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CATHOLICS, PROTESTANTS AND WORKERS:  
ETHNIC IDENTITY AND CLASS POLITICS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

by

Evan Keith Preston

B.Sc., The New University of Ulster, 1979

M.Phil., The University of Ulster, 1983

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
in the Department  
of  
SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationship between class politics and ethnicity in the particular situation of Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is a society deeply divided by Protestant and Catholic ethnic identities and allegiances into two distinct and parallel communities. Such community divisions are frequently manifest as open ethnic conflict in which many people have been killed and injured.

The dominance of ethnicity in all areas of life, makes the Northern Ireland situation an objectively difficult one for those who not only consider a socialist class politics to be a solution to the ethnic conflict, but who also actively canvas such a solution.

The dissertation examines the difficulties encountered by socialist organisations in their pursuit of class politics, and examines the ways in which they have attempted to overcome such difficulties, and to what effect.

Through an examination of political documents and ephemera, observation of political activities, and interviews with activists, the study examines the political theory and analysis, and importantly the resulting political practice of the socialist organisations extant in Northern Ireland.

The study shows how, for a number of these organisations, ethnicity is a resource which is used to mobilize either the Protestant or the Catholic fraction of the working class in the pursuit of socialist politics. For others, ethnic divisions within the working class are a constraint upon mobilizing the entire working class in pursuit of socialist politics.

For the former, the political theory and analysis which allows ethnicity to be used to further class politics is shown to have the practical effect of merely reinforcing Protestant and Catholic ethnic divisions. For the latter, the study shows that even a political theory and analysis which avoids privileging one ethnic community over another, is insufficient to overcome the practical difficulties caused by the sheer dominance of ethnicity. The study shows that socialist appeals to the working class are ineffective because in Northern Ireland politics the working class does not exist.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BICO	British and Irish Communist Organization
CEC	Campaign for Equal Citizenship
CLR	Campaign for Labour Representation
CPI	Communist Party of Ireland
CPNI	Communist Party of Northern Ireland
ICO	Irish Communist Organization
INLA	Irish National Liberation Army
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRSP	Irish Republican Socialist Party
LP'87	Labour Party '87
NICRA	Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association
NILP	Northern Ireland Labour Party
PD	People's Democracy
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
PUP	Progressive Unionist Party
RCWP	Republican Clubs the Workers Party
RLF	Republican Labour Party
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
SF	Sinn Fein
SWM	Socialist Workers Movement
UDR	Ulster Defence Regiment
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
WP	Workers Party

WSP	World Socialist Party
YS	Young Socialists
YSA	Young Socialist Alliance

## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation has its origins in a desire to rescue the socialist movement in Northern Ireland from obscurity. The late 1980's and early 1990's might appear to be a particularly inopportune moment to attempt such a rescue. After all, the apparent global collapse of bureaucratic centralist regimes heralds not only the end of socialism, but the end of history no less (Fukuyama 1989). The 'principles of liberal capitalism' may 'have won', but it is clear that in practice the populations of former communist states have not, and it remains to be seen what transpires from these momentous changes.

In any case, accepting the collapse of stalinism does not require one thereby to collaborate in the metonymic collapse of socialism. Indeed for many socialists, the collapse of stalinism and of many Moscow orientated communist parties throughout the world, opens up new possibilities in the pursuit of democratic socialism. Nevertheless, to the extent that stalinism and socialism are indeed equivalent in popular consciousness in capitalist societies, the difficulties of pursuing such a socialist politics are compounded.

Turning to Northern Ireland, it might be argued that such global developments will not have much effect in any case since the fortunes of socialism there could not get any worse. Even a passing acquaintance with the situation indeed makes clear that the dominant politics in Northern Ireland are non-socialist and ethnic. Socialist politics is obvious by its absence, or more precisely, by its ineffectiveness.

This ineffectiveness has been registered by a number of academic observers, even sympathetic ones. Thus Bew et al (1979:1) consider socialism in Northern Ireland to have been "a total failure", "in danger of extinction, politically and intellectually". This is because socialism in Northern Ireland has been "deficient, both theoretically and politically. Theoretically it is unable to illuminate a single aspect of the problem. Politically it has proved unable to generate a single effective political tactic" (ibid:2). Morgan and Purdie (1980:8) also consider socialism in Northern Ireland to involve "a theory and practice that have proved equally arid". Again for Bew et al (1980:153), socialism has provided neither "a clear analysis of ... political forces nor, consequently, a strategy which could ever have led an alliance of progressive forces to victory".

It is interesting that such observers consider "a re-examination and re-evaluation" of "the (sic) socialist

position' (Bew et al 1979:1), or a "re-examination of concepts and analyses" (Morgan and Purdie 1980:7) to be therefore necessary. And although Morgan (1980:175) in his "specification of socialism in Ireland" intends not "to reduce the history of the Irish left to theoretical original sins", he effectively does so.

These various authors usefully interrogate socialist theory and analysis and clearly show that theoretical and analytical deficiencies have contributed to the lack of success of socialist politics in Northern Ireland. The implication and impression is then that socialists have failed because of their wrong theories and incorrect analyses, so that academic "theoretical contributions may help fashion the possibilities of the future and ideologically equip socialist political interventions in popular struggles" (Morgan 1980:217).

To be fair to the authors, they do acknowledge that there are "objective reasons" (Bew et al 1979:1) for the failure of socialist politics in Northern Ireland, and that "the future for socialist politics will be determined by the interplay of social and political forces" (Morgan 1980:217). However such one-sentence gestural recognitions that there might be obstacles external to theory and analysis, which are faced by socialists in Northern Ireland, serves to underplay the

magnitude of them and to reinforce the widely held notion that a congenital dogmatism is the real cause of socialist failure.

Perhaps though, socialists just need to try harder. Darby's (1976:195) comment, though begging many questions and with its naive voluntarism, seems to suggest this:

"If it is accepted that the formation of a united working class is a desirable objective, then efforts could be directed towards the creation of a social structure similar to that in most western countries, where the main conflicts are between social classes".

The implication that the failure of socialists to have an impact on the Northern Ireland situation is due to the failure of socialists rather than to the Northern Ireland situation, does not sit easily with the author. I have spent a number of years actively involved in the collective struggle to pursue a socialist class politics as a solution to the ethnic conflict in Northern Ireland. It seems at the very least uncharitable to ignore the time and effort which socialist activists have expended in attempting to change the Northern Ireland situation: the endless hours of typing leaflets in dim, bare-walled rooms on battered typewriters; the motivation required to sell papers outside the shipyard at five-thirty on cold and damp winter mornings; the courage summoned to stand in front of unfriendly crowds to criticize their politics; the drudgery of selling papers door-to-door in sprawling and

unfriendly housing estates; the daily discussions with 'contacts' and with 'comrades' about global, national and local political developments, and theoretical, strategic and organisational matters; the time spent in 'branch' meetings, public meetings, trade union meetings, community group meetings, tenants association meetings; the ingenuity required to devise new methods of raising funds and the audacity required to practice them; the creativity needed to produce posters or banners; the gall to withstand the intimidation, the threats, the physical assaults and occasionally the shootings. Many activists cannot easily be accused of not trying, and all of this ought not to be ignored.

While a socialist politics in any capitalist society, particularly perhaps at present, faces formidable opposition, in the situation of Northern Ireland, socialist politics faces particular obstacles, the magnitude of which requires recognition. This is what this dissertation attempts to do.

The study can be located within that body of social science literature which has as its orientation, the ubiquity of ethnic politics in the contemporary world. More particularly it is concerned with the effects of this ubiquity on another type of politics - socialist politics. Further, the focus here is on these effects as they are manifest in the

particular situation of Northern Ireland. Why this particular orientation, concern and focus?

A preoccupation with documenting and explaining the widespread existence of ethnic politics developed in the 1960's as a response to the emergence in the advanced capitalist world of ethnic political movements such as, for example, Basque and Quebec separatism, or Scottish and Welsh Nationalism (Smith 1981:20-1). That such political movements required a response was because their very existence contradicted what was then somewhat of an orthodoxy in the explanation of political movements - modernisation theory.

