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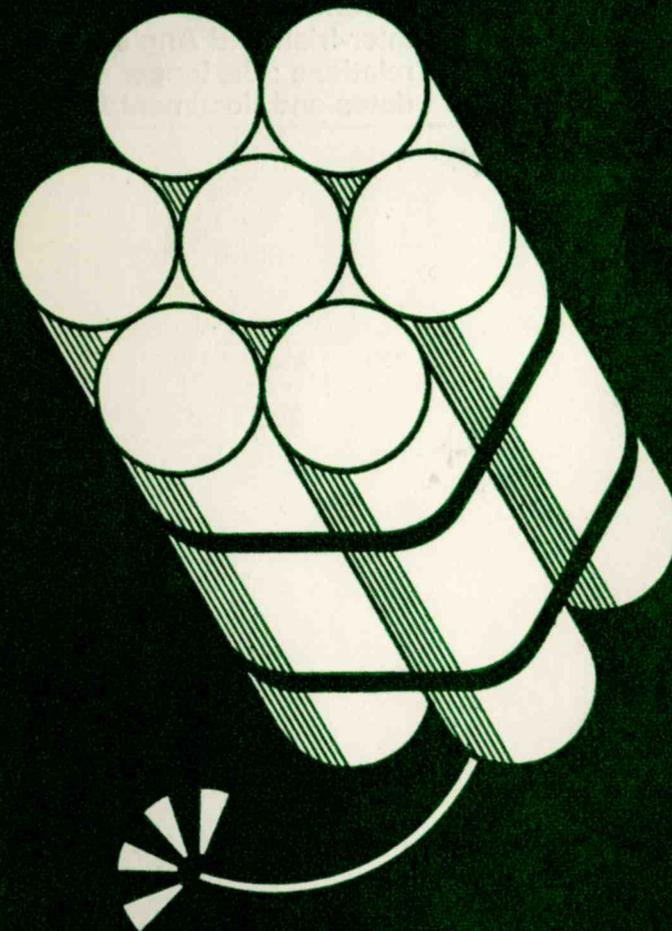
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1. Britain and Ireland —remote neighbours

In December 1868, Gladstone was interrupted in his tree felling with the news that he had been charged with the formation of his first Ministry. He commented: "My mission is to pacify Ireland". Gladstone pursued the mission for the rest of his political life; and he was only one of a distinguished line of Westminster politicians who have found both dedication and despair in Irish matters. A hundred years later his successors still experience similar frustrations.

In fact, the sentiments expressed by most British emissaries to Ireland have been uniformly decent but too often the politicians involved have been bemused by the way their seemingly civilised views have gone unheard. Hence the impatience with Irish affairs which so often has been the corollary of English sympathy.

Sometimes the impatience bursts to the surface. When, for instance, James Callaghan on a visit to Belfast in 1969 called for an end to "this nonsense in the streets"—a remark which he later very genuinely regretted (*A House Divided*) as falling far short of a true measure of the troubles he came to study; or Reginald Maudling's alleged exclamation, slumped in his seat as the plane left Belfast: "What a bloody awful country—bring me a double whiskey".

But Irish history cannot be dismissed so lightly. As Callaghan with a finer sense of the occasion said also on his first visit as Home Secretary to Belfast, he could not in a matter of days "reckon to solve the problems of three hundred years"—the most he could hope to do was "to buy time in a situation which had become tinder dry". Callaghan's caution was commendable—all the more so since it came from one who, unlike so many who deliberate on Irish matters, had been a frequent visitor to Ireland. (It is a significant fact that few British politicians and few English people generally—the Scots are different—have visited Ireland, especially the North. Gladstone made the journey once and Disraeli not at all; even much travelled Harold Wilson and Edward Heath have had little real contact with the island. This is certainly an

important element in the remoteness problem between the islands).

Since 1969 the Irish situation has again become tinder dry; to prevent a flare-up which could engulf all of Ireland, and Britain as well, the government must continue a patient search for political structures which will enable all parties to the Irish crisis to settle their difference without resort to nationwide violence.

Swift "solutions" must not be expected—notoriously, distance lends, simplification to the Irish Question. Even the very phrase "the Irish Question" is misleading. There is, in fact, no one "question"—the issues are far more complex than the matter of a line on the map. What has to be grappled with are three problems: the inter-Ulster issue, coupled to Inter-Irish and Anglo-Irish aspects. Each of these separate but inter-related issues is unfortunately subject to a timetable of its own. The need to harmonise the timetables is one of Ireland's most pressing political problems.

But for very practical and very human reasons the Ulster situation has become the most urgent Irish concern. The North Irish people have been caught in what has been described as "one of history's hurricanes"; unless they can be led to safety there can be little progress on the wider issues of North-South and Anglo-Irish relationships.

One positive by-product of the Ulster crisis has been the growing awareness in Britain of the complexity of Irish politics. This awareness (though sometimes accompanied by war weariness) has become much more evident since the serious challenge offered to the state by the Ulster Workers' Council political strike of May 1974 and the subsequent collapse of the Northern Ireland Executive. Since then (and particularly in evidence in the Commons Irish debate, June 1974) many myths and assumptions about Ireland have been challenged or quietly put aside.

There is, for instance, a growing realisation that affairs in Ireland may not fit into a time scale dictated by events out-

side the island. Few would now disagree with Harold Wilson's view that the decision to call a British general election in February 1974, only one month after the establishment of the Ulster Executive, was "a tragedy for Northern Ireland and for the hopes of peace and reconciliation there". The timing of that election demonstrates vividly that in politics there is an important difference between English people's time and Irish people's time.

Above all, there is growing evidence that all parties at Westminster may be prepared at last to base their policies on realities as they exist in Ulster and not on notions about what is "natural" for Ireland. Coupled to this is a growing recognition in Whitehall that there is a very real limit to the influence which any outsider may have on Ulster affairs. Neither London nor Dublin hold the final key to the crisis; certainly a helping hand is required but at the end of the day it is what happens between the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities in Northern Ireland that really matters.

The Dublin Government in particular has grasped this point and there is a growing reluctance on the part of the South to become too deeply involved in North Irish affairs. Indeed, the movement away from the North has become so strong as to enable Southern Irish Premier Liam Cosgrave to indicate recently that "the people of the Republic are increasingly disinclined to seek unity with an area or close association with a people so deeply imbued with violence and its effects" (13 June 1974).

This desire to disengage from the Northern Irish crisis finds a ready response throughout much of Britain and in all parties.

But the role of Britain remains vital and the responsibility cannot be avoided. The United Kingdom government is the sovereign power in Northern Ireland with ultimate responsibility for the lives and citizenship status of 1½ million people.

Like citizens elsewhere in the United Kingdom these people depend upon and

look to Westminster to safeguard their citizenship.

In addition, successive British governments have underlined the position of Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom. In 1943, in the midst of war, Churchill put it into words: "The bonds of affection between Great Britain and the people of Northern Ireland have been tempered by fire and are now, I firmly believe, unbreakable"; in 1949 Labour's Clement Attlee expressed his concern by the Ireland Act promise that no change would be made in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland "without the consent of the Parliament of Northern Ireland". More recently the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 reaffirmed the constitutional guarantees to the Province.

Backed by such assurances, most Ulster people value their citizenship deeply and, like citizens elsewhere in the United Kingdom, would resist any attempt to place them under another jurisdiction. Realistic discussions about the future of the Province must take account of such attitudes.

All this does not mean that there can be no real movement in the Ulster political situation—movement there must be. But in such a sensitive area of public policy great care must be employed to ensure that citizenship status is not diminished. Indeed for British statesmen the basic problem in Ulster is one of finding a formula which will make it possible for over one million Irish people in the North (a significant proportion of the total population of Ireland) who value their British citizenship to continue that citizenship in full, while at the same time meeting the desire of another section of the North Irish people for guarantees which will enable them to enjoy equal status in the state and a satisfying form of association with the rest of Ireland.

The construction of such a formula will be a difficult and lengthy process but Irish stubbornness must not become the excuse for Westminster impatience. Certainly the difficulties of the problem could never

justify any British government "getting rid" of the crisis by dumping it on the doorstep of local people or of the world community (and so far successive British governments have recognised their obligations). What is required at this stage is a recognition that the Ulster crisis is one of the great watershed periods in Irish history. After eight hundred years of involvement in Irish matters, a British government is being challenged to help repair some of the damage which has been done during that relationship.

It is particularly appropriate that the Labour Movement with its long and sympathetic interest in Ireland should be called upon to give a lead. It now has an opportunity to promote policies which will encourage the people of Northern Ireland, Protestant and Catholic together, to find partnership inside an "agreed Ulster" which will pave the way to new and healthier relationship with fellow Ulstermen, fellow Irishmen and all the peoples of Britain and Ireland.

2. Ulster crisis—background factors

The Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland in 1169 began an association between the islands of Ireland and of Britain which has produced one of history's great love-hate relationships. Down the centuries the flaws in the relationship have been many and at times massive but throughout the tension there has been a common recognition that all of Britain and both parts of Ireland constitute a pattern of islands to which both sides belong.

foundation of the Northern Ireland state

Sometimes, however, fundamental changes have been made in the terms of association which have had disastrous consequences. The Act of Union 1800 was widely regarded in Ireland as one such occasion—so too was the Government of Ireland Act 1920. Each date stands as a warning to politicians who propose constitutional innovations.

Few in Ireland were happy about the 1920 Act which made provision for two states in Ireland, separated by a political border and linked to the Parliament at Westminster for Imperial matters. But those who contrived the 1920 settlement worked in difficult circumstances. Britain was exhausted after the First World War, and Ireland, which had also suffered in the War, was bearing the additional burdens of widespread civil strife. The British government, anxious for a disengagement, pressed its proposals on reluctant Irish delegates. They were not impressed by the fears of the Irish, and Lloyd George (as with Edward Heath in 1973) was anxious to release himself for wider European matters. Irishmen signed the agreement but did so reluctantly. Some, like Michael Collins, believed it to be a death warrant.

