

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES**

**IRELAND**



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Northern Ireland - Assessment of minority's position in  
in a breakdown situation

General Observations

The SDLP have given us a list of electoral areas where they consider the minority community would be in danger in a crisis situation. We have an administrative map of Northern Ireland which shows district electoral divisions (D.E.D.s), rural districts, etc., as they were in 1971 when the last census was taken. The census figures unfortunately do not give a breakdown of the D.E.D. figures on a religious basis. This is done only for the larger urban and rural districts. In order to assess the number of Protestants-Catholics involved in the danger areas, the parish and rural district figures have been used to estimate the likely proportion in each D.E.D. Where possible this has been checked with the local SDLP representative. Too many inaccuracies should not arise in this way and it gives an opportunity to assess in detail the numbers involved.

On the attached map the endangered areas have been outlined in orange with green lines leading to safer areas where Catholics could flee for protection if attacked. A detailed report area by area, related to the above map, on the minority's position in the event of a doomsday situation is also attached.

It has been difficult to assess the type of attack which the minority might be subjected to. From the Belfast experience it is likely that in urban areas it would take the form of sniping, road-blocks and bombing street by street to force people to flee from certain areas. In the rural areas, attacks are more likely to be isolated incidents, assassinations and attacks on farmhouses. The major factor in the scale and type of attack will be the attitude and/or the presence of the British Army. As long as the British Army is present and attempts to enforce law and order, the scale of any attacks are likely to be reduced. However in any withdrawal situation, it is the opinion of all the SDLP members that I have spoken to, that the UDR and RUC Reserve would undoubtedly fight for the loyalist cause and the equipment available to the UDR (armoured cars, heavy machine guns) would allow them to wage war on a large and decisive

scale.

The overall picture emerges as follows. In the area West of the Bann including Newry there are 215,801 R.C. and 209,395 Protestants (1971 census). Except for Coleraine M.B., Portadown M.B., North Armagh and some areas to the West of Lough Neagh this area is fairly safe from the minority point of view. Although no food has been stocked, numerous escape routes are available if required. The loyalist community is also unlikely to initiate attacks in this area. The above supposition is conditional upon the British Army remaining and no well armed and trained force such as the UDR or RUC Reserve intervening on behalf of the loyalist side. If this happened the minority community west of the Bann could also be in danger as they have no comparable force.

The area comprising East Down R.D., South Down R.D. and Newry No. 1 Rural District is also relatively safe from the minority point of view. It has a Catholic population of 38,736 and a Protestant population of 32,538. The major problem for the minority in this area would be to keep a road open from Downpatrick to Newry so that supplies can be maintained. No contingency arrangements (such as stocks of food) have been made in this area.

In the rest of Northern Ireland i.e. North Down, Belfast and Antrim the situation is extremely bleak for the minority. There is a minority population of 213,382 and a Protestant population of 652,369 in this area. Except for West Belfast and the Glens area of Antrim, the minority population would be able to offer only the minimum of resistance if attacked. Most of the minority is isolated with no avenues of escape and little chance of survival in a doomsday situation. Except for the Belfast area food has not been stocked and there has been no planning or preparations for a crisis situation.

If a doomsday situation does arise, these 213,382 R.C.s will be in immediate danger with minimum chances of escaping to safety. This situation could arise even if the British Army was present, although attacks would probably be reduced in scale. The West Belfast section of the above (93,615 R.C.) would expect to hold out for 3/4 weeks but the rest of the minority, spread over Antrim, North Down, North and East Belfast, without food or means of escape could not hold out for more than a few days.

Annex D - Views of SDLP on doomsday situation

1. The SDLP appointed a committee consisting of Michael Canavan, Dr. Joe Hendron, Paddy O'Donoghue and Frank Feeley to consider SDLP policy in a doomsday situation. The Committee evolved the following general strategy for such a situation. Northern Ireland would be divided into three areas:

A. West of the Bann

North of Lough Neagh from Bellaghy to Coleraine. South of Lough Neagh following the Bann and Newry canal to Newry. They would attempt to take control in this area.

B. West Belfast

Hold out against any hostile forces for as long as possible.

C. Other Areas

No action to be taken with possible exception of South Down.

2. Area A above has been divided into areas where control could be established with existing man-power if appropriate arms and equipment was provided. Other areas particularly towns could not be controlled unless local sympathisers were assisted by regular army units. With regard to Area B, it would be important to establish a link between the West of the Bann area and West Belfast as soon as possible. No action is proposed in Area C because of the likelihood of provoking attacks from stronger loyalist forces in the immediate area e.g. Glens area surrounded in North Antrim.

3. SDLP planning is of course totally subject to whatever assistance they receive from the Irish Government. Michael Canavan met the Minister for Lands on 25th August 1975 and outlined the action which they would like to see the Irish Government taking in the event of a doomsday situation arising. This meeting has been reported on separately. The Government informed the SDLP that further discussions and information gathering would have to take place prior to any response to their proposals.