For modernisation theory<sup>1</sup>, social change is social development, with an emphasis on an evolutionary social differentiation from small groups whose social solidarity is provided by kinship ties and where interaction is circumscribed by particularism and ascription, to large groups whose solidarity is provided by interdependence based upon the recognition of mutual interests, and where interaction is conditioned by principles of universalism and achievement<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: Eisenstadt (1966), Smelser (1968).

<sup>2</sup> cf. Parsons (1960).

While modernisation theory has undoubtedly romanticised the past and misread the present, it is nevertheless a theory which still informs much common sense discourse and much political analysis. It is an approach which sees ethnic allegiances as rather primitive on an evolutionary scale of development. Such an ethnocentric (and by its own standards therefore 'primitive'!) approach is of course confounded by the reality of contemporary ethnic politics. Indeed that such a politics did not quite fit the dominant explanatory paradigm is indicated by the widespread use of the term 'ethnic revival' to refer to it.

Consequently much effort has been expended attempting to explain the salience of ethnicity. It is this which provides a point of departure and general orientation for this study.

The particular concern with the relationship between ethnicity and class politics follows a theme which runs through much of the social science literature on ethnicity. This theme is the relationship between ethnicity and class as different bases of sociality. The implicit question here is not so much 'why ethnicity?' but rather 'why not class?'. This concern is perhaps not surprising given that a major strand of modernist orthodoxy - socialism - assumed that class politics ought to be the politics of the present.

A concern with the relationship between ethnic and class politics is given added significance by certain current political events. If the ethnic revival of the 1960's in the advanced capitalist world illustrated the resilience of ethnic allegiances in the face of decades of liberal universalism, then more recent events in what was formerly the Soviet Union or in Yugoslavia for example, highlight in a most dramatic and more violent way, the ability of particularistic ethnic politics to win people's allegiances, despite decades of exposure to the universalistic claims of socialism.

The ethnic revival can surely now be more appropriately considered an ethnic resurgence. 'Why ethnicity?' and 'why not class?' are questions which address important contemporary political issues.

If one's concern is to examine the relationship between ethnicity and class politics, then Northern Ireland might be considered rather an inauspicious example to focus on, since as previously noted, a cursory glance at current Northern Ireland politics would suggest that no such relationship exists! Ethnic politics quite clearly dominate the political landscape and a class politics is hard to find. This has prompted some observers to claim that it is in addressing the Northern Ireland situation that socialism "... shows itself most deficient ..." (Bew et al 1979:2).

Given this, Northern Ireland could be seen as something of a limit-case, precisely because of the overwhelming dominance of ethnic politics. In such a situation, how socialists in particular advance their class politics and to what effect, may tell us something about class politics but also about the tenacity of ethnic politics, and probably about the relationship between the two <sup>3</sup>. It may also say something about the chances of success for any solution to the Northern Ireland conflict which attempts to cut across ethnic divisions rather than rely on them.

In order to address such issues, chapters one and two of the dissertation consider some of the theoretical issues involved in a study of ethnicity and class politics. Chapter one outlines what have come to be known as the primordialist and the instrumentalist approaches to ethnicity, and considers some of the explanations given within these approaches for the salience of ethnicity over class identity in social relations. It then contends that a 'discourse-theoretical' approach to the subject matter avoids the reductionism of orthodox approaches by holding that ethnic and class politics are not the effect of ethnicity and class identity, but rather the

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<sup>3</sup> There were also a number of more practical considerations which made Northern Ireland a relevant situation to study - a certain familiarity with the place and the opportunity to conduct research there being of relevance.

source of them; that ethnicity and class identity are primarily political phenomena.

Since concern here is with the encounter between ethnicity and class politics, it seems appropriate to consider them in their most frequently met guises. Chapter two therefore examines the relationship between nationalism and socialism. While it is widely recognized that ethnicity is frequently a resource for nationalism, yet can also be a constraint upon it, it is less usually acknowledged that ethno-nationalism may be both a constraint upon class politics but may also be a resource for the pursuit of class politics. The theoretical gymnastics and resulting positions within socialist theory which allow this are outlined in this chapter, since these are the theoretical orthodoxies which inform the political practice of socialists in Northern Ireland which is to be considered in chapters seven and eight.

In order to show the difficulties facing a class politics in Northern Ireland, chapter three documents the myriad ways in which the population is divided vertically and across class into two parallel communities. It does this through a review of the relevant sociological literature on Northern Ireland. The chapter is critical of the cultural and economic reductionism of much of this literature which implies that the ethnic conflict in Northern Ireland is an expression of

cultural and economic differences. The chapter wishes instead to hold that it is again politics which gives cultural and economic differences their particular significance in Northern Ireland.

Chapter four seeks to demonstrate how ethno-politicians in Northern Ireland have used the past to their advantage. Arguably, no history is neutral and this is particularly the case in Northern Ireland. The chapter does not therefore pretend to provide a neutral narrative of past events. Rather, it provides a necessarily cursory overview of the popular ethnic histories of Northern Ireland while making reference also to some elements of a socialist history. Doing this will show the importance of past ethnic conflicts in helping to perpetuate ethnic divisions in contemporary Northern Ireland.

In providing a schematic comparison between Northern Ireland and other ethnically divided societies - focusing particularly on other settler societies, specifically South Africa and Israel - chapter five indicates how particularly entrenched the ethnic divisions are in Northern Ireland.

Since information on the issues addressed in the above chapters - ethnicity, nationalism and socialism, the political economy of Northern Ireland, the history of Northern Ireland, comparisons with other divided societies - is available as

secondary literature, library research provided most of the information on which these chapters are based. However, the paucity of secondary materials on socialist politics in Northern Ireland made it necessary that some primary research be undertaken. Chapter six therefore outlines the sources of information upon which later chapters are based, and the methods and mechanics involved in obtaining it.

Chapter seven is a detailed account of the interventions by socialist organisations in the political life of Northern Ireland in the period from the beginning of the present period of conflict in 1968 to the signing of an agreement in 1985 between the Irish and British governments, intended to help end the conflict.

Chapter eight considers the ways in which socialist class politics in Northern Ireland has both used ethnicity and been constrained by it; and to what effect. The chapter will argue, on the basis of the foregoing chapters, that attempts to solve the Northern Ireland conflict by superseding ethnic divisions, have not been much aided by socialist politics. Those socialists who theoretically, and therefore practically, use ethnicity as a resource for their politics are forced by the reality of the Northern Ireland situation to decide which fraction of the working class, Protestant or Catholic, is the social force capable of bringing about change and overcoming

ethnic conflict. Practically, such a politics serves to reinforce ethnic divisions. For those socialists who see the working class as the agent of change, the major difficulty faced is that in Northern Ireland politics there is no working class, but rather Protestant and Catholic fractions of it. The result has been that, after a brief period of influence in 1968 and 1969, socialist politics has either been effectively absorbed into the ethnic politics of Northern Ireland or rendered insignificant by it.

## CHAPTER ONE

### ETHNICITY AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

Ethnicity may be conceived of as "identity with ones ethnic group" (Connor 1978:386), an ethnic group being a number of people "who conceive of themselves as being alike by virtue of their common ancestry, real or putative, and who are so regarded by others" (Shibutani and Kwan 1965:47). What is important here is a sense of common heritage. That this sentiment of shared ancestry exists in an industrial society is of course not surprising from what has become known in the literature as the primordialist viewpoint. In the work of Shils (1957), Geertz (1963) and Isaacs (1975) for example, ethnicity is seen as rooted in a basic psychological need for identity and belonging<sup>1</sup>. Such a need, being fundamental is

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<sup>1</sup> The primordialist viewpoint, except in its sociobiological form (van den Berghe 1978, 1981, 1986), appears to have been out of favour in recent years - though see Stack (1986) for a call for its resurrection - although this has not prevented a crypto-primordialism from occasionally surfacing in many works which would wish to claim otherwise. Thus Horowitz (1985:55) for, example, considers it useful to "abandon the attempt to discover the vital essence of ethnicity" yet claims that belonging to an ethnic group satisfies the "fundamental human

also, it is averred, transcendental - ethnicity being a constant given in human relations. It is questionable, however, as to whether the primordialist approach with its tendency towards psychological reductionism and dogmatism<sup>2</sup> furthers understanding of the phenomenon much. Certainly it cannot explain historical variations in the salience of ethnic sentiment.

