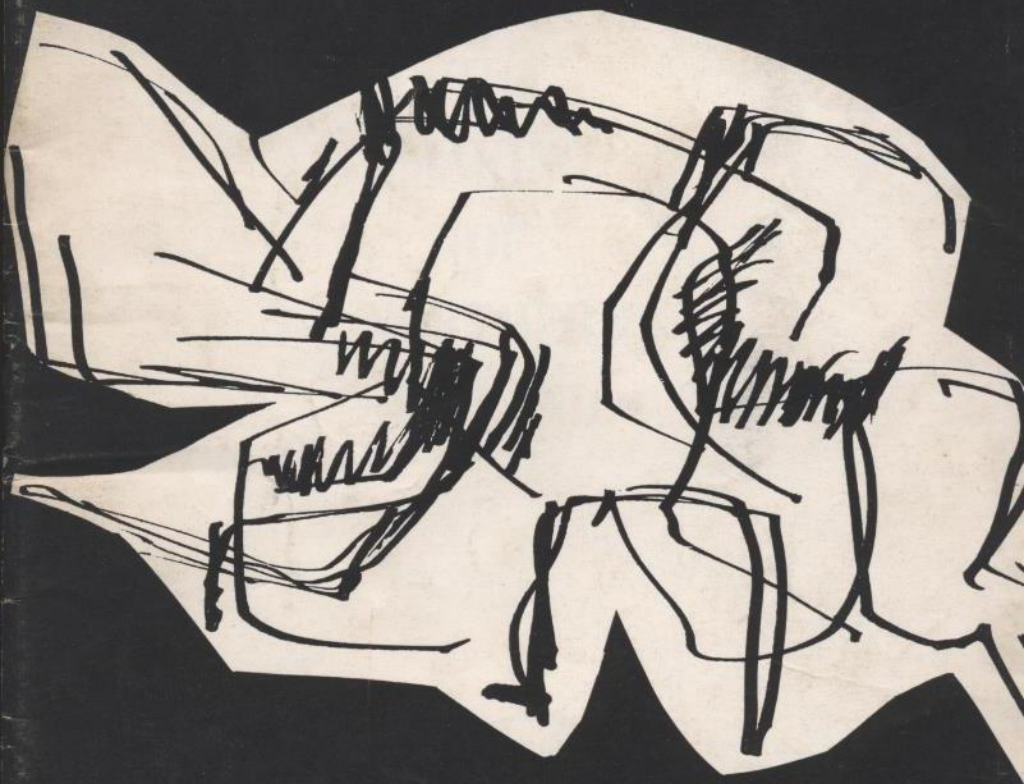
THE MAKING OF NORTHERN IRELAND...



..and the basis of its' undoing

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Citizens Committee

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(and the basis of its undoing)

by

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INTRODUCTION :

Conflicting Concepts of the Present Crisis.

The present crisis in Northern Ireland may be, now, either approaching its end or developing in decisively different fashion. It is therefore important that objective consideration be given to that crisis' background the better to understand what one's own action must be.

Of course, there are already analyses (and, more obviously strategies, without apparent analysis) concerning what is happening in the north-east of this island. How far do any of them deal adequately with the issues at stake?

Most important of the statements given have been those made by the present Government. Their immediate effect was to revive a general confidence in Fianna Fail as "the Republican Party." However, as it became clear that effective Government action was to be limited to stating at regular intervals that "The border is at the bottom of all this," expectations disappeared.

Nonetheless, Fianna Fail does have a definite strategy and it is one which is, in its way, more intelligent and realistic than others. Recognising that, under the present system, Britain is the supreme arbiter of Ireland's destinies, and readier to accept this than their predecessors, Lynch and Hillery are declaring that the Garda Siochana is better able than the R.U.C. to hold Northern Ireland for Britain. So far, this policy has failed due to the ability of Ulster Unionism to prove the opposite. The question is: can it continue doing so?

But there is another aspect to the Government line, as the **United Irishman** has noted. No doubt the forces of the Republic of Ireland would defeat those of Northern Ireland's Orange rump, but it would not be a picnic. As will be noted, there are economic, above and beyond the religious, reasons for north-eastern opposition to Irish unity. Thus the original Fianna Fail proposals for north-east "Home-Rule" within a 32-County Republic are being altered in a manner that will leave a possibility for 32 county "Home Rule" within a new Anglo-Irish union. This could include an actual 32-county Ireland and its enjoyment of British welfare standards if entry into the E.E.C. were achieved. If so, the Government is well aware that all the **United Irishman's** energy could not defeat it. The real (economic) pills of Union have been swallowed; the political formalisation will merely be the jam.

What has the opposition? The most startling fact about the present crisis is that there is no viable strategy to oppose political re-union within Imperialism. From Garret Fitzgerald to Conor Cruise O'Brien to Anthony Coughlan : none can do more than re-iterate their desire for civil liberties in Northern Ireland and better social services in the Republic.

Here are Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien's five points (admittedly the doctor is at a disadvantage in making his proposals eight months before his opponents; nonetheless, the Labour Party seems to be acting according to them, now) :

" 1. Refrain from public statements "raising partition," and from all other public statements and activities capable of damaging the progress of the Civil Rights movement.

" 2. Refrain from encroachments on civil liberties in the Twenty-Six Counties themselves. The Criminal Justice Bill represents a violation of this principle and seriously damages the civil rights movement in the North.

" 3. Listen to the advice of civil rights and of experienced Nationalist leaders as to what kind of policy statements and activities are likely to be helpful, or not, to the attainment of equal rights for all sectors in the North;

" 4. Make known privately both in London and to Stormont :

"a. That the interest of the Irish Government in Irish unity is only in a unity to be achieved by the willing consent of Irishmen, and that the Irish Government has no desire to coerce Ulster Unionists into a united Ireland—or out of one—or to induce others so to coerce them;

"b. That it objects to the coercion by Unionists of Irishmen who are not Unionists, and that it reserves the right to use all helpful peaceful means to bring about the equal application of democratic principles and civil rights throughout Ireland;

"c. That is recognises that so long as a local majority in a sizeable and pouulace area of Eastern Ulster does not desire unity with the rest of Ireland, there is a democratic basis for some form of partition;

"d. That the present boundary line was drawn without respect for the wishes of the inhabitants, and therefore lacks democratic legitimacy;

"e. That in view of the danger of serious violence which would be likely to be involved in any present attempt at border revision, such revision is not at the moment sought, but that it should be borne in mind that, when time and education bring about some further cooling of animosities, a revision of the boundary, in the light of the wishes of the inhabitants — as they may declare themselves at the time in question — would help to establish more friendly and stable relations;

"f. That the electoral and other abuses in force in Derry and elsewhere, and increasingly rejected by public opinion, now constitute such a threat to peace not merely in Northern Ireland but in Ireland generally that the Irish Government must see some progress towards the eradication of these abuses, or else be constrained, most reluctantly, to raise the issue, by resolution, in the General Assembly of the United Nations. The issue raised would be that of a denial of human rights in a part of the present United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It would **not** be the general question of partition;

"5. These points be put to London and Stormont privately, without prior reference to the leaders of the civil rights movement, etc. But no public development of them should be made without such consultation, and above all no attempt should be made to introduce a resolution at the United Nations without clear assurances that the civil rights movement would regard this as helpful and timely. In any case the threat of raising a given matter at the United Nations is normally a more powerful lever than any resolution aceually passed."
"The Irish Question, 1969"—**Lessons of Remembrance, "Irish Times"** supplement, 21-1-1969.

The Fine Gael statement was made public after one month of the crisis (cynics would say: on Deputy Garret Fitzgerald ending his holidays). It is a policy of ten points :

1. Alliance between Government and Civil Rights M.P.s;
2. Appeal to Britain to enforce the said civil rights;
3. Reconstitution of the R.U.C. and disbandment of the "B" specials;
4. "One Man—One Vote", and no gerrymander;
5. British protection for Northern Ireland's minority;
6. Revival of the Council of Ireland;
7. Renunciation of the use of force in reuniting Ireland;
8. An investigation into the Constitution of the Republic of Ireland;
9. Parity between the social services in the Republic and in Northern Ireland;
10. An all-party committee of Dail Eireann on Northern Ireland;

"Irish Times" September 12th, 1969.

In the same month Anthony Coughlan's pamphlet **The Northern Crisis—Which Way Forward?** appeared. Its significance is that it collects under one cover, and thus clarifies, the attitudes publicised in the **United Irishman's** September and October issues (and also, the general views of the majority official Republican Movement's Stalinite tail).

Mr. Coughlan's strategy is to support the Northern Ireland Covenant of Civil Rights, which "calls for legislation by the Westminster Parliament over the heads of Stormont to provide a Bill of Rights for the people of Northern Ireland." (**The Northern Crisis** p. 13.) "The Bill of Rights demanded by the Civil Rights Association would incorporate the following points :

"I Universal adult suffrage at 18 in all elections;

"II. An impartial Westminster Boundary Commission to draw up fair local Government areas, electoral divisions and ward boundaries, thus preventing the prospect (sic) of a new gerrymander contained in Mr. Brian Faulkner's plans for local Government 'reform';

"III. Guaranteed rights of freedom of assembly, and of demonstration, freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, freedom of the press. These require the abolition of the Special Powers Act and the withdrawal of the Public Order Bill;

"IV. Legislative guarantees against discrimination on grounds of religion in the allocation of jobs and housing, and legislation outlawing incitement to religious discrimination;

"V. The creation of independent machinery to enquire into citizens' grievances against members of the police force.

Such a Bill of Rights might also make it mandatory for Stormont to employ the Proportional Representation System of election, using the single transferable vote in both Stormont and local elections . . ." (p. 14)

". . . the political right which is needed in order to make possible free and peaceful argument among the people of Northern Ireland about its future is that the British Parliament should explicitly state that Northern Ireland may leave the United Kingdom if the majority of its people so desire . . ." (p. 15)

"A Bill of Rights could also give powers to Stormont, given fair and democratic representation within it through the civil rights already mentioned, to negotiate on trade, tariffs and kindred matters with the 26-county Government and the Government of other states in the interests of the people's economic welfare." (ibid.)

"The South best supports the North by putting its own house in order — by rejecting legislation like the Criminal Justice Bill and the laws proposed to restrict trade union rights, by developing its social services, opposing the pressures of economic imperialism and creating full employment, by pursuing an independent and courageous foreign policy." (p. 16).

In all this there is no qualitative difference between the groups of demands. Admittedly, Dr. Cruise O'Brien does not mention the need for improved social welfare services as a means towards re-unification (though his party has traditionally made this demand in its own right). Again Fine Gael can call to revive the Council of Ireland, after 44 years, and Mr. Coughlan can urge a certain amount of self-determination for Northern Ireland (both of which would be, in the present circumstances, mere window-dressing). But in none of this (nor in the actions of the bodies involved) has there been any recognition of the fact that, with the barricades in Belfast and Derry, and the dual power thus established, an opportunity existed to prepare for decisive revolutionary action. This is particularly notable in Mr. Coughlan's pamphlet (and in the **United Irishman**); there are, of course, sound material reaons why the Republicans should be playing it cool; many will feel that the circumstances do not warrant such frigidity. To any 'pure' Republican with an eye to the main chance, the lesson of the present events, so far, would be to trust the Governmental strategy, rather than the three alternatives given above.

The reason for this is that the Government is proceeding according to a narrow but realistic analysis of the situation. Of its opponents, Fine Gael is struggling somewhere in mid-air; its statement is complete opportunism: an attempt to cash in on the Northern Ireland civil rights issue by a party without any definite basis of popular support and thus without any readiness to clearly analyse matters. The other two cases are more significant; both base their demands on history. Their failures are, in part, due to their respective analytic inadequacies.

Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien's view is simply metaphysical and subjective:— "The real root cause of both partition and the Derry situation lies as far back as the 17th century, in the successful colonisation of part of Ulster, under conditions of religious war, in which religious profession became the distinguishing feature marking off the settler from the dispossessed" — "The Irish Question — 1969."

Mr. Coughlan's analysis is simple in a different way :— " . . . A first principle that needs to be borne in mind is the fundamental responsibility of Britain, the British Government and the British Parliament for the present situation . . .

"It is Partition which is the root cause of the denial of civil rights, because Partition is the basis of Ulster Unionism whose raison d' etre is the Unionist Ascendancy and the maintenance of the privileges that have gone with that ascendancy." **The Northern Crisis,** p.5.

It must be hoped that these statements are merely the inevitable mistakes in the development of a more scientific political viewpoint. Neither can really be said to be adequate as a foundation for understanding the problem it tackles. Both emphasise superstructural aspects of the problem. Dr. Cruise O'Brien's account is biased towards religion: Mr. Coughlan's towards politics. But there is a further difference in inadequacy, each emphasise but one part of the dialectic that produced, and now maintains, Northern Ireland: Mr. Coughlan, British colonialism: Dr. Cruise O'Brien, Irish internal contradictions.

The latter weakness is most important because it haunts the thinking of most Irish political theorists, including those who do not share the subjectivity of the writers already quoted. Thus the Maoites of the Irish Revolutionary Youth Movement begin their analysis in the Coughlan fashion, with :

"The Six Counties, just like southern Ireland, are very severely exploited by British monopoly capital (British imperialism)" — "British Imperialism Creates Fascist State"—**Red Patriot,** Volume I No. I, Thursday 28th August, 1969.

