

**Northern Ireland and the Anglo-Irish Agreement: Peace in Our Time?**

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(ABSTRACT)

The Anglo-Irish Agreement in November 1985 represented a watershed in Anglo-Irish relations. Its specific aim has been the removal of the unionist veto which has frustrated attempts to settle the Irish Question since the partition of Northern Ireland from the rest of the island in 1921. Heralded initially by many as the "solution" to the "troubles", the Agreement had much to live up to. To an extent initial accolades were functions of wishful thinking and condemnation that of knee-jerk reaction based upon instinctive fear. One can only hope that a path to resolution had been created despite such misgivings and high expectations. One thing has been evident, there has been a general confusion among nationalists and unionists as to what the Agreement allows for.

This paper attempts to analyze where the Anglo-Irish Agreement fits into the scheme of things in the political context of Northern Ireland. In the third year since its passing there seems to be little external sign of resolution to the conflict, certainly nothing that might justify the grand expectations of those who would have seen it realize the ultimate withdrawal of Britain from Ireland. The Agreement remains as contentious now after three years as it was in the days after its passing. This raises the necessity of a re-appraisal of the situation and forces the question, can there ever be a peaceful solution if there continues to be such a fundamental disagreement as to what is at stake? One of the few certainties about Northern Ireland is that if the parties involved continue to approach the problem from opposite and intransigent perspectives, no agreement reached between Britain and Ireland on the future of Northern Ireland which "threatens" to succeed will be allowed to do so peacefully.

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# Chronology of Events in Irish Political History

- 1500-1609** Irish chiefs are turned into English Feudal vassals.  
Ulster holds out, but submits with the flight of the Earls in 1609, followed by the Plantation of Ulster.  
THE REFORMATION.
- 1609-90** Native uprisings and resentment of overthrown Irish aristocracy leads to a series of rebellions, suppressed by the Cromwellian Plantation in 1653. Civil War in England, the political upheavals following the restoration of the monarchy in England after the Revolution of Cromwell (1649), culminates in 1690.  
The Battle of the Boyne.
- 1690-1730** With the overthrow of the Catholic James II, English Protestantism is decided.  
A series of anti-Catholic penal laws suppress Irish Catholicism.
- 1800** Act of Union  
Constitutional, non-violent.

- 1840-47** O'Connell's Repeal of the Union Campaign.
- 1886** Gladstone's First Home Rule Bill defeated in the House of Commons.
- 1892** Second Home Rule Bill defeated in the House of Lords.
- 1912-14** Third Home Rule Bill introduced to the House of Lords, ammended and passed in 1914 only to be shelved on the outbreak of World War I.
- 1916** The Easter Rising
- 1921** Anglo-Irish Treaty Partitions Ireland. Irish Free State set up, along with separate government in six northern counties where Unionists rule until 1972
- 1925** Irish Free State Government confirms border
- 1931** IRA declared illegal in South
- 1939-45** South neutral in the Second World War
- 1949** South becomes a full Republic
- 1956-62** IRA border campaign
- 1968** Civil Rights marches in North end in violence

- 1969 British Army sent onto the streets of Derry and Belfast after widespread violence. Westminster pressured for reform.
- 1971 Internment without trial introduced by Stormont with British government approval.  
Provisional I.R.A. grows in strength.
- 1972 Edward Heath, British P.M., suspends Stormont.  
Direct Rule from Westminster imposed.
- 1973 *March.* White Paper proposes assembly elected by proportional representation.  
  
*July.* Assembly of 78 elected  
  
*November.* Stormont agrees to power-sharing  
  
*December.* Sunningdale conference agreement on British, Irish and Northern Irish power sharing executive
- 1974 *January.* Executive takes office  
  
*May.* Executive collapses as Ulster strike paralyzes province.  
Direct rule reimposed
- 1975-6 Constitutional convention. Local parties fail to agree on government
- 1980 *January.* Constitutional Conference fails

*December* Haughey-Thatcher summit agrees to “joint studies” on range of topics

**1982** Northern Ireland Assembly boycotted by SDLP

**1983** Northern Ireland Forum set up in Dublin

**1984.** *May.* New Ireland Forum report suggests a unitary state, confederation and joint-authority

*November* Thatcher rejects all three options. Talks continue.

**1985** *November.* Anglo-Irish Agreement is signed

**1985-88** Struggle to gain acceptance and meaningful progress.

# Major Participants in the Struggle

## Political Parties

### *Nationalist.*

*Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)* Majority of nationalists in the North. Advocate united Ireland through peaceful means. Formed 1970.

Leader: John Hume

### *Republican*

*Provisional Sinn Fein* Political movement most closely associated with the I.R.A. Advocates violence to remove the British from Northern Ireland.

Leader: Gerry Adams

## *Loyalist*

*Official Unionist Party (OUP)* Original Party that remained in power in Northern Ireland for nearly 50 years before the current troubles led to internal splits and eventual direct rule from London.

Leader: James Molyneaux

*Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)* More hard-line and fundamentalist than the OUP, stridently anti-republican, lacking in will to compromise.

Leader: Rev. Ian Paisley (Very outspoken, charismatic to unionists)

*Alliance* Drew initial support largely from liberal unionist groups. Described itself as an alliance of Catholics and Protestants, an alliance committed to support of the constitutional link with Britain. Claimed to represent a viable alternative to the splintered Unionist Party. Formed 1969.

## **Paramilitaries**

### *Nationalist*

*Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA)* Predominantly Catholic in membership, seeks to drive out the British from Northern Ireland and form a socialist 32 county Republic. Split from the Official IRA in 1969. IRA is illegal in N.Ireland and the Eire.

*Irish National Liberation Army (INLA)* Radical Offshoot of the Official IRA. Though also Republican, it operates sometimes in competition with the Provisional IRA. Illegal Organization.

*Official IRA* Parent to both the Provisionals and the INLA, seeks a working class revolution of both Protestants and Catholics. Has little political or military will in Northern Ireland. Disbanded in late 1970's. Became Sinn Fein-Workers Party; then simply Workers Party. Marxist. No longer Republican.

### ***Loyalist***

*Ulster Defence Association (UDA)* Protestant working-class organization formed in 1969 to counter the growing republican paramilitary threat. Legal (does not claim responsibility for assassinations).

*Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)* Vigilante group formed in 1966 to suppress republicans. Illegal.

*Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF)* Another organization that practices selective assassination and sectarian murder. Known as part of the U.D.A. Illegal.

### ***Security Forces***

*The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)* Northern Ireland's normally un-armed police force. After its collapse and re-organization in 1970, it has steadily taken a greater role in enforcing law and order, assuming primacy in 1977. Predominantly Protestant.

*RUC Reserve* Part-timers who serve as auxiliary policemen.

*Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR)* Reserve component of the British Army made up of recruits from the province, primarily responsible for security check points and patrolling. Overwhelmingly

Protestant. *British Army* Garrison battalion's of regular British Army soldiers on a 2-year tour of duty and rotational units on a four-month tour from their usual NATO duties.

*Garda Siochana* The police force of the Republic of Ireland.

# 1.0 Introduction

The closing images of Northern Ireland in 1987 were once more of death and destruction. On Remembrance Sunday, an I.R.A. bomb in Eneskillen added 11 more people to the list of victims of the "Troubles" since they began in 1969.<sup>1</sup> Shortly before Christmas, John McMichael, leader of the Ulster Defense Association, was assassinated. The latter event, occurring as it did during the supposed season of good will and reconciliation, seems to have reinforced the oft-quoted phrase of Richard Rose, that the trouble with the Irish problem is that there is no solution. As we move into the twentieth year since the beginning of the recent troubles, the fact that the Irish Question is still a "question" at all bodes badly on the two nations which are at the center of the dispute. Given the immense amount of literature which has been offered during the two decades, in which all of the avenues seem to have been explored, the lack of headway toward a solution to the problem is even more disturbing. From time to time a "solution" does raise its head though in recent times, only to be shot down again.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement is the most recent attempt to defy this tradition and keep going in the face of the opposition which accompanies any political initiative concerning the province. The rationale behind the Anglo-Irish Agreement has signified a departure from previous settlement

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<sup>1</sup> "The troubles" is the name given to the series of bombings and maiming of soldiers, paramilitary forces and civilians since the outbreak of violence in 1969 which continues to permeate life in the province on a day-to-day level

tacts by introducing a policy of non-consultation within the realms of unionist party politics. In so far as this represents the deliberate exclusion of the unionist voice (taken as being in opposition to anything that might be interpreted as weakening the union between Britain and Northern Ireland), it is the first indication by the British Government since the partition of Ireland in 1921 that they are no longer prepared to accept limitations imposed upon them by the threat of Unionist veto or to be intimidated by the threat of Protestant resistance.

The Protestant psyche has been probed and the Catholic case has been critiqued. For all of the academic aspirations, the North of Ireland remains in deadlock in a seemingly endless spiral of mistrust and reactionary politics. Part of the reason for this is that "the problem" is viewed as being different to the different participants. For the majority, those comprising the Protestant bloc, the problem is with the demands made upon them by the Catholic minority. In turn, this minority of Catholics sees the problem in terms of a dictatorial oppressive regime in the shape of the British government, and before it, that of the Stormont government. This dichotomy has led to the demand on the one hand for assurance from the British government that the six disputed counties in Ulster will remain part of the United Kingdom, and on the other, the demand for the removal of the British presence from Ulster.<sup>2</sup>

A further reason for the lack of progress in the dispute of the territory of the north-east corner of Ireland is due to the long-term neglect of the British government in checking the inherent inequalities of the Stormont regime from its inception in 1921 until its dissolution in 1971. The fact that the earnest quest for a solution is only a relatively recently adopted ploy of the British government helps to explain why two decades have since elapsed without the resolution of grievances. The tactic of the British government of "wait and see", and various acts promoting the containment of the problem rather than its solution, ran aground with the spate of bombings on mainland Britain during the 1970's and 1980's by the I.R.A.. This culminated in the attempted assassination attempt of the prime minister and the whole British cabinet in Brighton during the Tory Party

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<sup>2</sup> The term "Ulster" will be used to define the six counties of Ulster which are currently under the direct rule of Westminster. The other three counties of Ulster; Donegal Cavan and Monaghan are in the Republic. The categorizing of Ulster to the former six counties as the area of dispute is simply easier to use in the overall context of this paper.

Conference of November 1984. This act brought home the urgency of attempting to finally bring forth legislation which could bring an end to the situation which seemed, by this act of extremism, to have got well out of hand.

Though in recent times, governments have been keen to emphasize that terrorists will not be negotiated with, there is little doubt that without the continued threat of bombings which have been used to draw attention to the situation of the nationalist plight in Northern Ireland, the government of Britain would have continued to drag its feet on the issue of resolution of the Irish Problem. This, after all, is its track record. Whilst one may admire the public stance against "terrorism", i.e. that perpetrators of terrorist acts will never be negotiated with nor their demands met, the Brighton bombing of 1984 seems to have had the desired effect of pushing the British government to the negotiating table. In the 1970's a meeting took place between the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland William Whitelaw and I.R.A. representatives in order to establish what the claims of the latter are. This has been counter-productive as it has increased unionist fears that the I.R.A. demands will be accommodated. The meetings which have been held in recent years have been predominantly with the Irish Republic. Although the I.R.A. has been excluded from such talks, it is clear that the overall interests of the Catholics in Northern Ireland are high on the agenda and this is consistent with the wishes of the supposed terrorist organization, the I.R.A. who want an end to what they believe is the oppression of their people.

The attitude of neglect, which the British are accused of in their relationship to the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland produced a constituency in the Catholic areas which will legitimize and support violence to achieve political ends. This makes attempts at tackling the problem even harder due to the extremist nature of some of the the parties involved. It is because of the intransigent nature of Protestant opinion that the British government has given up on negotiation with the unionists when discussing the long-term solution to the crisis in Northern Ireland. To say however, as the Anglo-Irish Agreement does, that any agreement concerning the future of the province must first meet with majority consensus in the north, has encouraged a mental block against change in the minds of the majority of Protestants. Therefore much of the inter-governmental initiative has been lost. Nevertheless, the precedent has been made for change in

direction over the whole question of who actually decides on the future of Ireland by introducing and cultivating the concept of joint authority over the province over the past nine years.

The Protestant contention has always been that the foreign power (as they see it) of the Republic of Ireland, has absolutely no right of say in the determination of the social, political, economic or religious affairs of the province. The Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 therefore achieved more than the formulation of an agreement between two nations to establish a forum to discuss the problems of Northern Ireland, it signified the beginning of a new attitude which identifies the legitimacy of the government of Ireland to determine future policy in a section of Great Britain. Thus there has been a noticeable shift in the policy of both governments to facilitate this. The British government has implicitly acknowledged the right of the Dublin government to have a right of say in the running of the province and the Irish government in turn acknowledged that Britain is the sovereign state of Northern Ireland and it is through the agent of the British government that the future of the province will be settled. It is the latter concessions which give the greatest hope to a settlement in Northern Ireland. It is the object of this thesis to show that a political watershed has arrived in Northern Irish politics which can facilitate lasting peace if only the parties concerned can realize it and take full advantage of it.

The realization that Great Britain holds sovereignty in the province does not necessarily have to end aspirations on the part of the South to change it. It is significant because it departs from the intransigent attitude of "The British should not be there in the first place". The point is valid but it does not fit into the present realities and is therefore unhelpful. Britain has made it perfectly clear that sovereignty is not at issue in the present scheme of things and it seems unproductive for the Irish government to continue to pursue the ideal at the present time.

There are calls for a radical approach as the only way to break through the deadlock in Northern Ireland. A mass movement of Catholics south or Protestants east has been suggested. Again, it is hard to argue against such solutions if all else fails. There is a reluctance by politicians to go enact such solutions, (apart from some on the left in the Labour Party) thus political realities are an important constraint in the case of Northern Ireland. One wonders therefore at the value of proposals which have little chance of realization in the Northern Irish context. Vast population

movements were witnessed after the Second World War, Britain was responsible for the division of an entire sub-continent. Northern Ireland seems small game in comparison. However, the rule of thumb as far as the British administration is concerned tends to reflect the idea that "you do not desecrate in your own back-yard".

A further possibility may be to give up on the situation entirely and hand over responsibility and jurisdiction to the United Nations. One can only speculate what would take place and how the UN would choose to handle the situation. It is difficult to see how this could be regarded as a "solution" to the problem. It would solve Britain's problem in so far as it has been the sovereign power in Northern Ireland and has held ultimate responsibility for its governing of the province and its soldiers have been the target of many nationalist paramilitary attacks. The Protestants, without a British identity any longer, may be forced eventually to accept the inevitable, and participate in a settlement imposed on them by a United Nations body. This may take the form of a united Ireland in one form or another, perhaps heavily subsidized to make its merge with the Republic smoother. It is pure speculation as to what a ruling body, such as the UN would do under these circumstances.

The nature of the problem, one of identity, will be focused on in chapter one. This will examine how the voice of the Protestants has been a major factor in the status-quo leading up to the talks between the British and Irish governments, and how lack of progress made towards peace in Northern Ireland via Unionist consultation has been a function of their "siege mentality" and reliance on their *Orange Card*<sup>3</sup> to get them out of any commitment to a united Ireland or any agreement which may fall short of a return to direct majority rule. The Protestant/Unionist view is diametrically opposed to that of the majority of the Catholic populace. Whilst the former demands continued protection from the British government and an assurance that the north of Ireland will remain "British", the Catholic/Republican, disillusioned with what it sees, even after direct rule, as a Unionist state, demands the re-unification of the island of Ireland. This apparent zero-sum game

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<sup>3</sup> The Orange Card is the threat of non-cooperation with the British government and even military resistance against it, should it decide to abandon the province to the specter or Direct Rule from Dublin.

is further complicated by the wishes of two governments which have taken the problem out of the province in an attempt to try to solve the problem externally.

The British government is locked in the paradox of committing itself to the protection of majority (Protestant) rights whilst involving itself in negotiations with the Irish government which seeks to compromise those rights through a redistribution of power in Northern Ireland and ideally to a unified Ireland at some stage. The Irish government is therefore viewed by this majority as hostile which helps explain their reluctance for the Irish government to have any legal say in the running of Northern Ireland.

The Dublin government is in an equally confusing position. The government is constitutionally and ideologically committed to the eventual re-unification of Ireland but the practicalities dictate that it probably would be unable to cope with the pressure of a province with the economic difficulties of the magnitude of Northern Ireland on top of its already underdeveloped economic base. Moreover, its own economy is vastly different to that of the province which it is apparently willing to take on board.

In ideological terms, Irish nationalism draws on two traditions, constitutional and physical force. Throughout the struggle for Catholic demands for equal rights and later, for Home Rule both of these elements have taken prominent position in the nationalist cause. Currently, the Social Democratic and Labour Party in Northern Ireland maintains the constitutional route to its ideals whereas Sinn Fein holds that force is appropriate because of the illegitimate presence of the British in the province to begin with.

The second chapter will look at the various struggles to achieve settlement since the overt conflict was initiated during the civil rights marches of the 1960's by the Catholics. It will look at the plethora of solutions which have been tried including the step to abolish Stormont and attempt to replace it with a power-sharing executive. The use of the army to preserve law and order has not produced anything that has helped bring a solution any closer. Initially used as a short-term measure, the army remains twenty years after its introduction onto the streets of Northern Ireland.

Faced with a realization that a solution was needed quickly, a whole range of possibilities were aired during the 1970's, but none which could tackle the problems which remain the legacy of the

historical and political struggles outline in chapter one. The British government, through the introduction of the army on the streets, internment without trial, and other policing tactics unthinkable to the average mainland citizen, has created dangerous precedents in terms of citizens rights in the United Kingdom. In the worst days of the miners strike in Britain (1984-5) there were no signs to enforce similar policing strategies but there is no reason to think that they may not be implemented in the context of a worsening economic situation of the majority of northern industrial cities there. Therefore the problem of Northern Ireland is relevant to aspects of British life other than the drain it puts directly on the British economy.

The fall of Stormont, so long the bastion of Protestant privilege, gave way to an attempt at a power-sharing executive in 1974. Its failure so close to the fall of Stormont is understandable in hindsight. The Protestants had nothing to lose at this stage and had still the unity to fight off what they saw as a step toward rule from Dublin. The British, reluctant to go ahead with enforcing an executive on them without their cooperation (an ideal it still holds) backed down and reimposed direct rule. A renewed commitment to a solution was therefore put back while the British government, lacking a more constructive initiative, re-imposed direct rule.

The third chapter will focus on the politics surrounding the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985. It will examine the evolution of the Anglo-Irish dimension into the attempt to try and build a solid basis for future talks on the Irish question and how it tries to withdraw from the never-ending circle of proposal and out-of-hand rejection which has plagued all attempts at coming up with an acceptable solution to all parties in the dispute. The Irish government, increasingly frustrated with the situation in the north, made overtures to the British for negotiations which British Prime Minister, Thatcher, met with initial vigor, though supplemented with a tough approach which was characteristically uncompromising. This stance was exemplified by her reaction to what she termed "moral blackmail" during a nationalist hunger strike in 1980-81. This stance also almost led to a termination of cooperation from Dublin at this stage in the brief series of meetings that had taken place between British and Irish governments around that time. By continuing talks progress was once again made in negotiation so that by 1984 an Anglo-Irish Agreement had been mapped out

in the hope that in the decade since Sunningdale, a power-sharing agreement (albeit from outside) could take root.

The fourth chapter will focus on the provisions set out by the terms of the Agreement and examines the various reactions, domestic and international after its passing. The Protestant reaction was one of age-old condemnation which, though not surprising in its character, was remarkable in its universality. It seemed as though nothing had been learned since Sunningdale. A blanket rejection from unionist quarters along the lines of 1974 displayed a stubbornness of the highest order. In the face of this, Thatcher held steady. The failure of the unionist bloc to repeat the "success" of 1974 in sabotaging the agreement through stoppages and strike action was due in part to the different dimension which the agreement had brought. The Agreement had not courted Protestant participation in its forming and so there was nothing to withdraw from as there was with the Sunningdale Agreement which enlisted the active support of the Official unionists under Faulkner.

Confusion abounded as to what the Agreement represented. Though it stipulated that the unionist bloc had to vote for any constitutional change which the province may undergo, most could not get past the involvement of the Irish government in their appraisal of what the Agreement actually entailed for them.

The SDLP, understandably bemused by the out of hand rejection by the unionists continued to work toward the ideals of power-sharing though the vehicle for them had still to materialize. The SDLP staked its reputation on the Anglo-Irish Agreement in the face of the cynical Sinn Fein cries of "sell-out" (borrowed from the Rev. Ian Paisley) and insistence that the Protestants would not be prepared to involve themselves in any equal partnership with the Catholics. The latter observation proved regrettably correct in the days following the Agreement.

