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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND - 8 JULY 1986

1. Disturbances before and during the Orange Order Church Parade in Portadown on 6 July have increased community tensions, particularly in that area but also elsewhere in the Province, and suggest that both 12 and 14 July are very unlikely to pass without further trouble.

2. The result of the divorce referendum in the Republic was greeted in Northern Ireland with joy from the Unionists and sorrow from the SDLP.

3. The campaign for "equal citizenship", the flag of convenience for integration, has maintained momentum though we understand that the Policy Committee of the UUP has decided that further public debate should be discouraged.

Portadown

4. It came as little surprise that the Portadown Orange Order Parade to Drumcree Church and back via the nationalist areas of Obins Street and Garvaghy Road was accompanied by violence, beginning when the RUC refused to allow George Seawright (Independent Unionist ex-Assemblyman from Belfast) and Jim Wells (DUP ex-Assemblyman from Banbridge and peripatetic protester) to join the parade, and continuing as the marchers passed through the nationalist strongholds where they and the RUC became the targets for abuse and missiles.

5. It seems clear that Alan Wright, District Chaplain of the Orange Order and chairman of the Ulster Clubs, was in charge of proceedings, though amongst those marchers who joined in the scuffles with the RUC were many who might have been considered more respectable than his followers. There was no immediate evidence of paramilitary involvement in the parade or in the

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violence. Some 27 policemen were injured, and Loyalist anger was also directed at representatives of the media who were present in considerable numbers. Wright's comments afterwards might be interpreted in some quarters as incitement. He recalled Loyalists "acting in a vociferous and volatile fashion against the RUC. I believe their action today is going to start the whole campaign off again, when they are going to become targets". Another marcher was quoted as saying "I hate to say it, but after today you are going to see more attacks on police homes".

6. Observers commented that unlike 1985 when the nationalists appeared genuinely frightened and resentful, and were grateful for the intervention of the RUC, on this occasion they were overtly provocative, seemed to be spoiling for a fight and appeared to delight in the obvious confrontation between the RUC and the Orangemen. It should however be borne in mind that the Catholic estates off Garvaghy Road, Garvaghy, Ballyoran and Churchill Park, are under considerable Sinn Fein influence and it is likely that Sinn Fein will have sought to exploit the occasion as much as possible.

7. Orange marches along the same route as that on Sunday 6 July planned for 12 and 14 July have been banned. The local Orange Lodge is now reported to have submitted an alternative route to the RUC in Portadown. It seems likely that this will be approved and may avoid direct confrontation between Orangemen and nationalists in the town. Feelings will still be running high, however, and RUC handling of the marches will come under the closest scrutiny from participants who may well seek any excuse for further confrontation with the police.

8. Although all other Orange Church parades throughout Northern Ireland involving some 75,000 marchers passed off without incident there is no guarantee that this will be repeated on 12 July. The Newsletter editorial of 7 July hopes that future parades "will provide an opportunity for further ... more dignified demonstrations of the strength of opposition to the pact". It must be considered unlikely that such dignity will

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accompany all the marches which take place on 12 and 14 July.

#### Referendum on Divorce

9. The result of the Republic's referendum on divorce came as no surprise to unionists who displayed smug self-satisfaction in expressing their view that their worst fears of the scale and extent of the domination of the Catholic Church in the Republic were confirmed. The result has been seen as a significant blow to the Agreement and as a shot in the arm to those Loyalists who already feel that the skids are under the Agreement and that the application of further pressure will ensure its collapse. The argument currently being deployed by Peter Barry and others, that the result can help reduce Loyalist opposition to the Agreement by demonstrating that Irish unity is merely a theoretical aspiration with no possible hope of being turned into reality, has caused great derision in unionist quarters who continue to view the Agreement as a pernicious means of involving in the affairs of Northern Ireland the Government of a foreign country whose culture and traditions have been clearly demonstrated as alien and prejudicial to the interests of the majority community in the North.

#### Political Developments

10. The integration/devolution debate drags on. Robert McCartney attracted an audience of 500 to a pro-integration meeting in the Ulster Hall in Belfast on 3 July and a long article by David McNarry of the Northern Ireland Charter Group appeared in the Newsletter of 7 July setting out the contrary arguments.

11. There is evidence of frustration amongst unionist business and professional people, and among unionist politicians less close to the Belfast leadership of the UUP, at the lack of political progress. Some feel that the campaign of opposition to the Agreement has now demonstrated enough strength and solidarity to provide Unionist leaders with a platform from which to bargain with the Government, but all agree that such a move, which is very unlikely to win DUP agreement, cannot happen before the autumn, and some have suggested that any sort of constructive dialogue is unlikely before the next Westminster General

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Election. All are pessimistic about the likely events of 12 July and the rest of the summer.

Comment

12. The outlook for the immediate future is bleak, and for the medium term not a great deal brighter. The 12 July parades have always had enormous symbolic importance for the Protestant community. This year, with feelings already running very high and the violent precedents of 12 July 1985 and 6 July 1986 fresh in Orangemen's minds, the potential for trouble is considerable, particularly if the Ulster Clubs or other Loyalist extremists choose to exploit certain marches to increase pressure on the RUC or to demonstrate the strength of their "ungovernability" threat.

13. The divorce referendum is no longer in the front of peoples' minds, though it has served to remind unionists of the gulf which they perceive existing between Northern Ireland and the Republic and will do nothing to diminish their resolve to oppose vigorously any further implementation of an Agreement designed to bring Northern Ireland into a closer relationship with such an alien state.

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