But it is the "just like Southern Ireland" that is developed; sectarianism is mentioned only in passing; Britain's specific Irish interest is ignored. In the end we have amongst other conclusions:

". . . Monopoly capital has decided that the only solution to the problem lies in the formation of a fascist police state." (ibid). Also:

"Lastly some people are trying to organise a military force to go up to the North to fight against the British. The main negative effect of this is to obscure the role of British imperialism in the south and to make out that it only exists in the north. Going up to the north for a few days can only have a limited effect because at some time it is necessary to come back." (ibid)

Compared with this, the less formally dialectical analyses are more convincing. The Maoites of the Communist Organisation have concentrated on the "internal basis of Partition in Ireland" **(The Economics of Partition,** p.7) partly in conscious opposition to the line of Mr. Coughlan and his friend Mr. Greaves, which is, it considers, "that Partition is entirely the result of Tory policies," (ibid) but, in practice, accepting, therebye, that line's explanation of the British interest

in Ireland as purely capitalist, and, now, imperialist. Thus, in the I.C.O.'s crisis statement, "The Situation in the North," the role of Britain is only analysed, thus:

"Clearly the British military forces will have to deal with the fascists sooner or later. But the longer it waits the greater the forces of sectarianism in the working class in Belfast will grow. British imperialism knows what it is doing in Belfast today."—"The Situation in the North." p. 2.

In the end, its only definite proposal for action is too long-term for the immediate needs:—

"The most important task is the work of building a genuine Communist Party—a genuine workers' Party—which will lead the Irish workers to the overthrow of imperialism in Ireland and the establishment of socialism." (ibid p.6.)

As the I.R.Y.M. points out ("British Imperialism creates Fascist State"), this, "doesn't show how this (the creation of a genuine workers' Party—author) is to be done or give any guidance as to what the broad masses are to do with the present situation."

A method similar to that used by the I.C.O. is applied by the League for a Workers' Republic, and its friends of the Young Workers' Alliance:—

"In the Spring issue of WORKERS' REPUBLIC, the League for a Workers' Republic presented an analysis of the situation which has been shown by events since then to have been broadly correct.

"Our analysis then pointed to the root of the present situation, which was the different stages of development reached by capitalism in the North-East of Ireland and in the South and West in the first two decades of the twentieth century" — "The North, a Political Statement," **Workers Republic,** supplement p.1.

Thus although the organisations do make a serious attempt to provide demands on which to act at this specific time, they are handicapped by their approach into making over simplifications:—

"There is little doubt that the largely Catholic areas wish to secede into the 26 Counties. Such a development would facilitate class unity between Catholic and Protestant workers"—"The Northern Crisis," p.3.

This leads to the following demands being made:— "For the North:

" SUPPORT THE RIGHT OF THE CATHOLIC POPULATION TO SECEDE INTO THE 26 COUNTIES IN THE AREAS WHERE THEY ARE A MAJORITY;

" DEMAND AN AUTONOMOUS STATE WITHIN A UNITED IRELAND IN THE RELATING AREA IN ORDER TO SAFEGUARD THE DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS OF PROTESTANTS "— ibid.

In this pamphlet, the Citizen's Committee is introducing to the debate on Northern Ireland two new but essential considerations.

The first is that Anglo-Irish relations, of which the existence of Northern Ireland is merely the major political aspect, must be seen as a dialectical whole, which includes both the British interest and the Irish internal situation.

The second point is that the British interference in Ireland is not co-terminous with imperialism or even capitalism. It began at a time when "imperialism" was merely a form of government practised by Romans, Greeks and semi-fabulous Asians. It could yet continue when both Ireland and Britain exist as "workers' states," possessing Socialistic economies. But this will depend on circumstance and circumstance will include one's own efforts, backed by correct understanding.

PART I.

CONCEPTION

British interference in Ireland began when England's developed feudal aristocracy felt the need for more land. It had a superb opportunity for pickings in Ireland due to that country's geographic defencelessness and inferior political organisation.

But this was complicated by a fact that had no parallel elsewhere at this time. In Prussia, Sicily, the Levant, indeed in England 100 years previously, in 1066, the adventurers involved were able, for one reason or another, to ignore effectively their metropolitan powers. On the other hand, in Spain, the Christian monarchs controlled rigorously their crusaders. Only in Anglo-Irish relations was the English feudal state strong enough to interfere yet not strong enough to impose a firm settlement on its vassal state.

The trouble was that England could not then (as it can even less now) just ignore what was happening in Ireland. The latter existed on its flank: a permanent potential threat in unfriendly hands.

So England had an interest in Ireland. Feudalism meant that it could only sustain this by supporting its own settlers when they needed backing without organising the subjugation of the country on an effective scale.

With the establishment of the Tudor monarchy, at the time of the Reformation, England changed its strategy. On the one hand, it sought security by winning the loyalty of the native Irish chiefs; on the other, it tried to impose religious uniformity with England. Where this strategy failed, it turned to a revived, but capitalist and Protestant, colonialism. Ulster was the last area planted thus. It has proved, from its founders' point of view, to be the most successful.

Its success has been based on its incompleteness. Unlike its contemporary plantations in America, it did not wipe out the aborigines of the place. On the contrary, its closeness to Britain enabled a natural selection to operate amongst its settlers. The townsmen and those of the peasants that had the best land remained as tenants on the estates of British landlords, on a system of "Ulster Custom" or the long, fixed, leases that had encouraged them to come over. Those that gained worse land were readier to sell out to Catholics and return to Britain. Not only did the Catholics get the worse land: they didn't get the security of "Ulster Custom." Thus, there was a permanent economic wedge forced between Protestant and Catholic tenant. The latter longed to gain the good lands for himself: the former feared this, and, furthermore, covered his fear with explanations of the latter's backwardness that was ensured in fact by his economic insecurity. Thus, the British government had a far more reliable garrison in the north (especially the north-east) of Ireland, than it had in America.

But, although the land struggle of the Seventeenth Century forced the Protestant settlers to support the British bourgeois revolution, the triumph of the latter showed the former's weakness. The British capitalists had compromised with their landed aristocracy, both classes

were able to participate in exploiting the rest. This included Ireland, of which the strategic value had grown with Britain's capitalist expansion outside Europe. No longer on the flank, Ireland cut directly across Britain's trade routes.

This colonial exploitation affected Irish Protestants in two ways. The first was that they, as well as Catholics, were kept from participating in British prosperity by law. The second was that many of them were not communicants of the Established Church, but Dissenters, and thus suffered legal discrimination, like the Catholics. But, for three-quarters of the eighteenth century, "Ulster Custom" kept separate both Sects.

From about 1772, a pressure was imposed upon the Ulster Protestant tenants that would, for a time, force them into alliance with Catholics and against the government and their co-religionist landlords. The settlers' leases began to expire. The landlords took full advantage of the situation. New leases were granted on prohibitive rents. Protestant emigration rose sharply. So, too, did Protestant radicalism. The Protestant secret society, the Hearts of Steel, developed as an anti-landlord body. This threat became obvious and organised when, during the War of American Independence, certain Protestant landlords organised an Irish volunteer force to defend the country from invasion. To end the new threat, Britain removed certain anti-Dissenter laws, and the limitations on Irish trade and on the Irish Parliament. The Volunteers disbanded and left Providence to help the peasants and Catholics.

What happened next is known as well as most of the rest of this history. Eastern Ulster with its large Protestant population, became, for a time, the United Irishmen's best organised area. In 1798 Antrim and Down were prominent amongst the revolutionary counties. But there were already tendencies developing that would defeat Protestant radicalism. Most of the immediate unrest over the leases had ended; new tenures were secured, if on inferior terms, still operating "the Custom." This weakened the support of the (established, or Episcopalian) Church of Ireland tenants for an alliance with the Catholics. Their land feuds with the latter revived and were encouraged by the administration as a counter to the United Irishmen. In 1795 after a sectarian battle in Armagh, peasants of the Established Church formed the Orange Society. This gained the backing and membership of Episcopalian landlords and merchants against the Catholic and Presbyterian supporters of the United Irishmen.

Of greater, and longer-term, significance was the appearance in the north-east of factory development. Until 1780, the Irish textile industry (including the linen making of the north-east) consisted entirely of cottage production. But in the year mentioned, there was opened a water-powered cotton mill at Prosperous, Co. Kildare. Four years later, the north-east had its first such mill at Whitehouse on the outskirts of Belfast. Other such factories were opened elsewhere in Ireland, but from 1790 onwards, the cotton industry expanded most successfully in Ulster. In that year (ten years before the Act of Union that would later be celebrated as the cause of all prosperity), "James Wallace, a Yorkshireman, introduced the first steam-engine

ever to be seen in Ireland into Lisburn" (E.R.R. Green, **The Lagan Valley** 1800-1850, [1949], p. 98).

A similar type of steam mill was erected in Lisburn in 1793. These were merely the obvious signs of Ulster's advantage over other areas. The capital reserves created by the Ulster Custom and, indeed, at this time, by the rack-renters, ensured the purchase of foreign supplies of raw cotton and of coal, for the steam-powered factories. The same helped create, in 1791, the nucleus of the Belfast shipbuilding industry.

As yet, neither of these tendencies were decisive. They would have gained a different significance by victory for the United Irishmen (with the European after-effects thereof).

Matters did not develop thus. Instead, the fact that Britain had to use its own troops as a necessary part of the defeat of the United Irishmen caused it to reverse its previous policy. Since it had to maintain direct military control over Ireland, it simplified its authority's political form by abolishing the Irish Parliament and taking the Irish M.P.s into its own.

This was not accomplished in the manner promised, with Catholic emancipation. On the other hand, the Presbyterians (already shaken by rumours of '98 Catholic atrocities) saw their clergy receive increases in their **Regium Domum** (in effect, their state salaries) in 1803. These facts provided, at the beginning of the Union, obvious differences between Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Catholics. Within months of the clergy's pay rise came Emmett's rising; Thomas Russel failed totally to raise the north-east.

But this developed further because Ulster's economic development continued, as it had begun, more successfully than that of the rest of the country. By 1808 (when the tariff protecting Irish cotton against English competition was repealed), cotton manufacture "had come to be centred very largely in Belfast" (D.A. Chart, **Economic History of Ireland,** 1920, p. 124). In 1811, Conrad Gill estimates (**The Rise of the Irish Linen Industry,** 1925, p. 234, note 3) that Belfast and its neighbourhood used more than three-quarters of all Irish raw cotton imports. The general use of the power loom in textile production from about 1813 finalised Ireland's weakness, except where steam power (based on Scots coal) already existed. This was, of course, in a radius of ten miles of Belfast where "there were 15 cotton mills powered by steam" (Gill, ibid, p. 233).

However, cotton production's historic role proved in the end to be one of pace-setter for north-east Ireland's actual major textile development. Its competition with linen and its creation of a capital basis for Ulster banking in the 1820's combined to stimulate use of the new technique of "wet" flax spinning after 1825, when cotton expansion was losing momentum due to a slump. In 1828, the Mulholland brothers of Belfast decided to rebuild their burnt-out cotton mill as a linen-spinning concern. In this way, they began the revolutionising of the Ulster linen trade which enabled it to regain its status as a peer of England and Scotland and helped cotton's decline to be survived by Belfast.

That city also developed its shipbuilding industry. It built the first steamship constructed in Ireland in 1819. About 1840 it produced Ireland's first iron boat. By 1850, it was the first shipbuilding centre in the country, though it was only after that date that the great firms of Queen's Island ensured the position.

From 1813 to 1851 the estimated population of Belfast increased nearly four-fold: from about 28,000 in the former year to 100,300 in the latter.

This regional growth accompanied what was, for the rest of Ireland, a great industrial decline. As a result, trade with the south languished. When, in 1838, the Belfast merchants projected their first railway scheme, they agreed to make the link not with Dublin but with Sligo (whence, at least, they got cheap labour).

It was to Britain that the north-eastern industries looked. Scots banks supplied credit. Scots mines supplied coal. British industry supplied recruits for the entrepreneurs' ranks (climaxing with Harland the ship-builder). The British empire gave Ulster markets. The Union Jack protected them. Even before the famine, the south could not compete with such a pull. After the famine, as Connolly asked in **Erin's Hope** :— ". . . tell me how poor Ireland, exhausted and drained of her life-blood at every pore, with a population almost wholly agricultural and unused to mechanical pursuits is to establish new factories, and where she is to find the customers to keep them going." (1968 edition, p. 14). Under a capitalist state, Ireland would have to go Ulster's way or stagnate.

And economically, Ulster's industrial bourgeoisie was British and imperial British at that.

Furthermore, the negative differences in the economic development of Ulster and, of Ireland, were complicated in a way that created an irrevocable split. The decisive factor in this was what its manipulators would call "religion:" their opponents "bigotry." To leave it thus would be to over-simplify. For the truth was that Belfast's industrialists recognised very soon the value of the thing for maintaining the discipline needed for building their industries in competition with better developed British firms. Without their acceptance and encouragement, matters could not have developed as they did.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Belfast was still religiously liberal. Protestants of all denominations subscribed generously for the building of Catholic churches.

This tolerance accompanied, in the cotton industry, a definite vein of working-class radicalism:—

"As early as 1802, the **Belfast Newsletter** was concerned about the extent of trade unionism in the town. In 1811, a great cotton operatives union for the whole United Kingdom was in existence.

"Not only were the weavers in Belfast organised, but those in the country around Lisburn as well. In April 1815, a large number of workers from the Maze marched into Belfast and left their webs unwoven at the warerooms as a protest against reduced wages. When the magistrates attempted to arrest the leaders rioting broke out. The most serious outrage took place in February 1816, when some twenty men attempted to blow up the house of an unpopular manu-

facturer in Belfast. Two men who had been found guilty of taking part were hanged in Belfast in September. In April 1817, Gordon Maxwell of Lisburn, the president of the Muslin Weavers' Society was fatally shot on the Malone Road. Before his death, he accused his employer, John McCann, of the crime. McCann was put on trial for his life but acquitted. In 1818, there was another big strike, although conditions had somewhat improved." (Green, **The Lagan Valley,** p. 101).

The struggles ended in 1819 with the cutting of the weavers' wages by one third.

It is characteristic of the employer class that, after winning a narrow victory over its workers, it repairs and reinforces its defence, using new materials so to do. Such reinforcement was at hand. Within the General Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Ulster, a tendency was consolidating against the dominant liberalism. This "Evangelicalism" took the form of an uncritical appeal to divine writ and the traditions of Calvinism, in particular the maintenance of the **Westminster Confession of Faith,** with its reference to the Pope as "Anti-Christ."