The fifth chapter examines the three years since the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. It examines how, if at all, the respective governments have been able to keep up the momentum of consultation and negotiation going following the initial reactions which indicated a bleak future for it. There is further concern that the British government has jeopardized the Agreement through a series of insensitive stances over issues relating to the security forces handling of their duties in general and an alleged shoot to kill policy in particular. Equally disturbing has been the frosty re-

ception that has accompanied concerns raised by the Irish government. The Agreement makes clear the need to work jointly on matters which concern the state of security in Northern Ireland. The refusal of the British to put this into effect where it clearly applies, is a definite hindrance to the Agreement living up to its full potential.

The concluding remarks examine what the potential of the Anglo-Irish Agreement is. It will also pose the question of whether or not there has been a subsequent change in unionist or nationalist strategy since the negotiations began in the early 1980's.

In the three years since the passing of the agreement and its ratification in the World Court, how much effect has the agreement had in real terms? That is, has the agreement proved to be a watershed in Anglo-Irish relations or yet another vain attempt to outflank the outflankable? In its 1988 review, should the agreement be abandoned and added to the long line of tried and tested solutions since the realization that containment of the problem to Ulster was no longer an alternative solution of actually trying to get to the roots of the problem. Alternatively, should it be viewed in the light of a treaty which has been strong enough to stand up against reactionary slurs of the opposition blocs only in calmer waters to be unable to catch a favorable wind. If the latter, in which direction should one set the sails in order to catch a fresh breeze? If the former, is there any hope of avoiding the continuing current towards the waterfall?

There are answers to these questions on both optimistic and pessimistic levels. Given that the Anglo-Irish Agreement itself was not meant to bring about total resolution of the extremely complex web of factors thus far hindering a resolution, it can not be judged on such terms. It did and still does represent an attempt to create a forum from which the Irish government can be actively encouraged to participate in decisions concerning the Catholic/Nationalist position of Northern Ireland and the joint security concerns of both the United Kingdom and Ireland pertaining to the use of the Republic as a haven for suspected perpetrators of violence against security forces in Northern Ireland.

The hope that Agreement had broken the back of extreme nationalist support has been undermined. The SDLP seems to be at a stalemate and even recent talks with Sinn Fein have produced no break-through. Hope however is starting to arrive as some unionists, frustrated with

the persistence of the Agreement, are contemplating a power-sharing initiative which would not include the voice of the Irish Republic. In the context of Northern Ireland this in itself represents a breakthrough in Protestant attitudes.

Ultimately it is a breakthrough in attitudes that may one day facilitate a solution in the province of Ulster. It is to be stressed that this is the only way to a peaceful solution and the only way given the persistent refusal for the British governments to allow anything that does not gain majority support in the Northern Irish community. This rules out, at least for the time being, a solution of a more radical nature, i.e. enforced from without. It is to the former cause that this thesis tries to address. There are signs of transition in the thinking of the unionists. It is evident that this is due in part to the effects of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It is also clear that in itself, the Agreement only represents a starting point and not the finely tuned coach which British ministers have suggested. It is time to move ahead in Northern Ireland, to design a new initiative or to build upon the old one.

## 2.0 The Question of Identity

It hardly matters whether an individual interpreted events in the seventeenth, eighteenth, or twentieth century terms. In Northern Ireland the conclusions drawn for or against the regime are much the same in one century as the next. (Rose 1976 : p.354)

The divisions within Ulster today are derived from and embedded in certain historical events stemming from the plantation period in Ireland. Elizabeth I after her accession of 1558 tried to establish the Protestant religion in Ireland. By 1580 the strategy had developed into one of “planting” British settlers in an attempt to form a sort of vanguard of loyal subjects to the crown. This population grew throughout time and, unlike settlers in Ireland before, these did not assimilate into the Irish culture but preserved their own distinct form of life and custom. By taking the best quality land from the indigenous Catholic population as part of settlement privileges the British ensured the gradual emergence of the Protestant ascendancy. The defeat of James II, the Catholic King of England, at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 by the Protestant William of Orange reinforced the dichotomy between settler and native. It now became a comparison between the victorious Protestants and the conquered Catholics. During the eighteenth century, the heavily populated northern region drew wealth and expansion from the industrial revolution in contrast to the rest of the country. The eighteenth century also brought political awareness which led to demands for Catholic rights which had been displaced under the colonial presence.

In 1829 the Irish Catholics gained voting rights under the Catholic Emancipation Bill along with their British counterparts. This was a major step in reversing the discriminatory laws which barred Catholics from office, from bearing firearms, from educational facilities, and from inheritance. The more ambitious demands for Irish Home Rule which gathered pace in the second half of the nineteenth century were taken as a more significant threat by Protestants. Home Rule became synonymous with popery and the specter of religious intolerance in Post-Reformation Europe even though the real threat from the Spanish was dead by 1714.<sup>4</sup> By the eve of the first World War the Home Rule Bill, giving Ireland independence from the United Kingdom was on its third time in the House of Lords. Its passing was compulsory due to the law that the the Lords can only act as a delaying agent in the passing of a bill. If a bill passes through the House of Commons on two occasions it may be blocked each time by the Lords. If however it passes through the Commons on its third reading, the House of Lords is obliged to let it pass into law. This was the stage which the Home Rule Bill had reached on the eve of The First World War.

The outbreak of war in 1914 meant that the bill was shelved and the future of Ireland hung once more in the balance. The northern Protestant population, prepared to use arms to fight incorporation into a independent Ireland saw their final opportunity to stave off Home Rule. Many took the opportunity to lay down their lives for King and country. Catholics from all over Ireland also joined the war effort, not due to any particular feeling of allegiance to the crown but out of a feeling of what they thought was right. Those who enlisted followed a tradition of Irishmen committed to fighting for a cause they perceived as honorable. William Redmond spoke of this when he encouraged Irishmen to enlist in the British Army. As leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party he praised the unity of hearts which was represented by the whole spectrum of Irishmen, fighting side by side and not against each other. The hopes that this comradeships could be continued in a united Ireland under Home Rule after the War was partly ruined by unionist determination at home and partly due to the events of 1916. Britain granted exclusion for the Protestant dominated coun-

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<sup>4</sup> A reactionary stance was taken against such perceived threats by the creation of the Orange Order in 1795

ties from having to join the rest of the island under rule from Dublin. Some Catholics, impatient with the fact that Home Rule had yet to be won, took their opportunity at Britain's weakness.

The Easter Rising of 1916 was a weak but heroic attempt to snatch independence from the British. The brutal way which it was put down provided the heroic label. The fact that it has remained a source of anger for many present day Republicans is testimony to the need for a strong settlement which can outweigh a nationalism which has a deep historical tradition. Though the rising had gained only minority support and participation from the population, the British reaction created martyrs which have been commemorated every Easter since. It should be noted however that the Protestant population is just as effectively able to summon up the historical evidence of siege and massacre experienced by fellow Orangeman at the hands of the Catholic forces.

The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 was a recognition of the right to self-determination of the Irish people but it also gave the Protestant population the right to choose their destiny. Their choice was to remain part of the United Kingdom and under the terms of the treaty they were given a devolved, local parliament. Though ultimate power lay in Westminster, the running of domestic affairs in the newly created province lay with the Stormont government of Belfast. Foreign policy remained totally in the hands of the Parliament in London. The Irish Free State was engaged in a civil war from 1921-23 involving the Free Staters who were the government formed from the 1921 treaty with Britain, and the "irregulars" who continued to fight for an all Ireland republic of the full thirty-two counties as opposed to the twenty-six allowed for in the treaty. Finally, in a no-win situation Eamon De Valera, leader of the rebels, made peace and formed Fianna Fail, the opposition party to the Fina Gael government. DeValera became prime minister as head of Fianna Fail in 1932. Recent evidence suggests that DeValera did not want a united Ireland if it meant compromise with the Unionists. The implication of this is that a twenty-six county Catholic Republic was preferable to a thirty-two county state which abandoned its unique hegemony of Gaelic history and culture. De Valera promised his followers that the constitution that he planned for would be in accordance with the traditions, aspirations and the philosophy of life of everyone. Yet, as Bowman points out, there were **two traditions, two sets of aspirations, and two distinguishable philosophies** which had to be reconciled.

The concept of political culture best demonstrates the cleavage: were there not two "intelligible webs of relations" on the island of Ireland? Further, was not DeValera's constitution as finally passed emphatically the expression of one of these political cultures; and far from being suited to a united country was it not antipathetic to the traditions of Ulster Unionist society, the spirit of its public institutions, the passions and the collective reasoning of its citizenry, and the style and operating codes of its leaders? (Bowman; 1982: p123)

The territory now known as Northern Ireland was specifically created to give the Protestants a majority and an effective stranglehold on the province. The gerrymandering of borders secured a domination of seats in the newly formed Stormont regime and reinforced the built in 2-1 majority of Protestants to Catholics. The irony of the treaty was that both the British and Irish governments saw the split in Ireland as only temporary and sure to fold within six months. Such optimism proved mistaken however. Though it seemed economically non-viable, the Stormont regime continued to find its feet and consolidate itself under the reluctant wing of British protectionism.<sup>5</sup> A situation developed which neither the Free State nor the British government desired, yet the latter was willing to commit itself to the preservation of the Anglo-Irish treaty. Though frustrated, the Irish government was helpless to the permanence of the situation. It was totally unrealistic for them to try to challenge the status-quo militarily. The I.R.A., was declared illegal in the Free State and effectively routed from overt political action there. There remained pockets of sympathizers but these were perceived as posing no further threat to the Dublin government. The government in Northern Ireland were always aware of the hostile nature of Catholic sentiment in the South and of the uncertainty of the British government on the mainland. This certainly explains the suspicion that the regime developed with regard to its dealings with both the British and Irish governments and is responsible for the siege culture mentality which has been prevalent in the north in its dealings with both parties. The South has never relinquished its claim to the North by removing it from its constitution. Perhaps this would be the first step in breaking down the barriers between intransigence and productive discussion and initiate a softening of attitudes which may facilitate an end to the civil strife which has torn the community apart in Northern Ireland over the last twenty years.

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<sup>5</sup> One reason why the British were reluctant to take on the North was that they agreed to subsidize it. This has been an expensive decision for the British government which has had to cope with a high unemployment rate together with a massive burden of welfare payments and infrastructure responsibilities which are consistent with those in Britain.

It seems, given the provisions set out by the 1920 charter that Great Britain did not have an overwhelming desire to keep any part of Ireland. The option was given for all of Ireland to leave the union which had been in existence since 1800. Though there were some Conservatives who were hanging on to the Empire, the majority of parliamentary members in London were ambivalent to the plight of the province. The landlords had been bought out of Ireland and so there was no longer an absentee interest in the land. The survival of Northern Ireland thus became an expensive and political embarrassment to the British, though one they were prepared to honor and were able to cope with. While protectionism became the only meaningful way to describe the relationship between Great Britain and Ireland, the inequalities in housing and employment (which became the feature of Protestant rule in Stormont) created fueling of passion which was vented on the streets through the civil rights movement in the late 1960's.

Once at the forefront of media attention, the situation in Northern Ireland ceased to be a "containable problem." The raw violence of Bloody Sunday in 1972 and the results of subsequent bombings emblazoned across national television and sensationalized in Fleet Street ensured that there was no longer a hiding place for the British government. The attitude of British Labour Prime Ministers have generally been more sympathetic to the plight of nationalist sectors of the Northern Irish community. Harold Wilson made overtures to the effect that the republican movement had legitimate grievances. James Callaghan noted with a tinge of disdain that;

Here they are with all the panoply of government, even a prime minister, and a population no bigger than a few London boroughs. They don't need a prime minister, they need a good mayor of Lewisham. (Finnegan p120)

Despite the unofficial stance of the government of Britain in the early 1970's the official stance remained in support for the maintenance of British presence in Ulster. A major shift in policy however came after a worsening of the violence; the decision to send in the troops. The Stormont government was no longer assumed to be in control. Though the troops were sent onto the streets of Northern Ireland initially to protect Catholics, the divisions within the Northern Irish community deteriorated further and the army became regarded by the Catholics as just another agent of British imperialism. The point of no turning back came when the first member of the British army was killed. Bloody Sunday has been relived in two different ways. The Catholic version of the

events of January 30th, 1972 is of the indiscriminate shooting into a crowd of peaceful protesters by the British soldiers. The official version offered by the British government backed up the army in stating that the army was fired upon first by snipers and that the crowd deliberately shielded the perpetrators with their bodies. It is also claimed that some of the dead were known I.R.A. members and that weapons had been removed from their bodies after being hit. Whatever the reality, the fact remains that this day produced a contemporary reference point for those who may have been more reluctant to fight against British tyranny of the time of William of Orange. The British government, for want of an alternative strategy in the wake of Bloody Sunday, reintroduced direct rule from Westminster. William Whitelaw, the Conservative Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, worked out a power sharing package which was designed to give a meaningful say in the running of the province to the Catholics for possibly the first time since the creation of the province in 1921. The response to the Heath government's initiative was one of rejection from all sides of the community. The combined efforts of the Protestant workers strike and the reluctance from Sinn Fein to cooperate in a similar assembly to the one which had perpetrated their economic deprivation, meant that the Sunningdale Agreement met with a bitter end. The SDLP stood by the agreement which it helped to create but the political situation was such that it began to lose support from the nationalist community by continuing to stand by it. The story of the latter part of the seventies and early eighties was once again of "*wait and see.*" While the government of Britain observed a major campaign of terrorism on the mainland and wept where appropriate for those dismembered in pubs and attending parades, hopes that public revulsion would be enough to see off those scoundrels were dashed. For, as Britain has yet to learn it seems, the conflict goes much deeper than that. Eneskillen has merely reinforced this lesson.

## 2.1 *The British Position*

The British government is the central actor in the debate over the six counties because it has ultimate sovereignty over the province. This is not altogether clear or meaningful in the particular case of Northern Ireland. Instead of being able to dictate the politics of the province, more often than not the British government has been intimidated by repeated threats from the Protestant population to make any change in the status quo unworkable, and by the threats of nationalist forces to continue their campaign of violence until resolution to their satisfaction (i.e. a united Ireland) can be attained. The result of this tail wagging the dog scenario is that Great Britain has been cast in the role of defender of the Protestant majority and by default is seen by the Catholic minority as dually responsible for the bigotry which it has experienced under the British flag since 1921. To add to the confusion the British position has been one of contradictory stances. On the one hand, the continued economic bailing out of Northern Ireland by the British government and the decreasing advantages of social and political links which it endures indicates a desire to withdraw from the province. Paradoxically, the British have consistently chosen to respond to Irish claims to the whole island by reinforcing its own position. In 1937 Britain treated such claims as not affecting the fundamental position of the Irish Free State, stating that the Irish constitution could not affect the position of Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom (Hull p106 1975).

The constitutional position of the relationship of Great Britain to Northern Ireland has remained intact since 1921 against a background of uncertainty in what to do in order to deal with Free State claims to a united Ireland. In waiting until being forced to do something following the violence of the civil rights movement, Britain has risked losing the possibility of ever finding a solution. It is interesting that Northern Ireland has never been amalgamated into Britain in the same way as Wales or Scotland. If it were, then the future of the province may indeed have been fixed back in 1921. Speculation of *what might have happened* is at best inappropriate and at worst irrelevant as constitutionally the northern section of Ireland remains part of the union formed in 1800. The 1949 Ireland Act had a bonding quality in that it was guaranteed its position under British rule

as long as Stormont required. The fall of Stormont technically leaves this question open once more. The point is that the future of the North lies in British hands solely because it has the power to undo any treaty it has ever made in Northern Ireland. Ultimately, *what Westminster has given, Westminster can take away.*

The major factor against revoking past agreements is that it is not democratic in the Northern context. When one notes the 2-1 majority of pro to anti-British involvement in Northern Ireland this would seem valid. Yet in the context of a province born out of violence and an unashamedly corrupt gerrymandering of borders which would otherwise show a much larger proportion of people supporting the severance of ties with Britain, democracy seems to be a moot point. Taking into account the whole of Britain together with the whole of Ireland, the majority of the people express a desire for British withdrawal or else shows an ambivalence toward the situation. This second stance has become less prevalent in recent years since the mainland bombing campaign by the I.R.A. made every British citizen a direct target of the nationalist campaign.

A MORI poll conducted in 1980 on mainland Britain confirms this belief by revealing that fifty per cent of respondents would vote Northern Ireland out of the United Kingdom. Only twenty nine percent of respondents expressed a desire to keep the U.K. intact. As far as the people living on mainland Britain are concerned, it seems that they do not share a feeling of kinship with those inhabitants of the north-east corner of Ireland. Alternatively, they are so intimidated by the terrorist tactics of Irish nationalist forces that they are prepared to see the British government relinquish claims to the province in order to gain peace of mind. The average English person does not have to be particularly well versed in Irish history in order to know that Britain would be better-off without the Irish problem. However, there seems to be a general ignorance about the more subtle aspects of the situation. The best selling British newspapers seem reluctant to inform anyone of them. One wonders if some sectors of the press are even aware that any exist.

As indicated earlier, there is a sector of British parliamentary opinion which is keen to solve the problem by recognizing the nationalist claims over those of the unionists. Some sections of the Labour party formed links with Sinn Fein in the early 1970's but these have all but disappeared under the waves of public revulsion following Sinn Fein's endorsement of nationalist bombing

campaigns. Along with this, Sinn Fein lost some support from sectors which perceived Labour support as reinforcing the legitimacy of waging covert guerrilla war on Britain. This however has not meant an overall loss of support for violence to achieve political ends as the economic stagnation and deterioration has given "direction" to many an unfulfilled youth. Though it has been retorted that the paramilitary adherents are not the product of street-corner thuggery and unemployed rebels short of a cause, the indication is that in more economically stable times together with a fairer crack of the political whip, the extremist option for Northern Irish Catholics would be less popular.

The present Conservative government under Thatcher has forged an agreement with the Irish Republic in the face of great opposition from unionist quarters. The agreement is the first official document between the two countries which recognizes that both governments have a legitimate say in the social and economic life of Northern Ireland. The government of Ireland has taken a big step in openly admitting that Britain has rights as sovereign power of Northern Ireland which replaces the ritual bemoaning of the illegitimate occupation of an imperialist power in a portion of their country. For the British, there is a recognition that the South of Ireland has a genuine interest in the rights of Catholics in Ulster and that their common cultural identity necessitates its involvement in the day to day aspects of the lives of Ulster people. This coming together of previously dichotomous stances gives hope for the future of the Ulster people on both sides of the sectarian divide.

## 2.2 *Protestant Ideology*

The Protestants are far too sensible to be real Loyalists (Watt 1981: p.44).

The Protestant of Ulster is an Ulsterman first and a citizen of the United Kingdom second. While asserting their "*Britishness*" (a misnomer as they are a part of the United Kingdom of which Great Britain is one of the partners and Northern Ireland the other), there is no doubt that it is

conditional on the solid support of the British government for the continuing dominance of the Protestant elite in the province of Ulster. When faced with the Home Rule Bill in 1912, a half a million Protestants signed the *Solemn League and Covenant* (some in blood) which was a pledge to the crown of England and at the same time a pledge to fight against Home Rule. In the event of Britain deciding to stand by the Home Rule Bill, they were prepared for armed resistance to a United Ireland. The main concern of the Ulster Protestant therefore is not and has never been to be a British citizen, rather, "*Britishness*" is a function of not wanting to be and not recognizing themselves as Irish. The Ulsterman may not know what he is but he knows what he is not.

A major fear of granting Home Rule to a United Ireland after the First World War was that there would be a conflict of loyalties with Ulstermen serving in the British army. How could they be expected to put down a rising which their kinfolk were participating in and that they agreed with anyway? A solution to this was worked out in advance by the British Commander-in-Chief who was prepared to let those who would be compromised in the event of an Ulster rebellion to *disappear* until the mess was sorted out (Messenger 1985, p40).

The Protestant settlers arrived in Ireland under the protection of the crown of England and, under various agreements their distinct and separate identity was kept intact. Part of this need to keep a distance from the indigenous Catholic population was born out of religious persecution and partly because the Catholic was simply regarded as an inferior creature. During the nineteenth century, the English magazine *Punch* often caricatured the Irish peasant as squatty, dirty and ignorant. In the eyes of the Ulster Protestant there was no question of sharing an any kind of responsibility for governance with such an inferior specimen. This distinction has never been totally lost in the eyes of the Protestant who, in more contemporary times sees the Irishman in terms of a lazy social scrounger who breeds with the intention of bringing about an overall majority of Catholics in the Province.