In the North of Ireland the 1920 Act was not seen as a great victory. Most unionists looked on the decision as at best an unhappy compromise, diluting their position inside the United Kingdom. For the nationalists the settlement represented a defeat, symbolised by the creation of a land border and a Parliament in Belfast

which they regarded, and were often encouraged by their opponents to regard, as "a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people". In addition, neither side had much faith in the ability of the Act to survive and, in any case, before long it was speedily amended by public opinion (for example, various acts of non-cooperation). Altogether a difficult start for a new state.

a divided society

In these circumstances a tribal situation arose. Each side (Protestant and Catholic alike) lived to themselves. They became a people who practised consciousness of kind: they lived apart, worked apart, worshipped apart and their children learnt and played apart. In many areas and for many people the separation was total. The majority Unionist Party took advantage of this situation and used their power to discriminate against their opponents in employment, housing and local franchise laws.

This explosive tribal situation has not been sufficiently understood either inside or outside the Province. But with such a background of polarisation, grounded in a revolutionary birth and dominated by two deeply held and contradictory political traditions, the area provided plenty of opportunity for those interested in religious strife. The working class, in particular, were exploited by "Orange" and "Green" Tories with their sectarian voting appeals.

Unhappily, the political divide inside Northern Ireland has for most of its history corresponded closely with the religious divide—Protestants being Unionist and Catholic being Nationalist. So religion and politics (less so Christianity and politics) have become interwoven. It would certainly be a false analysis to suggest that the Ulster crisis is a "Holy War", but it is an important public fact that religion remains a factor of significance in political debate. But deep down the confrontation has more to do with social and economic factors than anything else. Local government reform,

jobs, votes—these were the civil rights demands. Indeed, if all of Ireland were to become non-Christian tomorrow the divisions would remain. In fact many of the most committed political leaders care little for organised religion and some of the most militant groups are anxious to eliminate all the Churches.

This is not to say that the Church in Ireland has always lived up to its communal responsibilities. Too often the seal of approval has been given to state actions that have been divisive (opposition to integrated education, for example) and the silence of the Church has often encouraged the adoption of reactionary political policies. But more often the Church in general has suffered in reputation from the activities of political priests who have used the pulpit as a personal political hustling for reactionary views. Those who know their Irish Church know too that Irish Christians (particularly during the Ulster crisis) have crossed the sectarian divide in great numbers and in many ecumenical gestures. It is a glib summation that depends on a theory of Holy War in Ulster.

What cannot be denied and what was not faced by those who created the Ulster state is that the history, religion and culture of the Province created a situation which encouraged community *fission*. In these circumstances, what was needed during the formative years of the state was a policy which encouraged *fusion*—politics of community reconciliation, designed to create structures and aspirations aimed at the creation of a united Northern Ireland and based on the concept of power and responsibility sharing between the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities. The poets of Ulster, like John Hewitt and John Montague, have articulated this view and have given expression in their lines to feelings of a union of Planter and Gael. But for ordinary people in the 1920s political inspiration was needed to give them a sense of common destiny. No such inspiration came from the Ulster Unionist Party which until 1969 enjoyed massive majorities in the Stormont Parliament and a practical monopoly of Ulster seats

in Westminster's Lords and Commons. Most of Ulster's founding politicians took the sectarian way out—they kept one another at arms length, each to their own Protestant or Catholic ghetto, awaiting the expected breakdown of the 1920 Act. Bridge-building groups were suspect and for those who practised ecumenism, political advancement was denied. Such, in particular, was the fate of the trade union and Labour movement in Northern Ireland, with its long and honourable record of non-sectarian politics. "Orange" or "Green" became the community labels during the formative days of the province and down the years Ulster people developed a tribal code to guide them through their political labyrinth. The morning paper, the district lived in, the school attended, a "William John", or "Patrick Joseph"—all these became pieces of information readily translated by the sectarian computer.

In such circumstances the temptation to allow community structures to follow the community divide was great and with few exceptions the Unionist Party leaders who ruled the state accepted the situation. For them the choice was disastrously simple: one was either Protestant and Unionist Party or Catholic and Nationalist Party, and either "for" or "against" the constitution. For those who believed that the social and economic divide was more relevant there was little room. The political top was reserved for those who accepted a Unionist Party version of politics.

With such an alignment it was impossible to achieve a united community or to enjoy the changes of government normally associated with Western democracy. And on both sides of the community there were Protestant and Catholic politicians to whom the division seemed inevitable; to others it seemed desirable; and worst of all, to most it seemed that little could be achieved in the way of change. So in the inter-war years many Ulster people opted out of political discussion and normal politics were ignored, with every election becoming a referendum on the partition decision of 1920. Material progress was possible and

after 1945 some impressive advances were recorded in the social services and in industry, but they could not make up for the fatal flaw of the total community divide on which a sectarian state was being built.

crisis of 1969

Ulster, however, could not be insulated from new social and political pressures. After the Second World War it was increasingly obvious that the Province was being involved in changes which ran counter to the *status quo* on which the Unionist Party was based. The welfare state itself made a nonsense of much of the social separation of the past, as all came to enjoy the welfare benefits of the new era under the common entitlement of citizenship. Increasingly in the 1950s and 1960s the social and economic pressures for change began to blur the Orange/Green divide and new blends appeared. Even the border question was no longer a sure test of religion and, as surveys by Richard Rose and others began to show, very considerable numbers of Catholics and anti-Unionist Party Protestants favoured continued British citizenship. By the mid 1960s the Unionist Party had even begun to boast of some Roman Catholic members and Terence O'Neill began to reach out to Catholic voters. A real alternative to sectarian politics began to emerge in a growing Northern Ireland Labour Party which, between 1958 and 1965, managed to become the first political party in the history of the Province to gain parliamentary seats in Belfast constituencies which cut across the traditional sectarian voting patterns. The party and its affiliated trade unions pioneered demands which later figured in the civil rights programme but unfortunately neither Belfast nor London governments responded.

So the fatal flaw represented by Unionist Party monopoly power was allowed to remain (even a British Labour government did not intervene until the crisis was well advanced). The very modest demands put forward by the reform movements (to do with local government

franchise, housing, fuller trade union recognition and economic development) were resisted in the early 1960s by the Unionist Party. What might have proved an orderly parliamentary path to reform was blocked and the scene was set for a much more dangerous extra-parliamentary confrontation. The Unionists had forgotten that they were living in a new world where political turbulence could easily take over when dialogue became impossible. They also forgot that in the sixties the first products of the post-war Education Act were emerging—able and determined like their student brethren throughout the world to articulate their demands. Many of these young people were the sons and daughters of Catholic families in Ulster. They had no intention of living as second-class citizens.

But most of all Ulster was pitch-forked into sight of the twentieth century by the men and women in broadcasting and the press who came to report the civil rights campaign of 1969. To the alarm of the Northern Ireland establishment, skilled reporters arrived in Ulster from all over the world and made the machinery of government in the Province front page news. It was a disconcerting experience for the Unionist government. As Harold Wilson noted at the time, at last the British public were able to see the picture for themselves on the television screen and to form their own judgments.

Too late, Terence O'Neill and his supporters sensed the danger and tried to make the Unionist Party more aware of the need to improve its policy and image.

Pressed by a Labour Government, he and his successors encouraged a series of reforms which had they come earlier might have saved the situation. But by 1969 time was at a premium in Northern Ireland and things began to fall apart as the institutions of the state were unable to withstand the strains imposed by the demonstrations and counter demonstrations which accompanied political agitation. Reform after reform was hurried through the Stormont Parliament, often by the same people who a few years earlier had denied the need for any

change. It was not a proceeding which engendered confidence.

In the event neither side was satisfied with the changes. In an atmosphere of rising expectation felt by the Roman Catholic population and of apprehension felt by the Protestants doubts arose on all sides about the constitutional stability of the Province. What was needed was a period of tranquility—a willingness to give time a chance to consolidate and heal. Such a period could have persuaded the majority that the reform programme was reasonable (and not a device to assist the republican movement). The minority, for its part, would have been able to satisfy itself that the new deal was something more than merely a writing on paper as alleged by the extremists.

the impact of violence

There is a long tradition of physical violence in Ireland in support of political aims and at several points in its history Ireland has had to deal with sudden outbreaks of terrorist activity. But the violence since 1969 has been without precedence in terms of an Irish based campaign directed against fellow Irishmen. As one eminent Catholic layman put it: "We are being more cruel, more hurting, more unkind to one another than any invader could ever be. The reality is that more harm has been done to the Irish nation, North and South, in the last five years than any invader would have dared to do to us".

It is on the lives of ordinary people that the statistics of strife bear heaviest. In an area of 5,242 square miles (about the size of Yorkshire) the figures read as follows:

AUGUST 1969 TO OCTOBER 1974	
deaths	1,095
casualties	12,608
explosions	4,221

This list represents a proportion of adult deaths of one in a thousand and an injury rate of one in a hundred. On a British comparison these figures would

mean 44,000 dead and a casualty total of about 500,000.

The Northern Irish community has been stunned by the experience and, particularly the working class, has become fearful and unwilling to look far beyond the immediate crisis. Far from assisting the process of Irish reconciliation, violence has achieved the contrary. This effect was entirely predictable. Once the terrorists intervened with their special dimension of mindless violence, effective political dialogue—always difficult in Ireland—became virtually impossible. Even in 1969 violence against persons was not an important factor in the Ulster crisis—non-violent protest was the general rule. Certainly in that year Catholic opinion was greatly worried by the arson attacks made on Catholic working class homes in Belfast, and Protestants were protesting against what they regarded as republican plots against the state. But, as the Scarman Report subsequently observed, there was no evidence of a widely organised campaign of armed insurrection or vengeance by one side or the other. The real elements of importance were fear and rumour, leading to communal tension. The tinder dry situation feared by James Callaghan became the base on which a forest fire of riots were started. This in turn led to the intervention by the Labour Government in August 1969 when troops were sent into the Province to restore order.

The troops were generally welcomed, especially in the Catholic areas, but it was recognised that their introduction was a stopgap measure pending political initiatives. In their initial phase of military policy their community impact was favourable and in the Catholic districts of Belfast a good deal of fraternisation between troops and people took place. The decision of the IRA (and especially the Provisional IRA) to break this fraternisation and wage a terrorist campaign of bombing and killing in pursuit of political demands introduced a new and dangerous element into the situation.