4. From conversations which I have had with various SDLP Convention members over the last two months and in particular with Michael Canavan, it is clear that their main request in a doomsday situation will be for military advice and arms. Their fear would appear to be that if they have not got immediate access to arms, the IRA will take the initiative and will effectively seize control of minority areas. It is likely that the SDLP would be unable to retain their position vis-a-vis the minority community if they were not able to provide some protection and guidance in a doomsday situation. Prior decisions and planning would be required if the SDLP's strategy is to have any chance of success. It is likely that they will soon start pressing for a response from the Government to their proposals.

5. The SDLP have also made it clear that they do not want to become involved in the mechanics of a relief of distress operation. They see their role as providing leadership both political and to a lesser extent military, to the minority community if a doomsday situation should arise.

Visit to Northern Ireland, 22 October 1975

At the request of Michael Canavan, I attended a meeting at Stormont to meet the SDLP committee set up to consider the relief of distress in a doomsday situation and to obtain information which Mr. Donlon asked him to furnish at our meeting on 19 September 1975. The other members of the committee are Frank Feeley, Paddy O'Donoghue (both Convention members for South Down) and Dr. Joe Hendron (West Belfast). Discussion of the subject within the SDLP is confined at present to the Convention Party.

Michael Canavan gave me a list of areas for each of the 12 Northern Ireland constituencies where the minority would be in danger in the event of a breakdown and a corresponding list of the areas where they would flee if attacked. This information will have to be put on a map and further clarifications will probably be necessary. Michael Canavan has undertaken to channel further questions as the need arises.

Mr. Canavan said that it had come to their attention that the Department of Health and Social Services had alerted all area boards to prepare for a "contingency event" (unspecified) and were told to stock bedding, food supplies and appoint an officer in each area to deal with the matter. He was unsure of what had provoked this action but thought the activities of some of the church organisations may have been partly responsible.

All the Bishops have been approached by a Convention member and asked to prepare contingency plans and in particular to appoint a full-time priest to handle the problem. The response was unencouraging in all dioceses except Down and Connor and to a lesser extent Derry. We are aware of the Down and Connor situation but apparently Bishop Daly has agreed to appoint the Administrator of St. Eugene's (Fr. Desmond Mullan) to look after the matter on a part-time basis. It remains to be seen whether anything will result from this.

Both Frank Feeley and Paddy O'Donoghue reiterated some of the points made to Seán Donlon by Eddie McGrady in relation to the South Down area. The necessity for keeping a road open from Downpatrick to

Newry and the likelihood that many refugees would again be accommodated in Newry and Downpatrick in a breakdown situation. Most of this work in 1969 and during the UWC strike was done by the clergy, GAA and other voluntary organisations. They also referred to the scarcity in Dundalk and other border areas of petrol and gas cylinders (Kosangas etc.) during the last two crisis situations and that it was something which we might note for any future occasions. They both stressed that Kilkeel town had changed over the last few years and that many more Catholics were now living in the centre of town and that contrary to what we had been told (I did not mention our source) the Catholic population in Kilkeel would be very much in danger in any new crisis and are thinking of fleeing to Warrenpoint if attacked.

Dr. Hendron had very little to add to our information on Belfast except to say that the people of West Belfast would stick it out to the bitter end and that in a long drawn-out situation their main problem would be food and possibly the only way to get food in would be by air-drop. He also made the point that the one thing we would need to avoid in a crisis situation would be bellicose pronouncements by politicians in Dublin. He felt it was not appreciated in the South, the effect such statements could have in provoking the Loyalist community into attacks on probably undefended members of the minority in Northern Ireland.

The SDLP's next step is to consider in detail their role in a crisis situation. They do not want to get involved in the detail of the relief operation but to provide leadership to the minority community. When they have their next stage of planning developed, they would like a further meeting to discuss their strategy and what they would envisage as our role in the situation. I said that as explained by Mr. Donlon, while decisions would have to be made at a political level on specific points raised by the SDLP, there was no objection to discussing the planning and problems involved in any breakdown situation.

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Oct 75.

Areas in the twelve northern Ireland Parliamentary Constituencies in which the minority would be in danger in the event of a breakdown.

Derry.

Minority in Danger.

Coleraine.	}	→	Derry or sea
Portstewart.			
Castlerock.			
Ringsend.	}	←	Dungiven
Ballerin.			

Articlave.

Aghadewey.	—	Kilrea
Limavady.	—	Stay
Ballykelly.	—	"
Magilligan.	—	"
Eglinton.	—	"

Mid-Ulster.

Minority in Danger.

Stewartstown. → Coal Island  
Tullyogue, Rock, Sandholes. — Downey  
Coagh, Drumullan, Money, ore. — Aulsebrook  
Loup, Ballyronan. — Newbridge area  
Knockloughrim. — Maghera  
Castledawson. — Newbridge  
Tobermore, Desertmartin. — Maghera  
Lissan, Omtor. — Coalstown  
Killen (Castledery). — Strabane  
Donemana. —

Fermanagh and South Tyrone.

Minority in Danger.