The Home Rule Bills of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries represented everything foreign and threatening to the Protestant. But, for every nationalist hero who fought for an independent and united Ireland there was a Protestant hero who had fought against it. The history of Ireland from the settlers perspective has been one of success. Success in maintaining links with

Great Britain and success in fending off the threat of being governed by the Fenian masses. The history of Irish Catholics has in contrast been of failure. Failure to overcome the discrimination of their conquerors and failure to gain respect in the running of their own country. In various attempts of insurgence the Catholics were "put down" in a manner equal to the ferocity employed by the would-be usurpers. The Protestant ascendancy became committed to the continuation of this ideal.

The 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act was the first definite blow to Protestant supremacy and something that could not be countered by them. Many dissenters and Protestants had also been discriminated against by penal laws which disqualified them from voting but the Catholics *as a whole* had been singled-out as unfit for privileges of suffrage. The demands for Home Rule found increasing support in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The fear that this produced among non-Catholic sectors was a major factor in securing the dichotomy of a Protestant Ulster versus Catholic remainder on the island. The Orange Order rallied itself in self-protection and mutual self-preservation. It became increasingly apparent that this could only be totally assured with the help of the British government. The decision to stand by the Protestant population and grant them "salvation" from Irish Home Rule took on even greater significance when the nationalists who won seats to the newly created Stormont Parliament in Ulster and in the Parliament at Westminster refused to take their seats. Thus, the initial governing premise of the Unionists was that the Catholics were not only inferior but also traitors to the Stormont regime and everything followed there was nothing which substantially changed this view. Tony Gray noted in 1972 that many Orangemen were still convinced that there was a committee in Dublin consisting of Jack Lynch (Irish Prime Minister at the time), the Papal Nuncio and representatives of both wings of the I.R.A. all plotting the overthrow of the Protestants and recapture Ulster on behalf of the Church of Rome (Gray 1972: p.17). The fan which keeps such fires burning are provided by extremists on both sides; in their observance of mighty conflicts of the past with marches, speeches and even re-enactments of famous battles. Unlike their counterparts elsewhere in the world, such as the re-enactment of the American or English Civil Wars, there is an underlying animosity to those which take place in Ulster.

The "toast" of the Orange Order underlines the embedded religious and historical differences of identity which still persist.

To the glorious, pious and immortal memory of King William III, who saved us from rogues and roguery, slaves and slavery, knaves and knavery from brass money and wooden shoes: and who ever denies this toast may he be slammed, crammed, and jammed into the muzzle of the great gun of Athlone, and the gun fired into the Pope's belly, and the Pope into the Devil's belly and the Devil into Hell, and the door locked, and the key forever in an Orangemans' pocket (Gray 1972: p.22).

The contribution to the sectarianism of the Orange Order is very significant. Formed in 1795 into lodges to defend Protestant privilege, it is synonymous with fundamentalist Protestantism and the Unionist Party. Northern Protestants identified with the British State because they had little reason not to but *Unionism* entailed much more than an identification with the British State. It also entailed an intense distrust of, and antagonism towards, Irish Nationalism. The *Protestant work ethic* added to the stereotypical Catholic who became regarded as unworthy of employment in a Protestant business, lest he undermine the virtuously gained economic prosperity of the industrially advanced north eastern portion of Ireland. Ulster Unionism can therefore be viewed as a cohesive force which brought people together for different reasons. "This resulted in a convergence of interests on the national question between different religious denominations, between town and country, and between different social classes (Pringle 1985: p.267)". Once this Protestant hegemony had been established the symbolism of popery and moral and material depravity was quickly re-enforced whenever there was a danger of loosening of British identity. The overall effect of both unionist and nationalist cohesion was the loss of a possible working class identity which could cut across the sectarian divide. Thus the British Labour Party, for example has been unable to organize successfully in Northern Ireland. If one day it did decide that it would be feasible to organize in the Province, it would have to distance itself from its reputation of seeing the Catholic claims as higher than those of the Protestants. A party which saw its role in the province as one of ultimate abandonment would probably draw few adherents from the unionist sector of any class.

The position of the rulers of Stormont have done little to try to woo the sympathy of the potential Catholic support. Sir James Craig, one of the founders of the Protestant state said:

Ours is a Protestant Government and I am an Orangeman.... I am very proud indeed to be Grand Master of the Orange Institution of the Loyal County of Down. I have filled that office for years and I prize it far more than I do being Prime Minister. I have always said that I am an Orangeman first and a politician afterwards...All I boast is that we are a Protestant Parliament and a Protestant state (Gray 1972: p.244).

Furthermore, Sir Basil Brooke (Prime Minister in Stormont 1943) was quoted as saying in 1933;

I recommend those people who are Loyalists not to employ Roman Catholics, ninety per cent of whom are disloyal....if you don't act properly now, before we know where we are we shall find ourselves in the minority instead of the majority (Gray 1972: p.245).

Demographics show however that this theory of being "out-bred" by the Catholics greatly exaggerates the threat of this. Given the roughly 2-1 majority of Protestants to Catholics and the slow increase in birth rate of both communities in the province of Ulster, it would be a very long time before anything like an overall majority of Catholics would occur. Even given this scenario it is difficult to envisage the Protestant populace waiting until the last minute to give concessions and buy as favorable of a deal as possible for themselves to avoid the type of holocaust some rhetoric would have us believe. Though it is asserted that the relative power of the Orange Order has declined in contemporary Ireland, its legacy is far from dead. It will be embedded in the Protestant psyche for many years hence.

### **2.2.1 Ian Paisley and The Reformed Tradition**

The name of the Rev. Ian Paisley is familiar to anyone familiar with Northern Ireland politics since the troubles of 1969 became everyday life in Ulster. To many he is despised as a loud and obnoxious bigot, to others feared, revered, praised or cheered. One can not remain unaffected by such a presence for too long. Paisley claims to follow the Reformation tradition in both his theology and political beliefs, and can not be understood without reference to this tradition. He adopts an apocalyptic world view from Reformation Protestants such as John Knox and views the Roman Catholic church as the "harlot of Babylon" condemned in Revelation. Paisley invokes the Scottish covenant tradition as a model for political activity in Ulster, advocating resistance against any attempt to show political favor to the Roman Catholic Church (Mac Iver; 1987: p.359). He has been elected to three parliaments; the now disbanded Northern Irish Assembly, Westminster,

and the European Parliament. He is one of the leading opponents of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. His influence as leader of the Democratic Unionist Party is therefore significant in the Northern Irish community which always carries the capacity of volatility and is particularly susceptible to Paisley's distinct and effective oratory.

Though Paisley's central theme was in his outright condemnation of the theological liberalism of the official Presbyterian church, he and his supporters were involved in demonstrations and rioting over a variety of issues in the 1960's. Prime Minister O'Neill (of Stormont) came under heavy criticism for his 1965 talks with Southern leader Lemass. His movement gained support from a diversity of groups. In the countryside he mobilized support of the small farmers and tenant workers and in Belfast he had a wide religious following amongst the respectable petty bourgeoisie (Probert: 1978 p.128). He has also been rumored to have affiliations to the Protestant paramilitary forces. Certainly his speeches, while not condoning the violence of such organizations, are heavily loaded with reasons which make such actions understandable. To this extent he mirrors Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein who is often seen as spokesperson for the nationalist movement legitimizing Catholics rights to resist what they see is as an imperialist attempt to repress them.

When Stormont fell, Paisley warned what would happen if the British tried to "sell the Protestants out" and has always adhered to the battlecry "No Surrender!". In opposition to the Sunningdale Agreement he stood for the United Ulster Unionist Council (UUUC) in a successful attempt at a united front specifically elected on its opposition to Sunningdale. Since Direct Rule the internal squabbling of the unionists has persisted but one is always aware that the Protestant blood is thicker than the water which divides them.

## 2.3 *Nationalist forces North and South.*

### 2.3.1 Two Historical Traditions

One may trace back the tradition of armed resistance to English domination in Ireland almost to pre-history. An appropriate starting-point is when the constitutional option challenged that of rebellion and physical-force in general. The 1798 rebellion stands out as an example as does that of 1848. The constitutional option is rooted firmly in the nineteenth century. Daniel O'Connell, a young Catholic landowner from County Kerry believed that the Catholics could not gain independence through physical-force and prescribed a mass movement to demand right of representation at Westminster. The Catholic Association was set up and demanded rights of emancipation. The climax came when he was "elected" to Westminster but could not take up his position. The British had to reassess the case of the Irish Catholics and passed a Catholic Emancipation Bill in 1829. This success led to new aspirations for political gain internally and in its relation to Britain.

The island became divided on harsh economic lines and the laissez-faire economy of the nineteenth century increased the disastrous effects of the potato famine in the middle of that century in Ireland. The tenure system imposed by the colonists was substituted by an individualistic scramble for land. In 1849, under the Encumbered Estates Act three thousand estates were sold, passing mainly into the hands of a new middle-class. While the few prospered, the majority suffered under a lack of rights over rent and fixity of tenure. Evictions and harsh conditions, forcing thousands to emigrate also led to a corresponding shift in political action in order to deal with the problem. The land reform issue occupied a central position in Irish politics. The young Ireland movement of 1842-48 became dedicated to the revival of a distinctive Irish Revolutionary nationalism and believed that a secure and independent agricultural policy was the only base on which a people ever rose or could ever be raised (Probert; 1978: p.35). This clashed distinctively with O'Connellism and the two strands vied for pride of place in the nationalist movement as a

whole from that time onward. The Irish Land League under Michael Davitt was set up in 1879 with the objectives of pushing for a reduction in rent, state aid for tenants to buy their own property and to end evictions. Ironically, its very success in winning reforms from Westminster undermined its own radicalism. The hope that the Land Question would snowball into Irish independence was foiled by British co-operation and land reform faded out of the national question.

The rise of Parnell in Irish politics brought a new life to the constitutional push for independence. His alliance with the Land League attempted to harness the revolutionary aspects of nationalism, specifically Fenianism, in order to meet the challenge of Home Rule. His alliance with the Catholic church gave added grounds for suspicion from the Protestant population who were wary of Parnell's uncompromising stance. The stance kept within the realms of legality. When Gladstone decided that agitators should be dealt with in Ireland, Parnell had to opt to go along with his constitutional path or support the resistance of Fenian nationalists. He chose to stay loyal to his Parliamentary ideals. This decision was a major turning point in his career and for the nationalist movement as a whole. Though Parnell brought in his wake great parliamentary success (the last land reform bill was passed by Parliament in 1903), in the decade after his death his party split into warring factions. The separatism of Sinn Fein (formed in 1908) outgrew its constitutional counterpart with its militant nationalist sentiment and its concentration on things Gaelic. The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), physical force nationalists formed in the mid-nineteenth century with its watch words "soon or never", went further and took on the task of building a ground for insurrection against British rule. With the outbreak of the World War, the Home Rule Question was shelved and the onus had passed away from the constitutionalists. Volunteers from the IRB attempted a rising during Easter 1916. The failure of 1916 gave Sinn Fein a chance to take nationalism along constitutional lines once more but it was still too weak to take immediate advantage of the situation. In 1917, support for Sinn Fein, grew rapidly and this coincided with the release of survivors from the 1916 uprising. Eamon DeValera was a man who combined the two elements and he took over the leadership of the party by 1917. He expressed that Sinn Fein was a nationalist movement first and foremost, not one of class. The success of Sinn Fein in 1918, which took 73 out of 105 Irish seats in the Parliament of the United Kingdom owed much to the com-

ination of constitutional nationalism with the physical threat that force was not out of the question, merely infeasible given the strength of its foe at that particular time.

There were those however, who continued to fight. These volunteers who fought under the title of the Irish Republican Army maintained a level of resistance which, though incapable of winning against the British, were not going to be defeated. British war-weariness had an adverse effect on their struggle in Ireland until the treaty recognizing the Irish Free State in 1921 brought their withdrawal from 26 of the 32 counties of Ireland. Then commenced the tragedy of civil war from 1922-23 with the pro-treaty faction establishing what had already been gained. Yet nationalism had left three-quarters of a nation, not even united in satisfaction of what had been gained. Pro and anti treaty factions and the existence of "regular" and "irregulars" further bore testimony to the fact that Ireland had become more divided politically than at any other time in its fragmented history (Boyce; 1982: p333).

Failure of the anti-treaty faction and the granting of Dominion status to the twenty six counties brought an end to the Home Rule question largely as a result of both parties being exhausted and the inability of the Irish government to win the remaining six. DeValera's Fianna Fail (anti-treaty) government of the 1930's did not return to physical force but went about consolidating the Catholic Republic which his party inherited. His subsequent outlawing of the I.R.A. represents this commitment. From this point, physical-force nationalists represented a threat to the parliamentary nationalism of the Irish Free State just as it continued(s) to be in Northern Ireland.

### **2.3.2 The Violent Route to Freedom.**

The source of physical force Nationalist sentiment in Northern Ireland is from the Provisional Irish Republican Army (the P.I.R.A. or I.R.A. for short), a paramilitary group dedicated to the cause of a united Ireland with "*A ballot box in one hand and an armalite in the other.*" The physical force option re-emerged in the aftermath of the civil rights movement though there were sporadic outbreaks in the 1940's and 1950's. The Provisionals (also termed *Provo's*) split from the Official

I.R.A. in 1970 over a dispute in direction. A subsequent split in the P.I.R.A. witnessed the forming of the Irish National Liberation Army (I.N.L.A.) who thought that the I.R.A. were "going soft" i.e. not making the most of their terrorist position in trying to force the British out. Driven by the experiences of Catholics which they witness first hand, their perception that the Dublin government has abandoned them and their belief that the British government doesn't care, both organizations continue to do their best to solve their problem their way. This approach has earned each international notoriety as well as support. I.R.A. men have been trained by countries sympathetic to their cause and a general dislike of the British government. Arms shipments which are discovered from time to time either en route to or already in the possession of the I.R.A. have been sent from both America and Russia.

The support from the United States is predominantly from NORAID, a group of ex-patriots or Irish descendants of second or third or even more distant generations of Irish people. Russian and Libyan arms also find their way onto the streets of Northern Ireland. There has been recent findings of weaponry as sophisticated as anti-tank rockets and other heavy artillery. Their bomb making expertise is second to none in the world (Baldy 1987: p.57). In an I.R.A. statement which followed their shooting of a businessman in 1977 the role of the I.R.A. was laid out:

"In all cases, those executed by the I.R.A. played a prominent role in the effort to stabilize the British oriented Six County economy. This economy has never served the interests of the people. It is geared to their exploitation and is to the benefit of those in control. The war is not merely a conflict between the interests which these forces represent. Those involved in the management of the economy serve British interests which make war necessary"(Coogan 1980: p.473.).

Though this may have been one strategy, the pub bombings in Birmingham, England could not be claimed as an attack on the economy except by an extreme stretch of the imagination.

The Paramilitaries are driven on by the acknowledgement of the British army that the I.R.A. can not be defeated. The only hope that the British have is that the I.R.A. will be defeated by their own community deserting them and therefore isolating them. The only way that this can be achieved is through political initiatives, not through military ones. Again, following the assassination of Lord Earl Mountbatten as he was on vacation in the Irish Republic, the official stance of the I.R.A. was unequivocal:

The British army acknowledge that after ten years of war it cannot defeat us but yet the British government continue with the oppression of our people and the torture of our comrades in the H-Blocks. Well, for this we will tear out their sentimental imperialist heart. The death of Mountbatten will be

seen in sharp contrast to the apathy of the British government and the English people to the deaths of over three hundred British soldiers and the deaths of Irish men, women and children at the hands of their forces (Coogan, 1980: p.589-90).

The best that the British army can achieve is to try to prevent the situation from deteriorating into the type of confrontation currently experienced in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Britain's position in Northern Ireland is every bit as tenuous and those flash points in the Middle East at present. A negotiated peace settlement seems as far away. The paramilitaries have successfully driven a wedge between the British army and the Catholic community, capitalizing on events such as Bloody Sunday and anniversaries of battles and massacres of old. The realists of the nationalist forces admit that the battle will be a long drawn out one but is one that they can nevertheless maintain as long as they continue to be patronized by outside forces. Arms findings are hailed as putting the I.R.A. back six months, but in the context of a conflict that has seen numerous arms hauls over a period of twenty years, the significance of such claims is dubious. The most these hauls can claim to be are irritants. Sometimes they prove counter-productive as they may precipitate another bombing to "prove" that the effect of a loss of a section of their arsenal is negligible to them, and to boost the morale of supporters which may have dropped due to their enemy's success.

In the event of the paramilitary forces being able to oust the British and subsequently overcome Protestant backlash (admittedly an unlikely scenario), they would certainly not be inclined to hand over the reigns of government to the Dail of the Irish Republic. The relationship between the two is not one of mutual enmity though they share the same goals. The extradition treaty which the Irish government signed with Britain which allowed for I.R.A. suspects to be handed over to the jurisdiction of the British courts was taken as an outright betrayal of the nationalist cause by all nationalists. This agreement had facilitated the extradition of Great Britain's most wanted man, Dominic McGlinchy, a top I.R.A. figure. Indeed, the I.R.A. have been attacked and disowned verbally by most post-treaty governments of Ireland. The ideology of the I.R.A. calls for a thirty-two county all-Ireland Republic which has been largely undefined other than its tendency towards a socialist regime in hand with a strong nationalism. Yet the rejection of their violence and stated aims of wanting to topple the Southern government as part of a master plan, is rendered

ambiguous by a sympathy with the part of the cause which calls for a British withdrawal. How much this is rhetoric and how much reality is not clear. The more elaborate claims of the Official I.R.A. to unite a socialist Republic under a blend of Marxism and revolutionary nationalism does not find many ready adherents to its ideals and is easier dismissed as the ravings of pretentious and unreal rhetoricians (Cooghan; 1980: p.570).

In order to gain as much support as possible, there has been a tendency by the I.R.A. to stress the more nationalistic aspect of their struggle to their American public which seems largely uninformed of the strong socialist underpinnings of the I.R.A. and their aim to bring down the very homeland which is envisaged by most of those in Boston bars as they toast "the old country" on St. Patrick's Day. Similarly the image of a nationalist struggle against imperialist enemies is most needed when cultivating support from the third-world liberation movement. Yet this dual strategy is successful to the point of irony. That Reagan and Ghadaffi could share any common interest is surprising, but here it is enshrined in the belief that the future of Ireland has a hope in the disengagement of the British (however they may like to phrase it). There is little doubt that the twenty six counties of the Irish Republic would have some problems with this. Far from being a socialist country, its superstructure of Catholicism and traditional values would be hard-pressed into accepting such a mandate. It may help to alleviate Protestant fear of religious persecution in the event of a change in status-quo but the skeletons of centuries past pose an even greater question to the liberty of the Protestant populace. It is the heritage of the Irish Catholic in Northern Ireland which they see as setting them apart from those who identify themselves as British.

It is hard for U.V.F. men in jail to ponder on the nature of their heritage and on the fact that it was the British uniform which they were trained to revere which was now keeping them behind lock and key. It was the British handing out beatings whenever tensions arose in the camp, over prisoners' demands of infringements of the rules. It's even harder when, unlike his young I.R.A. counterpart who has a far greater historical continuity to look to, he finds his cause and his culture crumble under examination into a crisis of identity (Coogan, 1980: p.473).

The ballot in context of the ballot/armalite strategy of the Sinn Fein is only relevant in the way that it serves as a further justification in the use of violence and gives its democratic sponsors some kind of credibility (read: "U.S.A."). As it is the Sinn Fein electoral support seems to have peaked at ten per cent in Northern Ireland. It can only do better through the collapse of the S.D.L.P. The success of Bobby Sands in his victory in the 1983 General Election as nationalist

candidate was because of the extreme nature of the situation and that he was the only nationalist candidate running purely against unionists. If the political aspirations of Sinn Fein were to disappear as swiftly as they arrived there would be no significant ramifications for the Party, merely a return to the emphasis of the singularly uncompromising goal of physically forcing the British out as quickly as possible. For Sinn Fein and the I.R.A. the withdrawal precedes the ballot-box

The tricolor of Green, White and Orange, the national flag of the Irish Republic represents the aspiration of peace between Catholic and Protestant under one nation. However it also takes on extra symbolic meaning when used as a political statement by the Northern Irish nationalists and their adversaries, the unionists. Protestants ritually burn tricolors at soccer games and Catholics burn *Union Jacks*. Nationalist funerals in Northern Ireland often defiantly drape the tricolor over the coffin. On such occasions a volley of gunfire has accompanied the burial. The security forces have attempted to prevent such military type funerals but doing so with a crowd of a hundred or a thousand mourners has proved politically inexpedient.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.3.3 The S.D.L.P.: the Nationalism of Constitutionalists.