Great political skill and prestige were needed to organise public opinion against

such a development. The Unionist Government lacked such qualities. Worse still, in August 1971, the decision to introduce internment as a weapon against terrorism added greatly to the security problem by alienating the Roman Catholic community at a time when community co-operation was most vital. The internment issue also gave the IRA and their sympathisers a propaganda weapon which they used effectively on a world wide scale.

Internment also proved counterproductive where the troops were concerned, for the system involved the army in arrest and detention duties which marked them out in the Catholic community as agents of an unpopular government. The military consequently became increasingly estranged from the very people for whose protection they had been originally introduced. In the post-internment period the British army was thus involved in confrontations (ultimately with Protestant groups as well) which lost them the close community co-operation on which a peace-keeping and peacemaking operation must rest. (Not nearly enough thought has been given to the role of the army in situations like Northern Ireland, particularly in circumstances where the use of the police force is limited.)

However, not even the violence of internment can justify the terrorism of the IRA or the backlash counterviolence of loyalist paramilitary groupings. Irish socialists are certainly opposed to internment without trial, but they hold no brief whatever for those who maim or who execute without trial.

This view is shared by the great mass of Irish people who actually live in Ireland and who see the problem at close quarter. Certainly in no sense have the Irish people given the terrorists a mandate for their activities—it is also noticeable that the terrorist avoids the challenge of the ballot box when it is offered. The pointlessness of violence is also stressed by Irish commentators. Perhaps the best word was spoken by Roman Catholic Bishops in their comment: "Who in his

senses would wish to bomb a million Ulstermen into a United Ireland?"

Violence has done more harm to the cause of Irish reconciliation since 1969 than any other single factor. It has been a profoundly reactionary force.

The violence of the Provisional IRA has been particularly condemned by Irish public opinion. They have not been the only terrorist force at work, but they have been by far the main source of bombing and killing. Their reactionary outlook and the methods they employ have been condemned by forces as varied as the Official IRA, the churches and the Irish trade union and Labour movement.

Tragically and predictably, IRA violence has led directly to a wave of counter-violence by Loyalist paramilitary groups in which the minority Catholic community has been the main victim. The Labour movement in Ireland has always feared such a development, with the attendant danger of large scale civil war.

As Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien, the Southern Irish Labour Party spokesman on Ulster affairs, has remarked about the supporters of violence "It should always have been clear that the attempt to unify Ireland by force and the various ways in which so many of them condone that attempt could not possibly bring about unity, but would be certain to provoke a major sectarian backlash". O'Brien's prediction has been proved with chilling accuracy.

the threat of fascism

But deep down the confrontation in Ulster between terrorist and community is a dispute about how far a community has the right to decide its own destiny by democratic processes. Irish socialists, both North and South, deny any group the right to pursue its aims by resort to violence against the Irish people. This democratic principle is at stake in the struggle between community and terrorist (of whatever group). If totalitarian forces are not to prevail, it is a struggle which

must be won by those who believe in the ballot box.

It was into this situation of simmering violence (about to explode) that the Labour government intervened in August 1969 with the introduction of troops. Initially it was planned as a limited intervention, but it proved to be the beginning of the end for the Stormont Unionist regime. From the arrival of Home Secretary, James Callaghan, in Belfast new standards began to be defined and Westminster pressures were exerted to ensure their introduction. Very rapidly, tensions between the London and Belfast administrations began to develop, which three years later came to a climax. By that time Edward Heath was in power. In March 1972 he decided to suspend the Northern Ireland Parliament and to impose Direct Rule on the Province. William Whitelaw received the appointment as first Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

3. Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 — a false start

James Callaghan and William Whitelaw between them made an impressive mark on Irish history. Each was something new in Ulster politics—a London minister who managed to cross the community divide. It is a pity that Callaghan did not have longer in the job. He brought to the task a deep personal commitment and a sure feel for the local situation. Few who saw him operate could doubt that his work in Ulster was, as he later put it, “the most meaningful experience of my political life”.

William Whitelaw brought similar gifts to the task but, unlike Callaghan, was able by the closure of Stormont to operate on a clean sheet. He was authorised to draw up a new Constitution for Northern Ireland.

Whitelaw used the period immediately following the imposition of Direct Rule to involve the local political leaders in intensive consultations. These talks culminated in the Darlington inter-party meeting (1972) and the publication of the Green Paper *The Future of Northern Ireland* (HMSO, October 1972) and of the White Paper *Northern Ireland Constitutional Proposals* (HMSO, 1973). During his discussions, Whitelaw discovered a good deal of common ground on the White Paper (on which the Constitution Act of 1973 was based) and was able to record a considerable area of agreement among the parties favouring power sharing.

In its constitutional proposals the British government opted for a new system of government for Northern Ireland, one in which both communities would be involved. The principle was laid down that the government of the Province could “no longer be solely based upon any single party, if that party draws its support and its elected representatives virtually entirely from only one section of a divided community”. Power sharing (between Protestants and Catholics working side by side in government) was to become the principle on which devolved government in the Province would rest and the White Paper insisted that power would only be transferred from West-

minster when this condition was met. The principle of parity of esteem between the two communities in Ulster was further underlined in proposals for a Charter of Human Rights, providing safeguards against unfair discrimination (Vic—now Lord—Feather subsequently became Chairman of a Human Rights Commission).

Provision for the election of a new Assembly of 78 members was made. This legislature, less imposing than the old Stormont, was to be elected by proportional representation and was subordinate to Westminster. It was hoped that the system of PR would encourage the emergence of a considerable group of centre politicians, offering an alternative to the sectarian groupings of the past and likely to encourage the development of power sharing. A transfer of local powers (though not security) was guaranteed to the Assembly, once the members worked out their own standing orders and agreed a basis of government by consent.

In return for constitutional co-operation, the British government gave firm promises. The Province would remain in the United Kingdom so long as a majority decided so; the troops would stay so long as they were needed; and massive economic aid was promised. Even the “Irish dimension” got a favourable mention: a Council of Ireland was envisaged but again only with the consent “of both majority and minority opinion in Northern Ireland”.

The initial reception to the White Paper plan and the Act based upon it was surprisingly favourable in Northern Ireland. Predictably, right wing Unionists and extremist Republicans were opposed to the new ideas and promised total opposition. It was from the centre reconciliation groups that the peace plan received most support. Trade unions, Labour, Alliance and Liberal parties welcomed the proposals and Brian Faulkner’s Unionist following generally fell into line. In the June 1973 election for the new Assembly the pro-Constitution candidates managed to hold their support and gained a safe majority. Their strength was tested at the

first meeting of the Assembly on the question of the election of a Speaker. On this occasion the Craig/Paisley/West group could muster only twenty six votes. The vote showed that Faulkner and his supporters could depend upon a secure majority inside the Assembly. However their majority in the country proved more open to erosion—in the October 1974 Westminster General Election the Loyalist Coalition (UUUC), led by Craig, Paisley and West won 10 of the 12 Ulster seats and 58 per cent of the votes cast.

Before a Northern Ireland Executive could be agreed finally, there was a further round of discussions to complete—the promised (and, as it turned out, controversial) tripartite conference between the British government, the government of the Republic of Ireland and leaders of the elected representatives of Northern Ireland. This conference, held at Sunningdale, Berkshire, 6 to 9 December 1973, was called to discuss how the objectives set out in the White Paper of March might best be pursued. These objectives were as follows:

1. the acceptance of the present status of Northern Ireland and of the possibility—which would have to be compatible with the principle of consent—of subsequent change in that status
2. effective consultation and co-operation in Ireland for the benefit of North and South alike
3. the provision of a firm basis for concerted governmental and community action against terrorist organisations.

It was a dangerously wide agenda, framed to meet all sides. The Social Democratic and Labour Party was interested in the Irish dimension; the Unionist were anxious to get movement on the security question. Among all, there was a good deal of unspoken agreement that a successful conference was part of the price that had to be paid to enable the new Northern Ireland Executive to operate with success. Later events cast a question mark over this strategy and though at the end of the conference it was Liam Cos-

grave’s view that there had been “no winners or losers”, it soon became clear that Sunningdale was a hurried agreement leaving itself open to a variety of conflicting interpretations.

For the assurance of the Northern Unionists was a declaration by the Dublin government, supported by the leaders of the Catholic minority, “that there could be no change in the status of Northern Ireland until a majority of the people of Northern Ireland desired a change in that status”. This declaration, confining consent to “the people of Northern Ireland”, was a historic change of emphasis in favour of the Northern majority. The traditional nationalist viewpoint had always insisted on a consent definition in terms of “the Irish nation”. Furthermore, the declaration was to be registered at the United Nations, as was a separate declaration by the British government supporting “the wishes of the people of Northern Ireland”. The Sunningdale conference also agreed that a Council of Ireland should be set up, comprising a Council of Ministers with a Consultative Assembly having advisory and review functions. Here again, safeguards were built in to ensure that the Northern Irish were able to exercise a veto in the decisions of the Council.

In a more relaxed and trustful North/South relationship and given a cessation of the IRA campaign the Sunningdale agreement might have passed into operation without much fuss. At first it was received with surprisingly little comment in Northern Ireland. But some of the issues covered in the agreement touched on the raw nerves of Irish politics and provided opportunities for exploitation by those who wished to oppose the new system of government. In the process of establishing the new Assembly not enough effort was made to win public support for the reform initiatives. Public confusion was exploited massively by the opponents of the Constitution Act, led by a triple alliance formed by Craig, Paisley and West. They fastened on the Council of Ireland proposals and their emotive slogan became “Dublin is only a Sun-

ningdale away". In other words, Protestants were being told that the Agreement was a first step to an Irish Republic. But the South of Ireland was also greatly at fault in the aftermath of Sunningdale. In a challenge to the constitutional sections of the Sunningdale agreement in the Dublin High Court the court ruled against Cosgrave and so doubt was cast on his ability to deliver. It was also found impossible to agree on an extradition treaty to secure the transfer to Northern courts of terrorists seeking refuge in the South of Ireland. And when, in February 1974, a group of members in the Dublin Parliament laid claim by motion to the territory of the North and were only defeated in the count by five votes, the Northerners found additional grounds for questioning the good faith of the Southern government.

