



**An Chartlann Náisiúnta**  
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## BACKGROUND NOTE

### The Twelfth of July Parades

In recent years the "Twelfth" has passed off quietly. This year's parades were also generally quiet, although there were sectarian disturbances, and one serious plastic bullet incident, in North Belfast. The controversial march through the overwhelmingly nationalist town of Keady took place without incident; most of the inhabitants stayed indoors or left the town. Contacts in County Down, where disturbances have been common, described the year as the quietest ever. The Department presented a paper to the British side through the Secretariat some weeks ago, outlining in detail our concerns, and the information available to us, about several potential flashpoints. Our exchanges in the Secretariat continued up to, and including, the Twelfth itself.

#### Belfast

Although the North's biggest demonstration passed off without incident, there was rioting on the nights of the 11th and 12th July in North Belfast during which two men were injured by plastic bullets. SDLP Councillor Dr Alasdair McDonnell was among several people arrested during a minor fracas in Essex Street on the Lower Ormeau Road, which broke out after several bands passed through the area on their way home. All those arrested were released shortly afterwards. Dr McDonnell's arrest has been raised in the Secretariat.

#### KEADY

Keady is an overwhelmingly nationalist town in South Armagh. According to local estimates, it has a current population of 2,000 - 3,000 of whom there are only 30 to 40 Protestant families. A Deputy Grand Marshall of the Orange Order was reported in The Guardian of 13 July as admitting there are only two members of the Order living in the town.

The Orange Order justified the march through the town on the grounds that Keady was on a rota of traditional venues for the

main Armagh parade. The last such parade took place in Keady eleven years ago.

In the run-up to 12 July, strong representations were made to the British side through the Anglo-Irish Secretariat. We argued

- that the parade should not be permitted through the centre of Keady but should be confined to the environs of the Orange Lodge in Crossmore outside the town and to the small loyalist residential area,
- that the parade deviated from the agreed principle that marches should not go where they are clearly unacceptable to the local population,
- that the parade had raised tension in the area and that other loyalist marches in recent years had resulted in disorder and damage to property.

Mr King himself put forward the principle of acceptability in a statement to the House of Commons on 19 June 1986 when he asked: "How does it benefit anyone to march through an area where the inhabitants do not support the views being expressed by the marchers and where the only result is to exacerbate communal tensions?" We were also assured in this year's discussions in the Secretariat that the general policy is to re-route loyalist parades away from nationalist areas.

Notwithstanding our representations and strongly-voiced opposition to the march by Séamus Mallon, the MP for the area, and Fr McDonnell, the local parish priest, the RUC decided to allow the march through the town, with some minor modifications to the route; the march was routed to avoid the environs of the Catholic church and a small Catholic estate and was to proceed through the town on the way to the "field" only; it was not permitted through the town on return from the "field".

#### Misleading Talk of Consultation

The British told us the modified route was a compromise worked out with local community leaders, including local priests. This proved not to be the case so far as the SDLP and the Catholic Church were concerned and the British were unable to tell us who was consulted. We expressed strong concern in the Secretariat about the misleading reference to local consultation and compromise.

#### Parade Peaceful

On the night before the march, there was a minor incident lasting some hours when loyalists put up bunting in the main street of the town. A crowd of some 50 inhabitants gathered to protest and a union jack and two flagpoles were burnt. After the intervention of Fr McDonnell and the RUC, the loyalists agreed to remove the bunting.

The parade itself, consisting of 150 bands and some 7,000 Orangemen, passed off without incident; the townspeople either stayed indoors or left for the day. The new Chief Constable of the RUC, Hugh Annesley, who travelled to Keady to supervise the policing of the march, described it as a victory for common-sense and said that the controversy had been unnecessary. He added that the banning of the march had never been a good option because of the difficulties involved.

#### Portadown

There were no serious incidents in Portadown, one of the traditional trouble spots, although on the night of the eleventh several plastic bullets were fired in the Edgarstown (loyalist) and Garvaghy Road (nationalist) areas. The Church Parade on Sunday (9 July) passed off quietly, although the Drumcree Faith and Justice Group once again staged a "tea party" protest in the Garvaghy Road.

There was no parade as such in Portadown but loyalists proceeding to buses for "the field" at Keady were allowed to go through the Garvaghy Road at 8am. They were not allowed through the road on

their return from the field. The "Tunnel" and Obins Street were again barred to the marchers.

Limavady

In the past trouble in Limavady has centred around the march on the night of the 11th. As last year, in an effort to avoid trouble, the parade was bought forward to 9.00 pm and it passed off without incident at that time. At midnight a crowd gathered in the main square but there was a strong police presence and there was no attempt made to start a march. The Department was in touch with the local parish priest, Fr Donnelly, who thought that the arrangements had been reasonable in the circumstances and certainly preferable to allowing a midnight march.



Anglo-Irish Section

21 July 1989