The Presbyterian capitalists might not have supporting this grouping as their particular way of supporting their interests. But the uneven development of northern and southern Ireland was weakening any ties of interest linking their respective bourgeoisies. What was more, the specifically Catholic (Emancipation) appeal of the National movement under O'Connell did not encourage Protestant co-operation therein. Above all, the rapid growth of Belfast from 1810 onwards was accompanied by a disproportionate increase in the Catholic percentage of its population.

In 1812 Catholics were one seventh: in 1834, two fifths of Belfast's citizens. At a time of depression, an explanation of the shortage of jobs that blamed "the Taigs" (already hated as the Protestants' rivals for land) was very useful for the Protestant factory-owners, both Dissenter and Episcopalian.

Thus, by 1825, it is stated by a local historian (quoted by Andrew Boyd, **Holy War in Belfast,** 1969, p. 4) that liberalism "was already on the wane before the forces of reaction." In 1829, the moderate "New Light" wing of the Presbyterian Synod seceded thence and left control of it to Dr. Henry Cooke and his Evangelical supporters. In 1832, Belfast returned two Tories to the United Kingdom's reformed Parliament. In 1834, Cooke made his Hillsborough speech publishing "the banns of sacred marriage" between the Presbyterian and Episcopalian churches. In 1835, Belfast had its first sectarian riots. By 1850, they were an annual event.

No doubt the bourgeois leaders of the new Orangeism disliked these last developments, however naturally they sprang from the Evangelical's triumph. The point is that Ulster capitalism refused to recognise the connection. In any case the riots usually took place in the working-class areas and it was obviously better to have the workers' hovels destroyed than to have an employer's mansion threatened by explosive.

Certainly the latter danger was over. As far as the dying cotton industry was concerned:

"In the next (1819-1839) twenty years (wages) fell another third, and slumps followed by mass unemployment were common. Although the weavers were frequently to be pitied, they were never again to be feared. Sir Robert Bateson said in 1838, that 'he believed no men had ever conducted themselves better in their very depressed condition' " (Green, p.p. 107-108).

Nor was there any notable militancy in the growing linen industry despite its own development of factory production, with the resultant advantages for organising labour, and despite its use of wage reductions to help its survival:—

". . . It is certain that the wages of linen weavers in general remained very low until 1845, and were lower at that time than they had been twenty years earlier" (Gill p. 327).

"The flax-spinning mills brought the weaver no additional prosperity as the cotton mills had done forty or fifty years before. His earnings remained static at about a shilling a day. Wages began to rise after the great decrease in population consequent on the famine, but the manufacturer counteracted this by the belated introduction of the power loom" (Green, p. 118).

"The (linen) spinner could make no more than 2d or 1d a day where previously she had been able to earn 4d to 6d" (ibid, p. 116).

Yet, there are no reports of labour agitation on the 1815-19 scale, no mass support for Owenite trade unionism nor for Chartism: only the development of religious riot.

Sectarianism and industrialism in north-eastern Ireland grew intertwined. Belfast industrialists maintained the first by discrimination in favour of Protestants in employment (which they justified by faith).

In addition, they organised a Belfast Town Police Force which ran for twenty years (1845-1865) as an organ of open Protestant partisanship. And mill girls were dismissed their jobs when they complained of that force's behaviour in the major riots of 1864.

But the centre for the Ulster Protestant worker's bigotry and, thus, of his industrial quiescence was the Orange Lodge. An historian of recognised Unionist leanings has paid it tribute:—

"Though the Orange Order as such ceased to exist between 1836 and 1844 the lodges continued to function in many areas. They were in a sense the rural precursors of conservative workingmen's clubs which were to play an important part in British politics later in the century. For they were centres of social life as well as political association." (R. B. McDowell "From Union to Famine"—**Ulster Since 1801,** 1957, p.p. 27-28). But for the qualifying adjective "rural" (there is no evidence at all that the Lodges died in the towns: quite the opposite), this is an accurate description.

The system was bolstered from without. The imperial parliament might close down the Grand Orange Lodge, as in 1836, forbid membership in the Lodges for magistrates, as in 1857 and dissolve the Belfast Town police force as in 1865, yet it was also responsible for setting up the police force in 1845 and for arming the Lodges against the Young Irelanders in 1848. The Parliament might be embarrassed by the Orangement—but it found them an improvement on the United Irishmen.

On the other hand, the Orange tradition was not countered by any noticeable non-sectarian tradition. Of course, there were the Young Irelanders and (at once, more loudly and definitely) the Fenians, but these had only negative impact on Ulster, despite its producing many of their leaders. Nor could these movements be more successful; neither offered anything material to the industrialists, nor did they link their political aims to the economic aims of the workers.

Far more obvious to the north-east of Ireland was the actual development of the Irish national Bourgeoisie. From the funeral pyre of Irish industry appeared the gombeenman and his own type of capitalism: compradorian and usurious. The type was seen in Belfast where it was very prominent in the drink trade and could thus be used by the Belfast town fathers as a further scapegoat for the ills of industrial society.

This would not have occurred had the gombeenmen given the Ulster industrialist sufficient reason to discourage it. They could not do so. Gombeen-capitalism's nature was not attractive to north-eastern industry. It could not offer any inducement to the latter in expanded markets or investment. Further, its dependance on credit prevented both itself and its peasant debtors from amassing productive capital. Its political demand for "Home Rule" was not a demand for protection to develop a small home manufacture but for control of government patronage; its opposition to the landlords was against rival exploiters of the peasants. Ulster industry was not encouraged by this to become more Irish. In any case it had grown by using Ulster conditions; it would be difficult to adapt itself to the conditions in the other provinces.

And there were additional grounds for hostility. The gombeenmen were taking control of the Irish constitutional national movement (against the nationally-minded landlords and professional men, originally in charge) by allying closely with the Catholic Church.

This meant a natural and sectarian opposition to Ulster Protestantism. It was shown especially in education. Irish Protestants had been first to oppose the "Godless" Irish National School system when it was set up in 1831. However, the Catholic hierarchy soon discovered its disadvantages and attacked non-sectarianism in its own interests. By 1870, national education was segregated by religions. The Irish Home Rule League developed with the plank of support for this system. However, it proved to be inefficient, partly because it was kept short of money by the British exchequer: partly because under the system the manager had to find one-third of the costs of his school. The industrialists of the north felt this lack more than the gombeenmen. Hence Irish Unionism was able to act as a progressive force in education as against the nationalists. Naturally, this also strengthened its hold on its rank and file.

But there was a basic division in the ranks of the Ulster opponents of Irish gombeen-nationalism. The landlords were aware of their responsibilities to their numbers elsewhere in Ireland; for them the Union was the end: there were no alternatives. Ulster business was not so nationally-minded. It supported the Union because it enabled it to maintain its power in its own area. It had no national aims; its

growth had developed through the peculiar religious differences of Ulster; it had no equivalent elsewhere in Ireland. Thus, as early as October 1843, on the eve of O'Connell's Clontarf meeting and following a major season of rioting, "a petition was being organised in Belfast urging that the Union should be maintained and that, if any steps were taken to modify it, Ulster should, in view of its different character and circumstances, be given separate treatment from the rest of Ireland, either by being retained in its existing position within the United Kingdom or else by being given a separate legislature of its own similar to any legislature that might be set up in Dublin" (Hugh Shearman, **Anglo-Irish Relations,** 1949, p. 101). In the 1870's this demand was revived by the Orange leader, Johnston.

Johnston's reaction was to a real menace. The new, constitutional, Irish Nationalist movement had made major advances at its first general election in 1874. But it would not have had serious prospects had it not been the visible tip of a real threat to Britain. Young Ireland and the Fenians had failed, but by causing trouble (with foreign aid, in the Fenians' case), they put to Britain the whole question of the Irish settlement. The Union was not working as had been hoped; Ireland was still Britain's Achilles Heel. How could it be cured?

The first English politician to recognise the problem was William Ewart Gladstone. During his long career his attitude to the Irish question developed from straight coercionist to constitutional nationalist. But his basic aim was the same; on first accepting the Premiership of the United Kingdom, he declared: "My mission is to **pacify** Ireland:" a significantly accurate choice of words. How close he came to accomplishing this can be seen when his policies are placed against Karl Marx' three point programme for Irish Revolution: Land Reform, Republicanism and Tariffs. Gladstone weakened the explosive potential of the first, offered as much of the second as Irish national capitalism wanted, recognising its leaders' essential lack of interest in the third. Had "Home Rule" been given in 1886, England would solve its own Irish Question. The future combination of artisans, smaller farmers and farm labourers would have lost much of its revolutionary potential and Irish history (with the Northern bourgoisie having to play a role) would have been more effectively reformist than that of the twenty-six county state since 1923. But such a possibility was destroyed by an alliance of north-eastern protestantism, Irish landlordism and sections of British capitalism.

The Ulster Protestant bourgoisie had no interest in supporting Home Rule. Certainly, it feared that a Home Rule (i.e. gombeenman's) Parliament would milk it somehow to provide the industries that Irish national capitalism could not provide itself. But this fear could have been discussed and rationally eliminated: the gombeenmen wanted patronage, not tariffs. Three facts prevented this; there was no reason why it should be, there was a powerful internal reason why it shouldn't be and there were outside interests that would help Ulster oppose it.

For, in the 1870's and 1880's, the monolithic sectarian organisation that had maintained Ulster's capitalism was weakening. Liberalism

revived on a Pro-Union and anti-landlord basis. The annual religious riots had much of their encouragement removed after the Belfast town police force was disbanded. A major riot occurred in 1872: minor ones in 1876, 1880 and 1884, but these were settled conditions compared to those of the '50's and '60's.

An independent non-sectarian Labour movement was now able to grow. After 1873, the linen trade had a recession. The resulting wage reductions were opposed with strikes in 1874 and 1881. In Harland & Wolff's shipyards, reductions had to be enforced by lock-outs in 1883 and 1884. Most disturbing of all, Cooke's successor as leader of Belfast Presbyterianism, the Rev. Hugh Hanna, suffered a political set-back. Despite all his considerable eloquence, the Belfast Trades Council voted to nominate the first Irish Liberal-Labour candidate, Alexander Bowman, to contest North Belfast against the Conservatives in the 1885 general election. The Home Rule Bill was a heaven-sent opportunity for the Belfast bosses to restore their own "natural order."

But they might have hesitated had they not been assured of allies in Ireland and in Britain itself. The landlords of Ireland had very real grounds for opposing Home Rule; it meant a major transfer of power to their gombeenmen rivals. More significant was the alliance of the British Conservative Party. Gladstone had hoped that, as previously with Parliamentary Reform in 1868, Home Rule would be passed by the Conservatives with Liberal support, since the Conservatives were the traditional allies of the Irish landlords. This plan failed and the Irish nationalists put the Conservatives out of office. Gladstone, opposed by his own landlord (or "Whig") element and by such Liberal imperialists as Bright and Chamberlain, who feared possible Irish tariffs, introduced his Home Rule Bill. However, it was a Conservative, Lord Randolph Churchill, who initiated the new unity between Ulster capital and Anglo-Irish rent. He was a very suitable person to do this since he had most notably developed the vague feudal Socialist ideas of the Conservative leader, Benjamin Disraeli, into a theory of "Tory Democracy." By this, the British landlords and the British workers were to unite (under the Conservatives) to gain from the British industrialists a greater share of the surplus value produced by the labour of the foreigners in the British Empire. (This has been taken over quite effectively in fact by the British Labour Party—with the trade union bureaucrats sharing with the landlords.) What is important is that this essentially racialist ideal has obvious similarities to the essentially sectarian techniques of exploitation manipulated by Ulster capital and Irissh landlords. It was Churchill who called Ulster Protestants to arms against Home Rule and created the circumstances for the reunification of the Ulster Protestant bourgeoisie, mass support for the defeat of the Home Rule Bill and Belfast's worst sectarian riots yet.

Between Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill and Asquith's (1886-1912) came a period of change decisive for Anglo-Irish relations and for the development of Ireland and of Ulster. On the level of the Union, came a long period of Conservative and Unionist governments, interrupted only by Gladstone's cabinet of the second Home Rule

Bill, and followed by a Liberal administration that showed until 1910, little enthusiasm for Irish Nationalism. However, the policies of these administrations resulted in two significant changes that were to have their effect in the period after 1910. In the first place, the Unionist party adopted a policy of buying off the peasant rank and file of the Home Rule movement. Beginning with Ashbourne's Act of 1885 and reaching its climax in Wyndham's measure of 1903, Unionist laws transferred the bulk of Irish agricultural land from the landlords to the state from whom the tenantry could buy it over a period of years. This reduced the vested interests of the landlords in preventing Home Rule; they were now assured of cash from Britain regardless of what happened in Ireland. Thus Irish Unionism became more than ever an Ulster phenomenon; Unionism developed towards Partitionism. Secondly the Campbell-Bannerman-Asquith government of 1905 achieved certain social reforms that though small to the present generation, provided a beginning to the British welfare state, and, more importantly, transferred the burden of taxation from Ireland to Britain. From 1853 to 1909, Ireland had subsidised Britain; now Britain was over-taxed. This provided an economic reason for Britain to go even beyond Home Rule to pacify Ireland.

That Home Rule might not be enough from Ireland's point of view was being ensured by event there. The Parliamentary Nationalists' isolation of Parnell and his subsequent death as leader of a splinter-group left dissatisfied many of the artisan class. Some of these formed the nuclei of an Irish Socialist Republican Party under James Connolly and P. T. Daly. Others were satisfied to support the new Sinn Fein with its references to Grattan's Parliament and its demand for tariffs that would give work and wealth to the Irish in Ireland. On the other hand, the parliamentary Nationalist party became increasingly conservative, both economically and socially. Its rank and file support began to be identified with the Ancient Order of Hibernians, originally a social and friendly society but increasingly the political expression of the gombeenman's aims and ideas. (It was an Hibernian attack on a Protestant Sunday School procession that triggered off the 1912 Anti-Home Rule riot in Belfast). The Hibernians expanded well beyond Ulster.