These doubts, accompanied by continued violence on a massive scale, greatly eroded the position of the Northern Ireland Executive. The final blow to its prestige was delivered in the Westminster General Election of February 1974 when the "United Loyalists" won eleven out of the twelve Ulster seats. This election, however much it may have seemed necessary in Britain, came at the worst possible time for those who were working for reconciliation in Northern Ireland. It dealt the new Executive a psychological defeat from which it never recovered.

From January to May 1974, Northern Ireland's first power sharing Executive got on with the task of laying foundations for what many hoped would be a long term development. By any standard, what they pioneered constituted one of the most significant advances in the political history of Ireland. But the decision of the Sunningdale conference to associate the great advance of partnership in government inside Northern Ireland with a controversial all-Ireland Council required the Executive to pioneer too much too quickly. As many warned at the time, the "Irish dimension" was a dangerous insertion.

In many ways the Ulster people in early 1974 were in the throes of a political

nervous breakdown, following five years of social strain and rapid political change. In these years the adjustments had been considerable and for many Protestants the last acceptable change came when partnership in government between the two communities was established; many in the majority were made to feel that they had given way enough. The suggestion that they should also be asked to become involved in a Council of Ireland with Dublin politicians seemed, against a background of Provisional IRA terror and Southern ambiguities over the interpretation of the Sunningdale agreement, to add insult to injury. Whitehall also greatly underestimated these fears and made a serious error in judgment in pressing ahead for a Council of Ireland.

When the Ulster Workers' Council (a body not recognised by the official trade union movement, but strongly supported by paramilitary organisations and the Craig/Paisley/West coalition) called a political strike in May 1974 in protest against a Council of Ireland, the emotional ground had been well prepared for any wishing to take advantage of Protestant resentment. Initially, intimidation was undoubtedly a factor of great importance in getting the strike moving but as the stoppage gained momentum and discipline, so too did popular support. As Merlyn Rees noted: "There was not the slightest doubt of the overwhelming support of all sections of the Protestant community as the strike developed". After thirteen days of stoppage which frightened the entire community and paralysed the government, Brian Faulkner declared that a Doomsday situation had arrived; he resigned to prevent a final confrontation between the state and the uwc. His resignation made possible a retreat with honour on both sides and the strike came to an end. But the resignation also meant the end of the first Northern Ireland inter-communal government and the destruction of the grand design erected in the aftermath of Ulster's first period of Direct Rule.

Merlyn Rees as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had no alternative but to reimpose Direct Rule and prorogue the

Assembly. He had been faced with the unenviable task of implementing an agreement which he had inherited from a previous government. Like William Whitelaw, he now faced the formidable task of seeking a workable consensus. But for the Labour Minister the task was more daunting. He faced a post-executive situation in which a new and powerful industrial/political amalgamation had used their combined power with disconcerting success. Dangerous new demands were now being made.

Like many before him who had been sent to rule in Ireland, Merlyn Rees could lament "Just when you begin to understand the Irish Question, they change the Question!" His search for a new consensus would involve him in a consideration of many "options".

4. a united Ireland

A well known Irish political test goes thus : *question* "What is the best way to terrify a Dublin politician?" *answer* "Tell him that the North has decided to join the South".

The story makes a telling point. It is a reminder that people in Ireland (South as well as North) have less real interest in a united Irish republic than most outsiders imagine. Yet many commentators insist that "a United Ireland" is what Irish politics must be all about. Irish people who actually live on the island have no such delusions. Certainly, for those who have political responsibilities there are rather more pressing points to absorb their time and thought. The inability of many well meaning groups in England and America to grasp this fundamental fact of Irish political life is a source of great embarrassment to those who work for reconciliation in Ireland.

The anxiety of the South to avoid involvement in Ulster affairs received striking confirmation in the Dail debate following the fall of the Northern Executive. In that debate, Foreign Minister, Dr Garrett Fitzgerald spoke of the determination of his government "to allow no interest of ours, no myths derived from our history, no prejudices inherited from our ancestors, to stand in the way of a solution founded on friendship between the two parts of this island . . . this is not the moment for us to propound a solution to a problem which concerns above all the people of Northern Ireland themselves" (26 June 1974). His cabinet colleagues and Labour Party representative, Conor Cruise O'Brien, added "The majority in Northern Ireland ask little from us except that we leave them alone. I suggest that we be prepared to do just that, provided they do not deny equality of status to the minority in Northern Ireland". Such statements are representative of Southern outlook.

But the argument against the "United Ireland" solutionist goes deeper—there is the powerful additional point that for most Northerners (and increasingly so for Southerners as well) the existence of two states in Ireland is accepted as a fact of

life to which they have managed to adjust. Indeed, more than that—after fifty years of local self-government (and centuries of association with Britain) the majority of Ulster people look on their British citizenship as part of the natural order of things. Suggestions to the contrary sound distinctly odd to people so conditioned from birth. They see nothing strange in being both Irish and British—no more so than those who are Scottish, Welsh or English and also British.

All this is not to say that the Northern Irish were enthusiastic about the settlement of 1920 which established them in a divided island. Few Irish people ever supported partition as a principle and certainly fifty years ago the notion of a divided Ireland was not a popular political aim. What was at issue was the relationship between Ireland and Britain; the border was a by-product of failure to agree on the citizenship issue.

It is also important when assessing arguments concerning the Irish National issue to bear in mind that in recent years (and particularly before the worst of the violence in the North) support for a British link has become increasingly non-sectarian. Most people in the Province whatever their party or religion have no real interest in violent crusades against the British association and are content to allow the issue to be settled by consent.

The national argument in Ireland has also crossed the traditional party political divide throughout its history. Being for or against a British link is not a test of one's basic political philosophy—socialists and conservatives may belong to either camp. "Orange" Tories like the late Lord Brookeborough were, of course, staunchly pro-British, but equally convinced "Green" Tories like De Valera have been just as firmly republican in aim.

Socialists in Ireland have also been divided on the national argument. Members of the Southern trade union and Labour movement have been strongly nationalist in outlook, whereas in the North the great majority of the Ulster

working class have been pro-British in their views. For many Ulster socialists, being *for* the link with Britain has meant support for a fraternal and constitutional relationship which has brought considerable social and economic benefits to the Ulster people. It has also meant the continuation of a democratic socialist association with the British trade union and Labour movement and the international socialist movement.

However, differences on such matters do not mean that Irish people have failed to co-operate with one another. On the contrary, North/South links have been commonplace. Indeed, it is important to stress that political argument in Ireland has moved far from the sterile polarisation which in the past flowed from traditional stances on the national issues. For example, the Labour movement in Ireland is only one of many Irish groups co-operating freely and effectively. At all levels there has been a significant growth of North-South co-operation.

As one of Ireland's leading Church thinkers, Dr Cathal Daly, Roman Catholic Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois, put it : "The tragedy of the present position is that the incipient growth of understanding and mutual acceptance which marked the ten years up to August 1969 has now been blighted by the frost of violence".

Irish people in the post-war period have sensed the new fluidity in this situation and have responded positively. They recognise that any future changes between North and South must be based on mutual consent and parity of esteem.

There is also general agreement that the great imperative has now become peace in Ulster—without which there can be no stability in either part of Ireland. More ambitious ideas of a total Irish dimension are now expressed with care and with caution. What talk there *is* comes in terms of "a New Ireland". We hear too of "a Greater Ireland" and recently the SDLP have talked of "an Agreed Ireland". In Northern Ireland the new progressive theme for some time to come

is likely to be "an Agreed Ulster" within the UK.

All these are reminders that Irish people look for something more substantial to solve their problems than the slogan "a United Ireland".

5. negotiated independence

The idea of an independent Ulster, having a special relationship with Britain, has been put forward with growing confidence by militant Protestant organisations in recent years, especially by William Craig the Vanguard leader. Various branches of hard line Unionism suggest variations of the scheme but basically there is agreement that there should be a strong local Parliament, with Protestant majority rule.

In its policy statements, notably *Ulster a Nation*, the Ulster Vanguard movement has argued that the whole British Isles needs to make a new beginning and that this can best be done through a federal constitution. British sovereignty in Ulster is described as dangerous to the essential interests of the Province and the Vanguard is convinced that there is a "complete identity of view between the Westminster and Eire governments on their policy towards Ulster". The Vanguard therefore proposes to "re-negotiate Ulster's relationship with Westminster" and intends that "in any negotiation Westminster shall listen to the true loyalist voice that it has not yet heard"—ten United Loyalists (nine locals and Enoch Powell) won seats at the October 1974 General Election.

Vanguard leaders are confident that if they wait long enough they will get their way. They hope that war weariness in Britain, coupled with electoral success for Ulster right wing groups and their para-military supporters, will persuade some future British government to sue for peace on terms in line with Vanguard policy. They have been greatly encouraged by the growth of the "Bring the troops home" movement in Britain.

The idea of an independent or autonomous Ulster also finds support among some who have no interest in sectarian politics. Such supporters believe that the religious problem need not arise and that a separate Ulster state would be no more than a local version of Welsh or Scottish nationalism. This optimism, however, is not shared by those, Protestants and Catholics alike, who fear the sectarian dynamic of the Vanguard Movement.

Certainly if there was general community support for the idea of an Ulster Dominion and if the British government offered economic co-operation then there is no reason why an interesting new constitutional development should not take place. But these two vital elements are missing. To proceed without them would be disastrous.

The economic implications for Ulster of "going it alone" are daunting. The Province is heavily dependent on British economic aid. This dependence has grown in recent years—the transfer of resources, excluding loans, was £125 million in 1971/72. In 1972/73 it rose to £180 million and in 1973/74 the figure was £310 million. The estimate for 1974/75 is £350 million. With the loan element added in, the total rises to £420 million.

These figures are for transfers from United Kingdom funds, in addition to Northern Ireland's fair share of United Kingdom tax revenue. No deduction is made from this sum in respect of the cost of defence, overseas aid and foreign affairs. Internal security in Northern Ireland alone costs about £33 million a year. In addition, many of Ulster's most important industries (shipbuilding and aircraft, for example) are heavily dependent on massive injections of capital (and have been for centuries) and on loans from Britain. Of course the bargain is not one sided. Ulster (and all Ireland) has been of considerable economic benefit to Britain, but in a trade war the Province would suffer greatly.

