

Algeria. They are probably more concerned than they would have been if the 'subversives' had not succeeded in whipping up an international scandal.

However, I do think readers should be aware that if they reject the ambassador's arguments, then they are rejecting the way in which our own national strength and wealth were built up during the nineteenth century, and the way in which Japan's national wealth is being created today. They are rejecting the systems of social control, which have long been applied in almost every western educational and political system. The Catholic left in Latin America is very left wing indeed. A Chilean discussing his country's new government recently put the Christian Democrat splinter group MAPU to the left of its socialist and communist partners in the spectrum of the Frente de Unidad Popular. The Ambassador is not a Nazi-Fascist monster, unless you believe that every British Prime Minister this century has been a Nazi-Fascist monster.

Northern Ireland—Dismantling the Protestant State

by Kevin Boyle

The past two years in Northern Ireland have been a time of intense political activity among its one-and-a-half million people. The frequency and intensity of street violence has ensured international publicity and attention. Yet the causes underlying the disturbances remain much misunderstood at home and abroad.

It is a trite but necessary beginning to emphasize that the Irish problem is not one of religion. It is true that religious denomination neatly divides the political positions. Unionists are Protestant, non-Unionists Catholics. But however compelling it is to see the intermittent guerrilla warfare in Belfast or Derry in terms of Catholics and Protestants it must be resisted. These confrontations may have little formal political character, but in a real sense they represent a clash of different political forces; the resistance of a complex post-colonial social structure to new economic and social influences from within and without.

Put another way, the Civil Rights campaign and the British Government's involvement in that campaign and its aftermath represent attempts to dismantle, what had, under strain, become a semi-fascist state, and to replace it with something approaching

social democracy. Just why the 'Irish Question' should once again irrupt into British politics, and at this particular time, is problematical. But an important factor which enabled a Labour administration to begin on the unfinished business of Ireland is the impact of economic change on the relationships between the parties involved, the Republic of Ireland, Ulster, and Britain. Economic change alone cannot account for all developments, but an analysis of recent events in Ireland which leaves them out altogether could only help to mystify further the reputedly already amazed Britisher.

Certainly, the irony involved in the present British enthusiasm to re-structure Northern Ireland's weird polity is not lost on the natives, Unionist or anti-Unionist. The original strength of the Unionist state owed much to a heritage that the English themselves were the architects for, over the long centuries of grappling with Ireland. Not for the first time since the last war have the English been confronted with the less-memorable remnants of the 'former glory'.

To open the dam of English and Irish history is to put at risk objectivity and the reader's patience. But a limited reference to the past is unavoidable.

The present area of Ireland known as Northern Ireland, with its own parliament, within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, derives from the English answer to the Home Rule campaign. When the Liberal Party in England under Gladstone suffered its conversion to Home Rule for Ireland, the interests in Ireland opposed to Home Rule and for maintaining the Union with Great Britain mobilised themselves politically to great effect. The Orange Order, which had relations with all sections of the Protestant community in the North, was the vehicle that cemented these elements politically into a front against the Home Rule movement which was supported by the vast bulk of the Catholic population. But the religious aspect of this front was merely an instrument, a means of maintaining the solidarity of the Protestant workers and small farmers to the cause of landlords and businessmen. The Protestant people did have genuine fears of 'Rome' and a 'Popish' republic. The fertile basis of their historical situation had been sown too often with prejudice and distortion about their Catholic neighbours, to expect them to rid themselves of distrust overnight, and take part in a struggle for national independence. But however genuine their fears, they could never have held back the movement for independence; sentiment is but the spice of political forces, the meat is the market, and who controls it. The key group, in the Unionist alliance against Home Rule, was the northern businessmen, and it was largely through their support that the Home Rule movement was frustrated and Ireland partitioned in 1920.

Their objections to the Home Rule Movement were not couched in the kind of sectarian appeal to 'king, Protestant religion and the constitution' that the landlords indulged in. Rather they spoke in

terms of practical economics. Separation from England would spell economic disaster; the largely under-developed South would swamp Northern prosperity. The Ulster businessmen were supporters of free trade, because they had direct access to the markets of the British Empire. An independent Ireland would not survive without imposing a tariff wall, behind which the Southern economy could develop, but this would cut out the North from its markets, where retaliatory tariffs would lower the profitability of the Northern produce. Besides there was much radical talk of taking industry away from the entrepreneurs who had built it up, as well as collectivizing land and breaking up the large estates. Recourse was also had to the arguments still popular in colonial territories, that the Irish 'couldn't rule themselves', they would not be able to maintain an economy, and ultimately the British Empire would have to return and rescue the country.