In contrast to the primordialist emphasis on the given and immutable nature of ethnicity, an instrumentalist approach stresses the contingent and socially constructed nature of ethnicity. According to Jenkins (1986:173-74), since the publication of Ethnic Groups and Boundaries by Fredrik Barth (1969), this has been the dominant approach to ethnicity within social anthropology, and arguably, its focus on the processes of boundary maintenance between ethnic groups has been a useful corrective to the tendency within much sociology to reify ethnicity<sup>3</sup>.

Wallman (1979:3) usefully highlights the transactional nature of ethnicity by contending that "ethnicity is the

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requirement" to feel worthy (ibid:185).

<sup>2</sup> The term is here being used to refer to claims which cannot be 'tested'. See Hindess (1977) who uses the term in considering the claims of class analysis in this regard.

<sup>3</sup> For an example of the usefulness of the approach see Armstrong (1982).

process by which 'their' difference is used to enhance the sense of 'us' and "[b]ecause it takes two, ethnicity can only happen at the boundary of 'us', in contact or confrontation or by contrast with 'them'". This claim underlines the importance of the 'Other' in identity, suggesting that identity requires categorization ('us' and 'them') and identification (against 'them', for 'us'). As Barth (1969:13) notes:

"To the extent that actors use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for purposes of interaction, they form ethnic groups in this organisational sense".

From an instrumentalist viewpoint ethnicity is just one basis of sociality amongst many, a contention which suggests that "ethnic relations are best conceived of as particular instances of more general processes of group formation, boundary maintenance, structuring or whatever" (Mason 1986:11). While such an emphasis avoids the determinism of the primordialist position, it arguably errs in the direction of voluntarism<sup>4</sup>, and in any case - in terms of the concerns of this dissertation - says nothing about why ethnic identities appear more salient than class identities in much interaction.

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<sup>4</sup> This is registered by Horowitz (1985:66) who writes: "Group boundaries are made of neither stone nor putty. They are malleable within limits. The mutability of boundaries does not mean that ethnic affiliations are merely strategic, that they can be called forth whenever it is convenient to do so..."

The primordialist/instrumentalist characterisation of approaches to explaining the importance of ethnicity in social relations, has been criticised by van den Berghe (1978:18) as being a rather "simple-minded antinomy" serving "little purpose than to help Ph.D. candidates organise their examination answers". As an antinomy, yes; but as a dichotomy such a characterisation usefully points to two central, though seemingly paradoxical, observations on ethnicity: that the intensity and generality of ethnicity varies according to historical situation, yet has a perennial quality to it.

That these two features of ethnicity ought to be considered together has become something of a touchstone for many analyses of the phenomenon. The problem here is theoretically relating apparently incompatible features. van den Berghe (1978, 1981, 1986) for one attempts to do this by using a sociobiological approach which holds that:

"Ethnic sentiments ... have an underlying driving force of their own, which is ultimately the blunt, purposeless natural selection of genes that are reproductively successful" (van den Berghe 1981:35).

It is not clear however, how this sociobiological perspective can go much beyond the primordial/instrumental dichotomy, for while the author claims that:

"Nepotism and ethnocentrism are biologically evolved mechanisms serving the pursuit of individual self-interest" (ibid.:xi),

he goes on to show that "for all practical and contemporaneous purposes" (ibid.:58) economic and political forces condition ethnicity. Arguably what the author does is substitute the biological reductionism of sociobiology for the psychological reductionism of primordialism before separately arguing an instrumentalist viewpoint.

It could be argued that the search for the fundamental roots of ethnicity which is apparent in the literature, reflects the power of what Smith (1988) with reference to nationalism, calls the myth that ethnic bonds have existed "from time immemorial" (ibid.:1). Indeed van den Berghe (1981:27) acknowledges that the common descent of ethnicity is a fiction, though a fiction which "has to be sufficiently credible for ethnic solidarity to be effective" (ibid.). More precisely, "the myth has to be rooted in historical reality to be accepted" and that "unless ethnicity is rooted in generations of shared experience, it cannot be created ex nihilo" (ibid.).

Historical experience, however, is not a given, is not something which people - not even people in the past! - have access to. Rather what they have are histories -

interpretations of the past made from the vantage point of the present. Such histories, such discourses of common ancestry, such myths; are manufactured. In this regard, following Anderson (1983), ethnic communities are 'imagined communities'.

It is precisely the "myth of origins and descent" (Smith 1988:14) which is important in ethnicity and certainly this myth often has a long history. It is this that Smith (1988:10) alludes to in his argument with reference to the nation - that the nation is a modern phenomenon but it is dependant upon "the much longer time-spans of pre-modern ethnies". In this way Smith attempts to link both the perennial yet variable qualities of ethnicity through what he terms a 'symbolic analysis' (Smith 1986:14), an analysis of the symbols and mythologies of common heritage.

While there is an incipient primordialism in Smith's approach, the acknowledgement that it is ethnic intellectuals who provide the contemporary narratives of a history of "ethnic ties and ethnic mosaics" which have origins in the past and continue "into the modern world" (ibid.) shows ethnicity to be a socially constructed and political phenomenon.

If there is no primordial reason for the ubiquity of ethnicity, why is ethnicity a generally successful basis of political mobilization and class not? As Horowitz (1985:106) notes: "ethnic affiliations generally seem to elicit more passionate loyalty than do class allegiances". Class and ethnicity are, of course, different orders of phenomena (Miles 1982:156), and cannot therefore legitimately be compared. Class is a theoretical construct used by many social analysts to categorize people in terms of the social analyst's definition of their interests and relationships to each other with reference to economic activity in society whether in production or in markets. The concept of ethnicity refers to relationships between people as they are subjectively experienced by those people<sup>5</sup>. The two concepts are therefore not mutually exclusive in this respect. In another respect however they might be: that is where class is held to be a subjective experience and identification. This difference it could be argued, is registered by the difference between 'class-in-itself' and 'class-for-itself'. Class analysis in the first sense can thus be prior to an examination of the subjective experience of concrete individuals who may not see

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<sup>5</sup> Though Brass (1985), for example, considers classes and ethnic groups both to be objective categories and subjective communities.

themselves as members of a class but rather as members of say, an ethnic group<sup>6</sup>.

This then allows a number of authors to "recognize that class formation may be facilitated by the existence of ethnic identities" (Rex 1986:80) and that ethnicity can be "interiorized" (Wolpe 1986:111) within the class struggle. Certainly, as Horowitz (1985:32) notes: "Ethnic and class conflict coincide when ethnicity and class coincide - in ranked systems". It is therefore not surprising that much of the emphasis within sociology, with its focus on societies of advanced capitalism, has been on situations of 'race relations'. If these are considered as situations where physical markers are used as a basis for the invidious categorization of people, then the history of European colonization and of labour migration has established many situations where 'race' and class differences coincide.

Split-labour markets have also been considered as situations where "class antagonism takes the form of ethnic antagonisms" (Bonacich 1972:553), when higher and lower paid workers have different economic interests which can be furthered through ethnic identification. 'Middleman minority' situations too, have been considered ones in which economic

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<sup>6</sup> It does not therefore follow however that the model is more 'real' than the 'illusory' experience!

interests are pursued through ethnic identifications and categorizations (Bonacich 1973, van den Berghe 1981). Recognition of such situations allows Bonacich (1972:553) to claim that "while much rhetoric of ethnic antagonism concentrates on ethnicity and race, it really in large measure ... expresses ... class conflict".

There are of course a number of difficulties with holding that ethnicity 'really' expresses something more fundamental. Reluctance to take seriously people's consciousness, overlooks another equally plausible explanation in this regard, that economic antagonisms are an expression of ethnic conflict.