Their general adverse effect on Protestants was increased, in 1908 by the Papal Bull **Ne Temere** (which insists on the children of mixed marriages being brought up as Catholics). The choice of Nationalism represented by A.O.H., Sinn Fein and Socialism did not inspire the north-eastern bourgeoisie to turn to any of them.

This last took advantage of the 1886 riots to consolidate its control over the Orange lodges: "(the Orange Order) had lost almost entirely the support given to it by the upper and middle classes. Now they eagerly took it up again; the Orange lodges provided the basis of an effective political machine while their tradition of fraternal equality between members tended to blur class distinctions, and helped to reconcile the Protestant proletariat to the leadership of landlords and wealthy businessmen"—J.C. Beckett, **The Making of Modern Ireland,** 1966, p. 399.

This tightening of bourgeois control turned the urban Orange Lodges into far more disciplined and purposeful bodies. This meant a decline in the number of riots. Thus, Belfast remained quiet between 1886 and 1893, when the second Home Rule Bill was introduced and when the T.U.C. (including the pro-Home Rule Labour M.P.s, John Burns and Keir Hardie) met therein in September. Further riots occurred in 1898 as a result of the United Irishmen's centenary in that year. But there was now a Unionist Government at Westminster; the Orange rioters acted despite threats of losing their jobs.

But Ulster Unionism was still far from being monolithic. In the 1900s, it lost the support of W. W. Pirrie, the Manager of Harland & Wolff's, of Belfast capitalist firms the least threatened by the normal dangers of business life and, thus, the least dependant on sectarian passions. In 1905, his brother-in-law split the Unionist vote in West Belfast to let in Joseph Devlin, the Hibernian. In 1902, a bye-election in South Belfast returned an Independent Unionist, T.H. Sloan, against the full force of the Orange machine. In the aftermath, Sloan formed an Independent Orange Order. More serious was the continuing development of class consciousness. In 1898, six Labour candidates were returned to the Belfast corporation on a reformed (household) franchise. In 1906, William Walker ran for parliament as candidate of the British I.L.P., in the North Belfast constituency, and was only narrowly defeated. The next year he ran there again in a bye-election and lost more decisively. It was during the latter campaign that he surrendered to the pressures of a Protestant sectarian group and allowed himself to be quoted as being in favour of Catholic disabilities. What was more, when challenged subsequently on the matter by James Connolly, he brushed it aside as being of no importance, allowing himself the luxury to "affirm that it has now become impossible in Belfast to have religious riots and this is due to the good work done by that much despised body the I.L.P." ("Rebel Ireland and its Protestant Leaders" in **Forward,** June 3 1911). This was just a year before the riots of 1912. It is this irresponsible belief that religious bigotry can be accepted and then tamed, combined with a typical Social Democratic ignorance of the nature of imperial and colonial exploitation that constitutes "Walkerism." It has been an influence on the Northern Irish Protestant worker to this day.

But, in January 1907, there arrived in Belfast a figure far more menacing to Northern Irish capitalism than Walker. The organisation of unskilled workers, carried out in Britain since 1889, had been achieved only in a piecemeal, half-hearted fashion in Ireland. Accordingly, one of the new industrial unions, the National Union of Dock Labourers, sent its General Organiser, young James Larkin, to repair matters. Through the summer of 1907, Larkin developed a series of strikes of dockers, of carters, and, as a climax, of the police, each developing out of, and in sympathy with, the other: the first appearance of the revolutionary tactic of "Larkinism." The two non-Unionist Belfast M.P.s, Sloan and Devlin were forced for a brief period into supporting the strikes. Grand Masters of seven Loyal

Orange Lodges rresigned to join Larkin. As a climax, on the anniversary of the seige of Derry, he led a non-denominational parade in honour of Derry's gallant Protestant defenders—and of the Pope who had supported them. On the other side, the employers relied on the country Orange Lodges to supply scabs who were given arms: the nucleus of what would be recognised later as a Fascist band The strikes (except that of the Police) ended in victory for the workers, but their gains were frittered away in November, when the N.U.D.L. Secretary Mr. (later, naturally, Sir) James Sexton ended another strike over Larkin's head and on inferior terms. The N.U.D.L. collapsed in Belfast in 1909 when Larkin had been expelled from it. From 1910, his own, Irish, trade union, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, had James Connolly organising there, but it was in practice a Catholic trade union of the dockers of the lower port. Nonetheless, the Belfast employers had had their worst shock yet.

Once again, they relied on the cry "No Surrender," with the threat and finallly the introduction of the third Home Rule Bill from 1910 onwards. Sloan was defeated in South Belfast in January of that year. Devlin held his seat on a combination of Catholic sectarianism and personal efficiency. Pirrie was manhandled in the Belfast streets. But the worst sufferers were the workers. Sectarian riots took place again. Catholics were driven out of employment by their Protestant workmates. In April 1914, these latter gained the scant reward of their "own" Ulster Unionist Labour Association "of workers formed to support and maintain the Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland" under the Presidency of Sir Edward Carson and the Chairmanship of the Railway Company Director, John Millar Andrews.

However, the Unionist Party was now operating a strategy more developed than before in three respects. The black-legs of 1907 were expanded into a fully-fledged Ulster Volunteer Force to oppose all-Irish Home Rule by open rebellion if necessary. As the body's title implies, this opposition was to be for the province only—and not for all of it: only for those parts which its backers could control easily. Finally (and most importantly from Britain's viewpoint) liaison was made with such foreign (and, indeed, potentially hostile) continental powers as the German Empire. This strategy was successful, partly because of the immediate inadequacy of its opponents in Ireland. Redmond, the Parliamentary Nationalist leader took over the Fenian-backed Irish Volunteers but was not prepared to match the open disloyalty of the Ulster Protestants. Thus, when in August 1914, Great Britain entered the First World War, negotiations were proceeding on whether four or six counties of Ulster should be left out of Home Rule.

Thus, Protestant Capitalism, under Carson and (more effectively) Captain James Craig, had, in August 1914, reason to expect that, once the War was over (and it was agreed that this would be soon), they could smash Home Rule. Without its six north-eastern counties, Ireland would not be viable and Britain would not subsidise it, instead. Home Rule was doomed—but even if it wasn't, it didn't really matter; Ulster (which meant the Protestant capitalists hegemony thereover) would survive anyway.

As for Labour, the I.T.G.W.U. in Belfast had been isolated. The unskilled workers there were organised, if at all, in British-based trade unions. Larkin in Dublin had been crushed by the employers under the Unionists' political opponent, Murphy. Loyal Ulster workers were organised as a distinct political entity.

Every threat to Ulster Protestant capitalism had been defeated. All would be simple from now onwards.

As matters turned out, for them to have assumed this would have been over-optimistic.

PART II.

BIRTH

War accelerates tendencies already developing in society. The First World War was a particularly obvious example of this. It began with a reversal in the early months, when the leaders of the groups formally against the states involved, from Redmond the Irish Nationalist to Ebert the German Social Democrat, swore loyalty to their opponents in the name of the latter's victory. However, the pressures of the continuing struggle acted as a catalyst upon the situation existing in the countries concerned. But how matters developed varied considerably.

Ireland was no exception to the rule. Redmond's declaration of loyalty to Britain was buttressed economically by war contracts and British Army allowances and politically by the formal passage of the Home Rule Act (with a clause suspending it for the duration of the war). Yet these facts could not thwart historical development. The Redmondite majority of the Irish Volunteers went to France. The Fenian-supported minority moved into alliance with Connolly and the Irish Citizen Army (the military wing of the Irish Labour Movement) to rise against Britain in Easter 1916. The Rising was an immediate failure, due mainly to disputes within the Volunteers' organisation. But it acted upon such materials causes for grivances as the war-time inflation (especially in the countryside) and, politically, the British government's coalition with Carson and the Unionists. These facts were behind the gradual strengthening of Sinn Fein and of the reviving Irish Volunteers from 1916 onwards.

At the same time urban labour grew in militancy. It gained a major encouragement from Russia's November Revolution in 1917. New sectors of it, such as the shop assistants and the farm labourers began to be organised despite violent opposition from their bosses. Irish railwaymen and dockers achieved wage increases. In September, 1918, the labour situation in Dublin was compared to that of the great lock-out five years before. Between 1916 and 1920 membership of the I.T.G.W.U. (the most active of the trade unions) increased from 5,000 to over 100,000. In the first months of 1919, the labour struggle in Ireland was more noticeable than the contemporary guerilla war being fought in Munster.

But Labour never utilised this for political ends. The undeveloped character of the Irish Labour force meant that it lent itself too readily to the most negative side of the teaching of its theoretician, Connolly: his Syndicalist concept of organisation. The Commander-in-Chief of the Irish Citizen Army never developed his force beyond the form of a proletarian pace-setter for the petty-bourgeois Volunteers. He had stated that "the conquest of political power by the working-class waits upon the conquest of economic power" (**Socialism Made Easy,** 1968 ed., p. 31). Thus he allowed himself to give half his attention to the affairs of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, to which he had insisted that he be appointed acting Secretary during Larkin's absence in the U.S.A. Despite these weaknesses he

led the I.C.A. in the Rising and paid the penalty. His successors were less able to overcome his failing. Connolly had put forward analyses that could be used as guidelines for a permanent revolutionary strategy to develop a Workers' Republic from the national struggle :—

"Up till this period the middle class Belgians had only looked on passively . . . (**Revolutionary Warfare** 1968 ed., p. 13).

". . . The working class of Brussels tired of the hesitation and inaction of the middle class representatives, took matters in their own hands . . . (ibid p. 14).

". . . The middle class citizens who had been in the Burgher Guard kept carefully to their houses and out of the fighting. (ibid p. 15).

"The working class from the Faubourgs organised and marched upon the City Hall, or Hotel de Ville, and arms were distributed from various centres. (ibid, p. 21).

"This insurrection, like all previous risings of the same description, owed its success principally to the determined fighting of the working class. But whereas in previous insurrections the working class after doing the fighting were content to let the middle class reap the harvest, it resolved this time to demand certain guarantees for itself." (ibid, p. 27).

And :

"Lacking the co-operation of the other Russian cities, and opposed by the ignorant peasantry, the defeat of the insurrection was inevitable . . ." (ibid, p. 6).

"The isolation of (Paris) from all provincial support, combined with the overwhelming number of the soldiery had won the day (for the counter-revolution)." (ibid, p. 31).

Connolly's epigones refused to develop these writings, ignored the Citizen Army, allowed the Volunteers to make the running in the fight for Independence, and concentrated on building the trade unions, and especially the I.T.G.W.U. and its finances. Thus, they thought they were ensuring the economic power that would give them the political power. November, 1917, did no more than encourage their belief that victory was inevitable. Their only contributions to the national struggle were through one day strikes for specific aims, starting with the anti-conscription strike of April 1918.

This was disastrous for two reasons. In the first place, it weakened Labour's influence on the petty-bourgeois Nationalists of Sinn Fein and the Volunteers. Hegemony over these was taken by the Catholic gombeen-bourgeoisie led, politically, by those elements thereof (most notably the Healys and their circle) that had quarrelled with the Hibernians. P. S. O'Hegarty, a cynical Fenian and a founder-member of Sinn Fein, remarked of the party's condition at the forming of the first Dail in 1919 :—

"We did not realise at the time, but what had happened was not that Sinn Fein had captured Ireland, but that the politicians in Ireland and those who make them, all the elements which sniffed at Sinn Fein and libelled it, which had upheld corruption and jobbery, had realised that Sinn Fein was going to win, and had come over to it **en masse.** They gave their votes and their support to a programme,

every item of which was anathema to them, but in their hearts they remained still corrupt, still just politicians." (**The Victory of Sinn Fein,** 1924, p. 29).

O'Hegarty's book is often unreliable but on this matter he is telling the truth. Without any political leadership from the left a petty-bourgeois political grouping drifts to the right. Sinn Fein drifted to gombeen-politics, though keeping the forms of Sinn Fein economics : the surest way to keep the north-eastern Protestants united against it.

This was particularly the case because by allowing the bourgeois nationalists to dominate it the Republican movement was surrendering in fact, to Catholic sectarianism. Apart from Connolly's greater theoretical clarity than his allies of 1916, the most definite point of disagreement between them can be seen to have been in education. Pearse supported clerical management of the schools, in fact :—

"As to the local organisation of elementary schools, there will always be need of a local manager, and personally I see no reason why the local management should be given to a district council rather than left, as it is at present, to individuals in the locality interested in education, but a thousand reasons why it should not." — "The Murder Machine" in **Political Writings and Speeches,** 1924, p. 46.

Connolly was definitely opposed to this. In the programme of his Irish Socialist Republican Party in 1896, Clause 8 is a demand for "Public control and management of National Schools by boards elected by popular ballot for that purpose alone." Nearly twenty years later, he wrote in connection with education reform :

"Whatever safeguards are necessary to ensure that the religious faith of the parents shall be respected in the children will surely be adequately looked after by the representatives of a people to whom religion is a vital thing. Such safeguards are quite compatible with the establishment of popular control of schools, with the building and equipment of schools that shall be a joy to the scholar and an inspiration to the teacher, and with such a radical overhauling of the curriculum as shall ensure that full recognition shall be given to the deeds and ideas of the men and women whose achievements mark the stages of the upward climb of the race, as their failure to achieve mark the equally important epochs of its martyrdom." **The Reconquest of Ireland,** 1917, pps. 312-313.

The post-Rising alliance of Sinn Fein and the Volunteers with many of gombeen-capitalism's most dedicated supporters, coupled with their simultaneous abandonment of any formal alliance with Labour meant only one thing in this context. When the first Dail Eireann met, in January, 1919, a Minister for Education was not amongst those formally appointed. In fact such a creation had to await till after the signing of the Articles of Agreement for a Treaty with Britain. It is no wonder that, to the Protestants of the north-east, Irish Republicanism, with all its harking back to Tone and his non-sectarianism, has meant, simply, Hibernianism plus the gun.