The Government of Ireland Act 1920

Both camps in Ireland, Unionist and anti-Unionist, armed themselves and the English solution to these conflicting pressures was the Government of Ireland Act 1920. That Act provided for the partitioning of Ireland, but only as a temporary expedient. The idea was to give Ireland a dominion status, reserving to Westminster the major powers such as defence and leaving to the two Irish Parliaments, one in the North and one in the South, power to deal with domestic affairs. Ultimately the two Parliaments were to merge, in a single all-Ireland assembly, but still tied to the British Empire. The Government of Ireland Act was liked by neither side in Ireland. The Unionists had not wanted 'dominion' status, but to remain completely within the English Kingdom. Further, they had not wanted only a part of Ireland, but all Ireland to stay within the Kingdom. But they were realistic. The only strength they had was in the north-east. The Southern loyalists, mostly landowners, were abandoned to their fate, and the Unionist state was based on six only of the thirty-two counties.

But the Sinn Fein forces in the South never became reconciled to the proposed partition. A bloody civil war broke out, over whether the English settlement should be accepted. Eventually exhausted Irishmen brought the inconclusive war to an end. Before the second World War, all remaining allegiance to the British Crown was thrown off, and a Republic was declared. While claiming sovereignty over the Northern area, now governed by the Unionists, the Republic accepted the fact of partition and was actually a Republic of two-thirds of Ireland only.

The Unionist State (1921–1968)

Meanwhile in the North something approaching civil war also broke out, following the setting up of the Unionist state. The

Unionists had managed to hold six of the counties out of the nine in the historic province of Ulster. In fact there was a Unionist majority in only four of the six counties. But Unionist leaders had recognized that a four-county state would be unviable economically and indefensible from the Southern forces. So they had managed to have the two counties with anti-Unionist majorities included in the agreed territory. There was also a significant anti-Unionist minority in all but one of the other four counties. The result was that about 38 per cent of the population were opposed from the beginning to the state being set up, but were enclosed within it without being consulted. Resistance from this nationalist minority was dealt with swiftly. The Unionists created a special police force, from their original Unionist irregulars. Totally Protestant, and armed, it was used as an instrument of repression. In addition, emergency laws were passed—the Special Powers Acts—which were used to allow mass internment. After three years of intermittent fighting in which hundreds on both sides were killed or injured, resistance was broken. The Northern State had been established.

The Unionists now set about consolidating their position. By a series of subtle and sophisticated measures, they created one of the most extraordinary political environments in Western Europe. Firstly, they were assured of permanent power. The Nationalist minority when it ultimately became reconciled to fighting elections could never hope to take over. Northern Ireland is effectively a one-party state and the Unionists have been in control of it for fifty years. Social democratic and socialist parties emerged but the Unionists fought off threats from these sources by open sectarianism. All elections were fought on the constitutional question, and the population invariably split hopelessly into Catholic and Protestant, 'Orange' and 'Green'. The Orange Order which had created the Unionist party was now openly used as a means of further polarizing Catholic and Protestant feeling. Annual Orange celebrations, and the numerous local marches and demonstrations by Orangemen in Catholic areas, kept the past fresh, and the communities embittered and divided. By abolishing the electoral system of proportional representation and multi-member constituencies, the Unionists ensured that all tendencies would converge along sectarian lines, Unionist and non-Unionist. By manipulation of electoral boundaries, for both the parliament and local council elections, anti-Unionists were disenfranchised in areas where they had a natural majority. Londonderry was the classic case of this kind of 'gerrymandering'. Although Nationalists made up 66 per cent of the city's population, Unionists had a majority of four on the city council. Finally the property qualification for local elections and multi-votes for companies ensured that the Unionist population was over-represented at all levels of government.

Discrimination, in jobs and houses, against the Nationalist popula-

tion was widely practised. It was not motivated by religious prejudice, but by the concern to maintain a monopoly of power to the Unionist party. Thus, in housing, segregation of Catholic from Protestant in the interests of maintaining electoral majorities in wards was as important as discrimination in the supply of housing. In the areas with anti-Unionist majorities, the objective of the Unionists, openly declared, was to eliminate that majority. By refusing housing and employment, emigration was forced, particularly on young people, as the only solution. And emigration over the last fifty years has effectively cancelled out the expected increase in the minority population, due to its higher birth-rate. Because of these facts the Unionist party can be fairly accused of having institutionalized sectarianism in the North, and much of its present troubles in its reforming policy is that it was too successful at creating sectarian divisions in the past.

'Civil liberty', one of the slogans of Orangemen, has always had a hollow ring in Northern Ireland. The country has on its statute book the Special Powers Act, a permanent 'Emergency' law, whose provisions are in conflict with most of the general norms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights. In addition, the apparatus of justice, the armed police force, with its part-time auxiliaries, the partisan magistrates, and judiciary, have never had the confidence of the Anti-Unionist minority over the past half-century. All in all it is fair to say, before the chain of events that have led to the present fluid situation, that the Unionists had maintained the old Protestant ascendancy, that once had been the instrument of colonial rule, and squeezed it into the six remaining counties they could control. It could not survive for ever. Nor has it. What is going on in Ireland now is the effort to remove it. Those efforts have proved to be more painful and costly in terms of human life than anyone contemplated, least of all the British Government, which is now a direct instrument of change.