Rational choice theory embraces a similar reductionism. The work of Hechter et al (1982), Hechter (1986), and Banton (1983) for example, purports to explain identification with an ethnic group by suggesting such identification to be a matter of rational choice on the part of individuals seeking to maximize advantage in relation to their preferences. In other words, people will identify with an ethnic group if it advances their rational interests. In this regard it is claimed that "it can be expected that everyone will prefer more wealth, power and honour to less" (Hechter 1986:269). As has been noted elsewhere (Adam 1983:548) such an approach "falsely universalizes a specific capitalist North American

norm that claims everything is for sale"<sup>7</sup>. As Horowitz (1985:120) points out:

"We have become unduly accustomed to think of economic ambition as being unaffected by countervailing values like sociability, resignation and the fulfilment of religious obligations. We are also inclined to think of aspirations for improved status and income as being boundless".

Such custom and inclination is often confounded precisely by the importance of the non-economic in ethnic relations<sup>8</sup>. In any case, rational choice models do not explain what it is about ethnicity that makes it, rather than class, the more rational choice when one is calculating advancement.

From a primordialist position the salience of ethnicity over class is not because of any rational cost-benefit calculus on the part of actors, but because ethnic ties constitute an "all embracing matrix of intimate, affective relationships" which form a "pre-existing solidary community"

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<sup>7</sup> For a trenchant critique of rational choice models of behaviour in sociology generally, see Hindess (1989).

<sup>8</sup> The 'plural society' approach to explaining ethnic relations - see for example, Smith (1969; 1974), Kuper (1971), and van den Berghe (1967;1981) - is one which stresses precisely such characteristics but provides no means of analyzing class or economic differences within ethnic groups, and are therefore not considered here. See Adam and Giliomee (1979:42-45) for a critique.

(van den Berghe 1981:257), whereas class ties are "ties of convenience, based on selfish opportunism" (ibid.:244). Arguably such a claim serves to romanticise ethnicity and fails to take the historical importance of class solidarity seriously enough. From an instrumentalist perspective the questions 'why ethnicity?' and 'why not class?' may be answered with respect to a particular situation after empirical examination, but not in a general manner. That is to say, such questions cannot be given in advance of knowing something about the conditions obtaining in a particular situation.

It might be assumed that the questions 'why ethnicity?' and 'why not class?' would be particularly challenging to much socialist theory. Socialism can be defined as:

"a political ideology based on the objective of constructing planned and non-commodity forms of production and distribution" (Hindess 1983:10).

What is important for this study is that class, and more particularly the working class, figures prominently in much socialist theory, as the privileged agent of socialist change - it being held that the working class has an 'interest' in achieving socialism.

How does socialist politics then, with its privileging of class identity in theory and practice, account for the salience of ethnicity? Much socialist politics is informed by a modernisation perspective on ethnicity whereby ethnic ties based on kinship are acknowledged to be the earliest form of human sociality, remaining paramount through slave-owning and feudal modes of production, but then were destined to be superseded by the relations of common class interest which were to be an inevitable concomitant of capitalist industrialisation.

Much literature on socialist ideas sees adherence to them in terms of 'spontaneity' or 'voluntarism' (Wolpe 1970). The former holds that socialist ideas develop spontaneously from certain objective conditions associated with capitalism - conditions which reveal true class interests. In this regard there are a number of variants of the 'immiseration' thesis, none of which however explains why perception of the intolerability of material conditions should necessarily lead to adherence to socialist ideas. Indeed this mechanical equating of awareness of a subordinate or impoverished position in society with an awareness of the need for socialist change led Mallet (1965) to see 'the new working class', Nairn (1968) to see students, Nairn (1981) to see nationalists, and others to see no group as an agent for socialist change.

The voluntarist position stresses the power of propaganda and exhortation to awaken the latent socialist consciousness and class interest in the proletariat. Debray (1967) in stressing the efficacy of socialist action by a minority as an example to the masses, exhibits this voluntarism - a position adopted by many socialists to justify tactics of individual terror as an example to the masses.

As with liberal modernisation theory, so with much socialist theory: faced with evidence of the salience of ethnic ties under industrialisation, rather than alter theory, a special explanation is devised. In order to fit an evolutionary perspective which sees class interest as inexorably displacing ethnic allegiance, ethnicity must necessarily be regarded as an aberration - often labelled 'false consciousness'. The paradox here is that if class ideas are given by class position then of course it ought not to be possible for people to hold false ideas.

Such explanations operate variously with economic or psychological reductionism and a class essentialism. Such essentialism has of course been widely criticised. However there is another strand of socialist theorising which is informed by what has been labelled a 'discourse-theoretical' approach (Jessop 1982:191-210) to social analysis, and which

avoids the class essentialism associated with what is considered orthodox socialist theory.

In this regard, Hindess and his colleagues<sup>9</sup> have cogently argued that interests of any kind, class, ethnic, gender or whatever, are not given but are socially constructed. Indeed just as Smith (1988:14) argues that the myth of common ancestry is a myth of ethnic politics, so it could be suggested that the claim that fixed and given class interests exist, is a myth of socialist politics. It is through winning support for such myths that ethnic and socialist politicians link 'interests' to particular constituencies, and attempt to mobilise such constituencies in pursuit of particular interests.

In this respect, Weber (1968:389) maintains that it is politics "that inspires belief in common ethnicity". Also, despite the discursive linking of the working class with a class consciousness in The Communist Manifesto (1968), Marx and Engels in their practical political activities, as well as in their concrete political analyses, illustrated the importance of political activity in securing a relationship between a belief in common class identity and a particular constituency - the one they considered to be the most

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<sup>9</sup> See for example: Cutler et al (1977, 1978); Hindess (1983, 1987).

receptive to socialist ideas, and the force most likely to effect them - the working class.

Such a position, following Laclau (1977), holds that the relationship between categories of people and the political ideas they hold in common, is not a relationship of reduction but rather of articulation. It is in this respect that Lenin (1978:57-62) stressed the importance of agitation - political explanations given, not abstractly, but to people concretely experiencing and confronting particular situations (Wolpe 1970). 'Patient explanation' was a means of attempting to articulate socialist ideas with people in particular situations.

In a relationship of articulation there is no guarantee that socialist politicians will be successful. Socialist ideas, as Hall (1982:7) points out, are only held if "they displace other, not so good, not so powerful ideas". As Laclau and Mouffe (1985:85) argue, the "socialist determination of the working class ... depends upon the political mediation of intellectuals"<sup>10</sup>. Such an argument points to the importance of politics.

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<sup>10</sup> The term intellectual is here being used in the Gramscian manner to refer to those with an organisational role in society. See Gramsci (1971).

The importance of politics is grasped if it is considered therefore not as epiphenomenal to the 'real' underlying structures which govern individual and social behaviour, but when seen as operating as a relatively autonomous level of social practice<sup>11</sup> - as a process which mediates social structure and the behaviour of people; as both an ideological and practical process which mobilizes people into social movements.

The conception of politics being used here, is not the traditional political science approach - still widespread in everyday discourse - in which elections, political parties, governments, bureaucracies, and elaborated political philosophies such as Liberalism, Conservatism or Socialism, constitute politics. Recent social theory manages to avoid this ethno-centric and unnecessarily restrictive viewpoint by recognizing that relations of power are rather implicated in every social relationship<sup>12</sup>. As Donald and Hall (1986:xiv) suggest:

"What 'politics' is defined as at any one time - what it includes and what it excludes; where its boundaries fall; what concepts are considered legitimate to its

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<sup>11</sup> There is of course a substantial literature on this. See for example: Poulantzas (1973); Cutler et al (1977, 1978); Hall (1977); Hindess (1987).

<sup>12</sup> cf. Giddens (1984:14-16).

analysis and what illegitimate; why at one time politics is confined to the 'public' realm and at another time (as the result of extensive contestation) to 'the personal is political' realm, as modern feminists have convincingly argued - indicates that the domain of politics is not 'naturally' defined, but is ideologically constructed".

As an ideological process, politics provides the discourse within which cultural and material differences between people are identified and given salience and, if successful, in such a way as to engender a degree of what Barrington Moore (1972) calls 'moral outrage'. Moreover, if politics is to become effective, elaborated political discourse must become popular, must inform and dominate the common sense thinking of what (Giddens 1984:41-44) calls 'practical consciousness', and what Donald and Hall (1986:xii) describe as:

"the often fragmentary, episodic, internally contradictory, and incomplete chains of thought which ordinary people use in everyday social intercourse to figure out and make sense of what is happening in the political and social world".