The withdrawal of Irish Labour from political action was the less intelligent insofar as the raw material for a strong Socialist movement existed in Belfast and had been strengthened during the War. Connolly's exposure of Belfast health conditions in the fourth chapter of **The Re-conquest of Ireland** is well known :—

"The medical authorities issue long and minute instructions to the people as to how consumption may be avoided but the instructions are as a rule utterly valueless to the class most subject to the scourge. Of what use is it to teach people about the evil of overcrowding when their wages will not permit them to secure decent house room ? Of what avail a paper telling how to cook and prepare food when they have only 45 minutes to come from the mill, cook a meal, eat it, and return to the mill—the mother being one of the bread-winners or wage earners of the family? Of what avail instilling into the worker the necessity of choosing proper food to counteract the tendency to consumption, and so increase the resisting power of the individual, when the wages are so small that only the poorest, easiest cooked and generally least nutritious foods can be bought? " (ibid pp 280-281).

Matters did not qualitatively improve during or after the War. As late as 6th September, 1921, the Unionist paper, **the Northern Whig,** revealed that Belfast had had for some years the highest rate of infant mortality in the United Kingdom (presumably including the rest of Ireland). Earlier the same year Inspector Erant of the United Kingdom Board of Trade reported that, in many Belfast factories, the fire escapes were too rotten to be used (**Belfast Newsletter,** 28 Jan., 1921).

But at the end of the World War, the workers were acting, although in a limited and purely industrial fashion, to rectify this. In December 1917, the Belfast shipyard workers struck. For obvious strategic reasons the British government conceded their claims swiftly. The engineers' action was followed by those of Belfast druggists and the municipal workers in Portadown: two long drawn-out struggles. By July 1918, the Unionist leadership was perturbed enough to put the Unionist Labour Association on a formal basis. This could not prevent major strikes of the Belfast women workers and of the Corporation scavengers during the Autumn.

But the outstanding cause of industrial unrest in Ulster during the last months of the World War was the hours issue. This was a matter common to the whole United Kingdom. The prevailing 54 hour week in industry meant that workers had to go to their jobs before 6.30 a.m. and without breakfast, having a short break for that later. Against this system the British workers, especially in engineering, made claims for shortening their work-time by varying lengths. The most common demand was for a 44-hour week.

In Belfast, the demand was first made formally at a meeting in the Ulster Hall on the 21st August 1918. Amongst those who were prominent at it were James Baird, of the Boiler Makers' Union, who took the chair, James Freeland of the Amalgamted Society of Engineers and Robert Weir, a prominent figure in the Unionist Labour Association. A motion demanding a 44 hour week was passed unanimously. On 3rd October following, the Derry shipyard workers passed a similar motion.

The next month, following on the Armistice, the United Kingdom Parliament was dissolved. In the general election following, there were a number of significant changes in the organisation thereof; it was the first fought on full manhood suffrage, the first in which

women voted, the first (and only one) in which Belfast was able to send nine candidates to Westminster.

All parties in Ireland reacted to the situation in different ways. In most constituencies it was a straight fight between Sinn Fein and the Parliamentary Party. In the north-east, however, where the A.O.H. was known to be stronger than elsewhere, and where the Parliamentary Nationalists had beaten Sinn Fein in two bye-elections, an electoral pact was agreed between the two parties against the Unionists. The latter concentrated their energies on Ulster, and Dublin University, though candidates ran in Cork City, in Co. Wicklow and in the Dublin Townships (Pembroke and Rathmines). The Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress found itself caught in cross fire. Due to its political passivity it could not now defeat Sinn Fein. On the other hand, if it allied with it, which meant that its candidates swear to abstain from attending at Westminster, it was threatened with the disaffiliation of many local trades bodies by the Hibernian-minded officials thereof. The I.T.G.W.U. was growing, partly, by taking over such organisations, its acting Secretary, William O'Brien was secretary to the Congress. In any case, the economic wing must have priority. Labour waited. But there was a dissentient from this non-policy. The Belfast Trades Council, with its longer experience of political action, denounced the decision and appointed a Belfast Labour Representation Committee that nominated four candidates for Belfast constituencies. However, and also in their tradition, they were careful to avoid the national question.

As distinct from this, the Unionists nominated three of their tame Labour men. They seem to have thought that this would be enough; for the first week of the election campaign, their candidates limited their speeches to the themes of the Union, Drink, Education and occasionally (as good imperialists) United Kingdom Tariffs. Nonetheless, two of the three "Unionist-Labour" candidates declared support for the 44 hour claim, and, for the last three weeks of the campaign, the wretched housing conditions of the Belfast workers were denounced from Unionist platforms. On the 28 November, Carson himself declared at a meeting in his constituency in Duncairn, "My feelings on these (working class) subjects has been vastly modified since I have learnt the lessons of the War." He was, incidentally, standing in this constituency for the first time; previously he had sat for Dublin University, where he had had little reason to modify his opinion on the workers' lot. Exactly a week later, at an all Party meeting of Belfast candidates sponsored by the District Committee of the Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades, he limited himself to backing a 47 hour week as being the "national" offer (from the employers, not the workers). This did not worry his followers; the "Labour-Unionist" Donald, Dixon, Moles and Robert Lynn, editor of the Unionist **Northern Whig** all declared enthusiastically for the 44 hours demand. Indeed Lynn proclaimed lyrically that in the shipyards there would be as much work done in 44 hours as in 52.

This ready demagogy enabled many to vote for the Unionists despite any doubts they may have had. Carson and his followers won every constituency in Belfast by overall majorities, except Falls

where Joseph Devlin defeated de Valera. In the whole of Ireland, they were second to Sinn Fein which had effectively liquidated the Irish Parliamentary Party. But there was a small cloud on the horizon; in the four constituencies where Labour had candidates, they came second to the Unionists, beating Sinn Fein, Nationalist and Independent alike.

Even so, the cloud was no bigger than a man's hand. The Unionists could see their task only as one of ensuring their position. On the 21st January, 1919, Samuel McGuffin, the prosperous draper, who represented "Labour Unionism" in Shankill founded an "Ulster Workers Union" to "organise the unorganised." In reality as its history would show, it was designed to win support on the industrial front from the dangerous cross-channel unions, which were not proving to be as reliable as Ulster industry wanted.

For the hours question had still not been solved. On the 16th December, 1918, the Engineering and National Employers' Federation began talks with the F.E.S.T. These ended in an agreement to ballot on the formers' offer of 47 hours. This ballot was fought on terms that were bound to favour the bosses; the choice given was one between the 47 hours or the existing 54, and it was cast during the Christmas holiday; In the event only 25% of the workers involved cast their vote, by a small majority, for the employers' terms. Naturally, the latter announced their readiness to implement these immediately. Equally naturally, the workers were not so ready to accept them.

This reluctance was most expressed in Belfast, where the situation seemed to be complicated in the workers' favour. The major shipbuilding firms of Harland & Wolff and Workman, Clark & Co. were outside the employers' Federation. Accordingly, in the first days of January deputations from the engineering trade unions visited these concerns. But they had little success. On the 6th January, the Belfast District Committee gave the shipyard and the engineering bosses a fortnight's strike notice. Already the Humberside workers had struck on the issue, the Tyneside workers were preparing to do so; the next day the shipyard workers on the River Forth demanded a 30 hour week. However, the moment of the Belfast strike was postponed while a ballot was taken on the issue. On the 15th January the result was announced: 20, 225 to 558 voted in favour of a strike for the 44 hour week. On the 16th, strike notices of 10 days were handed in. This move was backed by the Clydeside workers who were demanding a 40-hour week. It was opposed by the national organisation of the F.E.S.T. which declared such a strike illegal.

The strike was announced to begin on Saturday 25th January, at 12 noon. On 23rd the Belfast District Committee announced that it would be supported by the Belfast Corporation workers. This increased the fears of the bosses. However when noon passed on the Saturday and nothing seemed to happen, they began to take heart again. How could such a strike happen in conservative Belfast and with a work-force organised in British-based unions ?

Relief was premature. The opening of the strike was the best thing achieved by the Belfast District Committee (now the strike

committee) precisely because of its initial stimulus to bourgeois optimism. Since the power-station staff worked in shifts, they called them out at the opening of the 4 p.m. one and allowed the tramway workers to continue working until the same time. Being Saturday, this hit the populace at the very moment it had finished its various recreations and was about to take the tram home. Instead it found that it had to walk thither through darkening and unlighted streets.

In the three-week general strike that now began, the workers had definite advantages. In the first place, they were helped in the early stages by the weather which added to the difficulties which the power strike caused everyone (outside the hospitals) by sending a snowstorm. In addition, the British government was not prepared to interfere for some time, despite the appeals of the Corporation (for a supply of soldiers to act as scabs) and of Devlin (for arbitration). This was particularly notable because the Corporation was totally unprepared for the dispute and was, accordingly, unable to act in any way in it. The eight Unionist M.P.s for Belfast remained silent; they were at once opposed to the strike and embarrassed by past speeches. As against the feebleness of the state power, the strikers were sustained by the parallel action of their comrades on Clydeside, by the solidarity of the T.U.C. which offered to extend the strike elsewhere and by that of workers in firms in Belfast and Lurgan which did actually do so. But the decisive factor was the spirit of the strikers themselves which enabled the strike to be continued by a system of mass pickets often several hundred strong.

But these advantages were opposed by a number of weaknesses that proved decisive in the end. The Central Executive Committee of the F.E.S.T. opposed the strike from beginning and suspended the Belfast District Committee. Its two largest member-unions, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and the Boilermakers' Union refused to allow strike pay to their members involved, although, other unions, most notably the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters backed their own members on this. Of more direct importance was the weakness of the Strike Committee. This had been elected (as the Belfast District Committee of the F.E.S.T.) some months before the hours issue had become prominent. Headed by a Catholic, Charles McKay, it included such notable "Labour Unionists" as Weir and William Grant, a founder member of the U.U.L.A. and a future Northern Ireland cabinet minister. It was thus not only non-denominational but non-political. Such left wingers as James Baird were not on it. Accordingly, in its strategy it had to limit itself to considering what would be the minimum needed to achieve its aims. Anything above this was suspect. It not only ignored the I.T.U.C.'s offer of a national general strike in its support, but it silenced Jack O'Hagan (later famous in the Knocklong Soviet of 1920), for demanding that the strike be spread. It refused offers of a sympathetic strike from the railwaymen. Such weakness magnified the losses caused as the strike continued. The weather changed for the better. The Grand Orange Lodge spoke out against the strike. And the British government came down firmly against the strikers. After two weeks, it arrested the leaders of the Clydesiders; a week later, after the Belfast strikers

had voted down an inadequate provisional offer from the bosses, it sent in troops, to re-open the Belfast public services.

This was the beginning of the end of the great Belfast general strike. At the same time as the troops moved in, Harland & Wolff offered a 47 hour week with a later start and a later ending, pending a national agreement. This offer was backed by Workman, Clark & Co. and by the other engineering firms. The strike committee recommended that a return to work be made on these terms. Despite some vocal opposition, the workers accepted them. The fight for a 44 hour week moved from Belfast to the British sphere.

But Unionism in Ulster had worse set-backs to come. Party propaganda thwarted Ulster's enjoyment of the May day strike called for all Ireland by the I.T.U.C. But during the rest of 1919, major strikes would occur all over the province. Not only, were the towns hit thus but, in March, the farm labourers in Cos. Donegal and Down struck for wage rises.

What was worse for Carson and his allies, was that opposition was developing in the political field. On 20th February, when the shipbuilders of Belfast were returning to work, the Unionist M.P. for East Antrim resigned. Amongst those seeking the seat was a local barrister, G. B. Hanna, who had been prevailed upon, in the name of unity, not to stand as an Independent in the general election. His loyalty was not rewarded at the nomination conference. The official Unionist candidate was Major William Agnew Moore, whose only previous connection with politics was through his family. He was not an Orangeman, nor did he have trade union support. Hanna was prominent in the order and had been nominated, originally, by the East Antrim Parliamentary Trade Union Association. He refused to accept the local party decision and determined to run as an Independent Unionist on those two, somewhat contradictory bases.

The bye-election campaign, from March to May, was a vicious one, mainly on the part of Hanna's supporters. Moore had meetings wrecked, his wife pelted with eggs, the glass in his motor smashed. He was denounced because of his Party's inaction during the recent strike as well as for his non-membership of the Loyal Orange Order. He gained support from the national leaders of Unionism; Carson endorsed him formally on two occasions; the **Belfast Newsletter** and the **Northern Whig** backed him in the name of party unity. The struggle was complicated by the appearance of a Liberal candidate who was fated to come bottom of the poll. He did, however, prevent Hanna getting an overall majority; 8,714 to Moore's 7,549 and his own 1,165. Even so, 9,879 electors in East Antrim (including the towns of Larne and Carrickfergus) showed themselves willing to oppose Carson and official Unionism. Hanna went to Westminster where after several months he was reconciled to the official Unionist party. His victory was essentially symbolic: evidence of conflicting tendencies that Unionism had either to master or have them master it.

Another threat to Unionism was, of course gaining strength in the south where the Irish Volunteers' struggle with the R.I.C. was developing into full-scale civil war. In October, the "Labour-Unionist" M.P., Thompson Donald, tried to play Nationalism against

Socialism in the traditional manner. In a series of speeches, he attacked un-employment of ex-soldiers as being created by Sinn Feiners taking jobs from Unionists, whilst the latter were at the war. He thus tried to turn to his party's advantage an argument of the engineering strikers; they had claimed that the 44-hour week would give more jobs to ex-servicemen by spreading work. In December, the Catholic Hierarchy helped the cause further by denouncing a British Bill for Irish education reform.