It is at this point of finance that the Vanguard case for an independent state runs into serious technical trouble—a demand is being made for an administrative arrangement which no British government could subsidise. Of course the problem goes much deeper than finance—the real defect in the Vanguard argument is communal. What is being asked for is a reversion to the pre-1969 Orange/Green relationship, with even stronger powers for the majority establishment. Such a form of government could not attract the loyalty of the overwhelming majority of its citizens or the

acceptance and respect of the international community.

Partisan independence would also contradict the principle of consent which has become the cornerstone of Westminster policy in Northern Ireland and it would run counter to the guarantee which has been given to the Catholic community of "an active, permanent and guaranteed role". Nor, as the Green Paper (1972) points out, can Northern Ireland "expect a form of independence which would guarantee substantial continuing financial economic and military aid from the United Kingdom but which would otherwise confer upon it virtually sovereign status. No United Kingdom government could be a party to such a settlement".

It is at the point of such fundamental issues that the case for forms of independence submitted by Vanguard and their associates breaks down.

UDI

Not many political leaders advocate UDI (or open rebellion against the British government) as a policy to be pursued in the Northern Ireland crisis, but given a sufficiently entrenched confrontation between the state and a large section of the community, a slide towards UDI could take place. In the Ulster Workers' Council political strike of May 1974, there were signs that such a confrontation was near—persuading Brian Faulkner to describe the stoppage as "the most important political warning that Western Europe has had since 1945". Certainly it is now clear that the Vanguard movement and their allies could call upon powerful industrial and para-military groups to assist them in a challenge to the British government.

There is wide agreement that UDI would be a social and economic disaster for Northern Ireland and the risks would be so great that it would be in the interest of all concerned for the future of the British Isles to oppose any such unconstitutional action. Most observers consider the case only in its economic con-

text, but it is also important to avoid the creation of a situation where UDI became *emotionally* viable. A failure of nerve or a surrender of responsibility by the British government (for example, a sudden withdrawal of troops or a statement of intent to eject Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom) could easily trigger off a UDI process. Such a state would be a human disaster, involving population transfers on an appalling scale and leading to civil war in all of Ireland, with inevitable repercussions in Britain. Unfortunately it is not beyond the bounds of possibility for such a development to take place. The terrorist organisations would probably welcome the opportunities presented by chaos for it would be difficult to stop the tribal tide once it got going. The Prime Minister of the Irish Republic has been particularly concerned about this possibility and has described a policy of British withdrawal as "a prescription for civil war in Ireland, which would be equally abhorrent to and perhaps equally dangerous to Britain—and, indeed, to Western Europe as a whole" (2 July 1973). He has also warned that a rearrangement of population "involving 200,000 Catholic refugees from East Ulster, would resemble the present situation in the Middle East much too closely for the comfort of the governments of Western Europe". Such concern reflects much of Irish public opinion regardless of party or creed.

And what an international Pandora's Box an embittered Ulster might prove on the left flank of Britain and Europe. In the event of an economic war between a UDI state and Britain, the Province could be led into foreign entanglements inimical to the rest of the United Kingdom and her allies. The point has already been noted inside NATO and some commentators have envisaged the Province becoming a political vacuum to be filled by anti-NATO groupings. UDI advocates have talked openly of "getting the money" from foreign powers interested in the military base potential of Northern Ireland.

Few would suggest that the troubles in Northern Ireland are foreign in origin,

but there is a foreign affairs aspect to the situation which should not be ignored and which has been underestimated by Whitehall. Vanguard influenced groups have stressed the importance of Ulster's international relations in their design for the future. In *Dominion of Ulster*, Professor Kennedy Lindsay, an active publicist for Vanguard and a Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly, underlined the point: "International affairs, and especially international power politics, are matters which are taken seriously in Ulster". He believes that there are "solid reasons why the government of Great Britain could not be permitted to remain responsible for Ulster foreign relations" if the Province gained Dominion status. He asks: "How could the same foreign office represent the commercial interests of Great Britain and Ulster when they were in conflict? The Ulster airways, for instance, might wish to secure a route from a foreign government to the exclusion of BEA or BOAC". On wider aspects of foreign policy Professor Lindsay claims that Ulster is likely to express disagreement. He is worried about the Anglo-French nuclear understanding and the drift in foreign policy away from the United States and Canada. He also expresses concern at what he sees as the tendency of France and Britain to regard West Germany as an emerging force which must be restrained and makes it clear that on such issues the Foreign Office "could not represent both Great Britain and Ulster. The latter would have to have its own Ministry of External Relations".

Many observers have dismissed Vanguard schemes as delusions of grandeur; however, the plans are also evidence of considerable determination on the part of separatist groups. It is unlikely that such a group would be prepared to follow meekly the policy of a British Foreign Secretary.

Support for total integration is fairly widespread in Northern Ireland and advocates for the idea (though usually as a last resort) will be found in most of the political parties and in each of the main communities. Brian Faulkner is on record as preferring the system to any "sham Parliament". Ian Paisley has supported the idea for several years, and Enoch Powell is a leading exponent of the policy. However, William Craig has never liked the idea, once describing it as a "gimmick".

Basically, the total integration argument rests on the thesis that if the Stormont Parliament cannot be replaced as an effective assembly then it would be wise for the Province to achieve constitutional stability by becoming an integral part of the United Kingdom and to be ruled from London on lines similar to those applied to Scotland and Wales. An increase in Ulster representation at Westminster (an extra eight seats) is also envisaged and an Ulster Grand Committee on the Scottish model would be demanded. It is argued that integration would lead to even handedness of treatment for Protestants and Catholics alike and would ensure the extension of full British civil and religious liberties to all citizens. Recent polls indicate a Protestant majority in favour of total integration and a smaller but significant proportion of Roman Catholic support.

There are however powerful United Kingdom forces opposed to the integrationists, in particular the main political parties in Britain. In the policy statement which followed the fall of the Ulster Executive, Merlyn Rees left no room for doubt: "I must make it clear, as we did when we were in opposition, that the Government are firmly against integration of Northern Ireland with the rest of the United Kingdom" (3 June 1974). Edward Heath also found the arguments against integration very convincing and in the same debate made the additional point that integration would be offensive to those of the minority community who did not wish to have it and would at the same time weaken the position of the

Southern government as an agent for co-operation. Heath was further concerned with the additional workload that the introduction of Northern Ireland affairs to Westminster would represent for members. But even inside Northern Ireland there is considerable party political opposition to total integration. The SDLP are not sympathetic to the idea and most of the major parties have as their first aim the reconstruction of a local Parliament (though there is fundamental disagreement about the form the reconstruction should take). There is wide agreement however on the integrationist demand for an increase of representation at Westminster—this demand will stand on its own and has the backing of the Kilbrandon Report.

But the Kinbrandon Report, though it argues powerfully in favour of more Ulster MPs at Westminster, also draws attention to the greatest weakness in the integrationist argument—that it is contrary to current developments in United Kingdom thought which now stresses devolution from Westminster, giving the regions of the United Kingdom more effective control over their local affairs. The tide in favour of regional assemblies is now in full spate. Against such a tide the Ulster total integration case is unlikely to make progress.

7. a strategy for Labour — community government and direct rule

The collapse of Northern Ireland's first power sharing Executive in May 1974 required the Labour government to think again about its Ulster policy. At the same time the government was given an opportunity to develop an approach more specifically its own. Merlyn Rees, when he took over from Francis Pym in February 1974, inherited a policy which was largely devised by Edward Heath and William Whitelaw. Many parts of that policy received all party support at Westminster but as the early months of 1974 indicated, there were many areas of the Sunningdale Agreement and the Constitution Act of 1973 which required reconsideration.

It will be a major task for British Labour in the lifetime of the present Parliament to carry out that reconsideration and, at the same time, to achieve peace with justice in Northern Ireland.

a framework of certainty

The people of Northern Ireland have been asked in the 1974 White Paper on future government for the Province to co-operate in the establishment of a regional administration. It is a fair request—but, if it is to be complied with, the Ulster people must also be given a framework of certainty inside which they can operate. In particular, they need to know that if they are to “stand up and be counted” for democracy, the British government will support their stand.

On the matter of power sharing (partnership in government between Protestants and Catholics), for example, the government must not equivocate. In particular, it must not give way under pressure from extremist groups. To do so would weaken fatally Irish socialists and others who believe in democratic processes.

All this is not to say that the power sharing arrangements devised by the 1973 Constitution Act were perfect—far from it. Considerable changes must be made if power sharing is to operate with success. But despite the resignation of the first Executive the partnership system remains

the only basis on which a viable non-sectarian state can be built. No other form of regional government commands equally wide support either inside or outside the Province.

Even the Ulster Workers' Council strike which brought down the Executive was not opposed to co-operation in government between the main communities what was opposed was a link between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

At the height of the strike a statement by the UWC reflected this opinion: “It is not the aim of the UWC to set up a sectarian state or to exclude Roman Catholics from representation in the government. The purpose of the strike is to end the Council of Ireland, not to kill power sharing”.

Unfortunately neither the British government nor the Northern Ireland Executive recognised this distinction in time—by seeking to defend a distant “Irish dimension” they risked and lost the immediate and essential gift of partnership in government.

The Labour Government, by giving Ulster the firm assurance that a search will continue for a power sharing form of government (based on consent not compulsion), can set the Northern Irish people on the road to political stability.

However, too much should not be expected too quickly—this was the Conservative government's mistake. Such institutions are difficult to construct even in favourable political conditions.

What, should be sought is an “Agreed Ulster”. Without such agreement peace in Ulster and the rest of Ireland is impossible.

guarantees

Other areas of certainty are equally important. In the main, most points would be covered adequately so long as the various guarantees contained in a long list of statutes and ministerial statements

are honoured: guarantees to do with citizenship, constitutional consent and the provision of adequate security arrangements. But such is the state of emotional shock in Northern Ireland after five years of terrorism and political instability that such guarantees often seem inadequate.