Laclau (1977:85) has developed a useful formal theory of the process by which this discursive dominance might occur: ideologically, politics is concerned with the linking or articulation of discourses, articulation being a symbolic process of overdetermination whereby elements of formerly

distinct discourses become moments of a new and unified one. The 'success' of a discourse in this regard is shown by its ability to "fulfil a role of condensation with regard to others" (ibid.:101). A successful discourse, in other words, is one which symbolizes others, which can 'summon' (Hall 1985:104) others in our thinking. The coherence of a complex of discursive elements is given by the connotative rather than necessarily logical connections between them.

Following Althusser's (1977) notes on ideology, the importance of discourse lies in its construction of subjectivities or identities. Indeed Laclau (1977:101) holds that it is the subject position or identity constructed within and by a discourse which gives a discourse its unity. Althusser (ibid) also highlights the necessity not only of a positive identification with the subject of a discourse, but also the negative identification with its opposite, for this provides the minimum criterion for differentiating self and other<sup>13</sup>.

Politics therefore is concerned not merely with the articulation - and disarticulation - of discourses, but with the articulation - and disarticulation - of identities; with

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<sup>13</sup> The issue of identity and difference has of course become a major concern of much recent social theory. See for example Foucault (1973); Said (1979); Derrida (1977, 1981).

a successful politics ensuring that a particular identity becomes dominant in common sense thinking, that is, becomes popular.

As a practical process, privileging a particular political discourse and identity is accomplished by political activists, by what Gramsci (1971) terms intellectuals. These activists must produce ideas, disseminate them, recruit support for them<sup>14</sup>, and mobilize this support and the resources it controls in order to realize these ideas<sup>15</sup>. In this way abstract political ideas become a material force when they "seize the masses" (Marx 1970:137) - when they become popular.

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<sup>14</sup> Dissemination and recruitment can usefully be considered, following Althusser (1971) as involving a process of 'interpellation' or addressing of people. If successful, people must recognize that they are indeed the ones being addressed. To do this, specific propaganda discourses which seek to recruit people to support an elaborated political philosophy must attempt to link elements of this discourse to the common sense discourses of those being addressed. Often this is attempted by appeals to 'interests'.

<sup>15</sup> The importance of ideas in the process of mobilization has too often been overshadowed in the social movement literature, by a concern with rational choice and organisational behaviour. But see recent works by Melucci (1989) and Eyerman & Jamison (1991).

The argument of this chapter is that ethnic and class identities are political phenomena, not reducible to biology, psychology or economics; though often affected by political claims that they are. Politics is not, therefore, the effect of structurally defined identities, but rather is the source of such identities. This is a position which theoretically allows for ethnic identity and politics to prevail over class identity and politics. Indeed it is a position which acknowledges the likelihood of this, given that the history of ethnic politics is a much longer history than is the history of class politics. As Debray (1977:34) claims:

"horizontal class divisions appeared far later in social history than the segmentary cultural divisions of ethnos",

and it is these "deepest layers" of social formation which last longest - the "hard core" of social organisation is always "archaic". Therefore the historical force of ethnicity is already a feature of the political landscape, a feature which has to be taken account of in the pursuance of socialist politics. While such a viewpoint privileges ethnicity, an adequate answer to the question 'why not class?', can be given only with reference to a particular situation, and only after an examination of the processes by which socialist politics attempt to construct a class identity, the obstacles it faces in doing this, and the consequent effects.

In contemporary societies the form of ethnicity most frequently encountered by those seeking to establish class as a basis of social identity and solidarity, is nationalism. How socialist theory has taken account of nationalism is considered in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

### NATIONALISM IN SOCIALIST THEORY

If the dominant form of ethnic politics which socialist class politics has been confronted with has been nationalism, this is probably not surprising since, as Connor (1984:6) notes: intensive interaction between the two 'isms' [ie. socialism and nationalism] was assured by their nearly coincident chronology". A sustained, theoretically informed socialist politics was indeed beginning to gain widespread support in the early to mid- nineteenth century, while: "Nationalism, as an ideology and movement, is a phenomenon that dates from the later eighteenth century" (Smith 1986:11).

Connor (1978:383) suggests that nationalism be defined as identification with and loyalty to the nation, and while he quite properly wishes to differentiate between nation and state, if the term nation is not to mean the same as ethnic group, then some recognition of the political dimension of the nation is necessary. It is this recognition which allows Adam and Moodley (1986:27) for example, to refer to nationalism as "the political expression of shared ethnic consciousness, or

politicized ethnicity", although clearly nationalism is only one manifestation of politicized ethnicity<sup>1</sup>

It has been pointed out elsewhere (O'Sullivan See 1986:5-6) that Coleman (1963:420-424) has usefully indicated the twin functions of nationalism to be 'nation-building' and 'state-building'. A nation he defines as:

"a large group of people who feel that they form a single and exclusive community destined to be an independent state" (ibid. 421).

A nation, unless considered a natural phenomenon, has indeed to be constructed. A large group of people have to come to hold such national sentiments and further, in terms of state-building, have to engage in political action to realize political autonomy.

Indeed much of the literature on nationalism emphasises the instrumental nature of the phenomenon. Whether nationalism developed to ease the dislocations of an ineluctable evolution from traditional to modern society - as suggested by for example Smelser (1968), Eisenstadt (1966) or Deutsch (1969) - or to establish the large home markets required for capitalism - as suggested by Lenin (1968:46) - it functioned as an

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<sup>1</sup> As the case of Northern Ireland Protestants makes clear.

integrating ideology, one produced and disseminated by elites for the purpose of nation-building and state-building. As Gellner (1983:55) bluntly states "it is Nationalism which engenders nations and not the other way round".

It is clear however that nations cannot be manufactured at, or by, mere will. Greater resources are needed. Ethnicity is just such a resource, if the solidarity provided by ethnic allegiances can be successfully wedded to the nationalist project of nation-building and state-building, to produce an ethno-nationalism. That ethnicity indeed constitutes a critical resource for nationalists is alluded to by Smith (1986) when he writes of the 'Ethnic Origins of Nations' and more explicitly recognised when he holds that nations are modern phenomena but "dependant upon the survival of ethnic ties and ethnic mosaics from pre-modern times" (1988:10). Similarly, Hobsbawm (1990:64) points to ethnicity as being:

"something that binds together populations living in large territories or even in dispersion, and lacking a common polity, into something which can be called proto-nations".

This:

"made the task of nationalism easier ... insofar as existing symbols and sentiments of proto-national community could be mobilized behind a modern cause or a modern state" (ibid.:77)

While the terms proto-nation and proto-nationalism are unfortunate in giving the impression that nationalism was to necessarily follow, the author clearly points to ethnicity as a potential resource for nationalism.

Whether ethno-nationalisms are products of and reactions to uneven modernisation - as held for example by Deutsch (1969) or Gellner (1969); colonial domination - as held by for example Smith & Kuper (1969) or Hechter (1975); or uneven capitalist development - as held by for example Nairn (1981); the nationalist project of nation-building and state-building is undoubtedly aided when the nation-to-be-built is already "a large group of people who feel they form a single and exclusive community " (Coleman *ibid.*)<sup>2</sup>.

However, while ethnicity can thus be a resource for Nationalists it can also, under particular conditions, operate as a constraint. The difficulties faced by rulers in the ex-colonial third-world in their attempts to construct single national identities in multi-ethnic states, illustrates this<sup>3</sup>, as does the emergence of ethno-nationalisms in the multi-ethnic states of the first and second worlds.

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<sup>2</sup> Nationalists are also undoubtedly helped, as Connor (1972:332) suggests, by the widespread dissemination of the principle of national self-determination.

<sup>3</sup> On this see, for example, Connor (1972).

Turning to the relationship between nationalism and socialism, as Hobsbawm (1990:123) notes:

"Nothing seems more logical ... than to see the appeals of nationalism and socialism as mutually exclusive, and the advance of one as equivalent to the retreat of the other".

For as Connor (1984:5) points out:

"Nationalism is predicated upon the assumption that the most fundamental divisions of humankind are the many vertical cleavages that divide people into ethnonational groups";

and that socialism:

"rests upon the conviction that the most fundamental human divisions are horizontal class distinctions that cut across national groupings" (ibid).