But there was little Volunteer activity in the north-east, as yet. Rank and file Unionists were perturbed by other matters. The linen trade was in the grip of a slump; unemployment was rising. The promised housing schemes were obviously inadequate. Unionism was suffering as an accomplice of the Lloyd George coalition which had already hurt itself by its extravagant promises in the general election.

In the local election of January 1920, the Belfast Labour Party, which had been formed from the Labour Representation Committee nominated 20 candidates for 60 seats on Belfast City Council. In the campaign that followed, the Unionists veered between housing promises and the Orange drum.

Finally, 13 of Labour's nominees were returned in Belfast's only election using P.R. This made the Party the second largest on the Council. The Unionists still held the majority with 37 seats but they suffered moral defeats in a number of wards. In Shankill, for example, Labour's Sam Kyle topped the poll and was made Alderman. James Baird was also elected and infuriated the genteel by appearing in his workers' overalls at Council meetings. At the first of these, the Party annoyed the Unionists still more by nominating their own candidates for mayor : a token, but effective, gesture. For the elections did represent a Labour advance from the national poll; even without P.R. but with manhood suffrage, Labour could expect to win parliamentary seats next time. On the other hand the Unionists recognised Proportional Representation as part of the threat to their dominance.

Yet the situation in Ireland remained interpretable in purely bourgeois terms. The British government was ready enough to see matters thus. In February, 1920, it published the Better Government of Ireland Bill finalising the settlement that had been prepared during the Home Rule struggle of the previous decade. Home Rule was given all Ireland — but it was partitioned as it is today. On the other hand, the Royal Irish Constabulary was reinforced — by the Auxiliary Cadets and the "Black and Tans."

It is well-known that the settlement was insufficient for the 26 counties. But it is believed, generally, that they satisfied the Ulster Unionists. After all, with certain modifications (the most notable being that of P.R.), they have worked. Admittedly, they didn't vote for it at the time, but this was, it is assumed, just a manoeuvre; after all, they had to themselves the fullest area that they could dominate without fear of an internal reverse.

But this is to ignore the reality. The Ulster Unionist leaders did object to Partition in 1920, for two reasons; their "Home Rule" Parliament was a wasteful proposal and they considered that they

had major interests in the rest of Ireland. For they did not believe that the gombeenmen (whether "Sinn Feiners" or "Hibernians") could hold down their Labour force. Already there had been two "soviets" in Ireland: one in Limerick, supported by the Republicans. In April, 1920, a general strike for the release of Irish prisoners involved the establishment of machinery for workers' power in a number of Irish towns; the British released the prisoners after one day. In May the Knocklong creamery was seized by the workers: the first of the great Munster creamery "soviets." A soviet twenty-six counties would soon be followed by a soviet thirty-two.

For north-eastern labour was still as much a threat industrially as it was politically. In March 1920 the shipyard engineers gained wage awards that increased their weekly earnings to 83s. 6d. (minimum) and 87s. 10d. (maximum): 1s. 6d. more than on Clydeside. On the 28th June they demanded a five pound per week minimum wage. What was more Workman, Clarke & Co. was suffering a major business crisis and had only just avoided bankruptcy in December, 1919. And over the bosses' heads loomed the hours issue. It was still undecided in Britain but, in Belfast, the building workers gained their 44 hour week at the end of April. Would the engineers continue for long at 47 hours ?

But the War of Independence was continuing. The Tans helped it grow more violent. The North-East began to feel it increasingly. At Westminster, the Nationalist rump stressed the continuing religious differences between Nationalist and Unionist by opposing bills to regulate the drink trade and to reform education. In Co. Galway, the Tuam U.D.C., began a boycott of Belfast goods, when, as has been seen, a "Buy Belfast" campaign might have been more practical. The Belfast bosses saw a chance to do what they had done before to keep their workers divided in the name of "religious unity." The possibilities of this were aided by the mild motions of the British trade unions in favour of Irish self-determination and, from the Middle of May, by an unofficial strike of Irish railwaymen against the carriage of British troops and munitions.

The industrialists of Belfast, who feared that the victory of Sinn Fein would mean the victory of Bolshevism were in a good position to warn their Protestant workers against organised Labour meaning the victory of Sinn Fein.

From the middle of April, the city of Derry, with its mixed population balanced between Nationalist and Unionist or Catholic and Protestant, was in a state of tension, exploding spasmodically into religious riot. A very bad period of this came in the middle of June. At the end of it a joint denomination council was set up and agreed to ban all religious processions, including the Orangement's. How far this council kept the peace: how far the British troops, is uncertain, but Derry remained quiet for the rest of the year compared to elsewhere in the six counties.

Amongst the victims of the riots was the son of the Grand Master of the Apprentice Boys. Later Carson would describe the effect of this murder :—

"The other day a respected citizen of Londonderry who was himself originally a Belfast man had a young boy of 23 (sic) home from the War. While he was staying with his father on leave, after serving his country during the War, he was seized on the side of the road by Sinn Feiners, brought into the field and riddled with bullets. That man and that boy were well known in Belfast. When I got to my home in London that evening after attending here in this House, I got a telegram from certain persons in Queen's Island, saying :

" 'We call upon you to call out the Ulster Volunteers and take revenge for the death of young McKay'—

"I think that was the name of this young man who had been so foully murdered. Do you wonder ? Are we the only people who are never to have a feeling over these matters ? "—**Hansard Parliamentary Debates,** Vol. 132; 700,22, 2nd July, 1920.

Whatever truth this story has, the effect of the June riots in Derry was to encourage tension elsewhere. It was only on 25th June that railwaymen at Portadown and on the Midland railway voted against joining the railway strike. They were the first of others in north-eastern Ireland. Three days later, a Protestant mob attacked a spirit grocer's shop in Sandy Row, Belfast. The **Northern Whig** helped matters to boil by publishing an article "revealing" a Catholic plot to massacre the Derry Protestants.

But Carson remained quiet. On 28th June he led a deputation to the War Office to ask for troops to patrol Belfast in case of trouble. The same day he wrote to Dawson Bates, Secretary to the Unionist Council urging him against violence. Although, on the 7th July, he spoke to denounce "the Bolshevik-Sinn Fein alliance", it might be expected that this responsible citizen would continue to urge his followers against rash action.

In his annual 12th July speech he did, indeed discourage actions—those as might not benefit his closest friends :—

"(The Sinn Feiners) have all kinds of insidious methods and organisations at work. Sometimes it is the Church. That does not make much way in Ulster. The more insidious method is tacking on the Sinn Fein question and the Irish Republican to the Labour question." (A voice : "Ireland is the most Labour centre in the United Kingdom"). "I know that. What I say is this, these men who come forward posing as the friends of Labour care no more about Labour than does the man in the moon. Their real object, and the real insidious object of their propaganda is that they may mislead and bring about disunity among our own people, and in the end, before we know where we are, we may find ourselves in the same bondage and slavery as in the rest of Ireland in the south and west . . ."

To the British government he formally declared :—

"If having offered you our help you are yourselves unable to protect us from the machinations of Sinn Fein and you won't take our help, well, then, we tell you we will take the matter into our own hands." **Northern Whig,** 13th June, 1920.

He ended his visit to Ulster by telling his followers, as he took the boat to England, how proud he had been of "the order" that had been kept in Ulster whilst he had led the Unionists. Perhaps he had forgotten the 1912 riots ?

On 17th July, Colonel Smyth was murdered in Cork. Smyth was a British officer and war hero of Ulster Protestant stock whose speech to a group of R.I.C. at Listowel had, by its callousness, provoked resignations even from that insensitive body. Who killed him is unknown, but presumed, generally, to have been Republicans, though it has been said, too, that the British secret service committed the crime, seeing that Smyth was now more useful dead than alive. Certainly, the killing helped Britain and more especially, its garrison bosses in Ulster far more than it did Ireland. **The Northern Whig,** which had praised Smyth's Listowel speech, demanded retribution for his murder.

On 21st July began the Belfast pogrom. The details are not disputed, though different stresses are placed on them. A special meeting of the Protestant engineers in Workman, Clark & Co. was held on the company property (probably with its full support: trade union meetings were not allowed there). It was addressed by a "Unionist Labour" member of Bangor U.D.C., Alexander McKay. He incited his listeners to demand that all "Sinn Feiners" (which as far as they were concerned meant their Catholic work mates) leave the yards as being a physical menace. They duly proceeded in force to the latter and ordered them to leave. As the latter were doing so one shouted "Up the Rebels." The threat of violence became a fact; the Catholics were forced out by hails of rivets. Labour solidarity in Belfast was at an end.

The pogroms spread over Belfast and to many other towns in Co. Down : mainly to the engineering and transport workers, whose labour militancy had been greatest. The textile workers' spirit had been low for some eighteen months, due to unemployment; perhaps it was for this reason that the pogromites avoided them. Officially the expulsions were directed against "disloyal organisations" rather than against Catholics. Just what was "disloyalty" was decided, of course, by the pogromites themselves, or rather by their leaders. Thus at a special meeting of the British T.U.C. called on 10th September to discuss the pogroms, F. Lowe of the Painters' Union was able to report that 100 of those who refused to sign the pogromites' oath of loyalty were ex-servicemen and that 22 of those members of his union expelled because of their advanced Labour sympathies. Amongst such victims were Charles McKay, Baird and J. A. Hanna, another prominent labour leader, who had been one of Orange leaders who joined Larkin in 1907. All in all 10,000 workers were victimised thus.

Once an establishment had been cleared, the pogromites raised over it the Union Jack, both as a sign of victory and a threat to opponents. It was at one such unfurling, at the valve and brass-finishing departments of Messrs Harland & Wolff's, on October 14th, that Sir James Craig made his declaration :—

"Before he sat down he would like to ask three questions and if they answered as he expected he would take back those answers to Sir Edward Carson when he returned to London (cheers). Would they hang on for ever to the old Union Jack, the emblem of their loyalty to King and Empire ? " ("Yes" and cheers). "Did they still refuse to go under a Sinn Fein Parliament in Dublin ? " ("Yes" and cheers)

"Well, as they had answered those questions it was only fair that he should answer one that had not been put to him. 'Do I approve of the action you boys have taken in the past?' He said 'Yes'" (cheers). **Northern Whig,** 15th October, 1920.

Less straightforward was the line taken by the Hibernians' **Irish News.** Naturally, it deplored the expulsions. But, at the same time it put the blame for them on something it called an "Orange Soviet." This was very intelligent; its sponsors had nothing to gain from either Unionism or Labour; but at least Unionist capitalism would let it keep what little it had.

The pogroms were not unopposed by their victims or their victims' friends. The Catholic population of Belfast fought back against its persecutors. Dail Eireann backed the Catholics by extending the Belfast boycott over all its territory: a gesture that said more for its heart than for its head. The Volunteers were more practical; they gave direct military aid. Belfast suffered its longest period of continuous "Holy War" ever: two years (July 1920—August 1922).

Shortly after the pogroms had begun, the British Army was called in to patrol Belfast. Probably it could have done this quite effectively by itself, but the bosses of Unionism were getting worried. The pogroms were too successful. Leadership in them had been taken promptly by certain elements (most notably, John Holness and John Crumlin) who had none of the links of Weir and Grant with the Labour bureaucracy. The rank and file of the U.V.F. was getting out of hand. On 11th August, S. C. Davidson's appeal to the Protestant workers in his Sirocco Engineering Works not to carry on a pogrom this was rejected out of hand. On the 20th August a meeting of the platers at Harland & Wolff voted down a similar plea from their bosses. The old game of divide and rule had not led the Protestant workers back to their leaders but was guiding them to Fascism.

Craig re-acted as others of his kind did: Giolitti in Italy or, later, von Papen in Germany. He was, of course, more successful. In September, he put his plan to the Cabinet, and, in the speech quoted above, he announced:—

"That an Under-Secretary charged with the care of Ulster affairs had been appointed, and that very shortly a scheme of special constabulary, of which he (Sir James Craig) had always been an advocate would be set up." (cheers)

Such isolated Protestant landowners as Sir Basil Brooke of Co. Fermanagh and Chichester of Co. Derry had already re-organised groups of Ulster Volunteers against the Republicans. Craig's move formallised the position and ensured that pogroms would be kept under "responsible" control. On the 6th December, the crack corps of the Special Constabulary (the "A" Specials) passed out of their training course. The next day, at a Unionist meeting at Portadown, a Colonel Spender announced the existence of "a constabulary of 1,500 men — practically all Protestants" (**Northern Whig** 8th December 1920). Then recruiting started to the "B" Specials, on the same religious basis. By 22nd June, 1921, when George V opened the Parliament of Northern Ireland, the semi-state power was established firmly. So, too, was the content of Ulster Unionism: a Protestant

Bonapartism balancing on and reconciling the interests of tory landowners, liberal-conservative capitalists and fascist petty-bourgeoisie and Labour aristocrats. The bulk of the authority was in the hands of the second.

As always, it was the last group that benefitted least (though, still, far more than its Catholic victims) from this arrangement. On 18th October 1920, the remaining (i.e. Protestant) workers of Harland & Wolff agreed to renounce their 44-hour claim in view of Belfast's unsettled condition.

Indeed the building workers were forced, though after an eight months' strike, to abandon their own 44-hour week. As from December 1920, the engineering employers of the United Kingdom enforced wage reductions, the Northern Irish engineers were no longer to the fore in opposing these. Indeed the shipyard joiners in Belfast, having brkoen with their trade union (the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters) rather than re-admit "disloyalists" to their work, scabbed throughout Union's nine month strike against wage reductions. The sectarian Ulster Workers' Union gained membership from its rivals. In the linen trade the mills had to close down for one month over Christmas 1920. In the political sphere, the results of the pogroms were still more disastrous for Labour. Before the first Northern Irish general election of May, 1921, many Unionists feared that even with the pogroms, P.R. would allow their party only a 12 seat majority, at most. In the event, the majority was one of 40 to 12. None of three Labour candidates were elected; two of them came bottom of the poll. Devlin was the only non-Unionist elected in Belfast.