Neo-Colonialism in Ireland

At the outset it was said that recent events in Northern Ireland are to be explained not only in terms of history, but in terms also of the interaction of that history with new economic patterns. These new economic features include the impact of international economic trends on Ireland.

Both parts of Ireland now have almost identical economic problems and to a large extent identical economic policies. Both have had a permanently high unemployment rate throughout this century, sometimes as high as 25 per cent of the adult working population. Emigration has also been high, particularly in the South. Approximately a million people have emigrated from the Republic in the last fifty years. With poor economic growth in both areas, urban

renewal, particularly housing, has been slow. Some of the worst housing conditions in Europe are to be found in Belfast and Dublin. High unemployment and miserable housing has been a significant factor in the unrest and violence in Northern Ireland, and all the areas urban and rural where large-scale violence has broken out have severe housing problems and large male unemployment.

Since the last war, economic policies have been changing. Both Governments have accepted the policy of providing employment by encouraging investment from outside, particularly from Britain and the United States. Thus the attempts particularly in the South to develop an independent economy has been abandoned. It was not always so. The original economic policies of the Republican party (Sinn Fein) were fundamentally socialist policies, but they were never implemented. Instead, for a period, as Northern interests had predicted, tariff walls against Britain were built, in an effort to build up a native capitalism. In addition there was considerable direct state investment in industry. While these policies succeeded in part for a period, they made little permanent impact on the unemployment and emigration statistics. Particularly since 1960, tariffs have been relaxed, British capital induced to come in, and with the recent Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement, the Southern economy virtually integrated into that of Britain's. These developments, even over a decade, have produced the extraordinary situation that there is now, probably, more British investment in the South than in the 'British' part of Ireland, Ulster.

In the North, the economic understructure of the society has also been drastically changed, in the last decade. While the family capitalist flourished for a while after partition, on the strength of the British markets, a changing world meant difficult times for the Northern economy. After the disappearance of the Empire, and with increased competition internationally, private local companies could not survive in a viable form. The vast capital expenditure needed for modernization in engineering and shipbuilding was ultimately supplied directly by the British Government. In the textile industry the switch to man-made fibres was possible only by attaching companies to larger international concerns. As a result the larger Ulster businesses, whose support was so crucial to the Unionist movement, have now been largely absorbed by international companies, such as I.C.I., Du Pont, Courtaulds, etc. The Northern economy, as with the Republic of Ireland, has increasingly become part of the international economy, based on international corporations. This changed economic situation has had direct political implications. In particular the economic justification for the Border between the two states, when similar investment was being attracted to both sides of it, is now being called into question. The unstable and discriminatory institutions of the North do not get the support of international investors whose key concern is stability.

This new industrial structure has been a key pressure in bringing about the reforms in Northern Ireland, and the opposition or backlash to reform has to a large extent been led by the groups that the new economic penetrations have displaced, the smaller businesses, the local Unionist politicians whose capacity to provide patronage is threatened by the centralizing of power in the interests of efficiency. It is among these groups that people like the Rev. Ian Paisley gains support, because he promises a return to the 'old style' society, and it is significant that he opposes the plans for British and Irish entry to the European Common Market, a development that would force economic integration, North and South. The key group again in the North is the local industrialists. Now local agents of international concerns, they have deserted the Unionist alliance in favour of reforms, and closer economic integrations of the whole island. But the political structures they helped to create do not vanish overnight. The pressures on the streets from the nationalist minority for 'civil rights' caused counter-pressures from the Protestant Unionist section of the working class, now confused and in panic as their leaders deserted them. It has been the confrontation between these two groups on the streets that has led to the actual violence and the collapse of political authority which in turn has led to the virtual British military rule. The responsibility for the situation, however, lies elsewhere.

The Irish situation is fluid and it would be foolish to try to predict developments too closely. But this much can be said in summary.

(1) The attempts to alter the political system in Northern Ireland from one in which a monopoly of power was held by the Unionist majority, to a social democratic 'coalition' between Unionist and Nationalists, have been tougher and more costly than was contemplated. They have not yet succeeded and there are signs that British enthusiasm, at least, is waning.

(2) The Nationalist minority, which has in fact been campaigning for civil rights for fifty years, succeeded in forcing change in this campaign because their pressures assaulted a state-structure already weakening in response to changing economic patterns, particularly the inflow of foreign investments.

(3) The Republic of Ireland has also been affected by new economic relations with Britain and is in no position to take any initiative in the North to end 'partition'.

(4) In the North, while Paisleyism or extreme Unionism has recently gained in strength, in the long term it represents an historical cul-de-sac, and lacking significant economic backing cannot win out.

(5) The likely solution that the British Government is hoping for, in the long term, is a federated Ireland, with some formula for a loose kind of link-up with Britain, possibly developing from successful entry by both countries to the European Economic Community.