Yet these are indeed assumptions and convictions, which have not prevented socialists attempting to press nationalism into the service of socialism. Indeed as Debray (1977:34) notes:

"Socialist ... victories have always been linked in one way or another to movements of national liberation".

For this study, it is perhaps appropriate that socialist theoretical consideration of the relationship between class politics and nationalism should have their origins in the

writings of Marx on Ireland. Indeed the importance which Marx gave to Irish national independence in the 1860's is a touchstone for many Marxists today<sup>4</sup>. Lowy (1976:138) suggests that these writings elaborate a number of themes which became important for subsequent socialist theorising of the issue:

"only the national liberation of the oppressed nation enables national divisions and antagonisms to be overcome, and permits the working class of both nations to unite against their common enemy, the capitalists ... the oppression of another nation helps to reinforce the ideological hegemony of the bourgeoisie over workers in the oppressing nation: 'Any nation that oppresses another forges its own chains' ... the emancipation of the oppressed nation weakens the economic, political, military and ideological bases of the dominating classes in the oppressor nation and this contributes to the revolutionary struggle of the working class of that nation".

The importance which Marx confers on national self-determination is, it could be argued, an importance subordinate to the broader principle of proletarian internationalism, and it has been the tension between the

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<sup>4</sup> In the 1860's Irish national independence may well have advanced the class struggle - but Marx's claim was based on a concrete analysis of conditions at the time. It could be argued that to claim, as some do, that therefore Irish nationalist movements today foster class struggle, is to subvert Marx's approach to political analysis and practice.

issues of nationalism and internationalism which have framed socialist debate ever since.

For example, within the international socialist movement from 1889 through the first world war, much of the debate on what socialist theory terms 'the national question', was between those who opposed nationalism "in the name of the principle of proletarian internationalism" (Lowy 1976:85), and those who supported various forms of national autonomy<sup>5</sup>.

It was Lenin's writings on the national question which overcame the abstract dualism of either nationalism or internationalism, yet within the broad principle of proletarian internationalism. For Lenin<sup>6</sup> recognition of the right to self-determination was considered a pre-requisite for the practical construction of international workers unity. But his approach was a realist one, in opposition to abstract and moralistic notions of either uncritical support for, or rejection of, nationalist struggles; and a political one which avoided the economism or culturalism associated with earlier

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<sup>5</sup> On the difference between the internationalism of the 'radical left' positions of Rosa Luxemburg, Anton Pannekoek, Leon Trotsky, Joseph Strasser; and the 'nationalist' positions of the 'Austro-Marxists' Karl Renner and Otto Bauer, see Lowy (1976:85-94) or Munck (1986:29-68).

<sup>6</sup> See for example Lenin (1975).

positions<sup>7</sup>. For while national self-determination was considered a democratic right, this did not mean that socialists were thereby obliged to consider actual self-determination absolutely necessary for international workers unity. Rather, whether or not particular nationalist struggles ought to be supported was a political question to be answered on the basis of a calculation as to their usefulness in furthering international workers unity and the international class struggle<sup>8</sup>. In this sense national movements may be seen as progressive or not, but as Bew et al (1979:10-29) show, this is not an abstract or moral question but a concrete political one.

Indeed after April 1917 Lenin came to consider that successful struggles for national self-determination on the basis of capitalism were unlikely in the era of imperialism<sup>9</sup>. In this he was adopting the thesis of permanent revolution which was implicit in Marx<sup>10</sup> but made explicit by Trotsky (1971). This theory held that in an era of imperialism national independence could be a by-product of, rather than a pre-requisite for, the class struggle to change social

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<sup>7</sup> See footnote 5.

<sup>8</sup> This allows Connor (1984) to label Lenin's approach to the national question as 'strategic Marxism'.

<sup>9</sup> See Lowy (1976:97).

<sup>10</sup> See for example Marx (1978:154-64).

relations within a nation and internationally. This was so because capitalism was now monopoly capitalism and an international phenomenon, and the very dominance of international capitalist organisations prevented the development of strong indigenous capitalist classes which might have an interest in mobilizing a population in a struggle for national independence - or for other democratic reforms - on a capitalist basis.

The democratic right of self-determination as well as other democratic rights to vote, assemble, speak freely ... rights which were in the past won by populations whose struggles were led by nascent national bourgeoisies, could only now be achieved through the struggle of populations led by the only force capable of changing society - the proletariat - a force which was unlikely merely to be satisfied to exchange a set of foreign exploiters for a set of domestic ones, but would rather have democracy and national independence on a socialist basis.

This was the argument for the theoretical possibility of a class movement making socialist demands which would transform social relations while in the process also leading the struggle for democratic demands. This was contrary to a view which held the former to be dependent upon the attainment of the latter. These two theoretical positions have since

petrified into the abstract orthodoxies of what are "stagist" and "permanence" theories of class struggle. The stagist idea holds that class political struggle involves a number of stages - the struggle for democratic reforms within capitalism providing the democracy which would allow free expression of and open struggle for national independence, which in turn by excluding "external" interference creates the conditions for unadulterated class struggle within a nation<sup>11</sup>.

By contrast the idea of the permanence - though continuity would be a more apposite term - of class struggle holds that there are no necessary stages of revolution to which democratic or socialist demands correspond and that social struggles cannot be held back to make them correspond with a theory that suggests otherwise<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> This strategy became closely allied to Soviet foreign policy when coexistence with capitalism became paramount with the advent of Stalin's notion of socialism in one country. Connor (1984:59-61) shows this. The strategy had the effect of putting socialist demands for radical societal changes "on hold" because democratic capitalism had to be achieved first. This was undoubtedly less of a threat to imperialism than the former strategy - indeed the perceived necessity - of making revolution international.

<sup>12</sup> Laclau and Mouffe (1986:47-92) trenchantly criticise both theories as essentialist in assuming that there are either necessary stages or necessary demands in history.

Problems arise when these two positions - as with the positions on nationalism and internationalism - become dogmas; that is when theory instead of being a guide to action becomes a rigid blueprint for it, leading on the one hand to an abstract pro-nationalism, and on the other to an abstract anti-nationalism. It could be argued that what distinguished Marx and Lenin and Trotsky from their respective contemporaries was precisely their recognition of the importance of the relative autonomy of the political moment in social processes.

With respect therefore to the relationship between nationalist movements and class politics, to avoid the twin dogmatisms of an abstract nationalism or an abstract internationalism it is necessary to have some kind of political calculus in order to decide in any given situation whether an ethno-nationalism is progressive or not. Certain political concepts which allow this have themselves become what Bew et al (1979:1) call orthodoxies - particularly the concepts of imperialism and labour aristocracy.

With respect to the concept of imperialism: identifying a nation as oppressor and another as oppressed is for some sufficient justification to support national struggles in the oppressed nation for such struggles weaken the dominance of the capitalist class in the oppressor nation, contributing to

the struggle of the working class in that nation and permitting the working classes of both nations then to unite against their common class enemy. For others, imperialism is considered progressive insofar as it promotes monopoly capitalism - a necessary pre-requisite for socialism.

With respect to the concept of labour aristocracy: since a labour aristocracy is the creation of imperialist exploitation of other nations - to an extent that allows the ruling class of the imperialist nation to privilege a section of its own working class - it is therefore an ally of, and indeed a part of, imperialism and consequently an obstacle to socialist politics. For others, a labour aristocracy, precisely in being a creation of imperialism - an advanced form of capitalism - is the most class conscious section of the proletariat, and in this respect a progressive force.