The Social Democratic and Labour Party of Northern Ireland, formed in the Summer of 1970 was initially set up as a non-sectarian party but its advocacy of the eventual reunification of Ireland through constitutional means, quickly established it under the nationalist banner and the most strongly supported "nationalist" party. Whilst believing that an all-Ireland government is the ultimate objective, the SDLP considers power-sharing as an important stepping-stone in realizing this aim. A major source of appeal which the SDLP has is its dual commitment to its long-term goal of reunification with the short-term commitment to making progress economically for its constituents. The party has made major pushes for funding grants from the EEC to help deprived areas in

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<sup>6</sup> The recent scenes at Republican funerals, where a Protestant gunman threw grenades and opened fire on the mourners, and the murder of two British soldiers during the next one by the I.R.A. has called into question the policing of such events.

the province. This is a policy which Sinn Fein has not pushed due to an almost total concern with the military aspects of the situation and the concern with getting the British out of the province first before putting forward a comprehensive program of reform in the day to day running of the province. Sinn Fein recognizes the Protestant fears and from time to time stresses that their "Protestant brothers" would be accommodated in a united Ireland.

The eagerness of the SDLP to accommodate the ethnic identity and standard of living which may be of concern to reluctant Protestants under direct rule from Dublin or even from a federally derived solution, is a more appealing way around the present situation in Northern Ireland which has been short on producing options for the divided society which brake away from dogmatism. It is the kind of solution to the problem advocated by Garrett FitzGerald (former prime minister of the Irish Republic and co-participant with Thatcher of Britain in the formulation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement). It is surprising that the SDLP, which might be thought to be strongly opposed to direct rule and in particular to the formulation of law by the civil service and at Westminster (where the party has been under-represented) is the least certain of the four parties (Alliance, DUP, OUP, SDLP) that it is a bad thing (Moxon-Browne; 1983: p.60). Gerry Fitt, the leader of the SDLP at its inception, gave notice that his party would co-operate with the British government to create a new system in order to prevent the tragic loss of life and prepared to take any steps they could in conformity with the government to prevent hundreds of innocent men, women, and children, Protestants and Catholics, being maimed as they had been since the onset of the troubles in 1969 (Kelly; 1972: p.42). Their departure from the Stormont regime, regrettable as it was, signified that they had not been able to capture and hold the confidence of the majority of Catholics in the province. There was no point at this time in putting themselves out on a political limb and risk totally alienating the people they had come into being to win over. After the fall of Sunningdale, there was a great sense of a lost opportunity. Had it been pulled off, it would have stood to an astounding achievement for the party in the short amount of time that they had been organized in Ulster. Furthermore, it would have re-established Constitutionalism as the major means to voice nationalist sentiment.

The SDLP, ruing setback, and possibly anticipating more to come emphasized their record and future direction as one of constructive parliamentary and public activity against an increasingly difficult background;

We have constantly condemned violence and have continually urged constraint, often at political cost to ourselves and in unpopular circumstances. We see the need for political solution.....we condemn outright, violence as a means to political ends. Those who deliberately organize and perpetuate violence in our society are only leading the people to destruction....the only ones to suffer to-date, and they have suffered grievously, are those people in the areas where violence has taken place (Kelly; 1972: p54).

Table 1 shows the relative support which The SDLP and Sinn Fein have. It seems clearly in the interests of Sinn Fein to moderate under a constitutional banner and try to put forth a united front. While Sinn Fein continues on its present stance, it portrays the whole nationalist movement in the same light, that of the minority. Perhaps that is motive enough not to change. A recent initiative has brought the SDLP and Provisional Sinn Fein together to discuss their aims and any mutual ground which may have facilitated further reason for discussion on the situation in Ulster. After weeks of discussion, the talks broke off with the same old fundamental sticking points why they could not co-operate in their mutual interests for a united Ireland. Sinn Fein talked of the SDLP encouraging the British imperialist forces that an internal political solution could be achieved. The SDLP countered that the failure of talks were due to the insistence that British withdrawal was a pre-requisite to any progressive move toward ultimate solution.

#### **2.3.4 Dublin: An Alternative Nationalist Strategy**

Influential leaders all over the world regarded Ireland as a gallant little nation standing up to a bully (McCoffey, 1979: p.147).

It is generally recognized that the only reason that the border separating Northern and Southern Ireland was accepted by the latter due to its instability. The warring factions were exhausted and there seemed nothing more to gain by prolonging it. In order to reinforce its own national identity, the Irish (Gaelic) language was established as the national language. In practical terms it continues to be a nuisance to the majority of Irish citizens whose main language is English

**Table 1. NI election Results 1973-83 (Exc. '74 Gen Election)**

Participating N. Ireland parties	1973 Ass.	1975 Conv.	1977 Local	1979 Gen.	1981 Local	1982 Ass.	1983 Gen.	1987 Gen.
Off. Unionist	12.4* 26.5+	25.8	29.6	36.6	26.5	29.7	34	37.9
UPNI (Faulknerites)	-	7.7	2.5N/A	1.9	-	-	-	
DUP	10.8	14.7	12.6	10.2	26.6	23.0	20	11.8
Vanguard	10.5	12.7	1.4	-	-	-	-	
UUUP	-	-	3.2	5.7	N/A	1.8	-	
Other Loyalists	1.6	1.5	2.3	N/A	3.3	3.9	N/A	
Alliance	9.2	9.8	14.4	11.9	8.9	9.3	8	9.7
NILP	2.6	1.4	0.9	-	1.5	-	-	
Combined H-Block	-	-	-	-	7.7	-	-	
<b>SDLP</b>	<b>22.1</b>	<b>23.7</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>21.7</b>
<b>Sinn Fein</b>	-	-	-	-	-	<b>10.1</b>	<b>13.4</b>	<b>11.1</b>

N/A Not Available  
\* Anti White Paper  
+ Pro Faulknerite

**Source**  
Bew and Patterson 1985: p124 / *The Times* 6/13/87

but who have to pass Irish examinations if they are to work in bureaucratic circles (as if the language of bureaucracy was not already a foreign one to most people anyway).

The playing of Gaelic games such as hurling and Gaelic football is also emphasized instead of the "British" games of soccer and cricket (though Ireland does have a national team for both of the latter). An interesting fact is that there is an "All Ireland" Gaelic football championship held annually which sends Ulster representatives to the play-off's every year. The players are exclusively Catholic however. Rugby truly represents a United Ireland as Protestants, Catholics, Northerners and Southerners play together on the same team. One theory for this is that the sport is a middle class game and less open to class warfare than to nationalist fervor. Even so, an Irishman from the Republic is still apt to call Rugby *The Foreign Game*.

Sport itself became a political tool after the influence of the British settlers started to encourage an "Anglophile" sporting tradition and the British government actively prohibited the playing of Gaelic games. The Irish Republican Brotherhood, in the nineteenth century realized the potential in promoting the continuance of playing Gaelic games as a political, nationalist statement. The formation of The Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884 carried this tradition under internal wrangling between factions committed to Parnellism and Fenianism. The overall flavor was indisputably nationalist. This may or may not give any significance to the fact that following the execution of fourteen undercover British intelligence officers on Sunday 21 November, 1920, British Black and Tans opened fire in retaliation on the crowd and players during a Gaelic Football game in Croke Park, Dublin, killing twelve. The peculiarities of Gaelic sport in post 1921 Ireland have not been used to any particular political goal. Only in Northern Ireland is it considered a political statement.<sup>7</sup>

Traditionally Fianna Fail (pronounced Feena Fall) have been more committed to the reunification question than the pro-treaty party Fine Gael (Feena Gale). The present (Fianna Fail) Prime Minister of Ireland, Charles Haughey occupying a lower cabinet position in the 1960's was

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<sup>7</sup> No sport in Northern Ireland is immune from the complex political situation created by sectarian divisions and most have reflected or contributed to the conditions which have allowed the Troubles to persist. Thus, in Northern Ireland, even the simple decision of which games to play are invested with a political dimension not normally encountered in a homogeneous society (ed.Allinson; 1986: p.117).

acquitted in an arms scandal which involved him and another minister diverting a shipment of arms from the continent of Europe through Dublin to the I.R.A. Despite this Haughey made his way back up to the leadership within a decade. One wonders if it wasn't because of it. In post treaty Ireland successive Southern governments tried to distance themselves from Britain. The name "The Free State" is a testament to this mentality. The successful breaking away from the Commonwealth in 1949 and the taking on of the name *Eire*, and defining it as "a sovereign, independent democratic state" In 1949 Prime-Minister Costello declared all formal links with the crown of England severed. The one notable move toward negotiation between the north and south concerning the future of Ireland came in 1965 with the exchange of visits between Sean Lemass, the Southern Prime-Minister and Captain Terrance O'Neill the Prime Minister in Stormont. The events of the latter part of the 1960's, the advent of the civil rights campaign and the onset of violence turned over a new chapter in north-south relations and heralded a gulf between communities and nations as wide as the Irish Sea itself.

The position of the Dublin government can be seen in varying degrees of sincerity as to what they can feasibly do with the situation of having six of "their" counties under foreign rule. As already pointed out, DeValera was probably willing to sacrifice a 32-county pluralist Republic for a homogenous 26-county Catholic State. In the years since, it would seem that most Irish Prime Minister's would concur. There has been an element of not being physically capable of successful invasion of the North and then defeating the British Army, which may excuse the lack of progress from the Republic on solving the Irish Question. This is also heightened by the fact that even given an initial victory, they would then have to quell the one million Protestants who would be expected to rebel on a scale proportionately many times greater than Britain is dealing with at the moment. To a certain extent the Dublin government could espouse "the loss of a portion of its territory to the imperialist foe who had only been part driven from the shores," without ever having to be expected to back it up in practice. Dublin has done more or less all that it could do under the circumstances. It has continued to use the political arena and diplomatic relations to try to resolve the situation constitutionally. The lack of success to this end is due to the intransigent and myopic nature of British governments over fifty years and more. Therefore when Britain did eventually

wake to the task of solving the Northern Ireland situation, it found to its dismay that it was treated like an invader in its own land. The nationalists wanted the British out, the unionists simply wanted Britain not to interfere and break the habit of half-a-century of distancing itself from the Province. Given the developments of the late 1960's there was no way that Britain could stand idly aside. So dawned a new era of the Irish Question.

## 3.0 Contemporary Solutions To Age-Old Problems

### 3.1 *The Air, Thick with Political Impossibilities*

Since 1969, when the present series of troubles began, the British government have used three tactics to try to solve the problem. These have broadly consisted of military, economic and political initiatives. In the military field the momentous decision to move in the troops in 1969 stands out as the most overt act to try to restore order in the province after the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) had failed as Stormont's peace-keeping force, to command the respect of both communities, Catholic and Protestant. Other initiatives followed, such as the use of the special air service (SAS) to try and defeat the I.R.A. but without success. One of the latest suggestions is for a Catholic police force to patrol those staunchly Republican areas where even the army has been unable to police. This option is however one of the lesser desirable ones because the British government still refuses to police the province as two separate entities while there is still hope that the two can be brought together eventually as one united nation under the same ruling body. The police force of the Republic of Ireland have been seen as an appropriate force which could command respect from the Catholics. However they are seen as the enemy from the point of view of the I.R.A. just as the British government judged. The southern police force has been accused in the past of treating

I.R.A. prisoners badly and even brutally. They would probably find little support from the more nationalist sectors of Northern Ireland. There is however the view that the majority of Catholics would have no problem with them. The Northern Irish Protestants are even more vehemently opposed to the idea of a foreign police force patrolling their streets. Without the support of the majority, the British might as well keep their own forces on patrol.

The determination to tighten security as an overall aim of isolating the I.R.A. has been at the expense of isolating the Catholic Community. Whereas in 1972 the number of fatalities was over 400 it now has dropped to around an average of 100. This success in one area has been nullified by a failure in another. The net result is negative. It will take much longer to win back the Irish community given the methods used to achieve these results.

It will take major concessions to the Irish community before the policies of internment, of detention without charge or reason, of trial without jury, and allegations of ill-treatment and brutality are forgiven, for they will always be remembered. Furthermore, the prominently Protestant police force will always be a reminder of who holds the power in Northern Ireland.

The economic policy pursued in regard to trying to solve the conflict in Northern Ireland has been one of attempting even-handedness in dealing with urban renewal. However, the expenditures on complexes like the "Divis flats" which are occupied exclusively by Catholics in West Belfast, are met with outrage by the Protestant sectors who regard it as rewarding the perpetrators of sectarian bombing tactics employed by the nationalist forces.

In the political sphere, the suspension of Stormont, its subsequent failure and the setting up of a 78-man assembly now in existence have constituted the major British quests for a politically derived solution along the lines of devolved government. The power sharing agreement of 1974 lasted a brief few months before it fell in the face of Loyalist reaction especially over the clause calling for a Council of Ireland. In the vacuum that was produced after the collapse of the Sunningdale Agreement, a 78-man assembly was elected as a consultative body in an attempt by the British government to keep milking the parties of Northern Ireland in case that some broad consensus could be reached to warrant an attempt at a new legislative body along the lines of a new devolved settlement. The elections held in 1975 (Table 2) gave loyalists 47 seats and the SDLP 17.

These two bodies set about trying to formulate some kind of mutually binding agreement on a future administration of the province. Again frustration reigned. An I.R.A. campaign produced talks between it and the British government to the astonishment of the Ulster Convention representatives. A truce was reached though it proved unfruitful. Meanwhile the frustration from the convention translated into a deadlock at the Convention and the British government dissolved it due to its unproductiveness in March 1976.

The British government appeared to be back at square one, i.e. in search of a policy which could be loosely phrased enough to offend neither community but strong enough to bring about something more meaningful to eventual peace than a commitment to renounce violence. The British government continued to encourage the participation of the nationalist parties in the democratic process of change through parliamentary change though the SDLP could be forgiven in despairing that two major initiatives to gain a power-sharing settlement had not so much eluded them as ripped from their grasp. The S.D.L.P. continued to represent themselves in Parliament at Westminster and Sinn Fein continued to refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of any ruling body over Northern Ireland so long as it maintained its political links with Great Britain. The fact that Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Fein, continues to justify the tactics of violence used by bodies such as the I.R.A., has made it harder for the British to associate with its claims for a change in the status of Northern Ireland which would possibly give them an appreciable say in government.

### 3.1.1 Sorting the Wheat From the Chaff

In theory the British government has been faced with many possibilities from which to adopt a strategy to employ in Northern Ireland. Some have been tried to varying degrees while others do not fit into the political realities of the province (at least, not so far);

- total suppression of the minority
- integration into the United Kingdom
- granting of a separate nation
- working within the system to make the society less discriminatory and more accommodating to the demands of the alienated minority
- a redrawing of the national boundaries
- handing sovereignty over to the Republic
- granting a federal Ireland
- British-Irish Condominium rule
- consociationalism (power-sharing)
- avoidance of the issue

Table 2 shows a statistical breakdown of the support for various constitutional options taken in 1974 and 1976. These were monitored by a Northern Ireland Attitude Survey (NIAS) which attempted to come up with a possible solution which gained most overall support from both communities, not necessarily either ones top one or two preferences. For example, it is important to emphasize that direct rule is not the form of government most preferred by most people in Ulster. Among Protestants, this option constantly ranks well below a return to Stormont or full integration into the United Kingdom. For the Catholics, direct rule was less popular than power-sharing or a united Ireland in 1974: by 1976 it had become the most popular singular alternative (Moxon-Browne; 1983: p114). This was in the wake of the failure of Stormont when the continuation of direct rule, at least to Catholics seemed preferable than either a return to Stormont or another vain attempt at power-sharing.

**Table 2. Northern Ireland Convention Results, 1975**

	votes		Seats	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>
<b>Anti Power Sharing</b>				
Loyalists:				
Official Unionists	169,797	25.8	279	19
DUP (Paisleyites)	97,073	14.7	18	12
Vanguard	83,507	12.7	17	14
Other Loyalists	10,140	1.5	5	2
<b>Total Loyalists</b>	<b>360,517</b>	<b>54.8</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Pro Power Sharing</b>				
Alliance Party	64,657	9.8	23	8
Unionist Party NI	50,891	7.7	18	5
NILP	9,102	1.4	6	1
SDLP	156,059	23.7	30	17
Republican Clubs	14,515	2.2	17	0
Indep/Others	2,430	0.4	4	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>658,161</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>78</b>

Source. Rose; 1976: p97

From the list of options, some may be dismissed as unrealistic, some have been suggested though never tried in practice, some were suggested and became official policy in Northern Ireland and failed to bring consensus, and one is the present strategy of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It has not been feasible for the British Government to ignore the situation in Northern Ireland since the recent "troubles" began. The other extreme, the suppression of the minority by force is not acceptable to the democratic context of Britain and would only serve to exacerbate the situation now that there has developed an outward movement to counter suppression. Thirdly, Dublin could not stand idly by and watch the situation deteriorate further. The parameters of action are narrowed further by the limitations of options which proscribe the granting of an independent nation; re-drawing of national boundaries or integration into the United Kingdom more fully. As far as the granting of a separate nation is concerned, the geographical position of the strongest concentrations of Catholics, in Belfast and Derry, are in no position to form their own state or join the Republic short of the building of a wall like the one separating East and West Berlin. This is clearly not relevant to Northern Ireland. Numerically, economically, and in terms of infrastructure, this is simply a non-starter unless the Protestant population agreed to the whole province forming an independent state. Their reluctance to do this stems from a distrust of the South which they believe may try to invade on behalf of the Catholics and the fact that an independent Northern Ireland would not be able to survive if the blood supply to Britain was cut off. The economic burden of Northern Ireland on Great Britain since 1921 has been substantial though overall marginal to the British economy. In recent years of depression, Northern Ireland has suffered as badly as any other part of the United Kingdom. It is not feasible that, given independence, the living situation would get any better. There is much to suggest that it would get worse.

A re-drawing of the national boundary separating north and south may be politically feasible but would amount to tinkering with the problem. The main areas of conflict are far enough away from the border as to be impossible to include in the South via a distortion in boundary or creation of a corridor to link those who would opt to join the Republic. Unless a move in boundary was assisted by a significant population exodus of the minority from remote parts of the North the distribution of the population would dictate that re-partition is not an answer. The British gov-

ernment has pursued the Irish dimension in recent years by banning Protestant marches through Republican areas, resisting the temptation to ban Sinn Fein, financing an Irish speaking school in Belfast, and pursuing talks with the Irish government on the future of the province. However most of these could be interpreted as piecemeal and inadequate or as beneficial to the authorities in terms of keeping law and order rather than of an act of concession to any kind of Irish dimension. Furthermore the connotations that such gestures have for the Protestants has ensured that pursuit of further settlements which include such a dimension has to be strong enough in resolve to overcome their opposition. The Anglo-Irish Agreement is one case which tests this resolve.

Bi-nationalism can be seen as a further gesture to the Catholics that they have a right to claim Irishness as a legal fact. Unlike America which requires singular nationality, the British government accords the Northern Irish citizen full constitutional rights even if the citizen holds a passport from the Republic of Ireland. This also gives the Irish Republic a legitimacy in looking after the rights of those who claim dual nationality. The tightrope which the British government is constantly walking is to avoid either community feeling alienated in the land where they live. It seems that whenever one side is given concessions, the other is quick in exploiting the political significance of it. The responsibility of the government must therefore be to try to be seen to be as fair as possible in its dealings with both communities, though as will be shown in chapter 5, it appears sometimes that the government is deliberately being obscure in its dealings with law and order and risking everything by its bloody-mindedness towards certain events pertaining to its policing of the province and the dealings with suspected perpetrators of bomb outrages in Britain and abroad.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement builds upon the fact that that both Ireland and Britain claim jurisdiction over Ulster and follows loosely the precedent set by the 1972 proposal, *Towards a New Ireland* which recommended joint sovereignty, enacted through the appointment of two commissioners, one from each country to approve all legislation, to oversee the workings of an elected Executive, and to appoint a constitutional court (Rose; 1976: p.158). The blockage to this is the Irish government's inclusion in the process and the implication that this is the first step to Irish unity.

A Federal Ireland is acceptable to the Protestant only on condition that it is under Westminster rule. The problem here is with the Irish Republic, which after centuries of struggle to free itself from the British yoke would not be willing to return to a hypocritical oath of allegiance to the British crown.

