress is by no means automatic, however. Hence, we make a detailed input through official level exchanges with the British side and discussion each year at Conference level.
4. 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. The Joint Statement issued after the 27 April 1992 meeting of the Conference noted that "the right to demonstrate should be exercised with respect for the rights and sensitivities of others and with regard for the maintenance of public order".

5. The legal basis for the power to ban or reroute a parade is found in the 1987 Public Order Order. We are concerned that the Chief Constable has tended to prioritise one desideratum of the Order (that is, maintenance of public order before and during a parade, which is often achieved at the cost of bottling up nationalist residents), over the power, explicit in the Order, to prohibit parades where they are "likely to cause.....serious disruption to the life of the community". (Art. 5 of 1987 Public Order Order). The power to prohibit parades is one for the Secretary of State.

Outlook for next year

6. We continue to argue that 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. The Whiterock Orange Hall parade on 26 June is another. A third and important example is Duncairn Gardens in North Belfast, a volatile and vulnerable area which is now essentially nationalist. We understand that Orange/Apprentice Boy Parades are planned for Duncairn Gardens next year. (There were none this year). We would wish to put down a marker on this point.

Anglo-Irish Division
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