The murder triangle;-

Moy, Coalisland, <sup>Apex</sup> Aughnacloy.

- Coalisland or border

The Clogher Valley;-

Ballygawley, Aughnacloy, Fivemiletown.

- Border

The Newmills hinterland towards Cookstown;-

Newmills, Tullyhogge.

Coalisland

Co. Fermanagh;-

Ballinamallard.

- Coa.

Trillick.

- Drogheda or Torrington

Lisbellaw.

Maguiresbridge.

]- P. S. O. S. B. E. A.

Armagh.

Minority in danger.

All electoral area A.:-

Collegelands, Charlemont, Blackwatertwon, Tullysarron, Annaghmore, Clone<sup>in</sup>ore, Loughgall.

- *Armagh town*

Armagh City:-

Moy Rd. Railway St. Newry Rd. Portadown Rd. Scotch St.

Markethill, Poyntzpass, Tandragee, Richhill, Glennane, Mountnorris, Glady, Granemore,

Ballymacnab

Lisinnon, Bessbrook, Parts of Newtownhamilton.

*Armagh T*  
*or*  
*Keady T.*

Portadown and greater Portadown area.

- *stay*

Craigavon:-

the Burnside Estate.

*stay*

Belfast West.

Minority in Danger.

Lower Falls.

Mid Falls.

Rodney Parade.

Donegall Rd. (Falls End.)

Mid Springfield Rd.

Upper Springfield Rd.

New Barnsley.

Belfast North.

Minority in Danger.

This arēa has mixed areas scattered thro-out and most of the sectarian assassinations take place on the interface areas.

There are two main minority areas;-

Ardoyne.

The New Lodge Rd.

to which the minority population would go for refuge if serious disorder broke out; tho the topography is such that many would have difficulty getting there. The refuge thus afforded would be of a temporary nature and if serious disorder persisted most would try to get to West Belfast.

Belfast South.

Bridges  
commandeered

Minority in danger.

Willowfield.

A small decreasing population with church, ~~the~~ schools, and  
convent under frequent attack from surrounding hostile Loyalists.

Upper Ormeau (Ballynafeigh).

Under attack from anadale and Cregagh Estate (bounded by  
Cregagh R., Mt. Merrion, and Rosetta Rd.). Generally these  
South of the Lagan would be in danger if the bridges were  
commandeered.

Lower Lisburn Rd.

Finaghy and Orchardville.

In danger from the Dunmurray area.

Belvoir Estate.

Most of the minority have now gone.

Belfast East.

Minority in danger.

The Short Strand area which is a small tightly-knit community between the lower ends of Newtownards Rd. and Albertbridge Rd.

Probably sufficiently well organised to withstand attacks for a period, but would be vulnerable to longterm siege or strong well-equipped attack.

Other than above ~~xxx~~ minority fairly widely scattered throughout the constituency, there is a higher percentage in a few streets near Ballyhakamore than elsewhere.

If individual families attacked little could be done to protect.

South Down.

Minority in Danger.

Kilkeel. — Warrington  
Rathfriland. — Hilltown  
Banbridge. — Newry  
Gilford. — Ruygah or Craigover  
Laurencetown. — Ruygah  
Dromore. — Castlewellan  
Killyleagh. —  
Ballynahinch.  
Saintfield.  
Crossgar.

It would be important to maintain a corridor through Co. Down from Strangford to Newry  
i.e. Downpartick, Castlewellan, Cilcoo, Hilltown, Mayobridge, Newry. The difficulty in  
maintaining it would come from Clough-Seaforde, and Rathfriland.

North Down.

Minority in danger.

The line from Strangford (where the minority are well organised) to Portaferry (same applies) and on at an angle of 45 degrees to the North East towards Portavogie (not included) shows to the South almost 100% minority. If required the ferry service-30min- between Strangford and Portaferry would be safe for refugee purposes.

North of the line mentioned is virtually solid Loyalist territory thro-out the rest of the constituency, except for substantial pockets in Bangor, Donaghadee and Newtownards. There is also a large de La Salle Orphanage 200 boys in Kircubbin which has been attacked previously, and would be at risk.

North Antrim.

Minority in danger.

All the minority outside the Glens area (from Ballycastle to Carnlough inclusive) would be at risk, particularly;-

Carrickfergus

*evacuated*  
These must get out quickly, ~~and should go to Carnlough~~  
*sea or prison*

Larne.

Should go to Carnlough.

Ballymena.

Should go to Cushendall.

Ballymoney.

Should go to Ballycastle.

Outline plans for refuge have been made in some areas, and in some country areas especially the minority have good neighbours and fear nothing from them.

South Antrim.

Minority in danger.

Newtownabbey.

W. Belfast

Glengormley.

Bawnmore Estate (Belfast)

Antrim Town.

Heavily outnumbered but concentration in one area would help.

Lisburn

do.

do.

do. proximity to WestBelfast

do. do.

Dunmurray.

- stay

~~do.~~

~~do.~~

~~do.~~

~~do.~~

~~do.~~

~~do.~~

~~do.~~

~~do.~~