Community doubts are also increased by the many commentators in London and Dublin who, notwithstanding these guarantees, talk about “reassessments” or the “Irish dimension” in ways which seems to question the very basis of Northern Ireland's position inside the United Kingdom.

The difficulty is well illustrated in discussions about a Council of Ireland. Over emphasis on this point by Republicans and distortion by Loyalist groups has turned the whole subject into a seeming threat to citizenship status and now prevents effective North/South dialogue. In these circumstances, any attempt by a British Parliament to impose an “Irish dimension” on Ulster would be counter-productive. Mutual agreement must be the basis of any such development. Imposition would run counter to the principle of consent and would, in any case, be made unworkable by local abstention.

two-fold problem

The immediate problem is the pacification of Ulster—wider Irish objectives are distinctly secondary in present circumstances. Better by far for British Labour to allow North/South relations to develop naturally (as they were before the violence and as they shall again) without insisting on paper declarations which cannot be met. What really matters is contact and co-operation between both areas on matters of common concern. Mutual trust and respect is the foundation for such developments.

Given an ability to provide such a framework of certainty, the way is open for a Labour government to provide day-to-day government for the 1½ million United Kingdom citizens in Northern

Ireland, and at the same time to take measures which will prepare the way for the eventual development of regional institutions of government based on inter-community partnership.

What is needed at this stage is a recognition that the solution to the Ulster crisis divides into two distinct stages—immediate and longer term. The failure to recognise this distinction has already been the cause of grave difficulties.

The *immediate* concern must be that of mounting (via direct rule) a massive programme of social and economic reconstruction which will get the Province going again and which in a practical way will provide manifestations of hope for the mass of the people. The *longer term* problem of organising regional government (power sharing) deals with subjects which by their very nature are part of a complicated consensus, are divisive and which are unlikely to yield to instant diplomacy.

community government : the long term strategy

The Labour government has indicated (White Paper, July 1974) its belief that it is possible for Protestants and Roman Catholics to work together for the good of Northern Ireland and its people. This view is shared by a majority of Ulster people and there is widespread support for the belief that some form of partnership must develop, since no political system can survive in the Province unless it has general acceptance throughout the community. It is a view which deserves the support of British democratic socialists determined to resist the fascist or sectarian alternatives which seek power in the Province.

The idea of community government is not new in Northern Ireland—it has been advocated, amongst others, by members of the Labour movement. But it is only since 1971 that the idea has gained wide acceptance, across both main religions and several political parties. So far the concept has had little opportunity to prove itself and not much thought has

been given to the long term possibilities and difficulties inherent in the idea.

first power sharing administration

The first power sharing government for the Province—the Executive formed by members of the Unionist Party, Social Democratic Labour Party and the Alliance Party—was formed on 1 January 1974. It ended on 28 May when the Chief Minister, Brian Faulkner, resigned as a result of pressure brought upon the government by the political general strike organised by the Ulster Workers' Council.

But for many people in Ireland the administration, though short lived, was a unique and valuable experience, marking a watershed in the island's history. For the first time in the history of the state, Protestant and Catholic had combined their efforts in government. Power and responsibility was being shared between the two communities. Both sides were being given common institutions with which they could identify. As *Hibernia*, the Irish national political journal, put it at the end of 1973: "The year that is drawing to a close has seen enormous changes in the political scene on this island: a new Executive in the North, tentative agreement on a Council of Ireland, a coalition in the South and, for both, the first year of membership within the EEC. But the greatest of these developments is that for the first time ever, the representatives of the minority within the Six Counties are to participate in government. For that advance alone, 1973 must be considered a significant year in the history of this still divided island". Unfortunately the Ulster Workers' Council strike, which was mounted originally as a protest against the creation of a Council of Ireland, also created pressures which led to the fall of the power sharing Executive. Right wing politicians subsequently exploited these pressures in their fundamental opposition to the whole concept of power sharing between Protestants and Catholics.

But it is important to distinguish between public attitudes on North/South co-

operation and co-operation *inside* the Northern Ireland community—there has been much opposition to the Council of Ireland project, but equally there has been a wide measure of support for a coming together of Protestants and Catholics in government. When the first Executive fell, there was genuine regret throughout much of Ireland and a wide acknowledgement that the men who served in it did not fail. As a government statement put it "They disproved for ever the idea that it is not possible for Protestant and Roman Catholic to work together for the good of Northern Ireland and its people".

Power sharing, in one form or another, remains the great imperative for Northern Ireland and is the one form of regional government which attracts strong inter-communal support. No other policy attracts the same favourable consensus. It should remain the central aim of British government policy.

Already the government is committed to a policy which involves both communities in the administration of the Province. The 1973 White Paper on which the Northern Ireland Constitution Act was based insisted that there could only be devolution for Ulster "on a basis of government by consent". It was also made clear that the Executive "must be composed of persons prepared to work together by peaceful means for the benefit of the community" and it was the view of the government that the Executive could no longer be based solely upon any single party if that party drew its support and elected representatives "virtually from only one section of a divided community".

This policy is now accepted by the major parties in Britain and by most political groups in Ireland—a powerful dissenting voice in Northern Ireland is the Loyalist coalition, though even they do not admit to demanding the exclusion of Catholics from government. In these circumstances, it is not reasonable to expect Westminster to subsidise in any form a sectarian state in Northern Ireland. The Leader of the Liberal Party probably reflected the oppo-

sition of most of his colleagues to any resumption of sectarian government when he told the Commons "Power sharing is the very minimum that this country is prepared to accept for continued United Kingdom membership for Northern Ireland. If the people of Northern Ireland want to rescind it and ask us to tear up the 1973 Act, let them tell us; but if not, we for our part are honour bound by that 1973 Act, and United Kingdom membership, will mean continued financial support and responsibility for law and order" (4 June 1974).

building a new power sharing executive

It will not be easy to construct an agreed Executive, but the 1974 five month experience of working the system has indicated lines for possible development. In particular, it is now clear that efforts should be made to include members of the Loyalist coalition in any future administration and to encourage a pattern of *agreed* power sharing by giving any local legislative assembly more authority in the creation of the Executive. In fact, any Executive would be largely self chosen, reflecting the balance of power among elected members, but the 1973 Constitution Act gave the impression that the administration was in the gift of the Secretary of State and that his favourites were to be put in office. Clarification on this point would take the sting out of Loyalist criticism.

However, the decision by the Labour government to elect a Constitutional Convention for the specific purpose of preparing new constitutional proposals should do much to ensure that local people will feel directly involved in any new Constitution Act devised for the Province. This decision is a marked improvement on the procedure adopted by Edward Heath. Much of the opposition to the 1973 Act sprang from the fact that it was part of an elaborate package deal put together by William Whitelaw and, at key points, without the involvement of local people. Any agreed proposals coming from a local forum would have the great merit of having a "made in

Ulster" stamp on them—this would facilitate greatly the acceptance of any new Constitution Act emanating from Westminster.

non-sectarian government

Beyond the immediate need to re-establish the power sharing Executive, there is need to think about the direction in which the system of government ought to be developed. Community government is not, as so many people outside Northern Ireland see it, coalition government; those who have pioneered the system (particularly the members of the Northern Ireland Labour Party) seek to create a situation where the present largely religious party groupings will break up, giving way to a politics based on social and economic confrontation. Coalition seeks to retain party identity; community government aims to make new formations possible. In fact, community government if it is to have real meaning in Northern Ireland must above all challenge the sectarian assumption that it is natural for Ulster people to divide on religious lines. The application of that belief since 1921 (subscribed to by both Orange and Green establishments) has been a central cause of the Ulster crisis. Community government seeks to challenge not institutionalise, sectarian politics.

voting system

A key factor in the transformation process will continue to be the composition of any future Northern Ireland Assembly. For that reason it will be essential to ensure that the Province enjoys a voting system which ensures that the Assembly represents an authentic cross section of the Northern Ireland people. Under the Constitution Act proportional representation (STV) was provided and this assisted the election of many minority group representatives who would have been excluded under the simple majority system. (The unsuitability of the simple majority system was vividly illustrated in the 1974 Westminster General Election when the West/Paisley/Craig alliance

gained eleven out of the twelve available seats on a 52 per cent share of the vote. In such circumstances, there is a very strong case for the extension of PR to Northern Ireland in both Assembly and Westminster elections.)

But it is also clear that PR (STV) is not enough to ensure the election of many influential groups with significant but scattered support in the Province. If it is desired (and surely it is) to make elections as representative as possible and to give democratic legitimacy to the many small but politically important groupings which exist, the Constitution will have to provide a PR voting system which casts the widest possible net. This basically is an argument for the introduction of the List System for elections in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Labour Party has made proposals to this effect. Under the scheme the Province would become one constituency and it is calculated that on a 75 per cent poll and an increase in the number of seats to 100 each party or independent candidate would secure one seat on the basis of 7500 votes. Even the smallest groups would stand to gain a few seats on this basis; those that did not could speak with little authority.

The traditional objection to PR would still exist under the List System and in some ways would be aggravated, but the great gain would be an Assembly more accurately a reflection of public opinion than that produced by the June 1974 Assembly election based on STV. It is particularly important that the Constitutional Convention should be as representative as possible.

community government— a new dynamic

But whatever electoral system is adopted in Northern Ireland, community government is unlikely to develop swiftly in the Province—the system must be given time to take root and grow. Nor must the system of itself be regarded as a miracle cure. Nobody should look to power sharing as an overnight means of transforming the security situation—it is very

likely that terrorist groups will be unimpressed by such policies, however widely supported or democratically applied.

But power sharing if properly developed, does introduce a unique and powerful factor into Ulster politics: it challenges the sectarian pattern which has been a root cause of the Northern Ireland problem and which has prevented the growth of a united community. Sectarianism has also prevented the emergence of a strong Labour movement, supported on social and economic policies. For such reasons, community government has become the only real alternative in Northern Ireland.

direct rule—a Labour regional initiative

It is likely that an agreed consensus will take some time to emerge in Northern Ireland—for that reason the Labour government must be prepared to assume responsibility for Direct Rule in the region well into the future. But, unlike their Conservative predecessors, Labour must use the system to make a positive contribution to the development of progressive government in the region and not merely to preserve the *status quo* until local agencies take over. As citizens of the United Kingdom, the people of Northern Ireland are entitled to their full share of Labour policies for regional development.