It is these theoretical orthodoxies of self-determination, imperialism and labour aristocracy which allow socialist politics to come to terms with ethno-nationalism in its analysis, providing no foolproof way of determining the likelihood of nationalism furthering socialist class politics or hindering them, yet allowing socialists a flexibility in using ethno-nationalism to their advantage. Indeed, as Hobsbawm (1990:126) notes, there are many examples of situations in which "mass movements could simultaneously

express aspirations which we regard as mutually exclusive". A strategic socialism successfully incorporated ethno-nationalism to establish regimes in the Soviet Union, China, Yugoslavia and Vietnam for example<sup>13</sup>. Nationalism was also closely associated with the political left during the anti-fascist period of the 1930's and 1940's, an association reinforced in the post-war period of the colonial revolutions (Hobsbawm 1990:148), and still evident in contemporary movements such as the A.N.C. and the P.L.O. This record suggests that socialists are well able to promote change by strategically linking ethnicity and class. It might be expected therefore that in Northern Ireland, socialists would be able to do the same. Before examining this however it is necessary to describe the situation which socialist theory and practice is actually confronted with in Northern Ireland.

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<sup>13</sup> On this see Connor (1984).

## CHAPTER THREE

### NORTHERN IRELAND: A DIVIDED SOCIETY

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter constitutes a review of the sociological literature on the Northern Ireland situation. It is undertaken in such a way as to illustrate the organic nature of ethnicity within the fabric of Northern Ireland society, showing the divisions in personal identities and activities, religion, housing, schooling, work, political allegiances ... It then critically reviews a number of the explanations of the conflict, arguing that what is missing from them, and indeed what is necessary for an understanding of the situation, is a recognition of the importance of politics.

Northern Ireland was not a topic of academic analysis until it became 'the Northern Ireland problem' in 1968<sup>1</sup>, when

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<sup>1</sup> There had been a few studies prior to 1968, but nothing compared to the 'explosion' of research since then. Whyte (1990:x) estimates the number of items in a social science bibliography would be about 7,000, leading him to comment that "it is quite possible that, in proportion to size, Northern Ireland is the

the present 'Troubles'<sup>2</sup> began. On October 5, 1968 the oft-times violent politics of Northern Ireland became visible through television cameras to both a local and an international audience when violence on a civil rights march left a number of people injured. The period since then has been the most persistently violent in the history of Northern Ireland. Almost 3,000 people have been killed; more than 32,000 injured. (Flackes & Elliott 1989:411,414).

This number of deaths may not seem particularly large in comparison to other conflicts - witness Sri Lanka or Lebanon - but in a population of only 1.4 million the impact is great<sup>3</sup>. Death and injury have been extensive enough to ensure that virtually everyone in Northern Ireland has been close to it.

While there are many different chronologies of the Troubles the one which has widest currency is that which outlines the most dramatic or sensational events: the civil rights marches of 1968 and 1969; the British army being put on the streets in August 1969; the introduction of internment without trial in August 1971; the shooting of 13 people by the British army on 'Bloody Sunday', January 30, 1972; the

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most heavily researched area on earth"!).

<sup>2</sup> Colloquial term for the conflict.

<sup>3</sup> An equivalent number of dead for the population of Canada would be 41,000.

introduction of direct British rule in Northern Ireland on June 30, 1972; the deaths of 9 people on 'Bloody Friday', July 21, 1972 when 22 I.R.A. (Irish Republican Army)<sup>4</sup> bombs exploded in the capital city, Belfast; the Ulster Workers Council general strike of May 1974 which brought down the Northern Ireland administration; the deaths of 10 Republican paramilitary prisoners on hunger strikes in 1980/81; the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement<sup>5</sup> in 1985 and the subsequent protests against it.

These broad contours are supplemented by the details of interminable riots, shootings and bombings<sup>6</sup>. While such statistics of the conflict are generally agreed upon, explanations of what these statistics are symptoms of, differ widely<sup>7</sup>.

Many journalistic accounts write of the conflict as a military one between the I.R.A. and the British Army, with

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<sup>4</sup> I.R.A.. Organisation dedicated to remove the British presence in Ireland by military means.

<sup>5</sup> An agreement by the British and Irish governments to work more closely together on the Northern Ireland problem.

<sup>6</sup> Between 1969 and 1987, for example, there were at least: 30,525 shooting incidents; 8,548 explosions; 4,020 bombs defused; 7,770 malicious fires, and: 13,161 armed robberies (Flackes and Elliott 1989:415).

<sup>7</sup> See Whyte (1990) for the most comprehensive review.

the I.R.A. concerned to force the British Army out of Northern Ireland. Certainly since the introduction of British troops into Northern Ireland in 1969, this has been an important element of the conflict. Indeed between 1969 and 1985, for example, 386 British soldiers and 184 I.R.A. volunteers were killed. However, concentration on this element of the conflict ignores the existence of other military and paramilitary forces: so that between 1969 and 1985, for example, those killed also included 158 members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, 235 members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, 65 Loyalist paramilitaries and 54 non-I.R.A. Republican paramilitaries. It also ignores nearly 2,000 civilian deaths. So the "I.R.A. - British Army military conflict" focus is rarely an explanation and more often a partial description of the conflict, partial because it ignores other forms of conflict in Northern Ireland: riots, beatings, harassment, discrimination and so on.

Another explanation appearing widely in the mass media is that which sees the Northern Ireland situation as a law-and-order problem: that the conflict is between those who break laws and those who enforce them. This has been the view held by successive British administrations. The resources which they have been able to mobilise to promote this definition of the situation are considerable: the judicial apparatus of the state which in practice - since 1976, when the British

government policy of "criminalisation" was established - treats those whose behaviour prior to this time was considered by the state to be political, as criminal. The informational agencies of the state repeat this definition which is subsequently repeated in the mass media. That hunger strikes and demonstrations involving large numbers of people have taken place on this issue, indicates that such a "criminality" definition of the situation is a contested one. Such a narrow "law and order" focus does not in itself constitute an explanation for why so many people support or engage in such "criminal" activities.

#### **CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS**

It is in the nature of the discipline that the specifically sociological literature has generally attempted to explain the conflict by examining the social structure of Northern Ireland. In this regard the said literature has usefully exposed the cultural and material differences within the population. The predominant organising principle of this literature has been that of a division between Protestants and Catholics<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Whyte (1990:18-22) observes that such labels were not frequently used, either by academic commentators, the media or politicians, prior to the current troubles. Which raises some interesting questions about the role of

Such an organizing principle seems appropriate since most people in Northern Ireland today do indeed classify themselves as either Protestant or Catholic - to such an extent that in a study of 1,291 persons in 1968, Rose (1971:248) found that 1,287 accepted one or other label. Whyte (1990:20) similarly reports that in a study by Smith (1987b) 1,654 out of 1,672 survey respondents accepted Protestant and Catholic labels.

Censuses from 1861 to 1981 provide an indication of how many Protestants and how many Catholics constituted the population over this period, and show the proportions ranging from between 33.5% Catholic and 63.3% Protestant to 40.9% Catholic and 59% Protestant<sup>9</sup>. The approximate breakdown of the population is therefore 40% Catholic and 60% Protestant.

The importance to people in Northern Ireland of being able to ascertain the identity of those they meet has often been referred to in ethnographic studies<sup>10</sup>. Burton (1972) uses the term 'telling' to refer to the myriad methods used by people to ascertain whether people are Protestant or Catholic.

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sociology in what might be termed a "politics of signification" (Hall 1982).

<sup>9</sup> These figures are from Whyte (1990:23), who also discusses some of the difficulties of interpreting census figures in Northern Ireland.

<sup>10</sup> In this regard see for example Harris (1972), Burton (1978), Larsen (1982a).

For example, since housing, work and schooling are segregated<sup>11</sup> to a greater rather than a lesser extent in Northern Ireland, knowing where a person lives, works, or what school they attend or attended, 'tells' whether the person in question is a Protestant or a Catholic. What buses people travel on, since people ride buses which travel to either Protestant or Catholic areas, often provides the same information. Which newspapers people read, which sports they play or watch, which social clubs they belong to - these things also differentiate Protestants and Catholics<sup>12</sup>.

The colours a person wears also offer identity clues - green, or green white and gold are Catholic badges while orange, or red, white and blue are Protestant. A person's name will provide identity clues, with surnames such as O'Halloran, McAfee, O'Connor being Catholic and Patterson, Boyd, Dickson being Protestant. While first names such as Bridget, Briege and Sean are Catholic, James, Billy and Elizabeth are Protestant names.

A person's vocabulary provides clues to their identity. Protestants will say Londonderry when referring to the second largest city in Northern Ireland, or Ulster when referring to contemporary Northern Ireland. Catholics will speak of Derry,

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<sup>11</sup> See below.