The opening of the new Parliament was the event of an appeal for peace talks to Dail Eireann from the British. It was accepted by the Irish, but for a different reason than it was offered. The British government could only continue the war by a surrender to its ultra-conservative supporters, whose policies could only alienate an already restive working class. The Dail would have to break with its bourgeois connections, renounce its claim to serve all the people equally and, in fact, renounce Griffith's policy for that of Connolly, if it wanted to win what it claimed. So a truce was signed, and, in December, the Articles of Agreement for a Treaty.

The negotiations that led to this conclusion are, as far as Northern Ireland is concerned, notable mainly for a proposal that has been elevated into a major red herring by Ernest Blythe. This was Craig's "very statesmanlike" proposal of Dominion status for both parts of the partitioned Ireland. Had this been accepted by Ireland, Blythe maintains re-unification would have followed swiftly. It is an odd statement to come from a man who was, once, respected, if not liked, by Irish marxists. The fact is that the internal situation of Northern Ireland at that time, might end its dominion status, but it would not mean it would end partition: the greater liklihood is that it would intensify it by re-establishing direct unity with Britain. As Finance Minister of Saorstat Eireann, Blythe carried on a trade policy of inegration within the British Empire which went some way to weaken one aspect of Northern Ireland's alienation. As a Northern Protestant

Sinn Feiner, he seems never to have appreciated fully the sectaranianism on which Unionist power rested and which justified it.

Of the eighteen articles of Agreement, six (Nos. 11-16) deal with Northern Ireland. Most of them were details of the mechanics of partition, but Articles 12 and 16 had some permanent formal relevance. The first provided for a future Commission "to determine in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants, so far as may be compatible with economic and geographic conditions, the boundaries between Northern Ireland and the rest of Ireland." The second forbade religious discrimination — north and south.

These clauses were window-dressing to make acceptable to the majority of the Irish Volunteers the peace wanted by the gombeenmen (and by many others, too, but the gombeenmen needed it in their long term of things). Northern Ireland did not send delegates to the talks that initiated them. No member of the sitting Dail cabinet, whether for or against the Treaty did anything when the County Councils of Fermanagh and Tyrone declared their adherence to Dail Eireann and were dissolved, accordingly, by the Unionists.

This is not to say that Irish national capitalism did not want the country re-united; but it had no essential material interest in the matter.

However, partition was forced to its attention. Apart from the tiny, new, Communist Party of Ireland, everyone wanted peace. De Valera's basic support for the Anti-Treatyites was because Griffith and Collins had forgotten the terms that the Cabinet had agreed would maintain its unity. It was on these grounds that he patched up the coalition that was to become the Executive organisation in the Irish civil war. The Treatyites could not understand this attitude. Griffith and the civilians decided that the matter was simply one of riot and should be put down straightaway. Collins was less certain; he feared the Communist opponents of the Treaty and saw that his unpopularity with those with whom he had worked was hurting his own hopes of dictatorial power. (His rather odd ideas of democracy are to be found in his **Path to Freedom,** 1969 edition, p.p. 97, 98). He saw that much of his opponents support in the Volunteers' rank and file was the result of the incompleteness of the Articles dealing with the north-east. Accordingly, while, with his one hand, he built his own National Army to defend the Treaty, his other hand was dealing with Craig, by abortive pacts to soothe the worst sufferings of the Belfast Catholics and by organising guerilla bands to make Northern Irish government impossible. But, in the end he was not prepared to attack Britain, and Britain, in its turn, was not prepared to sacrifice its garrison population in the north-east to people whom it had been fighting a year previously. So Collins forgot the border and attacked the Republican Executive in the Four Courts in Dublin. The pressure was off Northern Ireland.

But, once again, it had provided the excuse for new guarantees to that area's rulers. In April, 1922 the notorious Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Bill was introduced in the Northern Ireland Parliament. With the Sinn Feiners and Nationalist M.P.s boycotting this

assembly, the bill became law very swiftly. So did the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Bill abolishing P.R., in local elections, though, here, there was a silent delay as the British government of Lloyd George hesitated to follow it. It was passed eventually, the wards were swiftly gerrymandered and elections under it were held in January, 1923. The results were wholly satisfactory to Craig and his friends. The Nationalists abstained from the contesting the Councils of Derry, Downpatrick, Dungannon, Enniskillen and Lurgan. Better still, in Belfast, they were again the main opposition party, with a firm base in Smithfield and Falls Wards. An attempt by McKay to run expelled Workers Candidates against the Hibernians failed dismally.

With the change of government in Britain from a coalition headed by a nominal "Liberal" to a Conservative one including hard line Unionists, one of the last major problems of Ulster Unionism was solved. Under the Government of Ireland Act, their regime incurred certain major financial duties to the British exchequer. This embarrassed increasingly a state whose economy was, at best, insecure and which had just gone through a long period of disorder. A Commission set up by Britain saw the force of these arguments and, from March 1925 Northern Ireland's "imperial" contribution has been a nominal sum. Craig's only remaining major worry was the Boundary Commission; the British Labour Government that insisted on its appointment weighted it with pro-Unionists, and the Saorstat agreed to forget that part of the Treaty.

As Unionism became more secure, business improved and the rank and file began to relax. Many expelled workers (but not their most prominent figures) were returning to their old jobs during the winter of 1922-23. In May of the latter year, an Ex-Soldiers' Candidate defeated the Grand Master of the Orange Order in a bye-election for the Northern Irish Parliament. In the Westminster general election in December that year, a Labour candidate was defeated in West Belfast by only 2,000 votes. And in the general election for the Northern Irish Parliament in May 1925, three members of the new Northern Irish Labour Party were returned at the expense of three sitting "Labour-Unionists," one a Parliamentary Under-Secretary.

The Government re-acted in two ways. It introduced a special company franchise for local elections and it finally acted on its promises to abolish P.R. for its parliamentary elections. As Craig (now, of course, Viscount Craigavon) put it in the debate on the Governor's address :

"My own feelings about P.R. can be summed up in a very few words. It will be difficult for anyone, when we are returned by single-member constituencies, to humbug the electors. The electors will be able to choose whether they will have one member or another, and they will see the results of their own action. What I have been so afraid of under the system of Proportional Representation was that certain members might be returned to this house who, in a crisis upon the one point of vital importance to the Ulster people, might not stand by whichever side it was intended they should stand when they were

elected to this House." **—Official Report of N.I. Parliamentary Debates, (House of Commons)** Volume 10,28; Debate on the Governor's Address, 26 February, 1929.

At the next election (May, 1929,) two of the three Labour M.P.s lost their seats.

Craigavon's speech was made after five years in which the Saorstat Eireann regime of Cosgrave had tried to administer an economic policy that did little to clash with Northern Ireland's. That had had to surrender to a section of their supporters in putting a duty on imported textiles. This in itself was little (the Saorstat textile firms were in wool rather than in linen), but, on top of a textile slump and of a hundred years of north-eastern Protestant Nationalism, it had its negative effect.

This was increased when the combined effect of World Slump and small farmer agitation returned de Valera to office in March 1932. His high tariff policy weakened the basis for north-south co-operation more than ever before.

Once again Ulster's bosses were happy; the Slump had begun encouraging non-sectarian action by Labour. The Saorstat's tariffs made no provision for the six counties that it claimed. The charge for a new sectarian riot was laid. It exploded in 1935.

But, compared to the 1920's it was a minor affair. Everyone knew that there was little real threat to Northern Ireland. It was established.

Epilogue :

WHITHER NORTHERN IRELAND ?

The tightening of world imperialism on, and outside the formal limits of, the British Empire has weakened the foundations from which Northern Ireland developed. Of course this was not immediately apparent. The World Slump from 1929 onwards forced Irish "gombeen" capitalism into accepting the high tariff policies of the artisan classes. What was more, in 1930, the "imperial" contribution could not be paid, and Britain had to take responsibility for it's sub-state's unemployment benefit.

Yet the Slump created a first weakening in the position of the Protestant industrialists who had been the chief force in creating the six-county regime. Towards the end of the second Northern Irish Parliament, in February, 1929, Craigavon detailed his hopes for the next four years, in a speech, another part of which has been quoted already :

"If I were requested to put in a few words what my expectations are, I would say that with any chance at all we in Ulster ought to spend the four or five years to which I refer in a great trade push."— **Official Report of Northern Ireland Parliamentary Debates** (House of Commons), Volume 10, Debate on the Governor's Address, 26 February, 1929.

The actual "chance" he was given was that of the ensuing economic crisis. Of course Ulster's industrial capitalists had survived previous disasters, but they were now weaker and the world monopolies stronger than before. Already, Workman, Clark & Co. had had to surrender its independence to London; now other firms were faced with the same pressures. Most of them survived. As late as 1954, 60% of capital invested within Northern Ireland was still invested in private companies. But they did no more than survive. And they could not help others; in 1938, 30% of the insured population was still without work. Northern Irish industry had developed as an offshoot of British weaknesses in an exaggerated form. Capital and entrepreneurial talent fled abroad. What remained was remarkably like the gombeen capitalism of the rest of Ireland : a few long-established large firms and a mass of struggling unenterprising concerns. This degeneration affected the Unionists' business wing. Once the Finance Minister, H. M. Pollock, and, in 1940, Craigavon himself, were dead, the political poverty of Northern Irish industry was all too clear.

A more significant development towards the reconciliation of northeastern capitalism with that of the rest of Ireland was the final inability of the latter to adopt permanently Sinn Fein economics. A new layer of small industrial capitalists was added to the gombeen-capitalist hierarchy and became promptly identified with its interests, including the nearest foreign market : that of Britain. Fianna Fail spokesmen had renounced the British market on several occasions. They did this ignorantly; from Ireland's point of view it is not the market that is at fault: It is the economic system of the regime that deals with it. Now they could not oppose men who included its

leading backers (and whose demands were those of potential new ones). In January, 1935, the Saorstat signed with Britain the "Coal-Cattle Agreement", a mutual cutting of tariffs on the commodities named. Negotiations began to eliminate the major points in dispute between the islands. During their continuation, Craigavon had occasion to address the Northern Irish Comptroller-General of Finances :—

" 'Duggan', he said, 'you know that in this island we cannot live always separated from one another. We are too small to be apart or for the border to be there for all time. The change will not be in my time, but it will come ' " — G. C. Duggan, **Northern Ireland — Success or Failure,** 1950, p.p. 21-22.

The actual Anglo-Irish agreements of April 1938, seemed to widen the difference between the Saorstat (or "Eire" as it now called itself) and Norrthern Ireland. Under them, British forces were withdrawn from the former, enabling its Government to claim an independent foreign policy for the next twenty-three years. In fact this independence was allowed only because British troops could make up for it in the north-east. This has been ignored by de Valera and Craigavon (who knew what they were doing; they won elections partly by misrepresenting the issue) and by a generation of bourgeois and petty bourgeois publicists for Irish unity (who, we must suppose, knew not what they did).

A similar effect had been made the previous year by de Valera's "Dictionary-Republican" Constitution with its sectarian provisions (most especially those against divorce and protecting religious property). But this was merely the climax of fifteen years of administration by mainly Catholic gombeenmen.

The fact was that the real importance of the 1938 Agreements was in their economic clauses. These formalised the Coal-Cattle Treaties, recognising the dependance of bourgeois Ireland on the British market. Separatist economics had now been found wanting by both parts of capitalist Ireland.

Naturally reunification was still impossible. Quite apart from Britain's interest in the matter, there was also the clericalism of "Eire" and, above all, Northern capitalism's dependance on sectarian division keeping Ireland divided.

The Second World War emphasised the real difference between the two parts of the country. "Eire" stayed neutral; Northern Protestatnism was vociferously loyal. Indeed a sectarian riot started in Belfast just after the War began, but as the employers felt secure enough, it was put down determinedly.

De Valera was able to prevent Northern Irish conscription and to send fire-engines to blitzed Belfast. Both these acts helped Britain as much as they helped the north-east. The real weakness in his position was exposed when, despite his formal protests, Americans and British built and maintained the Ballykelly naval base in Co. Derry.

More significant than what "Eire" could do was what happened in Northern Ireland itself in May, 1943. After same years of backbench Unionist discontent, the Cabinet of J. M. Andrews, which had

the engineering boss, J. M. Barbour as Minister of Finance, resigned. A new Cabinet was formed under the landowner, Sir Basil Brooke. It included only one (non-industrial) businessman, but also two Presbyterian Ministers, as well as two representatives of Labour interests: Grant and the Northern Ireland Labour renegade, Harry Midgely. This change was symbolic of the weakened position of the old capitalist leadership of Ulster Unionism. The question was: would the new Bonapartism be enough? Would extra incentives be needed to maintain the situation?

No doubt partition would have been continued for some time, if not permanently. The differences over tariffs were still strong; the basis of Northern Irish industry was still that of a proletariat divided by religion; the religious differences (as in education) had been strengthened, if anything.

Nonetheless, after 1945, Northern Ireland's government moved to strengthen the basis for Partition in a way that opened the way to change it radically, as well. This was its application of Britain's welfare state legislation to its territory. There was nothing new in this. It had begun in the 1920's with the British Conservative Government's acceptance of the Colwyn Report which cut the imperial contribution. It had continued when, in 1930, the British Labour Government, had accepted responsibility for Northern Irish Unemployment Insurance. However the new welfare legislation prepared a major quantitative change in Northern Irish views. The old, sectarian, foundation for Northern Irish industrial capitalism had depended on a necessary minimum of insecurity amongst the workers. Now this foundation was weakened, however inadequately. On the one hand, the pressure for jobs bore less on the Protestants. On the other hand the Catholics became less tempted to end Partition, without guarantees of Irish parity with Britain in social welfare.