At all costs, there is a need for the British government to be straight with both communities. While attitudes on both sides are clogged with half-truths and a whole load of idealism, nothing can be resolved. The government to this extent has showed persistence in making everyone aware that a change in status will only come about by a majority vote in Northern Ireland. Yet the mind set still dictates a fear of betrayal because the underlying truth, that the British government one day desires to see the island re-unified, has never been publicly admitted to. All trust from the Protestant side seems to evaporate from this point on. Given that the British government was to "come clean" over its policy on the long term future of Ireland as it sees it, it would give the Protestant community to think in a clear fashion what the situation called for. Though there is a line of thought that the Protestants would start to prepare themselves for a civil war as they have threatened in the past, the uselessness of such a strategy when faced with the British army, Irish Army and possibly some kind of international peace-keeping force all resolute in policing the transition it would be incredibly naive for someone as politically astute as Paisley not to act well in advance in order to get the best deal possible for himself and his constituents.

The threat of armed resistance from both loyalist and nationalist forces should not be overlooked. The defeat of the I.R.A. should be possible as never before because the aim of a united Ireland should have been met, the enemy gone. The lofty ideals behind a takeover of the Republic could never be allowed to come to anything with the majority of Catholics opposing it. The sectarian nature of the dispute gone, any credibility of a united socialist Ireland would have to continue within the realms of the Dail or on the fringes of society, within anarchist tradition of which one is at a loss to find in the history of the Republic.

The fear that the Protestant military forces will act in the same way as the I.R.A had is real but can be alleviated by enough foresight by the Republican government. By avoiding the types of mistakes that the Stormont government made and deliberately including a

“Ulster/Protestant/Unionist” dimension and constantly being at pains to point-out the positive aspects of participation in an all-Ireland society, a attitude of hope and peace may be cultivated among the majority of Protestants, and with the isolation of violence a success could be made of the union.

The possibility of Consociational democracy in Northern Ireland has been unsuitable for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is no multiple balance of power from which to build. Consociational power-sharing works best where two or three parties could each achieve exclusive power itself (Moxon Browne; 1983: p.65). The Northern Ireland situation has always held up the majority status which is based upon sectarian lines. Also, a sense of national identity is most useful for the parties to commonly relate-to. In Northern Ireland, identity is outward looking, either to the South or across the sea to mainland Britain. If a common identity could be cultivated and the religious barriers taken down, two very significant events if they were to happen, then perhaps a resolution on consociational parameter's could be made to work. This does not mean that separate identities would be lost, but that a different focal point could be created. The time was not right in 1974 when it was attempted by the Sunningdale Agreement. The leaders became outflanked due to an increasing fear and loss of identity with a state (Britain) which was apparently attempting to withdraw from the union. For a more successful attempt at solution at this level, either the fears have to be allayed, or the threat of withdrawal deemed not such a restricting factor in negotiation as it once was. If the leaders can carry their followers then a solution on these lines may be still possible. So far, this has not been possible as the leaders remain vulnerable to loss of support and even outright rejection.

**Table 3. Support for Various Constitutional Arrangements: 1974 and 1976.**

Options for the future	1974			1976		
	<i>Prot</i>	<i>Cath</i>	<i>DI</i>	<i>Prot</i>	<i>Cath</i>	<i>DI</i>
<b>Direct Rule</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>9</b>
Full Integration	78	39	40	80	55	25
Power-Sharing	52	88	36	20	45	26
Majority Rule	58	7	54	75	25	49
Independence	7	7	0	13	8	6
Federal Ireland	4	36	52	nc	nc	nc
United Ireland	2	46	57	4	45	49

**Source.** Moxon-Browne; 1983: p.115

nc = not asked

DI = calculated by including Don't Know replies not shown here

### ***3.2 1969-79: Military Might and Political Power***

The civil rights protests held by the Catholic community in 1968-69 heralded a new episode in Anglo-Irish, Northern-Southern, and internal Ulster relations. The outbreak of violence of intolerable proportions and the response of sending the British army onto the streets of Northern Ireland was a definite military response to the headache of Northern Irish politics as a whole and not just a reflex reaction to a series of demonstrations which had got out of hand. The initiative was backed up in August 1971 with the introduction of Internment due to the fact that the army presence by itself had failed to reassure anybody that law and order had been returned. On the contrary, lawlessness and fear of pogrom had been exacerbated. The burning of families from their houses in an attempt by both sides to form homogenous sectarian communities produced a geographic malaise which reinforced distinctions in the province already dichotomized along lines of socio-economic structure. Internment all by itself managed to unite all sectors of Catholic opinion against it, from those who were the intended and real victims to those who were outraged at the pure discriminatory nature of it. The way in which those rounded-up and interned under the provisions of the 1922 Special Powers Act were dealt with became subject of a British Parliamentary enquiry and it became evident to all concerned that the army had behaved disgracefully. The relative acquiescence of the Catholic population over a period of fifty years which had given a false sense of unity in the province was about to be exposed for the illusion that it was. The underlying feelings of discontent with the system had been voiced through the protest marches of the civil rights movement. Now the frustration and the hatred which had been brewing within the hearts and minds of the oppressed minorities of the North were realized in the violence of the bombings perpetrated by the self-appointed protectors of the minority, the I.R.A.

The talking stopped, the shooting began. A breeding ground for extremism, the situation was manipulated by radical extremes on both sides. The I.R.A. formed support and made ground in the urban centers where previously they had been absent. The guerrilla campaign moved from the countryside to the cities. The escape routes were no longer over open fields and pastures into the

relative sanctuary of the Irish republic as during the "border campaign"<sup>8</sup> but through the backstreets and alley's of tenement housing into the relative safety of Andersonstown or "Free" Derry (Kelly. pp.59-60). On the Protestant side, the Ulster Defense Association (U.D.A.) formed in 1969 describing itself as a counter terrorist organization operating as a moderating loyalist force sponsoring political activity through the Ulster Loyalist Democratic Party (Baldy 1985: p64.).

The television pictures showed how Britain dealt with the problem before them. The notorious B Specials<sup>9</sup> were seen to hand-out their own brand of punishment to protesters. The Protestant adage of making the Fenians lie down was a naive tactic given the size of the community of which they were dealing with. Had Catholics been a tiny minority, they could have been ignored totally. Had they been fifty per cent they would have been able to deadlock politics unless power was shared. As it was however, the Catholic population, hovering at about thirty per cent, was in Unionist eyes a threat to be suppressed and probably could be -rather than a substantial community that needed to be coaxed and that would would require some hand in power, even if only for its own self- respect (Kelly, 1972: p71.). Even after the results of the abuses of law were recognized there were still those who continued to justify incidents in terms of necessity. Hard liner John Taylor, defended "without hesitation, the action taken by the army, when it was necessary in the end to actually shoot to kill (Kelly, 1972: p.55). " The earnest quest for a political solution from that moment was made substantially harder.

The policy of internment a unmitigated disaster within the realms of Ulster also had significant effects on the relationship with the government of Eire and interested parties in the United States. For a time, the position of the Republican government was one of passive support for the nationalist forces in the North. If Prime Minister Lynch had co-operated in a cross-border clampdown of the I.R.A. it may have saved face for the policy of Britain and quelled criticism across the Atlantic. Instead, he chose to speak out against British policy and began a bitter dispute between

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<sup>8</sup> The border campaign was a tactic used by the I.R.A. whereby they attacked targets near to the Republican border (such as an army check-point) and escaped over the border where they could not be pursued by the British authorities. This frustrated the British government so much that they have sought extradition treaties with the government of the Republic though recent events have made these arrangements tenuous.

<sup>9</sup> Army reserves taken exclusively from the Protestant sectors of Ulster, known for their ferocity in dealing with Catholics.

the Irish and British governments. On August 12, 1971 Lynch called for the replacement of Stormont by an administration, possibly a commission, in which the minority of Catholics would share power with the ruling Protestants. He urged all Irishmen to use political action to topple the Stormont government, which, he charged, "had constantly repressed" the Catholics. He re-iterated that he was against the violence which had been used by terrorist organizations and made a special plea to the British people to work toward a change in the administration of the Protestant government in Stormont (Mansbach, 1973: p.109). The British premier Edward Heath condemned this as interference though to do so was to deny that the Irish government had any right of say in the province. Following talks between the two leaders, Lynch clearly pointed out where he thought his position was. He stated his right to be involved in negotiations involving Northern Ireland by the fact that he was the elected head of the government of Ireland and as such represented the mass opinion of the Irish people (Mansbach, 1972: p111). Heath did acquiesce to a further meeting and initiated a tripartite summit between himself, Faulkner and Lynch. Again, nothing concrete was achieved, merely a resolve to condemn violence which fell on deaf ears anyway.

### **3.2.1 American Opposition**

Feedback from America had a history of support for the plight of the Catholic minority of Northern Ireland and the overall claims of the Irish Republic to a united Ireland. Eamon de Valera was American-born and a massive influx of Irish crossed the Atlantic during the famine in the nineteenth century. Edward Kennedy, a descendent of Irish people used his high political profile as senator of Massachusetts to react to the deteriorating situation in Northern Ireland publicly calling it Britain's Vietnam. Calling for the withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland and its reunification he said that the conscience of America could not keep silent when Irish men and women were dying. He accused the Stormont regime of ruling by "bayonet and bloodshed", and claimed that the struggle in the ghettos of Derry and Belfast was the result of an age-old struggle of oppressed minorities (Hepburn, 1980: pp.190-91). Though in fact Kennedy was speaking largely

for himself, his reputation naturally carried much political weight. There was no official US government stance as their precarious position in Vietnam was not a suitable background from which to espouse anti-imperialist dogma. Meanwhile the amount of money being sent through NORAID during the period increased dramatically which facilitated the continuation of the conflict. The truce which the I.R.A. called for during the Christmas season of 1971 was more a function of giving themselves a rest than any particular desire to end the confrontation.

### 3.2.2 Opposition at Westminster

Harold Wilson, leader of the opposition suggested that the situation had gone far enough and that it was impossible to conceive of a long-term solution without considering and directing efforts toward the aspirations of a united Ireland. The framework of the proposal was dependent on agreement from the three Parliaments involved (Stormont, Westminster and Dublin) and in particular, referring to the Downing Street Declaration<sup>10</sup> Wilson stressed that provisions satisfactory to the Protestants would be sought if the dream was to become reality. A fifteen year time span was proposed as a reasonable period in which to work for this ideal. An immediate sticking point for the nationalists north and south of the border was that Wilson proposed that the Commonwealth be re-instated. The Queen, ultimate figurehead of the imperialist nightmare in the Republic was perhaps a minor problem when one examines the problems faced when trying to get one Parliament to agree on any significant issue much less three Parliaments in unison. As if by this time things were not bleak enough in respect to uniting the people torn apart by rioting, an army presence on the streets and a disastrous internment policy, subsequent political initiatives were given a major obstacle to overcome after the events of "*Bloody Sunday*."

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<sup>10</sup> The Downing Street Declaration was a communique issued by Wilson after the troops had been sent in which re-affirmed the constitutional position of Great Britain in relation to Northern Ireland. It stood by Clement Attlee's promise as Prime Minister of Great Britain after the Second World War that the status of the United Kingdom would alter only in the event of the Parliament of Stormont resolving to change it.

### 3.2.2.1 *Too Bloody Late?*

On January 30, 1972 thirteen civilians were shot dead by the British Army during a protest march. The march itself was nothing out of the ordinary, such events had been routine since 1967. This particular one stood out however because it had been expressly forbidden by the authorities. The fact that the march went ahead anyway was not surprising as the Catholic community had lost faith in law and order in the wake of the internment campaign. The army, apparently without warning opened fire on the crowd. The massacre had tremendous ramifications. Politically, it distanced the Southern Irish government even more. The foreign affairs minister (and subsequent President) Patrick Hillery called for America and other governments to put political pressure on Britain to end its *lunatic policies* (Mansbach, 1973: p158). The British Embassy in Dublin was burnt to the ground and the fire department was purposely prevented from reaching the fire by the crowds until the building was beyond saving. The I.R.A. stepped up their bombing campaign both in Ulster and on mainland Britain. In England the barracks of the regiment which fired upon the crowd on Bloody Sunday was attacked but the only casualties were innocent civilians, six cleaning ladies and a padre. In July of the same year, the I.R.A. claimed responsibility for "Bloody Friday" when twenty-two bombs were set off one afternoon in Belfast killing two soldiers and nine civilians. During the first decade of troubles since 1969, the year 1972 was by far the bloodiest. The death toll was 468 (Hepburn, 1980: p.191). The question now was whether the problem of Northern Ireland was insurmountable.

**Rent Strikes and Insensitivity:** A further tactic used by the Catholics which pushed settlement further away was the decision to show opposition to the British government through rent strike. Politically it was very effective because with the mass participation of the Catholic community the government had no recourse open to them. They could not put twenty-five per cent of the Catholic community behind bars. Social welfare benefits were withdrawn from participants in the strike but their action still managed to put the local government out of pocket by more than five million pounds. The Protestant subsequently became troubled by the fact that the Catholic civil disobedi-

ence had somehow been rewarded with the plan to spend five million pounds to renovate their housing when there were Protestant areas as badly in need of renovation (Hepburn, 1980: p.195). This latter qualm was over insensitive urban policy rather than an initiative designed to solve the intrinsic problems of Northern Ireland. These were times when any event could and would be turned around to suit political grievances, there is nothing particularly new in that.

### 3.2.3 Heath Decides: Army in, All in

Direct Rule became the next stage in search for solution. Stormont could not keep order and the army had been sent in, Stormont could not find a way to keep the day to day confidence of the whole province so perhaps Westminster could show the way. Direct rule was imposed formally on March 30, 1972. The original plan was that there would be an interim period where direct rule would be re-imposed and following a restoration of law and order, power would be reinstated in Stormont. Once solely in charge of the province, the Heath government had already decided that it would phase-out internment. The Stormont government opposed this radical outlook which heralded its imminent extinction but they had little to argue with in the circumstances. The province seemed to be collapsing under a spiral of no-go areas and general loss of confidence in their capabilities from domestic and external sources.

**Support and Rejection:** Senator Edward Kennedy (D., Mass.) joined fellow Democrats Sen. A. Ribicoff and Rep. Hugh Carey in praising the British takeover Irish Republican leader Jack Lynch welcomed the takeover as signalling British intent to permanently withdraw the Stormont regime and work toward a united Ireland. This was a false impression if it was genuinely held. Nothing that Heath had said during the period should have given rise to such an interpretation. In Northern Ireland, moderate Catholics were entertaining similar hopes. Much of this could be put down to wishful thinking. Obviously the fall of Stormont met with bitter rejection by the Protestant population. The threat of armed insurrection which had been **The Orange Card** did not materialize.

Faulkner warned that the suspension of Stormont would be interpreted as a concession to violence. It is doubtful that such a drastic step would have been taken if the constitutional route had been solely adhered-to when expressing nationalist grievances. The Loyalists still had a hand to play however if their government was not going to be returned to them intact. The U.D.A. threatened to make any alternative proposal unworkable that infringed on their power. This included any power-sharing agreement and certainly any move towards a role in government for the Irish Republic.

The Social Democratic and Labour Party welcomed the new proposals and committed themselves to the ideal of power-sharing in the province as the first move toward a peaceful solution in Northern Ireland. The militant wings of the Nationalist movement however were as upset as their loyalist counterparts over the resumption of direct rule. The Republicans regarded the action as a tightening of the grip on the province, not a loosening of it. They demanded that the abolition of Stormont be only the first step to eventual withdrawal of the British from Ulster. The next step would be to withdraw the British troops and to release all those interned whom they regarded as political prisoners and prisoners of war. Prime Minister of the Republic, Jack Lynch had called for the establishment of a "specifically Irish Institution" to rule Northern Ireland (Mansbach, 1973: p.205). His call was for reunion if the majority of Irish people called for it. Here again, the emphasis was on the future of Ireland being decided by a different group than those regarded with legitimate say according to the British government and the Protestant population. The British government was quite determined that the rules would be determined by Westminster. Whitelaw went about courting the opinions of all sectors of the community and then retired with willing representatives to Sunningdale in England where the conference produced a constitutional proposal for power-sharing in the province as a way forward to peace.

### *3.3 Sunningdale: Paradise Regained?*

Now that the initiative was with Westminster a new tact was attempted. Clearly there was no desire to keep on direct rule as a permanent solution. Straight away a commission was set up in order to reinstate a provincial parliament along the lines of Stormont only with a more equitable say in government for the Catholics. It was a chance to start afresh by molding a constitution which appealed to both sectors of the community. There was a realistic chance of this working if only because the alternative to half a say in the provincial parliament under a power-sharing initiative would be no say at all as a result of affairs being controlled from Westminster. To the Catholics the potential was set out for the first real meaningful say in government since the creation of the province distinct from the Republic since 1921. Surely they would give it a try.

William Whitelaw, The first Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (the position created on the dissolution of Stormont) set forth to try and formulate a constitution that could be used to fill the hole left by the old Stormont regime. Institutionalized power sharing was the main tenet of the new system which would incorporate a recognition of the Irish dimension. That is, that recognition be given to the differentiation in ideals and identity which is part of being a Catholic living in Ulster but descended from the Irish-Gaelic tradition which conflicts with the tradition, hopes and aspirations of the majority in Northern Ireland- those generally born within tradition and culture foreign to that of most inhabitants of the island of Ireland. A further concern of the Whitelaw commission was that during the fifty years of it's existence, the same party had occupied office exclusively and that the minority, which comprised of one third of the population of the province, had insufficient political support to put up a strong opposition. The consent to undertake the proposals by the whole community was regarded as essential if the new constitution was a) going to work, and b) going to provide the first step in an attempt to solve the whole Northern Irish issue. The initiative appeared to be back with the the Ulster people.

The Sunningdale agreement was a product of the efforts of the Westminster government, the Dublin government, leaders of the official unionists, the SDLP, and Alliance, and a collection of

advisers (Coyle, 1983: p.79). The declaration which preceded the agreement stated the intent of the Irish government to stand by it even though its major premise was that the constitution of Northern Ireland would not change unless the majority of the people there agreed. They therefore had been a major concession granted to the British government in signing the Sunningdale Agreement by the Irish government. Though they still had aspirations for a united Ireland it was significant that they were prepared to work towards that goal with the acknowledgement that they would have to attract a significant number of Protestants to the idea too. In view of the fact that the Protestant community had become somewhat polarized after the heady days of civil rights marches, internment and Bloody Sunday, this was quite an undertaking for Jack Lynch, on behalf of his government to undertake. His action however was interpreted by the more radical elements of nationalist opinion as selling out the Catholics in the north to a permanent future of discrimination. The British government also made it clear that the majority of the northern Irish population would have to sanction any move away from the present constitution. This did not prevent Ulster loyalists from attacking the withdrawal of Stormont and move towards power-sharing as an abandonment of the Protestants to a reunified Ireland down the road.

The refusal of the Democratic Unionist Party (D.U.P.) headed by Ian Paisley to attend the Sunningdale summit was a blow that did not bode well for the workability of any agreement that might be worked out. The significant support that Paisley had amassed since the formation of the D.U.P. in 1969 was threatening because the nature of Paisley's politics was vehement loyalism. The loyalism now had turned from loyalty to the crown (being as he was going against the expressed wishes of Her Majesty's government) to a unshakable loyalty to his own ideals and perceptions of what was right for his constituents and Ulster as a whole.

The frustration of the Protestant population with the British initiative which included talks with the I.R.A. and a commencement to release some internees posed a threat to the Catholic community as a whole. Desmond Boal of the D.U.P. had warned that

People who were fearful or frustrated...if not given specific targets.... would find their own....That would mean that innocent Catholics would suffer (Nelson; 1984: p.119).

Indeed, Protestants were finding it increasingly difficult to distinguish between innocent Catholics and I.R.A. members. It was inevitable even with a clear sight of the enemy that there would be

innocent casualties and fatalities. This was one unhappy assurance that the Sunningdale Agreement brought with it. The civilian casualties which the bombing campaign had already brought to the Protestant community had already created feelings that the Catholic population "*per se*" was inhuman and would only understand a taste of their own medicine. Sunningdale only increased many peoples dismay at the apparent giving-in to terrorist tactics and an acceptance that a reciprocal campaign by Protestant paramilitary forces was a legitimate response. In fact any tactic to bring down the Sunningdale Agreement had begun to be seen as appropriate. The collapse of the executive was not however due to a mass demonstration of Protestant anxieties of the ilk of the civil rights marches, but a relatively tight operation involving the knowledge and execution by a minority of the Protestant work-force of an industrial strike designed to cripple the economy of the North. Since it was mainly Protestants who were in charge of services like gas stations and other essential day-to-day essential services, co-operation from operators was assured. The use of *influence* to assure support of those more reluctant to co-operate in the strike was unhesitatingly and successfully applied.