The bi-partisan policy of the parties at Westminster on Ulster constitutional affairs must not extend to social and economic matters as well, thereby denying the Province the opportunity for the first time in 800 years of benefiting directly from departmental control by socialist ministers.

origins of direct rule

The crisis of May 1974, following the collapse of the Northern Ireland Executive, forced the Labour government to bring in from the cold the strangely neglected option of Direct Rule. This form of government, originally introduced by Heath in March 1972, came to

an end when the new administration took over office in January 1974. There were those at the time who argued that Northern Ireland was not then ready for the assumption of local self-government. Even William Whitelaw had stated that he would not wish “in any way to be a party to trying to form an executive on a hasty or ill considered basis”. In the event, sacred dead lines were laid down which had more to do with political considerations in Britain than with the political realities of Northern Ireland. The new crisis has given the government an opportunity to think again and, in particular, to reassess the potentiality of the Direct Rule system.

So far, anxiety to disengage from Ulster politics has made the British government underestimate the constitutional potential of Direct Rule. Yet during its short life under William Whitelaw and Francis Pym, Direct Rule *did* prove an effective form of government. Indeed, there are strong grounds for arguing that the Whitelaw administration was the least controversial government in Northern Ireland for fifty years. Had it not been for the over shadowing effect of the terrorist campaign, the efficiency of the Direct Rule team and their fairness in administration might have persuaded a majority to support a continuation of the system rather than risk a return to a local government. Certainly when Whitelaw left Northern Ireland in 1973 there was regret and apprehension at his departure. The British government must now simply face up to the fact that Direct Rule may be the only viable form of government available for the Ulster Province for some time to come. If the local political leaders cannot speedily agree on terms for an agreed system of power sharing (and the signs are not good) continued Direct Rule is likely to gain a wider spectrum of support than any other available option.

new developments for direct rule system

But this time, unlike 1972, the government must be prepared to think of Direct Rule in more imaginative terms—it must

be seen as an instrument which can be developed creatively, dealing with the problems in hand while at the same time preparing the way for the re-establishment of local forms of government. Already around the Northern Ireland Office a framework has been established by Westminster politicians. In the phase planned by Labour there are opportunities to think in terms of “Ulsterising” the Northern Ireland Office. This means finding ways of introducing local politicians into the power structure alongside the Secretary of State and his Westminster colleagues. Such local people (perhaps responsible to Westminster through membership of the House of Lords) would be responsive to the local situation and their regional knowledge would be available to assist their London based colleagues. Such an arrangement would allow the practice of partnership in government to develop between London and Belfast as well as inside Northern Ireland.

The “grafting on” process would also continue to involve local leaders (hopefully of all main groupings) in the day-to-day work of the Northern Ireland Office and would prepare the way for the eventual re-activation of the local administration which will one day reappear once the community has recovered from its recent political breakdown. Nor is there much need to worry about an agreed agenda to work upon; the physical mutilation inflicted on the Province provides a ready programme for action.

Back-up support should also be provided for the Northern Ireland Office by the creation of a Council of State, serviced by Ulster people, qualified to advise the Secretary of State and to act as a link with community opinion.

Labour policies

It is important that the Labour government should be prepared to apply a Labour policy to the problems of Northern Ireland. As has been noted above, the re-introduction of Direct Rule following the collapse of the local Execu-

8. Inter-Irish and Anglo-Irish relations—the longer prospect

tive means that for the first time ever, socialist ministers are responsible for all aspects of regional policy in the Province. It is an opportunity to pursue democratic socialist policies and to demonstrate to Ulster people the effectiveness of progressive non-sectarian measures.

The local trade union and Labour movement has already published a list of priorities to which attention might be given. Transport, reform of the secondary school system, integrated education, public ownership and local land controls are all high on the list. An imaginative and radical approach by a Labour administration on matters such as these could do much to transform the sectarian dialogue into a debate on social and economic issues which would cut across the religious confrontations preferred by reactionary groups in the Province. Labour will fail if it simply maintains the *status quo*.

It is also important that Labour Ministers should be able to maintain close links with their trade union and Labour allies in the Province. Consultative machinery should be developed with trade union and other representative groups.

Direct Rule, in fact, provides Labour with a unique opportunity to begin the social transformation of Ulster during the transition (perhaps a long transition) phase before local self-government is resumed.

direct rule : the preparation for a new executive

Parallel with the social reconstruction carried on by the Direct Rule administration, the Northern Ireland Constitutional Convention would be established to discuss proposals for the future shape of government in the Province—and would have to face the challenge of finding an agreed consensus before the opportunity for local self-government could again be enjoyed. Since elections would again take place under PR (preferably the List System), partnership supporters would still return in considerable numbers. Such elections would also

have the merit of giving the post-Sunningdale vintage of leaders a chance to prove themselves at the polls.

Each to its task, the separate but related operations would make a contribution towards the creation of local political co-operation. But this time, unlike the post-Sunningdale arrangement, the Constitutional Convention could continue its search for agreement on the form of executive government for the Province unimpeded by the urgent day-to-day demands of the administrative system. Meanwhile, as the Convention proceeded with its discussions (no doubt lengthy and perhaps necessarily so; and even if abortive) the Direct Rule administration, reinforced by local people would be engaged in the vital operation of community reconstruction, without which no system of government in Northern Ireland can hope to succeed.

Not for the first time, there has been a false start to reconciliation in Ireland. The 1973 Constitution Act and the subsequent Sunningdale Agreement became hurried affairs largely because full advantage was not taken of the possibilities for dynamic regional government inherent in the Direct Rule system. Hopefully, recent events and the unavailability of other tenable options may prevent the Labour government from repeating the mistakes of its predecessor.

Beyond the pressing inter-Ulster problem there must also be a search for a new and better inter-Irish relationship; on one small island the need for harmony is obvious. And this search can be pursued without impairment to the constitutional integrity of either North or South—indeed, unless it is pursued in this spirit no start can be made.

In some ways the door is more than half open. In recent decades Irish people have co-operated readily and without difficulty across their political border. In fact until the terrorist campaign, formal restrictions were few. The full extent of this relaxed attitude to the border, where social and economic matters were concerned, has not been fully appreciated outside Ireland. More note was taken when the O'Neill/Lemass meeting took place in 1965, but this occasion merely gave formal recognition to a process of co-operation which was taken for granted by most Irish people.

Opportunities for renewed and extended co-operation will return and it should become increasingly possible for all in Ireland to improve their lot together. This will not mean a sell out by one side or the other. It will merely recognise the need to assume relationships in line with modern demands. The trade union and Labour movement with its island-wide structures should be able to assist this as should common EEC membership. Political co-operation between North and South will however be limited so long as the Ulster crisis persists. Certainly, controversial proposals for formal bodies like a Council of Ireland are unlikely to attract wide political support. It is also likely that the North will demand from the Dublin government the deletion of those parts of the Southern Constitution which lay claim to the territory of Northern Ireland. As the matter now stands, there is a contradiction between that Constitution and the acknowledgement that the people of the North have an absolute right to determine their own constitutional future.

But difficulties about formal political agreements need not rule out co-opera-

tion on a wide range of social and economic matters in which both Belfast and Dublin administrations have a common interest. Given parity of esteem between North and South, it should be possible to work out mutually beneficial methods of co-operation and consultative machinery acceptable to both sides.

Anglo-Irish council

There is also a need for the establishment of machinery to bring London, Belfast and Dublin into regular inter-regional contact for consultation on subjects of mutual interest—emergency talks are no substitute for regular meetings to harmonise the needs of all areas of the British Isles.

An Anglo-Irish Council should be established to meet the needs of all three parties. Indeed, one of the failings of the Sunningdale Agreement was the lack of provision for such a British dimension. The decision to exclude this dimension left out of the reckoning an essential partner in the British Isles inter-relationship and gave the impression that the Dublin-Belfast relationship was alone paramount in the Agreement.

The close involvement of Britain with Ireland (both North and South) cannot be ignored. As indicated earlier, the Ulster problem is only one part of a complicated and interlocking relationship which includes not only Belfast and Dublin but London as well. Those who talk about “solving” the Ulster problem in a wider context miss the point when they confine their thoughts to Ireland. Britain is and must be part of the solution. Just as Britain is involved in a closer union with Europe, so in this post-colonial era Britain and both parts of Ireland must grow closer together. Partnership, not separation, is the most appropriate post-colonial stance.

For this reason, Britain as a major force in the partnership must pursue policies which maximise co-operation not only in the North of Ireland but throughout all of Ireland and between the whole of Ire-

appendix: dates and documentation

land and Britain as well. Already, there are signs that Westminster is willing to act as guarantor. In the 1972 Green Paper the British government gave as an "absolute" a guarantee to Northern Ireland that the constitutional status "cannot and will not be set aside". At the same time a more creative relationship with the rest of Ireland was sought.

Equally, in the South of Ireland there has been for some time (and particularly evident in the attitudes of Liam Cosgrave) a growing recognition that all parts of Britain and Ireland have more in common than that which separates them. The role of the Republic in Europe and the world is being reassessed as never before; in the process of reassessment Britain and Ireland will come closer.

a new Ireland Act

The time is also at hand for the exploration of new and additional forms of shared citizenship between all the people of the British Isles. The 1949 Ireland Act was produced in response to a specific citizenship crisis—something more expansive and flexible is needed for the modern setting, especially for people who intermingle so freely and at many social and economic levels. Certainly, citizenship rights should not rest so finally and inflexibly on which side of the Irish Sea one happens to dwell. There is room, for instance, for a greater shared use of welfare, educational, transport, broadcasting and other communal services. Common forms of taxation, particularly to do with welfare and pension benefits, could be introduced to minimise citizenship right distinctions. This whole field is one which requires the study of an inter-governmental commission.