It was not much but it was a beginning, reinforced continually by Northern Ireland's need for foreign industries, and these latters' unwillingness to adapt themselves to sectarian considerations of employment. The appearance of these industries, from Britain alone of the empire countries, and without any dependance on the union jack for their markets weakened, also, the imperial mystique of Unionism. The empire was now a "commonwealth", other spheres had equal economic attractions.

Immediately, welfare legislation accompanied the final merger of Midgely's breakaway "Commonwealth Labour" Party with the Unionists. British Labour was quite satisfied to grant the necessary funds to Northern Ireland; it recognised that on them might be built a Unionism that would not hurt the obvious and immediate (Social Democratic) needs of Labour that had suffered previously. However, the Unionist Government showed equal intelligence; despite its claims of "parity with Britain" it did not repeal its own Trade Disputes Act (against general strikes) when Westminster repealed the United Kingdom one.

Of course the changes in both Republican and Unionist policies

were confused. Welfare reforms could not change working-class attitudes immediately. Similarly, in "Eire", a trade agreement weighted even more in favour of Britain than that of 1938 was followed in 1949 by the final, formal, proclamation of the Republic. In turn, the Unionists beat the Orange Drum again in a general election that destroyed utterly the largest representation held by the Northern Ireland Labour Party since 1929. At Westminster, British Labour passed an Act declaring that the Northern Irish Parliament could, alone, vote to end Partition.

And as the primary situation changed, the traditional petty-bourgeois answers to the Ulster question revived for what now seems to be their last desperate flings. The first, as it was the most significant, was that of the militant Republicans. Despite divisions, this was unquestionably the most serious attack on the Northern Irish settlement since the 1920s. It failed, partly because of its divisions, more because of lack of support in the official Republic and above all because of inadequate analysis of the existing situation. The campaigners of '56 were still approaching their British foe in the way that had failed in 1920. Their most active support was in the Catholic rural areas along the border, rather than in Belfast. Their campaign died, finally in 1962.

The challenge of the revived N.I.L.P. was based, at least, on the objective facts of Northern Irish political life. The effect of the welfare reforms is shown by its achievement of its largest number of seats (4) in Belfast in the 1958 election, during the Republican struggle. That is all one can say for it. The party's defeat in 1949 had sent it up the blind alley followed by Walker, Midgely and the various Independent Unionists who had, like John Nixon and Tommy Henderson, been just too radical for the official party. Defeated on the "Taig" issue, the Party majority has decided (to paraphrase the U.S. politician, George Wallace) that no-one will ever again "Out-Taig" it. Instead of trying to educate the Belfast workers (it never developed much outside Belfast; its Derry branch grew despite its leaders) in the nature of imperialism and of its Socialistic opposition, it accepted uncritically the British subsidies, and their associate, Partition, provoking a major split. This was natural for non-scientific Socialists. However, even on their limited terms, N.I.L.P.'s parliamentarians proved inadequate. It is doubtful whether their constituents enjoyed under them even the level of service given by Henderson and Nixon. Today only one of the original four lay preachers remains in Stormont, though supported by the M.P. for Falls, Paddy Devlin. And so, at a time when there is less to be said for this than ever before, the Party plans to accept the logic of its position and merge with British Labour. R.I.P.

The N.I.L.P. might not have had as much success as it enjoyed had the Anti-Partitionist Socialist Opposition been better. The fact is that the splitting of the N.I.L.P. after 1949 did not provide even a Social Democratic alternative to Walkerism. Despite the efforts of the Irish Labour Party, Socialist Republicanism in the north-east has meant generally a group of small feuding political clans centred on such individuals as Jack Beattie (the first Belfast Non-Unionist M.P.

at Westminster since Joseph Devlin) and Harry Diamond. Of recent years, there has been a unification of these bodies around the person of Gerry Fitt, but this has not accompanied any major improvement in organisation: rather the substitution of one big chief for many little chiefs. The formally superior organisation of the N.I.L.P. was an important secondary factor in Paddy Devlin's victory over Diamond in Falls at the last election.

Against such opponents (these were, after all, the best) the Unionists were able for a time to win many uncommitted voters under the leadership, after 1963, of Captain Terence Marne O'Neill. This mediocre landowner could yet recognise the changed situation. He was quite unable to adapt his party's policy to it. Having taken power with the aid of the Chief Whip, William Craig (spokesman for the forgotten, embittered, small Protestant businessmen), he was never able to command the loyalties of the majority of the bourgeois wing, which had backed his rival, Brian Faulkner. Instead of quietly going about the business of internal transformation (as Craigavon would have done), he relied on speeches and gimmickry, of which the famous tea-party with his opposite number from Dublin was the most notable. This did not win many Catholic votes; it alienated many Protestants. Simultaneously, he weakened his popularity amongst his natural rural supporters west of the River Bann by being seen to be hostile to the University in Derry, by giving his backing to a new growth centre in Portadown, and by sacking Fermanagh's Minister for Agriculture, Harry West. In the days of his greatest security, his one significant reform was the long overdue abolition of the Queen's University Parliamentary seats. When he fell from power in April, 1969, it was not the downfall of a courageous liberal who had fought the good fight against the stream; it was, rather, the ruin of a political bankrupt. He had lost every visible means of support.

It was the failure of all other political strategies that led to the rise of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement. Now that promises have been made (and backed, in a fashion, by the British government) to fulfill most of its demands, all opposition parties from the Nationalists to the Communists are claiming inspiration for it. It is really irrelevant just which particular group can claim the credit for being the tool of circumstance. For, at the decisive moment on October 5th, 1968, none of the founder bodies was ready to go beyond formal legal demonstrations. It was the refusal of the followers to obey the official leaders and disperse on that afternoon that began a train of events that has sent O'Neill into retirement, Bernadette Devlin to Westminster, barricades to Falls and Bogside and the probability of formal democracy to Northern Ireland. The moving force in most of this development was the agitational body, People's Democracy. However, when the major period of fighting began, in August, the P.D. (apart from Bernadette Devlin) was unable to dominate the leadership of the barricades, which was taken by others of various types of Socialist and Republican views.

The disorganised nature of the risings in Belfast and Derry were merely expressions of the fact that in the situation full-scale revolution

was premature. The two conditions for revolution, as Lenin (and who should know better?) pointed out are the inability of the rulers to continue in the old fashion and the determination of the exploited not to maintain the system. Whereas the first was abundantly obvious, the second was complicated by the fact that a very large proportion of the exploited were prepared on subjectively religious grounds, to struggle to defend existing conditions. The mistake made by bourgeois, and petty-bourgeois, nationalists was to imagine that, because there was not the immediate prospect of a revolution, one should continue to raise the demands that had been put forward before the barricades appeared. For the barricades did change matters. They did create, not a revolutionary situation, but, certainly a major tendency making for such. As it was, the most influential political bodies in the country agreed objectively to try to de-fuse the bomb. A serious revolutionary leadership would have struggled to broaden the demands and to open new fighting fronts; in a word, to escalate matters.

How this could have been done is now less than history; it did not occur. All that can be said here and now is that the rising in the north-east ended because escalation was not encouraged (beyond the Falls) either in Northern Ireland or in the Republic. The Dublin Citizen's Committee did indeed demand, in the early stages of the crisis, that the Irish army cross the border. However, being an ad hoc body, it could not immediately press its point home, whilst carrying out its duty of helping the defenders of Falls and Bogside materially. It will continue to help its friends even though the troops are in and the promises made. Sooner or later Britain will withdraw its forces and then, at least, there must be a balance of terror between the forces of progress and their enemies: at most, as Peadar O'Donnell has said, in another connection, "There will be another day."

For by substituting for Protestant Power, equality in misery under the welfare state, as the basis for mass support for Northern Ireland, Britain is making more likely the fulfillment of the fears of its Province's founding fathers. The very fact that the risings developed as they did and did not become a serious threat to British imperialism has meant that there is no immediate prospect of a victory for Unionism's Fascist wing. Britain does not need it; Hume, Cooper, Chichester-Clarke and Eddie McAteer are all much more respectable. Thus the leadership of Protestant Fascism has toyed with the idea of U.D.I. But it is obvious that this could not be successful as in Rhodesia; it could mean, in fact, only one of two things; more British troops in the Shankill Road (and more Protestants killed) or Irish troops there, with Britain's permission, still more Protestants killed and a loss of welfare benefits. The centres of Protestant Fascism are, in fact, more than ever before, the small farm areas, mainly west of the River Bann, that O'Neillite Unionism tended to neglect and which could not be compensated by farm subsidies. In Belfast itself, the Northern Committee of the I.C.T.U. was able to prevent sectarian riots in the Queen's Island, and the most prominent leaders of Protestant Fascism seem to be no longer proletarian but petty-bourgeois — like John McKeague. For the Protestant workers of

Belfast, the choice is at the moment, one of Protestant domination or the welfare state. As the first is whittled away, the second will become overwhelmingly important and serious opposition to it will come from the left.

On the other hand, if the reforms are carried out, they will weaken further the traditional Catholic anti-Partitionism. In February, 1969, the Nationalist Party lost three of its nine seats in the Northern Irish Parliamen, including its last urban base in Foyle, Derry City. In each case, the victor had not even a formal opposition to the border; in one constituency, he was a prominent ex-Unionist. Again, the party seems likely to survive longer in the (Catholic) small farms areas, west of the Bann and south of the Mourne mountains. But a revival is, to say the least, unlikely.

Thus, partition survives, primarily, because of British money. And Britain pays up because it is still, on balance, more secure with Northern Ireland than it would be with a 32 county Republic.

In order to keep the former, it has had to pay its way. If Ireland were re-united, it would either have to subsidise another twenty-six counties, or withdraw the subsidies from the six north-eastern ones and create discontent. Thus both Ireland and Britain look hopefully towards the E.E.C. as a possible way out of their problems, involving as it does welfare re-organisation to a certain standard, and, of course, an outside uncontrolled scapegoat if the standard is inadequate. Thus, too, the choice for Ireland is not simply partition or unity but partition, unity within imperialism (both of which might be the same for all the Irish bourgeoisie can do) or unity despite imperialism.

In one sphere, the alternatives are alike. Both must adhere to Connolly in one matter, at least : his adherence to non-sectarianism in policy, and especially in education. Dr. Hillery would have done more for national unity as Minister for Education than he has yet done as Minister for External Affairs, had he admitted frankly that in educating their children, the Ulster Protestants have, since 1921, been better than their fellow-Irishmen. Today, this will not be as impossible to the Catholic bourgeoisie as it would have been ten years ago. The increased technical demands of world industrial capitalism mean that Ireland has to improve education or die, with or without the clergy. Vocational education is not enough a certain company director once said "Classics graduates sell more oil"; it is not reported that divinity graduates are rivals in that. Any true follower of Connolly will back this tendency, and, in fact, attack any weakening therein caused by the capitalists' need for clerical backing. But from then on, and in other spheres, the imperialist and anti-imperialist United Irelanders will divide.

Unity under imperialism does have certain conditional arguments in its support. It may mean, for the Republic, increased welfare benefits. There may be more factories set up and larger markets for the goods thereof. More realistically, under capitalism, Ireland outside the E.E.C. is not only not likely to be reunited so quickly, but could well lose the welfare, the factories and the markets that it has. In fact,

what really is attractive about Irish reunification within imperialism is that it is the way of least resistance.

Contrariwise, the struggle to reunite Ireland against imperialism will mean serious and sustained effort. Nonetheless, its successful conclusion will be the achievement of the Workers' Republic, such as will give the working people of Ireland, whether workers, small farmers, students or struggling businessmen, equal shares in a total capacity to plan their land's prosperity. The present, dominating, foreign interests will retain only as much influence on the economy as fire, flood, pestilence or any other "act of God." Once achieved, such a state, would be for Socialism what Ireland of the dark ages was for Christianity — and more.

But how is this to be done? Two points must be made as to essentials. Firstly, the struggle must be won in both parts of Ireland. This does not mean that it must be started simultaneously in both parts, but that, in whichever part it starts, it must spread to the other part before it can be fully effective in either. If the north-east by itself is unduly weak economically, the rest of Ireland is in much greater danger from the British Army when it has only to cross the land border than when it has to cross the Irish Sea, Secondly, the revolution in the north-east will have to win Protestant support. This is more possible now than it has been for two centuries. But to achieve it, it will be necessary to maintain not just a non-sectarian but a scientific Socialist approach to problems. North and South the cry for workers control must be raised: control of the factory, the farm, the school and also, at the top, control of the whole economy.

This is purely agitational. Propaganda is also needed. The crisis has also revealed the political nakedness of Ireland's leading politicians. But they are, in one way, not to blame. Little has been written since Connolly to educate the people or their leaders as to the real nature of Irish society. This must be changed. If the present lull in the overall Irish crisis continues, the Citizens' Committee will develop its third aim : to "mobilize the full weight of the writers, artists and intellectuals of this country and the world." One must add that the Committee does not limit the term, "intellectual" to mean that of the professional thinker : a bourgeois concept that would have kept out Connolly. Any intelligent person who can contribute will be welcome.

But as it is now, the Committee cannot, by itself provide the organisation that will smash imperialism, north and south. It is difficult to recognise any existing political body (or "front") that is likely to be able to do so. It is possible, only, to recognise that the body will have to be a movement possessing both political and military functions. Many of our heroic comrades seem to believe that the Republican Movement failed in its moment of truth because of the political education given by its leadership since 1963. This philistinism must be rejected; a man is not necessarily a better shot because he has never read Karl Marx. What was wrong with the Republican political education courses was not that they existed, but that they were bad of their kind.

Of course, one cannot be too definite in this matter, but one must make a general proposal. What is to be built should, at the moment, be based on the bodies now possessing the greatest revolutionary spirit : the defence forces expanding in the north-east itself. Although it is no longer possible to escalate the fighting, the organisation thereof can be expanded into a thirty-two county Irish Citizen Army. The question of open political action, and organisation if necessary, can be considered within the context of the overall strategy of revolution to be fought by this body. For the time being the duty of left-wingers should be clear :—

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