



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Information Note - Portadown

The Obins St. / Tunnel confrontations of a number of years ago led to an end in the use of that route for Orange marches in Portadown. While it is generally accepted that the situation has since improved, nonetheless the use of the alternative route through the heart of the nationalist area along the Garvaghy Road, is deeply resented by local nationalists and remains a potentially serious flash-point.

The parades in question are:

- The parade to and from Drumcree church on the Sunday before the twelfth (8 July this year).
- The parade on the morning of the Twelfth itself which last year consisted of local bands on their way to the Railway station to catch buses for Ready. (They were not allowed to parade through Garvaghy road on their return last year.)

While there may be some justification for the parade to Drumcree church, which is located on the nationalist side of the town, there is a far less controversial route available which would at least skirt around the nationalist area rather than go right through it as at present.

The parade to the railway station on the 12th requires a considerable diversion (the most direct route is through the centre of town) and it is regarded as pure coat-trailing. The local nationalist community feel very strongly that it should be re-directed along a more direct and less provocative route.

The parades passed off peacefully last year but only at the cost of widespread and deep resentment on the part of the nationalist community which was subjected to day long security restrictions. A counter protest in the form of a "tea party", which was organised by the Drumcree Faith and Justice Group, passed off without serious incident and will be held again this year.

The matter has been discussed in detail in the Secretariat on a number of occasions. However, notwithstanding our representations regarding the continuing use of the Garvaghy Road, there is no intention on the part of the British authorities to change the route of this year's march, which will again use the Garvaghy Road on the 8th and 12th of July.

B. M. G. G. G.
Anglo-Irish Division
28 June 1990

*PSS
Agreed.
- 2/5/90*

QUESTION No:

To ask the Minister for Foreign Affairs if he has discussed the re-routing of the Orange Parade in Portadown, County Armagh under the Anglo-Irish Agreement; and if he has got an undertaking that it will not be allowed through the nationalist areas of Obins Street and Garvaghy Road.

Peter Barry T. D.

For WRITTEN answer on Tuesday 3rd July, 1990.

Draft Reply

The question of the routing and the policing of parades is of particular sensitivity and importance and has been the subject of discussions at meetings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and in the Anglo-Irish Secretariat in Belfast.

In the case of the Portadown parade, the Deputy will wish to be aware that it is no longer routed through Obins Street. It has, however, in recent years used an alternative route through the nationalist Garvaghy Road which is also an unsatisfactory situation. The Government have conveyed in forceful terms their objection to the continued use of this route and have made it clear to the British authorities that they would wish to see it changed. They have underlined the over-riding principle that parades should not take place in an area or along a route where they are not welcome. The Government will continue to press the British authorities on this issue and will also be closely monitoring the parade situation generally in Northern Ireland in the coming weeks.