When the Sunningdale Power Sharing Executive took office in January of 1974 it had already had the commitment of large sections of the community against it. In particular, the provisions for involving the Republican government, convinced Protestants that it had to go. It survived barely two weeks of industrial action against it in May 1974 before Faulkner, its leader, resigned, having already been physically attacked for his part in it by Unionist party members. The Ulster Workers Council (UWC) which organized the strike therefore received support from all quarters though it did not court mass support. The threat of action stemmed from a motion raised condemning the involvement of the Irish Republic in the Sunningdale Agreement. If the motion was defeated then civil disobedience would follow. In the event, the motion was defeated and the UWC went ahead with its action. A further blow to the chances of a successful Executive was the general election called by the Heath government in February 1974 in an attempt to establish a vote of confidence in the government after a Winter of industrial disputes in Britain. In Ulster, in a surprising show of unionist inter-party loyalty seats were fought according to pro and anti Sunningdale. The United Ulster Unionist Party (UUUP) stood against the executive and on the mandate of non co-

operation, won eleven out of the twelve Parliamentary seats. Only Gerry Fitt of the SDLP was returned to Westminster as a pro-Sunningdale member from the North. The I.R.A. had reacted with violence to the executive and were as pleased as the Protestant groups when it fell.

Following the collapse of Sunningdale there was a certain amount of confusion as to what to do next. In these days many possible initiatives were lost. The UDA came away from the experience thinking that a clearer political idea of what they did want as opposed to what they did not was in order. There did develop more acceptance in the mainstream of the UDA that some alternative to civil war or Protestant dominance must be found, and that any settlement must make some concessions to the aspirations and fears of the minority. These ideas failed to make sufficient progress in substantial sections of either community (Nelson; 1984: p.160). The carefully planned and researched executive which courted the most able politicians both sides could muster had been laid asunder. The strike had thrown the parliamentary structures aside and there was a feeling that somehow the air had been cleansed. Time seemed ripe for a radical departure from the stale politics of yore and the cultivation of a grass-roots movement was experimented with.

The formation of Community Organizations of Northern Ireland (CONI) in February 1975 offered a possible base for the development of community politics. Its lack of support from political leaders who may have justifiably thrown their arms up after this latest failure to come to grips with the problems of Northern Ireland, and the lack of support of the trade unions meant that there was not enough impetus to bring it to prominence.

The UWC in the days after the strike began to lose favor quickly with the established parties. It was seen as a threat to their own authority since it was a movement not based on party support. Fear of being outflanked led Bill Craig to say; "Who do these boys think they are? We're the politicians not them. They need us" (Nelson; 1984: p.162).

The Loyalist parties pushed for majority rule once more in May 1974 hoping that the government would be weary of the Northern Ireland problem and willing to go against its better judgement and give in to their demands. Weary of the situation as Britain was, and fearful too of another strike, the new Wilson government did not come any closer to re-establishing the old Stormont system. The Labour Party was not any more likely to give into Protestant wishes because

the Loyalists traditionally had found the Conservatives more amiable to their plight than Labour. The alternative, continuation of direct rule, was preferable to power-sharing and certainly to anything else that may force the province down the path to direct rule. The DUP, which had kept relatively quiet, in the days preceding Sunningdale, returned to its hard-line approach.

### **3.3.1 1974-9: All Quiet on the Irish Front**

The days and years ahead came and went without a further positive proposal to change the status-quo from Westminster that was along the lines of Sunningdale. Westminster had suffered a major confidence blow and was apprehensive in trying to bring about another initiative. The government also felt powerless to impose one on the province. Dublin, also reeling from the shock of the aborted Sunningdale Executive, started to play-down the Irish dimension and concentrated instead on a form of power-sharing that was less reliant on the concept. By 1976 it was prepared to accept the proposition of a devolved government with equal share in government by all sectors of the community. By 1979 it espoused any form of administration so long as it met with the agreement of both sectors of the community. The new hope was that the two communities would work out the differences between themselves.

In July 1974 the British government issued a White paper announcing the formation of a Constitutional Convention on Northern Ireland. Its objective was to try and establish what option for the future of the province would find most acceptance in Northern Ireland. Predictably, the answer was of an option which simply put forward the case of the majority in the province, the Protestants. As a matter of political expediency, Jack Lynch, now head of the opposition in the Dail Eireann, and leadership under attack, called for the British to announce their intent to withdraw from the province. However, on the whole, the Irish government's policy to Northern Ireland all but disappeared until the end of the 1970's. The situation remained comparable in Westminster where the Northern Ireland question became relegated to a less prominent position and more pressing domestic issues took priority. The bi-partisan nature of the treatment of Northern Ireland

throughout the 1970's meant that once it ceased to be such a burning issue after 1974, it was left to float through the rest of the decade under direct rule but with no real direction. The strange marriage of the OUP and the Labour Party in 1978 in order to ensure the Labour majority in the House of Commons under Callaghan, meant that at least in the short run the unionists had a significant position to play and the likelihood of the Labour Party pushing for reform adverse to unionist ideology was at this time remote.

### **3.3.2 In Search of an Acceptable Consensus**

The justification of giving-up on the attempts of "consensus hunting" which had been the major strategy up until 1980 is that it simply did not work. The reason for this is that the majority of views within Northern Ireland have time and time again been contrary to what Westminster wants to hear. If they were in accordance with the views of Britain, then the Irish Question would have been resolved long ago. By administering Northern Ireland the way in which Scotland has been, or else taken on board the Welsh or Yorkshire models it has been proposed, there may be a quite credible solution to the troubles. There are Welsh separatists, Scottish nationalists and even Yorkshiremen in search of recognition for their own separate identity to be recognized constitutionally, therefore the continuing claims of the Northern Irish Catholics would have historical bedfellows. However the violence in Ireland is of a much greater intensity than that of anything the British have faced in the Scottish, Welsh or Yorkshire variety. In a resurgence of Welsh nationalism in the latter part of the 1970's there were incidents of English-owned residences being burnt to the ground. Plaid Cymru still keeps the political fire burning for Welsh independence and the Scottish National party still manages to win seats in The House of Commons. However, the "Yorksire option" is out simply because the the province is not in fact part of England and cannot be administered as such. Scotland has its administration in the hands of a Secretary of State who is usually a member of the ruling party with a majority in a constituency there. Since neither the Conservative nor Labour Parties are organized in Northern Ireland because of the sectarian nature of voting there and neither

could expect much support, integration would have to take on a new form. Quite what form has yet to be coherently stated.

The route that the British government has taken in the 1980's has been to leave the path clear to a united Ireland if only it can be sanctioned by widespread support which has kept nationalist interest, especially that of the Irish government. However, the agreement also stated that the majority of people would have to consent to a constitutional change in government. Examined closely, there is a no-win for the unionists as far as their present stated ambitions go. Majority rule applies to the re-unification of Ireland, their greatest fear, but majority rule does not apply if it demands a return to the days of majority rule in Stormont. The search, to put it accurately, is for agreement across the sectarian divide, as it was in the formulation of the Sunningdale Agreement but this time with the added barrier of non-consultation with the unionists until it was signed, and the positive aspect for the SDLP that there was an Irish Dimension in the Agreement which recognized the existence and legitimacy of the voice and culture of the Republic within the territory of Northern Ireland. The philosophy behind the Anglo-Irish agreement was to get consensus with the two government's involved if it was not possible to get consensus within the territory which was at the center of the dispute. Time and again the unionist distrust of the selling-out of the Protestant people to a united Ireland had prevented them accepting any initiative that would accord the minority a power-sharing position or one that elevated them above the position of minority status in a local parliament. There still persists the refusal by the Protestant elite, and reluctance by the British government, to grant power to a section of the province, be it nationalist paramilitary or nationalist constitutionalist, whose long-term aim is the destruction of the province. This, at least is understandable, if frustrating to the point of view of Westminster. Direct rule has done neither Westminster, nationalist nor unionist any real good compared with what cooperation might have achieved if Sunningdale had been given a chance of success.

As far as the nationalist is concerned, direct rule from Westminster means a firmer hold of the province by the British. In this regard it is seen as a move away from eventual unification, not a move toward it. As far as the unionist is concerned, there is uncertainty over what Westminster will decide to do next, now that the constitutional fulcrum has moved away from Northern Ireland

to London. Equally, to the mind of the unionist, direct rule from Westminster is preferable to a power-sharing agreement with the nationalists. This has been illustrated by the constant resort to non-cooperation stance taken in the face of repeated attempts by the British Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland to get the parties together around a conference table.

The effectiveness of the boycott of such meetings has been ensured by the insistence of the British government that the wishes of the majority in Northern Ireland has always been of paramount importance. Yet this has not meant that they have strictly adhered to the expressed wishes of the majority. The British government instead continued (and continues) to try for solutions which they know are not in the interests of the majority. This double approach to the problem has, not surprisingly, led to a vicious circle which involved initiative between Britain and the Republic of Ireland, suspicion of their motives by the unionist sector, and total rejection of any subsequent agreement that suggests a weakening of British authority or beginnings of constitutional influence of the Republic of Ireland on the province of Ulster. Though the unionists have lost their direct power, the guarantee from Britain that no constitutional change in the position of Northern Ireland will be made without their sanction still gives them an indirect hold on their own destiny.

The move away from direct negotiation with the communities of Northern Ireland at the beginning of the 1980's was therefore only incremental and by no means exclusive. Continued attempts at negotiation within Northern Ireland have continued but the emphasis on reaching agreement with the Republic of Ireland replaced this as the most important strategy in determining the future of Northern Ireland. By receiving the support of the Irish government, it was hoped that the corresponding sectors of the Northern Ireland community would be forced into recognition of the legitimacy of what was being forced upon them. Once the Republic of Ireland had officially acknowledged the status of Great Britain as the sovereign power in Northern Ireland, it would theoretically be easier to sell to the nationalists within Northern Ireland. Similarly, once agreement was reached, the unionists would be forced into accepting Britain's commitment to it. However, to counter-balance this, the unionists would have the satisfaction that the Irish government officially recognized British sovereignty in the province and that it was binding.

Almost a decade elapsed before the governments of Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland were able to come to an agreement over the future of the province. Its road has been as rocky as that of Sunningdale, for many of the same reasons. The fact that it has "survived" over three years gives some people hope that it may contain some kind of prospect for progress toward resolution. To others it signifies that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has failed to produce anything worthwhile and is incapable of doing so as long as it remains in the mode that it is, i.e. essentially a forum for discussion on the future of Northern Ireland. The beginnings of the return to solutionism after the disappointment of 1974 came with the emergence of an Anglo-Irish dimension. The next section will deal with its rise to prominence as the major vehicle for political change in Northern Ireland and its prospects for real progress given its record over the past three years.

## 4.0 New Dimension, Same Directions

The Thatcher years are easily distinguishable for the people of Northern Ireland. They represent an unbroken period of Conservative rule and an unbroken resolve to tackle the problem of governance by introducing power-sharing and a role for the Republic of Ireland in the day to day affairs of the province, not constitutional, but consultative in nature. After the failure to gain consensus through the Sunningdale Agreement and the period of inactivity which followed, or rather, the period of ineffective activity that followed, a new approach was implemented. Essentially, the new strategy departed from the round of talks within the Northern Irish community where the two factions of nationalism and unionism were courted and some kind of moderate policy sought in order to try and reconcile the two. The consociational option, which the Anglo-Irish Agreement stood for, was derived from deciding which policy Britain most wanted implemented in for Northern Ireland and then attempting to solve the problem from this perspective. The solution which Thatcher's government found struck a compromise between desirability and feasibility was a government based on power-sharing within Northern Ireland under the cloak of a return to devolved government.

The emphasis had therefore moved away from consultation with the parties within Northern Ireland towards the the imposition of an agreement based on negotiation between the governments of Ireland and United Kingdom. Most of the solutions that had occurred to British leaders had

been examined and exhausted. The Sunningdale Agreement had failed in its attempt at bringing together the two parties, Protestant and Catholic, and laying out a structure that they might both adhere to. The Hillsborough power-sharing agreement therefore tried to force the two communities together in accepting the fact that the British government held sway on the future of Ireland, and not extremist or intransigent groups from either side of Ulster's political divide. Furthermore the solution was to be reached through consultation with the Irish government i.e. the state involved in the territorial dispute in Ulster, not the communities within Northern Ireland, at least, not predominantly.<sup>11</sup> This was a shrewd move from the point of view of the British government. By coming to terms with what was thought acceptable for the two nations in the dispute as opposed to what was thought acceptable by the majority in one particular province thought, a new dimension was explored with the possibility that a new opening may reveal itself.

#### **4.1.1 International Acceptability**

Previously two major sources of embarrassment for the British government have been the reaction of the Irish government and that of the United States. In the event of formulating an agreement on the future direction of the province with the Irish Republic, there was the automatic effect of solving both problems. The major thrust of American indignity toward Great Britain's handling of the Northern Ireland situation was that it ignored the say of the government of the Republic of Ireland and the continued policy of ignoring the Catholic claim to their Irish heritage through the absence of an Irish dimension. In the realization of the Irish dimension in a proposal for the future of the province, Great Britain, by developing links with the Irish government, was at least beginning to make international strides even if it was to be at the expense of an initial loss of ground within the Northern Ireland community.

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<sup>11</sup> The SDLP was a significant actor in the preliminary talks about a power-sharing settlement in Northern Ireland but it was the interaction of the Westminster and Dublin government which was considered more important in the initial stages

An added incentive to work directly with the Irish government was that it could enhance cross-border security operations. The pursuit of suspected terrorists into the Republic has been outlawed in the past because of a general disagreement over the British army's right to be actually on the island in the first place. Extradition has been a similarly frustrating sticking-point for the British because of its implicit recognition of British sovereignty in Northern Ireland. If the Irish government are powerless to enact what it believes is its right to administer the North, then it has left no doubt as to whom is in control in the South. Such political point-scoring has been a hindrance to what the British believe is justice, to bring criminals to trial. The enlisted help of the Irish government over the whole Irish Question therefore carried the added boost to the British as facilitating a forcing of the issue over extradition under a spirit of *mutual cooperation*.

The one internal force in which an Anglo-Irish Agreement could expect to find support was the S.D.L.P.. The Official Unionists had held out a moderate hand in 1974 at Sunningdale but those days had gone. As it stood, with the help of the S.D.L.P. there was hope that there may be a chance of eventual success when it came to enforcing an Anglo-Irish Agreement upon the people of Northern Ireland. However, there was still the fear that once instituted, another total rejection by physical-force nationalists would once more bring withdrawal from the S.D.L.P. from an initiative that they had supported. The fear of being outflanked by hard line nationalists this time however, with the Anglo-Irish dimension having been ceded by the British, was less of a risk to them. In 1974, the S.D.L.P. risked isolation in the political wilderness, this time they had the Irish government as a potential ally. The rejection from unionist quarters was expected, but provided an Agreement could be lifted off the ground, with the help of a section of the community (supporters of the SDLP), there was hope that they would embrace it as a move solely toward power-sharing and not as the first step to re-unification. The perception that the S.D.L.P. would not stick to their original demand for power-sharing meant that unionist help could not be counted upon to make the new change in strategy of an Anglo-Irish dimension to work. From the unionist standpoint, there was no more acceptance that the Irish government were entitled to have a say in government than the United States or France. The early attempts at inter-governmental talks on the future of Ireland through the Anglo-Irish looking-glass were conducted against a background of tenuous

support in the North with only the S.D.L.P. and in particular it's leader John Hume, playing a significant part in negotiations leading up to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. In particular, his influence in having the Conference secretariat located in Northern Ireland was an important symbolic gesture<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Break-Throughs and Set-Backs

The continuation of Anglo-Irish summits between 1980 and 1984 was the one stable political feat that the that the British could be thankful for. In 1980, when Charles Haughey took office as prime-minister of Ireland (as head of Fianna Fail), he stated that the situation was totally unacceptable in Northern Ireland and that he would seek talks with the British government as soon as was possible. Haughey's meetings with Thatcher in London in May 1980 and again in December of that year in Dublin were interpreted by the Irish premier as very significant and that the whole future of Northern Ireland could at last by taking advantage of this new dimension to the problem (or solution). In 1981, Garrett FitzGerald, new prime-minister (Fine Gael), and head of a coalition as shaky as Haughey's had been, came into a situation where there was pressure on him to follow Haughey's example and push for a solution in Northern Ireland which involved the partnership of Ireland and Great Britain. The continuance of the Thatcher government meant that at least there was an element of continuity of personnel from one side involved in the project if not the other.

The apprehension and expectations which followed were shortly lived due to a nine month long experience that was to push the communities further apart. The H-Block hunger-strikes which had started in 1976 after special privileges given to prisoners in 1972 had been revoked. The privileges were as near to the granting of political status as they could be without the British formally giving it. They included the right not to wear prison uniform or take-on prison work. In review, the British government had decided that a mistake had been made and that a return to normal prison

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<sup>12</sup> See "The Anglo-Irish Agreement and the Prospects for Power-Sharing in Northern Ireland" in *Political Quarterly*; Volume 59, No.1.(April 1988).

status was needed. The reaction was to start a "dirty protest" which entailed the smearing of excrement on the walls of the prison cell and the wearing only of a blanket. In 1980 a renewed effort was begun to revoke the British decision. One by one, twenty-two prisoners started on hunger-strike. After an apparent signal of defeat by the British government, the strike was called off only to have proved a false alarm and the fasting began again in 1981. This time the hunger-strikes were called off in the face of Thatcher's intransigence.

Though Thatcher had "won", winning brought its costs. Ten of the *men on the blanket* died the agonizing death of starvation. The men were made martyrs of by the Catholic community as a whole and the reaction to Thatcher's policy of "No U-Turn" divided the communities in Northern Ireland even further. There was a general outcry from the international arena, questioning the British humanity over the episode, and a upsurge in support for the I.R.A. and its political advocate, Sinn Fein (Baldy; 1987: p23) The election of Bobby Sands (who subsequently died on the protest) to Westminster during the hunger-strike further heightened the embarrassment of the British government but the astute political maneuver by Sinn Fein was not enough to break British resilience. Following the success of the Bobby Sands victory, Sinn Fein re-assessed its position of not fighting elections (Sands' victory was the result of opportunism by Sinn Fein not out of policy). They decided to contest local elections within Northern Ireland and occupying any local seats won but not any won in the regional assembly. They also decided to contest seats in Westminster though refusing to occupy them in the event of being elected. This had further ramifications on the SDLP which now had to face up to the constitutional challenge of an organization which condoned violence in the name of nationalist opinion. The policy of the British government over the hunger-strike was not the last to test the tenuous links which it was establishing with the Irish government over the future of Ulster.

Garrett FitzGerald took a different approach to Haughey in his meetings with Thatcher in November 1981. His aim was to remove articles from the Irish constitution which were obnoxious to the Protestants of Northern Ireland in order that they would be more accepting to the proposition of a united Ireland. In a show of genuine commitment to his ideals, he agreed in a joint communique with Thatcher that the future of Northern Ireland would be determined by a majority

of people within the province deciding to change its constitution. FitzGerald wanted to eliminate the sectarian nature of the Northern Ireland problem and looked toward a unity of hearts as a necessary pre-requisite to any kind of a united Ireland. The attitude of FitzGerald was criticized by Haughey who thought that his counterpart was ruining all his good work. Fianna Fail's return to power early in 1982 was the chance to put things right. 1982 was a politically bad year for Anglo-Irish relations. Still angry at the way Thatcher had dealt with the hunger strikes, Haughey also showed considerable indignation toward Britain's involvement in the Falklands War. The Imperialist parallels between that and the Northern Ireland situation did not have to be voiced, they were obvious enough.