Indeed, as we look beyond the difficulties of the Ulster crisis we begin to see the outline of possibilities for new and fertile inter-relationships among the small pattern of islands to which we all—English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish—belong. The Ulster crisis gives the Labour movement an opportunity to look again

at the relationship and to seek for ways in which it may be improved.

It is against the background of such expanding possibilities that the troubles of Northern Ireland take on a more hopeful aspect—beyond the strife lies the possibility of renewal.

key dates

1920 Government of Ireland Act.

Labour Government

1949 Ireland Act

1969 August : troops sent to Northern Ireland. Downing Street Declaration issued.

Conservative Government

1971 August : Northern Ireland government introduced internment.

1972 March : Direct Rule imposed.

1972 September : Darlington inter-party conference on the future of Northern Ireland.

1973 March : White Paper, Constitutional Future of Northern Ireland.

1973 June : elections to new Northern Ireland Assembly.

1973 November : Executive designate agreed between Unionist, SDLP and Alliance parties.

1973 December : Sunningdale Conference.

1974 January : Northern Ireland Executive takes Office.

Labour Government

1974 May : Ulster Workers' Council call general work stoppage.

1974 28 May : Brian Faulkner resigns and Direct Rule reimposed

1974 July : White Paper *The Northern Ireland Constitution* outlining the next steps.

patterns of government from 1920 to 1974 :

1 Devolution of powers to the Parliament and Government of Northern Ireland under the Government of Ireland Act 1920, up to March 1972

2 "direct rule" under the Northern Ireland (Temporary Provisions) Act 1972,

with the Government of Northern Ireland suspended and its Parliament prorogued, executive powers exercised by a Secretary of State and laws made by Order in Council, from March 1972 to 1 January 1974

3 a new system of devolution of powers to an Assembly and Executive under the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973, from January to May 1974 and, since then

4 discharge of functions of that Executive under the Constitution Act by Northern Ireland Office Ministers, with the Assembly prorogued.

the government of Ireland act, 1920 : the original scheme

The main points of the Act of 1920 as it came into force in Northern Ireland were as follows :

1 It provided for the establishment in Belfast of a bicameral Parliament, consisting of a 52 member House of Commons elected by Proportional Representation, and a Senate of 26 Members, 24 elected by the Members of the Northern Ireland House of Commons and two (the Lord Mayor of Belfast and Mayor of Londonderry) sitting *ex officio*.

2 This Parliament was given a general power to make laws for "the peace, order and good government" of Northern Ireland, subject to certain specific reservations, conditions and safeguards. In particular (a) The Act specifically reserved to the Parliament of the United Kingdom certain powers principally relating to the Armed Forces, the Crown, and international matters. (b) The fiscal powers of the Northern Ireland Parliament were severely restricted by the reservation to the Parliament of the United Kingdom of power to levy income tax and customs and excise duties. (c) The Northern Ireland Parliament was specifically prohibited from making laws and the Northern Ireland Government from taking administrative action other than on a basis of religious equality. (d) Section 75 of the Act provided that :

"the supreme authority of the Parliament of the United Kingdom shall remain unaffected and undiminished over all persons, matters and things in (Northern) Ireland and every part thereof".

3 The Governor of Northern Ireland, in whom the executive powers of the Northern Ireland Parliament were vested, was "aided and advised" by the executive committee of the Privy Council, or Cabinet consisting of Ministers of Northern Ireland.

4 Northern Ireland was to be represented in the Parliament of the United Kingdom by 12 Members for territorial constituencies and one for the Queen's University of Belfast.

5 Northern Ireland was to make towards Imperial liabilities and expenditure, a "just" contribution having regard to the relative taxable capacities of Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom as a whole.

The Act also made provision for a Council of Ireland (the Council never came into being).

Ireland act, 1949

In 1948 the Irish government decided to sever its links with the Crown and the Commonwealth and to establish an Irish Republic. The Ireland Act, 1949, was passed as a consequence of these developments. An important section of the Act referred to Northern Ireland: "It is hereby declared that Northern Ireland remains part of His Majesty's dominions and of the United Kingdom and it is hereby affirmed that in no event will Northern Ireland or any part thereof cease to be part of His Majesty's dominions and of the United Kingdom without the consent of the Parliament of Northern Ireland".

Downing Street declaration

A meeting was held at 10 Downing Street on 19 August 1969 between the Prime Minister (Harold Wilson) with four of

his chief Ministers and the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland (Major Chichester-Clark) and three of his Ministers. After the meeting the following Declaration was issued:

1. The United Kingdom Government reaffirm that nothing which has happened in recent weeks in Northern Ireland derogates from the clear pledges made by successive United Kingdom Governments that Northern Ireland should not cease to be a part of the United Kingdom without the consent of the people of Northern Ireland or from the provision in Section I of the Ireland Act, 1949, that in no event will Northern Ireland or any part thereof cease to be part of the United Kingdom without the consent of the Parliament of Northern Ireland. The border is not an issue.

2. The United Kingdom Government again affirm that responsibility for affairs in Northern Ireland is entirely a matter of domestic jurisdiction. The United Kingdom Government will take full responsibility for asserting this principle in all international relationships.

3. The United Kingdom Government have ultimate responsibility for the protection of those who live in Northern Ireland when, as in the past week, a breakdown of law and order has occurred. In this spirit, the United Kingdom Government responded to the requests of the Northern Ireland Government for military assistance in Londonderry and Belfast in order to restore law and order. They emphasise again that troops will be withdrawn when law and order has been restored.

4. The Northern Ireland Government have been informed that troops have been provided on a temporary basis in accordance with the United Kingdom's ultimate responsibility. In the context of the commitment of these troops, the Northern Ireland Government have reaffirmed their intention to take into the fullest account at all times the views of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, especially in relation to matters affecting the status of citizens of that

part of the United Kingdom and their equal rights and protection under the law.

5. The United Kingdom Government have welcomed the decisions of the Northern Ireland Government relating to local government franchise, the revision of local government areas, the allocation of houses, the creation of a Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration in Northern Ireland and machinery to consider citizens' grievances against other public authorities which the Prime Minister reported to the House of Commons at Westminster following his meeting with Northern Ireland Ministers on 21 May as demonstrating the determination of the Northern Ireland Government that there shall be full equality of treatment for all citizens. Both Governments have agreed that it is vital that the momentum of internal reform should be maintained.

6. The two Governments at their meeting at 10 Downing Street today have reaffirmed that in all legislation and executive decisions of Government every citizen of Northern Ireland is entitled to the same equality of treatment and freedom from discrimination as obtains in the rest of the United Kingdom, irrespective of political views or religion. In their further meetings the two Governments will be guided by these mutually accepted principles.

7. Finally, both Governments are determined to take all possible steps to restore normality to the Northern Ireland community so that economic development can proceed at the faster rate which is vital for social stability.

the Sunningdale communique, December 1973

The Sunningdale Conference took place, from 6 to 9 December 1973, between representatives of Her Majesty's Government, of the Government of the Republic of Ireland and of the three parties involved in the Northern Ireland Executive-designate. The principal features of an Agreed Communique which was issued on 9 December were as follows:

1. declarations by Her Majesty's Government and by the Government of the Republic of Ireland on the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. These were to be incorporated in a formal agreement to be signed at the formal stage of the Conference and registered at the United Nations;

2. outline agreement on the basis for setting up a Council of Ireland, to be implemented after further detailed study of functions and finance;

3. agreement to establish a joint British-Irish Commission to recommend, as a matter of extreme urgency, the most effective means of dealing with those who commit crimes of violence, however motivated, in any part of Ireland.

4. agreement to give a Council of Ireland a recommendatory role in relation to human rights in Ireland, and a consultative role in relation to appointments to Police Authorities, North and South;

5. a re-affirmation by Her Majesty's Government of its firm commitment to bring detention to an end in Northern Ireland for all sections of the community as soon as the security situation permitted;

6. Parliament would be asked to devolve full powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive as soon as possible. The formal appointment of the Executive would then be made;

7. early in the New Year the British and Irish Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive would hold a formal conference "to consider reports on the studies which have been commissioned and to sign the agreement reached".

extract from the Northern Ireland constitution, July 1974

Reality must include recognition of a number of facts:

1 history has caused divisions within the Northern Ireland community. Events of the past few years have amply demon-

strated that no part of that community can, let alone should, be coerced into accepting the others' view. Events have also shown that a consensus can be obtained on the basis of serving the interests of the whole community. There must be some form of power sharing and partnership because no political system will survive, or be supported, unless there is widespread acceptance of it within the community. There must be participation by the whole community ;

2 any pattern of government must be acceptable to the people of the United Kingdom as a whole and to Parliament at Westminster. Citizenship confers not only rights and privileges but also obligations ;

3 Northern Ireland, unlike the rest of the United Kingdom, shares a common land frontier and a special relationship with another country, the Republic of Ireland. Any political arrangements must recognise and provide for this special relationship. There is an Irish dimension.

It would be premature at this stage to say that the approach embodied in the Constitution Act 1973 is untenable. Indeed, much of the content of that Act is not a matter for dispute. What is apparent is that there is little prospect of forming from the present Northern Ireland Assembly another Executive which meets the terms of that Act.

The Government proposes that the following steps should be taken in order to allow the fullest discussion of the future :

1 temporary arrangements to be made for the government of Northern Ireland ;

2 a consultative Northern Ireland Constitutional Convention to be elected, to consider what provisions for the government of Northern Ireland would be likely to command the most widespread acceptance throughout the community there ;

3 the Convention to have an independent Chairman and 78 members elected under the Single Transferable Vote procedure ;

4 the Government to lay the Convention's Report before Parliament and also the results of any referendum.

This course offers the people of Northern Ireland every opportunity to take the lead in shaping their own future in accordance with the realities described earlier.

The Fabian Society exists to further socialist education and research. It is affiliated to the Labour Party, both nationally and locally, and embraces all shades of Socialist opinion within its ranks—left, right and centre.

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The Society is organised nationally and locally. The national Society, directed by an elected Executive Committee, publishes pamphlets, and holds schools and conferences of many kinds. Local Societies—there are one hundred of them—are self governing and are lively centres of discussion and also undertake research.

Enquiries about membership should be sent to the General Secretary, Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, London, SW1H 9BN ; telephone 01-930 3077.

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