John Hume initiated steps to give a united voice to the nationalist parties, north and south in order to deal with the disruptive threat of Sinn Fein which had won five seats in the 1982 Northern Ireland Assembly. Both the SDLP and Sinn Fein had opted to boycott the Assembly, resurrected for the first time since the power-sharing executive of 1984. Sinn Fein's vote was increasing. From ten per cent of the vote in the 1982 assembly it increased to fourteen per cent in the general election of June 1983. Thatcher had also produced a landslide in that election but the landslide seemed to be one which was cutting off the pass between nationalist and Conservative. This was a disturbing signal that the nationalist movement as a whole was becoming more hard-line and that if Thatcher did not move to stop the slide, she could be faced with a situation of irreparable damage. She was given a further jolt by the All-Irish Forum which met on 30 May 1983, which consisted of Fianna Fail (the government), Fine Gael and Labour in the south, and the SDLP in the north. The New Ireland Forum, after eleven months of deliberation, came out with a report on the tragedy of the Northern Ireland situation and the urgent need to do something immediately. In a statement issued by the Forum they stressed that;

The immediate outlook for the North is extremely dangerous unless an acceptable political solution is achieved. The long-term damage to society worsens each day that passes without political progress.... There are at present no political institutions to which a majority of the people in the nationalist and unionist traditions can give their common allegiance or even acquiesce in. The fundamental social bonds which hold people together in a normal community, already tenuous in the abnormal conditions of Northern Ireland, have been very largely sundered by the events and experiences of the past terrible fifteen years... The immense challenge facing the political leaders of Great Britain and Ireland is to create the conditions for a new Ireland and a new society acceptable to all of its people (Shannon; 1986: p.862)

The onus clearly rested by this time with an Anglo-Irish initiative according to the 90% of all nationalist opinion which this statement represented. Three constitutional frameworks for possible settlement were advocated. They were, a unitary state, a federal/constitutional state and joint authority. The recognition that the Protestant voice had to be accommodated was put forward but there was nothing that the forum had to say which was of particularly new or revolutionary which may have won much support in the Protestant heart. However sincere the gesture, the fact that the Irish government had recently held a referendum to incorporate their ban on abortion into the constitution. Though in this case the moral issue was one which crossed sectarian divide, it did nothing to alleviate belief that the Catholic Church held sway on moral issues and could in future times could proceed to determine legislation that would offend the sensitivities of the Protestant population. This certainly was not the kind of pluralist type of government which FitzGerald had often emphasized as necessary to entice the non-Catholic sectors of Ireland into a union with them.

Politically there had still been little produced in the way of a realistic way forward for the province in terms that were offered from the Republic in its All-Ireland Forum or from its meetings with the Prime Minister of Great Britain. Internal Irish meetings had really only produced a forum for espousal of its limited aims which were, united Ireland (i), united Ireland (ii), or half-way to a united Ireland, without ever getting to grips with what is the most pressing need, i.e. the satisfaction of the Protestants that they have something to gain by a change in the constitutional position in Northern Ireland. Politically there was room to maneuvers. An offer of significant representation in the Dail could have been made. One that had a detailed, written explanation of where they would stand as a minority in the event of a unitary island. Economically, there is even less reason to join a united Ireland after the recession of the late seventies which is still lingering and causing severe hardship. There had been no evidence put forward that the six counties could be feasibly supported by the Irish economy which has experienced such a downturn. Socially there is only evidence of possible friction to come if the dictates of the Catholic tradition continue to play a central role in the political sphere. In sum, solutions as put forward by the nationalist parties of Northern and Southern Ireland up until the Anglo-Irish Agreement, had very little chance of success given the character of the Republic and that of Ulster. While Anglo-Irish relations were at an ebb, during the

hunger strikes and British involvement in the South Atlantic, the Irish government had come close to giving up on a bi-lateral solution. By holding on to what had been achieved instead of having to start all over again from scratch, channels were kept open. However small, some initial progress had been made in terms of the Anglo-Irish dimension. The FitzGerald/Haughey summits with Thatcher constituted a dimension that could be built upon and the Forum's plea for new initiatives were not just leaps in the dark. The opinion of Great Britain was essential in the context of settlement in Northern Ireland, maybe even more-so than the direct courting of the Protestant people which they had shown to be so inept at. In any event this was the way in which the Irish and British governments went into the Anglo-Irish talks preceding the agreement of November 1985.

Thatcher and FitzGerald met in November 1984 to discuss their relative positions. While FitzGerald remained "hopeful" Thatcher made her position clear. She told the waiting press that the option of a united Ireland was not on the agenda, thereby renouncing all espousals of the all-Ireland Forum. When questioned on anything that remotely suggested that the Irish had proposed something workable she insisted "That's Out!...That's Out!" Perhaps it had something to do with the recent attack on her life and the lives of her cabinet in Brighton that month. Norman Tebbit, one of her cabinet members was at the time of conference, still in bad condition in hospital. In short, the meeting was held in an unusually stressful situation and the counterparts at the conference table, while abhorred at the bombing, were still advocates of part of the reasoning behind the bomb, the nationalist contention embedded in the Irish constitution that the island was one nation. Though FitzGerald's politics were not so crude, the overall legitimacy of the presence of the British in Ireland is a question central to the call for negotiation over the future of the province and not out of any general sense that the British have not been fair to a minority of their citizenry. After all, the Scottish or Welsh cause have never been of national importance to the Republic of Ireland. A concession to terrorism at this juncture (as a promise to work with the Republic on a formula toward a constitutional adjustment to the province of Northern Ireland may have been interpreted), would not only have signalled a general shift in policy which holds that physical-force will always prove ineffectual against the state, but would go against the reputation of non-compromise and single-mindedness of "The Iron Lady" which had been built up over Thatchers position in 10

Downing Street. By June 1985 the mood seemed to have changed almost inexplicably. Suddenly the two nations were on the verge of the signing of an Agreement. Essentially, the long-awaited agreement between Britain and Ireland set out the provision for an Inter-governmental conference to deal with political, security and legal matters and the promotion of cross-border co-operation. The vagueness of the agreement was remarkable. What exactly "cooperation" and "working together" entailed was certainly not cast in stone. The term "conference" as opposed to anything more official sounding like "commission" was used so as not to stir up the unionist anger in thinking that a joint government was being formed under their very own (un-consulted) noses. Statements of measurable intent by the British government included the wish for a devolved settlement via the vote of a majority within Northern Ireland. It seemed strange that the policy initiated and executed from without, by Britain and Ireland, made even more untrustworthy by the fact that they negotiated behind the backs of the unionists should then be offered to the unionists in order to get their support. This was in effect what happened. The reaction was somewhat predictable.

## 5.0 Reaction to the Anglo-Irish Agreement

### 5.1.1 The Main Provisions

The Anglo-Irish Agreement contains 13 articles. The article itself is brief and contains the vital clause;

There is hereby established Intergovernmental conference....concerned with Northern Ireland and with relations between the two parts of Ireland, to deal, as set out in this Agreement, on a regular basis with (1) political matters; (2) security and related matters; (3) legal matters including the administration of justice; (4) the promotion of cross border cooperation.

Other articles make it clear that cross-border cooperation is meant to be comprehensive, covering "security, economic, social, and cultural matters." Never before had the Republic of Ireland been given legal right of say in the province. However, this must be seen in the context of article 2b which states that;

there is no derogation from the sovereignty of either the Irish Government or the United Kingdom government, and each retains responsibility for the decisions and administration of government within its own jurisdiction.

Furthermore, the two governments promised that the constitutional status of Northern Ireland could only be changed by consent of a majority in the province and that there was a general recognition that this was not prevalent at the time of signing.

The terms of the agreement are quite vague in detail. For example, "the two governments would put forward views on the Northern Ireland problem." No recourse was given for strong

disagreement between the two governments. One assumes that in the event of an unacceptable resolution made by the Irish government, it would be simply countered and left at that. Nothing bound the British government to any suggestions which may be forthcoming from Dublin. Only a commitment to a three year period of talks was given by the British with no indication that it was to be renewed. Again, the use of the word "conference" played down any suspicion that it might be anything more official like a "council". There was no stipulation that the conference would meet at specific periods, merely that they would be regular and frequent.

The declared wish of the British and Irish governments was for a devolved government according to Article 4 of the Agreement . The wish was for something more than the Devolved government of Stormont 1921-72. It was to renew the commitment to power sharing, a return to the ideals of Sunningdale. The unionists had defeated that agreement even though it directly consulted them. The Anglo-Irish Agreement couldn't lay claim to doing that. Article 5 recognized that there were two distinct communities which had to be catered to. As far as the rights of the Catholics were concerned, Article 6 called for the Irish government to fill the role of speaker for them. The remaining articles expressed a need for improvement in the policing of the province implicitly dealing with laws on extradition as well as the undermining of the system of justice by intimidation of juries judges and the police force in general.

That such a seemingly innocuous arrangement as that which the British and Irish governments came together to sign on 15 November 1985 should cause such hysteria in certain parts of the province which it was designed to supposedly help is quite remarkable. That it should produce an air of disappointment on the other side of the fence and not a converse sense of rejoicing is yet another. This in fact was the way in which the agreement was met in the two places where the most significance was placed upon it; Northern Ireland and the Republic. The Prime Ministers of the Republic and Great Britain showed the type of enthusiasm that one might expect from a document which they had invested so much time and work in and had billed as "historic". Of the two signatories, FitzGerald had certainly placed greater significance on it. As an Irishman it had in some ways represented his life's work. It is only fair to say that the significance of the agreement was not of such historic importance to the average person in the street in Britain as it was to an Irish

counter-part. The Irish situation had not always occupied top priority in Britain even as late as 1983 when the urgency of the situation was expressed by the All-Irish Forum.

The urgency of the Irish moves towards a solution to the Northern Problem only served to *spook* the unionists in the province. The old fears of rule from Dublin added to the feeling of a loss of control over their own destiny due to the direct rule imposed upon them by Westminster and now this "Agreement" imposed upon them combined to make the loyalist parties pour condemnation upon it. It was only a short lag in time before it had a similar effect in Ireland. The feeling that the agreement just amounted to another confidence trick in a line centuries long by the British was becoming a prevalent concern. After ten years of waiting the sum of progress made signified by the agreement was seen in certain sections of the nationalist movement as negligible. The reasons lay in what the expectations of the agreement were. Thatcher at no time promised a united Ireland. Indeed, the contrary message had been given in the meetings before the agreement was signed. Yet at the same time there were indications that there was more in the offing.

While it would be unfair to say that FitzGerald was duped into thinking that something more substantial would come out of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, his hopes for some kind of foundation on which to base his undeniable long-term aspirations for a united Ireland in whatever form, pushed his pen along a dotted line which had less significance than he probably realized toward an overall quest for this goal. Ironically, by signing the agreement, FitzGerald did much to ensure that there would never be a united Ireland. The Agreement, finding ratification in the Dail, Westminster and the United Nations, was probably far more significant than any one piece of legislation in the history of the Ireland since the acceptance of the treaty in 1921 which partitioned the country. The reasons why it was significant were not however based in the realization of nationalist goals but in the guarantee that the province would not be threatened with loss of British sovereignty unless a substantial number of Protestants agreed to it. The homogenous nature of the Protestant bloc by 1985 was as secure as it had been since the collapse of Stormont and in the face of developments in the early 1980's, with the increased activity between Dublin and London, even more so.

## 5.1.2 The Protestant Wrath Descends

Even before the Anglo-Irish summits had produced an agreement, the Protestant stance was made quite clear. There would be no acceptance of any agreement reached which had not courted their acceptance in its formulation. Secondly, the fact that it alluded to the involvement of the Republic of Ireland in the day to day running of the province and the concerns of the Catholic community specifically (i.e. their problem with the insatiable lust for power of the Loyalists), it was bound to involve itself in the attempt to wrest power away from them on behalf of their "Fenian brothers" Thirdly, the power sharing aspect implicit in the agreement under the auspices of a return to devolved government was wholly unacceptable to them.

In reaction to the Agreement, a new movement organization was launched called the Ulster Clubs, launched initially by working-class loyalists in Portadown. It's general idea was to create a network which could be used to mobilize loyalists, first to make an effective any campaign of civil disruption and then, in the event of civil war, to take up an armed struggle (Bruce; 1987: p647).

The leader of the group had no doubt of what the struggle was about. As a Salvation Army Evangelical, Alan Wright viewed resistance as a pure conflict between Protestantism and Rome. The strong link between evangelicalism and opposition to power-sharing is still as much of a factor as it was in centuries past. Even those who do not personally subscribe to the more extreme views of Paisley and others of that ilk, recognize what it is to be a Protestant in Northern Ireland (ibid).

The Protestant parties banded together to suspend local government in the face of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the implicit threat of having to sit together with the representatives of Sinn Fein. Despite the assurance that Britain would retain sovereignty, the loyalists continued to speak of the Agreement as treachery This amounted to a of blind condemnation of the Agreement. If the hand of Dublin was in the formulation, then that was enough to deem it worthy of extremist reaction. Typical was John McMichael of the U.D.A. who warned;

"If our fears are confirmed, this is the beginning of the end. We expect the worst and are preparing for it. We have the ingredients here for civil war"

Unionists almost to a man, criticized the Agreement as a sell-out and the first step down the road to Dublin rule. On December 11, 1985, when the first meeting of the Inter-governmental conference was held, Ian Paisley handed a letter of protest to Tom King, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. It read;

In the name of the Unionist majority whose rights you have trampled into the gutter, we repudiate you. The sordid exercise in which you are involved is the very antithesis of democracy. Today you debase yourself to the level of equal to the imposter Barry,<sup>14</sup> the lowest form of political existence, who has no jurisdiction in this realm, parasite that he is, who has been carried to your table on the backs of the murdering IRA (Shannon; 1986: p.851).

Paisley also compared the task before the Protestants in the wake of the Agreement to the task set by the loyalist signatories to the Solemn League and Covenant of 1912. Then, Edward Carson rallied his Protestant forces in opposition (violent if necessary) to Home Rule. His resurrection of it in 1981 was now used to spell out what the people of Ulster had to do;

Just as in the past, at a parallel time of imminent Constitutional danger, the men of Ulster pledged, organized and prepared themselves to resist to the death any attempt to hand them over to their enemies, then so at this time of equal danger the men of Ulster are preparing to resist and destroy the process of ongoing all-Ireland integration intended to flow from an all-Ireland Summit (Mac Iver; 1987: p.368)

### 5.1.3 Thatcher Keeps Her Cool

The decisive factor of whether Thatcher would call the unionist bluff revolved upon the commitment to the belief that Westminster was the sole executor of its own policies. The added incentive to deal with a situation which was costing four billion pounds sterling per year may have also played a part in the final decision to fight the resistance of Ulster if that was what it took to make the situation in Northern Ireland resolvable. The step which the Agreement took was not large but small and faltering. This is a measure of the task which befalls the future leaders of both nations to come a little further. This in itself requires amendments to the agreement as it stands.

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<sup>13</sup> Taken from *Newsweek*; 4 November 1985. p.10)

<sup>14</sup> Peter Barry, the Irish Foreign Minister and appointed his government's permanent ministerial representative to the conference

An editorial in *New Statesman* quipped that any agreement which produced such vehemence by Charles Haughey in the South and Enoch Powell in the North must have been facing in the right direction. However, the policies of Thatcher, successful in their determination to continue to resist opposition (from any quarter) to the Agreement, lacked a character of transition. One might expect that after an initial show of intransigence, Thatcher might have moved on to a more constructive policy. Yet the tendency has been to remain locked in the war of attrition and to stay there as an end in itself. The battle remained one of defeating the I.R.A. to the exclusion of most anything else.

#### **5.1.4 SDLP Holding On**

The *New Statesman* reviewed the year of progress since the Anglo-Irish Agreement and noted that the SDLP themselves were starting to believe that they had no better chance at ever formulating a power-sharing agreement than they had when they first formed. They were granted an Irish dimension, and a chance at power-sharing under devolution. Yet everything had been frustrated by the familiar problem that the majority bloc would not cooperate. The simple fact remained after the agreement that nothing had changed which could offer hope of a consensus which could enable Protestant and Catholic to live together and to obtain their objectives. The main reason is that the different belief systems upon which their world-view relied refused to allow for their peaceful co-existence. Nothing in the SDLP manifesto could make inroads into this situation and as a result, its moderate voice found no expression in unionist idealism.

#### **5.1.5 The I.R.A. and Sinn Fein Resist**

Martin McGuinness of the I.R.A. dismissed the entire Anglo-Irish process as merely another device to "enable Britain to refine its repression of republicans and its partition of Ireland" (O'Meila; 1985: p.16). Like the unionist reaction, the radical nationalist voice in the North was

predictable. Thatcher tried to turn the Agreement into an exercise of hunting out the I.R.A. with the help of cross-border security operations and the all-Ireland Forum report based upon a mutual agreement by the other nationalists that the political success of Sinn Fein had to be countered. This attempt to isolate the physical-force nationalists only served to harden the resolve of the I.R.A. to fight back. In the years since the agreement, the effect has not been to break the support of the I.R.A. a fact that the 1987 General Election results brought home to the British government. Even the politically destructive paramilitary attack in Eneskillen did not do any lasting serious damage to the cause of Sinn Fein (as was speculated by some commentators at the time). One can speculate that any ground lost among the nationalist community would probably have been regained in the wake of recent events at Republican funerals. Similarly, while injustice is seen to be done through police cover-ups and people get killed by plastic bullets, the support for a physical force answer will remain. Almost every family in Northern Ireland has been affected by the death toll in Northern Ireland, either by having a relative killed or imprisoned or by knowing someone who has. This ensures a bedrock of staunch Republicanism that can never be broken down. Where progress can be made is with those masses on the fringes whose attitudes can be brought around to constitutional change. As yet, the policies of the governments North and South, and the pleas from the SDLP from within, have proven largely unsuccessful.

### **5.1.6 International Aspects**

The Anglo-Irish Agreement was welcomed widely abroad. The influential support in America was particularly complimentary in its assessment of the ability of the Agreement to facilitate a solution. The support of the United States was backed up by the promise of Jimmy Carter in 1977 who had pledged economic assistance to any solution that could be agreed upon by the British and Irish governments. Ronald Reagan's claims to Irish ancestry presided over the administration which donated \$50 million to the Agreements International Fund. On November 15, 1985 Reagan and Speaker of the House O'Neil issued a joint statement commending the Irish and British govern-

ments on reaching agreement on the Northern Ireland problem (Thompson; 1985: p.294). They obviously read into the Agreement much more than Britain intended. In the American mind, the future of the island seemed to be the re-unification of Ireland and the Agreement was the vehicle (together with British withdrawal) to that realization. This mis-apprehension gave way to a determination to support the Agreement as it stood, with a "no strings attached" aid payment of \$250 million. O'Neil in a speech on March 5, 1986 put forward his case;

As you know, the President and I have had our differences on many issues over the past five years. We have no differences on the need to end the violence in Northern Ireland and bring about political progress there in a peaceful and constitutional fashion. Based upon my recent discussions with President Reagan and Secretary Shultz, I understand that the Department of State will recommend that Congress appropriate fifty million dollars a year for five years to this fund. I believe that by considering current budget restraints this is a reasonable sum. I do however believe that the assistance should be substantially in the nature of economic support funds and not loan guarantees. I also believe that Congress should make this aid contingent on a long list of political conditions. We need to express our unqualified support for the accord, not our doubts about it (Thompson; 1985: p.294-5).

Though the Foreign Affairs Committee passed the bill it fell short of acceptance of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee over a budgetary issue which lowered the overall amount agreed to send to \$120 million and secondly over extradition practices which were tagged on as part of a concession to the British lobby wherein the terms came into line with the European Human Rights Convention. The link between the US government and the Anglo-Irish Agreement has remained an important factor which keeps the rounds of continued negotiation between London and Dublin going. There is an added responsibility towards negotiation when a proportion of the finances used to improve conditions are from an external source. American money, though it does not involve a buying into the rounds of negotiation, does apply a subtle pressure to the parties involved to try and justify their confidence in the Anglo-Irish Accord.

The membership of NATO has arisen as a consequence or even pre-condition to a united Ireland. The non-aligned Irish state has historically proved troublesome to members of the alliance. It has been proposed in recollection of the Nazi Swastika flying above Dublin castle during the second world war in order to justify that some kind of guarantee of Ireland's political credentials should be assured. Such fears are not well founded. A United Ireland is no more likely to pose as a threat of a Soviet base than France or Belgium. The refusal to take up the American offer to join NATO in 1949 was clearly linked to British involvement in Ireland and the more recent refusal to join an EEC sponsored blockade of Argentinian exports during the Falkland War was that it was

a political move out of line with Irish neutrality. The British may opt for a guarantee of Irish commitment to a more united European Community emanating from closer political ties in a Euro-Irish context but as yet, the British have been reluctant to deal with an eventuality which it sees as much further down the road than does Dublin. In the interim, it might be a good policy for the Irish to explore the possibilities of a withdrawal from its militarily isolationist stance as FitzGerald tried to do as Irish Foreign Minister in the 1970's. In an atmosphere of Anglo-Irish mistrust, a more comparable stance toward European communal ideals might be a significant background from which to work.

The internationalizing of the conflict may be fruitful if the border issue can be made less significant in the dispute. Economically, it makes more sense to deal with Ulster as a whole. In particular, Derry has a natural affiliation to the economy of Donegal which is in Ulster but one of the three Ulster counties that is in the Republic. This is a long-run strategy which should be cultivated. There has been little success with a series of short-term expediencies which have been attempted so there is a need to assess the merits of such options in the context of a struggle which has resulted in a sixteen year stalemate necessitating direct rule to be continued into the foreseeable future.

## 6.0 1985-88: Sink, Swim or Self-Destruct?

The consultative role which the Irish government agreed to play has proved thorny over the last six months due to alienation's concerning a shoot-to-kill policy by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and allegations of a cover-up to protect the perpetrators. The decision by the British government not to release the findings of the Stalker Report which was produced after an investigation into the case did not inspire the Irish government with thoughts that Britain was keeping their side of the Agreement. As far as Britain has been concerned, the consultation process only goes one-way. In fact Thatcher responded to Irish concerns that it was none of their business. This remains one of the more extraordinary statements by Thatcher in her dealings with the Anglo-Irish problem. If she persists in this line of thinking, then she may find the disintegration of the Agreement down the line. If this is her belief, it seems pointless for the Irish government to be involved in the Agreement a moment longer. When it comes up for review in November 1988 the Irish have to ask themselves if there is anything to be gained by renewing their commitment to it.

The British government have been under severe criticism over an alleged shoot to kill policy which had helped alienate the Catholic community as the membership of the R.U.C. is almost exclusively Protestant and the victims invariably Catholic. During 1983 there had been seventeen deaths at the hands of the security forces. Thirteen members were charged with seven of these

killings and in all cases there were delay's in bringing the cases to court. In all cases the soldiers and police were acquitted. The SDLP in a policy document said of this;

The fact that the trials were held in non-jury courts with the repeated appearances of the same judges in almost every case gave rise to a serious questioning of the impartiality of the judiciary and whether it was now legal for British soldiers and police officials to kill civilians with impunity. The situation unfortunately remains unchanged with no soldier or police officer being convicted of a killing of a civilian while on duty in the streets of Northern Ireland. Such a position has, must and continues to lead, to a great alienation from the judicial process (Moxon Browne; 1986; p.82).

A government sponsored internal inquiry into the allegations surrounding the shootings was headed by John Stalker. However on the completion of the report, the government refused to publish the findings. The government, predictably came under a barrage of abuse for the new round of cover-up which it was deemed to be the center of.

John Stalker has since cleared the government and R.U.C. of being involved in a shoot to kill dead without warning rather than to arrest them. The Attorney-General Patrick Mayhew officially sanctioned four years of fabricated evidence, cover-up obstruction and delaying the investigation of six particular killings because of the consideration of "national security" The killers in fact remain in uniform protected from prosecution by this legal loophole. In sum, according to a *New Statesman* article, Stalker described the use of law which was characterized in Northern Ireland as "populated by bullying and irresponsible tyrants, half demented visionary lunatics, and ineffectual civil servants. It is sleazy and corrupt, and corrupting, on par with the banana dictatorships everywhere."

The Stalker Report uncovered evidence which pointed to the cold-blooded murder of suspects. To illustrate one particular case, the police were have found to have lied about a routine police check, at which the three men's car had been asked to stop. In fact, the three men had been under surveillance for several hours and there had been a spectacular police chase in which the police had fired 108 rounds of ammunition over 500 yards. After the car had crashed the drivers dead body was found lying outside the car. The police story was that he had been shot dead while driving. In order to have opened the door the man would have had to have pulled the handle toward him which nullified the claim that his weight forced the handle down when he collapsed behind the steering wheel. It was found that the driver had been killed by a solitary bullet which entered through his back and went through his heart. Again the police version was not compatible from the

forensic evidence. A more likely explanation is that the man was dragged from the car and shot dead by one of the officers in pursuit. However, this did not seem a likely explanation as far as the court determined. The officers involved were acquitted and commended for their courage (taken from *New Statesman* 12 February 1988).

The reputation of British law was further dented by the review of the case of the "Birmingham six" who had been jailed in 1974 for their alleged part in the bombings of bars in Birmingham, England in 1974. A three-man bench on the court of appeal listened to new evidence that the men had been beaten while in custody and forensic evidence at the trial had proven shaky on scientific grounds. Despite this, and under the full scrutiny of the press the men's cases were deemed unsubstantiated. The reaction of the Dublin government was one of outrage and Charles Haughey sent a letter appealing for clemency on what was thought to be a grave miscarriage of justice. Once more Thatcher stood firm behind a justice system which had been observed by most to be wholly unfair. Again, the comments of the Irish Republic were deemed intrusive and unwelcome. This constitutes yet another blow to the spirit of cooperation which was deemed so precious in the outset of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The latest in the trio of unhappy events was been the shooting of apparently unarmed Irish citizens in Gibraltar. Though there is no doubt that the three were on an I.R.A. bombing mission where there was potentially an outrage of the magnitude of the Eneskillen blast on Remembrance Sunday of November 1987, the fact remains that they were executed when they could have been arrested and tried under normal procedure. Again the Dublin government condemned the killings and again the British government have stood by their actions. This drew one Labour member of Parliament, Ken Livingstone to accuse the British government as becoming tantamount to accomplices to murder.

The editorial of the *Irish Times* noted that the most recent events have amounted to "an extraordinary catalogue of misunderstanding and, often, on the British side, high-handedness"

### **6.1.1 A Lasting Resistance.**

In the period since the signing of the Agreement, Paisley's mood has softened concerning what options are now open to the Protestant people. Whereas before he had sworn that no power sharing settlement would be sanctioned by he or his party, he has recently moved toward the approach of official unionist James Molyneux who has talked of power sharing in the context of agreement outside that of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. In other words, the Irish dimension remains a sticking point but the prospect of a power sharing package is for the first time being considered by the traditional hard liners in the unionist bloc. While resistance to the Agreement remains steadfast, and will probably never weaken as a matter of principle if nothing else (in retrospect it must be evident to even the hardest of hard-liners that the British never meant for the Agreement to bring about the specific change in constitution which had been perceived), there has been a conciliatory shift by the unionist parties which would open the way for negotiation of a devolved government without the inclusion of the Irish government at the talks. This has real possibilities in respect to a renewed strategy of consultation in Northern Ireland. It represents an accommodation to the Catholics in the Province by a section of the unionist bloc for the first time since the resignation of Faulkner from Stormont and should be taken seriously. It may lay the foundation for the next major political initiative in Northern Ireland if the Anglo-Irish Agreement is eventually abandoned.

### **6.1.2 Economic Decline and Economic Mis-Management**

The economic depression of the 1980's in the province has seriously undermined attempts to get through to a majority of people, who in more prosperous times, even times when they had a job to go to, might be drawn away from the extremes which many have chosen to indulge in. A person who has a stake in the community that is lived in will probably work toward its prosperity. For

those who have no stake, only a deep resentment for the authorities which preside over it, are more likely to be instrumental in the attempts to do away with it. The Tory years have done much to encourage this latter experience through its failure to provide employment through public investment, in particular the systematic butchering of the National Health Service and such needless penny-pinching tactics such as its latest masterstroke, the ridiculous policy of charging patrons of public libraries for their library tickets. The Catholic is two and a half times more likely than a Protestant counterpart to be unemployed (see table A). The overall unemployment rate in the province also continues to be the highest in the United Kingdom. Successful political initiatives are not going to come out of statistics like those. The more middle-class oriented SDLP lost ground to them in the years since the Agreement was signed. There seems sign that this will change in the near future. The most daunting statistic overall has to be that the level of violence, the number one concern for the British government in signing the agreement, has not gone down. Whereas in 1984 the death toll for the province was 44, in 1987 it was 97. The recent restraint shown over Eneskillen and Milltown<sup>15</sup> may show a slow change in strategy by the paramilitary forces. History however, has taught the Northern Irish observer the audacity of optimism. One can seldom judge whether the troubles are lessening but the onset of an increase in them is only too apparent.

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<sup>15</sup> The latter being the location where a lone gunman threw grenades and fired shots at a group of Republican mourners in a cemetery, killing three and wounding fifty.

**Table 4. Religion and Unemployment (%)**

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	Male		Female		Total	
	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981
Protestant	6.6	12.4	3.6	9.6	5.6	11.4
Catholic	17.3	30.2	7.0	17.1	13.9	25.5

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**Source.** Osborne and Cormack *Economic and Social Review* April 1986.

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### 6.1.3 Dublin: Have we Started Yet?

Whatever the tactics of the British government were at the signing of the accord, the reason for Catholic optimism has slowly diminished over the three years of the Agreement's existence. The failure to confer any meaningful gesture onto the Irish government as to a more positive future role in the province has not been forthcoming. While Thatcher may remind us that it was not offered in the first place, she can not have seriously thought that the Irish donkey would follow the the carrot around forever without showing at least a little frustration.

The initial reaction of Charles Haughey as opposition leader when the Agreement was signed was mainly as result of political expediency even though the nation as a whole appeared to be in favor of it. The distancing of Fianna Fail from the Agreement followed the historical precedent of opposition to the treaty of 1921. When Haughey came to power in March 1987 he modified his claims that the Agreement was unconstitutional by recognizing the existence of it from an international perspective. Despite the fact that no love is lost between Thatcher and Haughey, they both have realized the importance of a united political front. However, the lack of personal depth to negotiations has proved an irritant to both parties. The frustration, built up over a period of time has found an outlet in the vehicle of the contentious issue of extradition of people from Ireland to Britain. The persisting arguments over extradition have shown that the Irish government maintains a bargaining chip in its dealings with Britain. The British insistence for a tightening of security has proven to be a lever in which to maneuver Thatcher into dealing with political ideals which are higher on the political agenda in Dublin. Thus, handing an extradition agreement to Thatcher on a plate would be doubtful in the context of an Irish government which thinks it has received the short end of the agreement. In the particular context of the relationship between Haughey and Thatcher it seems even more remote.

#### 6.1.4 Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained

The formulation of the machinery for a devolved settlement before a consensus to power-share could be reached was viewed in 1985 as "encouraging" the progress of establishing consensus. In retrospect it was equivalent to putting the cart before the horse. Progress has been slow if not retarded. By grafting the agreement to the province instead of planting the seed and nurturing its growth the risk of rejection was substantially increased. There can be no regret in trying the experiment. At best it would mean the dawning of a new era in Irish politics and at worst brought the process back to the unhappy situation which was prevalent in the day's before the agreement was signed - Direct rule from Westminster and a drifting along in an atmosphere of increasing uncertainty as to when the next Catholic movement would show itself. The drifting through almost fifty years of Stormont rule is a dangerous precedent to follow yet this is the situation which Westminster had started to settle down to in the decade after the break from Protestant majority rule and the failure of Stormont. A further cause for concern was that the next political upsurge could come from the unionist quarter and the British could find themselves in a situation where the whole province took on the complexion of opposition to rule from Westminster. A crisis of total ungovernability in Northern Ireland does not even bear contemplation. A rough idea of the magnitude of the situation would be enough to push the British and Irish governments back to the negotiating table and plan how an agreement could be reached through the intricate involvement of as many people as possible. It has been proved in the years 1985-88 that policies inflicted from without are not feasible without a premise of support from within. The parties involved in the contentious issues of where the province of Northern Ireland goes now and into the future are assured of one thing, that they face a return to the "long way round" as by taking the short-cut, through hitherto unexplored terrain the danger of becoming lost has become even greater.

## 7.0 Conclusion: Peace in Our Time?

Are there any reasons for hope given the catastrophes in recent months involving cover-ups violence at funerals, executions on both sides, (I.R.A. and British armed forces), and a continuing stance by Thatcher which refuses to acknowledge that the British forces have stepped over too many lines in their dealings with the Irish situation? Not if there persists this inexplicable "King Canute"-style refusal to give in to the obvious. The tide almost came all the way in at Brighton in 1984 and Thatcher seems determined to continue to ignore the evidence that mistakes have been made in the policing of the province. To admit that errors and outright injustice had been prevalent in the incredibly testing situation of Northern Ireland would be at least an honorable way of approaching the allegations which had been levelled at Britain. To opt instead for the loyalty approach to obvious wrong-doers not only discredits much of the good work done under duress by the Northern Irish police force but to give no indication that she has been operating in an even-handed way in her approach to the North in general, and in the context of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in particular. Without this confession and without the realization that not only must justice in Ireland be done but be seen to be done, then the Anglo-Irish Agreement is doomed to a watery grave.

There is little reason for optimism as long as there continues to be killing in the Province and the paramilitary forces operate in no-go areas. This in itself is a function of the intensity of both nationalism and unionism there. If this could be broken (it does not look as if the Agreement has

broken it), then there may open up a cross-community consensus which is what any solution to the problem needs. When it came down to enforcing a solution on the province, it was mild in nature. A reason that it did not produce further success is implicit in what it stated to be its goals. They did not include re-unification but they did include devolution through power-sharing and a role for the government of the Republic in the affairs of the province. The consultative nature of the Agreement has been in existence but has not been used to any great effect. A devolved system of government has not materialized because of the persistent refusal of the unionists to make it work. Has the total strategy of non-consultation worked then? The answer in a practical sense is no. The very obstacle to settlement which was recognized in their exclusion from Anglo-Irish talks i.e. the unionist bloc, has continued to frustrate attempts to make the agreement work now that their voice has been courted. Any hopes that they would realize the British resolve to make the agreement work despite unionist protest and reluctantly give in to the inevitability of it has been sadly misplaced. It only made them even more adamant that a negotiated settlement without them would never float.

There has been no comfort for the moderate parties in Northern Ireland election results. Though the SDLP continues to gain the majority of Nationalist votes and win a seat in Parliament at Westminster, the Provisional Sinn Fein vote holds a core vote of about ten or eleven per cent which seems irreducible even after two and a half years of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. In 1982, when Sinn Fein was first perceived as a real threat to the Nationalist movement (enough to see the formation of the all Ireland Forum which excluded them) the Sinn Fein vote was 10.1 per cent. In the 1987 General election it was over eleven per cent. More significant is that in 1982 Sinn Fein had 35% of the nationalist vote and the SDLP had 65%. In the 1987 election the proportions were exactly the same. (*The Economist* 6/20/88)

The Alliance continues to hover around the same percentage as Sinn Fein and does not have the support to influence the course of Irish history by gaining significant cross-sectarian support. In 1988 the sectarian nature of the political divide in Ulster is as clear as it was at the beginning of the current troubles. The Northern Ireland Labour Party was in a similar position throughout the 1970's. Ultimately its stance on the emphasis on classic bourgeois values of equality and opportu-

nity was lost in the melee of 1960's and the fall of Stormont in 1972. The Workers Party has unsuccessfully tried to re-open the door to class politics which the NILP once kept ajar.

The Agreement has not been able to achieve anything which would alter the constitution of the Republic but the evidence is that it was not designed to. The unionists prefer to believe that it is their intransigence which has de-fanged the Agreement. Any move toward receiving the Agreement has been resisted as it is believed that the status-quo is preferable to anything that might awaken the sleeping giant. In their own terms the unionists have been successful and that, it appears is all that matters. A realization that there is nothing for the unionists to fear in terms of a permanent constitutional role for the Republic in the North seems a prerequisite for any successful attempt to gain consensus over the problems in Northern Ireland. There remains a chance that they might accept a role of the Catholics in a power-sharing initiative as long as the role of Dublin is taken away once more. Given that the role of Dublin remains negligible, a re-stating of the role of the Dublin government is in order. There is still room for ministers from the Republic to act in an advisory capacity to the British government but it can not continue on the completely random basis as it has been operating on over the last three years. A loose affiliation only aroused suspicion as to what the talks between London and Dublin involved. A clearer set of guidelines is therefore needed to establish a more productive relationship between the two governments. The existing situation has only lead to misgivings and misunderstandings as to how much of a say the Republic actually has in the affairs of Northern Ireland.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement is under the threat of collapse, not in the face of unionist aggression ironically, but through a self-destructive tendency which Britain has initiated over the last few months. This may force the Dublin government to pull out of the Agreement. Fianna Fail has been distrustful of Westminster all along. Furthermore, the agreement signed when Haughey the was leader of the opposition. This leads to the real possibility that Dublin may pull out if it continues to find itself being ignored by Thatcher in dealing with sensitive matters such as the shoot-to-kill allegations.

There may be hope among the gloom given the lack of out an out retaliation by either side after the attack on the mourners by a Protestant gunman (acting on his own initiative apparently)

and in the wake of the I.R.A. bomb in Eneskillen last November. The optimism is valid, though the recent I.R.A. killings of British soldiers on the European continent as reprisal for the murder of I.R.A. members in Gibraltar shows that an end to hostilities remains elusive.

There is an argument in favor of keeping the Anglo-Irish Agreement because of the lack of any alternative treaty which binds Ireland and Great Britain to the question of the North. This is valid, if extremely irritating. After two decades of troubles any hope is worth holding onto. The fact remains however, that if this is all the Anglo-Irish Agreement has come to mean, it has failed in the larger sense of providing a solid base for acceptable conclusion to the torment of Northern Ireland. Unless the support of the Northern Ireland majority can be split or turned around as a whole, much of the work done between times will be of little lasting significance. Similarly, while Northern Irish politics continues to dictate that leaders fulfill the demands of the people for hard-line stances, there appears to be little that anyone can do to bring an end to the troubles any closer. So long as the Northern Irish Catholics and Protestants continue with the definition of their interests as being sectarian, there seems to be a fundamental choking point for negotiations toward future peace cohabitation. (Rose)

There is some indication that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has succeeded in paving the way for future, more successful initiatives. Recently, Charles Haughey has spoken to the effect that the Agreement in itself may have outlived its usefulness and should be now either added to or replaced by a more far-reaching initiative. He is quite correct in his belief that the unionist bloc will not go any further with the Agreement and that they might be accepting of a progressive step in the province along the lines of power sharing if they were given the opportunity. He is wrong to assume, however that his government would be allowed a say in what the terms of such an Agreement would be. Over the past years of the Agreement, the one concession must be the realization that there is no majority wish for a united Ireland in the North and there does not look like there will ever be.

In many ways the pressure may be lifted from the South that the government should continue the facade of courting a united Ireland. In the 1980's there seems a prevalence of wanting peace in the North over an objective which could bring unity with continued violence. When this is made

clear, and intractably so, the isolation of terrorism on both sides of the community may be achieved.

While the conflict continues to be couched in terms of Nationalist fervor;

The more British soldiers go back home in coffins, the sooner it will all be over (spokesman for NORAI, New York Aug 1983)

or;

The IRA will continue to ignore pleas from slobbering moderates as long as British soldiers remain in Ireland (President of Sinn Fein, Ruari O'Bradaigh)

Or in terms of an uncompromising unionist strategy;

No Surrender, Not one Inch (Ian Paisley)

and the majority of people are prepared to support, or even worse, hide behind such statements, there can be no way forward and the "Heritage of Hate" will continue to be passed on.<sup>16</sup>

There are positive signs that there has been a willingness for the parties within the province (excluding Sinn Fein) to get a dialogue going with a view to an internal solution. The growing belief that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was not a means in itself but a vehicle on which other more progressive solutions may be built is realistic. The time may be ripe now for a reassessment of the working toward a solution within the province once more. The Sunningdale conference in 1974 did not yield lasting consensus but there is reason to believe that the fifteen years since has witnessed sufficient changes in attitudes to warrant a new initiative which may yet yield power-sharing within the province and a return to devolved government. Unionist options have been whittled away in recent years. A unionist veto is no longer acceptable nor likely to be successful. A return to devolved government may be best achieved by the oversight of the participants in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, thereby keeping the link between the two governments alive and relevant to the political life of Northern Ireland. The unionists may still show reluctance to enter into the arrangement even now. This can not last indefinitely. Under the active re-assurance that sovereignty remains in Britain and the reinforcement of the commitment to equality in the province, which even now is not clear, a long-term peace can break-out in Ulster.

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<sup>16</sup> O'Ballance in *Terror in Northern Ireland*

Talk of unity is still not practical. This is not to say that it will not come at sometime in the future. If it is to become a viable proposition in years to come then it may be due to the part played by the Agreement in Ireland's political history that such a solution was allowed to develop. Alternatively, the failure of such agreements to substantially change the status-quo in Northern Ireland may lead to the only options left open, those of a radical nature. Politicians of the ilk of Paisley would do well to heed the implications from a continued failure to accept the inevitable. If the majority of people are unable to reach a consensus involving a power-sharing role for the Catholic community, it may have to be forced upon them. It would be surprising if the unionists let the situation deteriorate to this extent. Political initiatives such as the Anglo-Irish Agreement offer a way out. Ultimately it is up to the unionists to take advantage of them and to try and gain the best deal for themselves as possible. For the moment, the unionists continue to be courted in the hope of peacefull settlement. British tolerance may only be finite after all and it is in the interest of everyone that it is not tested any further.

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