<sup>12</sup> See below

the North or the Six Counties. Pronunciation also 'tells'; Catholics and Protestants pronounce the letter 'h' differently<sup>13</sup>.

Such are the symbols of Protestant and Catholic identity in Northern Ireland. While of course such significations are based on stereotypes, nevertheless they provide, in the useful manner of stereotypes, a shorthand method of assessing the possibilities for interaction. Such 'telling' then allows for what Larsen (1982a:145) calls 'avoidance' - either of interaction altogether or of what in Northern Ireland would be taboo subjects between people of different 'persuasions' - politics, the security situation, the latest shooting ... This allows for a restricted form of interaction between Protestants and Catholics in public. 'Telling' and 'avoidance' are methods by which people, though divided, interact: and methods by which people reproduce Protestant and Catholic divisions and identities in their daily activities<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Thus children will ask each other to recite the alphabet to ascertain identity.

<sup>14</sup> As Barth (1969:10) notes: "ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction ...", but rather depend on it.

## THE CHURCHES

Assuming the Protestant-Catholic axis, it is probably appropriate to examine the place of the church in Northern Ireland. The major Christian churches are indeed the Catholic church and various Protestant churches, their importance indicated by high church attendance figures. Rose (1971:496) found that in 1968, 95% of Catholics claimed to attend church at least once a week; 66% of Protestants, at least once a month. Moxon-Browne (1983:125) gives figures for 1978 of 90% and 59% respectively, while Whyte (1990:26) reports data for 1986 which indicate figures of 90% and 53% respectively.

While figures on church attendance may indicate the influence of the churches, they also indicate an uneven influence. The Catholic church would seem to be more influential than the Protestant churches over their respective members. Whyte (1990:27) suggest that church influence is probably weakest over working-class Protestants, and Darby (1986:36,121) indicates that the Catholic church has less influence over urban working-class congregations than those elsewhere.

While church attendance figures can be used to illustrate Protestant-Catholic cultural differences, they also however serve to obscure religious differences within the Protestant

population. Whyte (1990:28) reports as many as 50 Protestant denominations in this population. Compton (1978:81) suggests that in 1971, 45.3% of the Protestant population were Presbyterian, 37.5% Church of Ireland<sup>15</sup>, 8% Methodist, with many other smaller denominations, such as Baptist, Brethren, Free Presbyterian and so on, constituting the remaining 9.2%.

While it is correct to claim therefore that the population of Northern Ireland is indeed two populations, on the criterion of general church affiliation, this discursive strategy obscures the denominational differences within the Protestant population.

Church influence may also be indicated by the number of church related organisations and activities which people are involved in. Barritt and Carter (1962:75) and Larsen (1982a) for example, report on the Mother's Union, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Boys Brigade, Youth Clubs and choirs of the Protestant churches, and their activities such as social evenings, plays, displays, sports tournaments, bible study sessions and so on. Darby (1976:155) similarly refers to the St. Vincent de Paul Society, parish youth clubs, bingo games, social evenings and so on, of the Catholic church.

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<sup>15</sup> The Anglican church in Ireland.

## CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

While Catholics and Protestants are involved in different church related organisation and activities, they are also involved in different cultural organisations. The Orange Order for example, is the largest such Protestant organisation - an organisation from which Catholics are excluded - having between 80-100,000 members (Flackes and Elliott 1989:212). It provides a network of 'lodges' across Northern Ireland<sup>16</sup>, providing a focus for a range of cultural activities - most focused on the annual commemoration of the victory of the Protestant King William of Orange over the Catholic King James at the Battle of the Boyne on July 12, 1690. So flute bands and brass bands<sup>17</sup>, marchers with regalia - swords, bowler hats, badges, pikes, flags, banners, sashes ... - practice and march throughout the year<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> And indeed beyond; in the Republic of Ireland, Britain, Canada, the U.S., Australia, New Zealand ... Ghana. See Gray (1972:257-273).

<sup>17</sup> There is an intriguing process of competition between these 'Loyal Orange Lodge' bands, with the flute bands tending to be more boisterous and demonstrative. Between flute bands, with their huge 'Lambeg' drums, the more demonstrative are known as 'kick-the-pope' bands.

<sup>18</sup> Larsen (1982b) captures the excitement which the annual 'Twelfth' demonstration can generate amongst many Protestants.

While the Orange Order is an important element of Protestant society, it has always only been a minority of Protestants who have been members of it, with numbers and influence varying according to region. For example, Larsen (ibid.:284) notes a 90% membership in one town, Whyte (1986:222) reports on a study by McFarlane (1978:229) finding less than 50% in another, and Rose (1971) estimated a 15% membership in the capital city of Belfast. Moreover anecdotal evidence suggests a decline in influence of the Order in recent years<sup>19</sup>.

The Ancient Order of Hibernians is something of a Catholic equivalent to the Orange Order, in terms of its organisation and activities - marches, bands, regalia, banners ... - with public parades being held every March 17 and August 15<sup>20</sup>. The influence and activities of the Ancient Order of Hibernians have declined in recent years, to a greater extent than have those of the Orange Order. The Gaelic Athletic Association is another Catholic cultural association, which promotes traditional Irish sports and in Northern Ireland excludes members of the security forces from participation.

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<sup>19</sup> Bell (1987:173) suggests this, and observations of 'Twelfth' demonstrations over recent years by the author support this view.

<sup>20</sup> St. Patrick's Day and the Feast of the Assumption respectively.

While the Orange Order, the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Gaelic Athletic Association are examples of organisations which actively celebrate Protestant and Catholic differences, there are many other voluntary social activities which are merely segregated - workingmen's clubs, amateur dramatics groups and so on<sup>21</sup>. A number of sporting activities in Northern Ireland are segregated<sup>22</sup>. Gaelic games - gaelic football, hurley - are almost wholly played and supported by Catholics, while rugby, cricket and field hockey are played mainly by Protestants<sup>23</sup>. While soccer is widely watched by both Protestants and Catholics, they often support different teams. So Cliftonville F.C. is a 'Catholic' team, while Linfield F.C. is a 'Protestant' team<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> See Donnan & McFarlane (1983).

<sup>22</sup> See Sugden and Bairner (1991).

<sup>23</sup> See Barritt & Carter (1962:149); Darby (1976:153).

<sup>24</sup> This Protestant-Catholic division of support extends across the Irish Sea, so that in the Scottish League, Glasgow Rangers is a team supported by Northern Ireland Protestants - and to this end for example, there is a very active Rangers Supporters Club in the staunchly Protestant Sandy Row area of Belfast - while Glasgow Celtic is the Scottish team supported by Northern Ireland Catholics. Similarly, the two English League teams from Liverpool - Liverpool F.C. and Everton F.C. tend to be supported by Northern Ireland Protestants and Catholics respectively.

Catholics and Protestants also read different daily newspapers, the contents of which - both in terms of subject matter and presentation - cater to the different populations. Thus the Irish News is read by Catholics while the Newsletter is read by Protestants. The Belfast Telegraph is read by people from both populations but more often by Protestants<sup>25</sup>. While local and British national television is broadcast throughout Northern Ireland, to obtain broadcasts from 'the south' - from Radio Telefis Eireann - particularly tall television ariels are required, except along the border. Those houses and areas which exhibit them are clearly Catholic.

A number of observers have noted that Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland marry within their own population, with intermarriage being rare. Survey research by Rose (1971:329) in 1968, Moxon-Browne (1983:180) in 1978, and Compton and Coward (1989:186) in 1983, produced figures for intermarriage as, respectively, 4%, 4.5%, and 3.6% of the

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<sup>25</sup> Todd (1990:xiii) begins her book - an Ulster-English dictionary - with the claim that even the weather can be a subject of controversy. She quotes the lead headlines from two of the papers of the same day - September 19, 1983 - where in describing the same storm, the Irish News proclaims 'Gale leaves wide swathe of wreckage', while the Belfast Telegraph assures, 'Ulster gets off lightly after gales'. Todd does not expand on this, but maybe these two sentences do exhibit senses of repression and siege respectively. Certainly the term 'Ulster' as used to refer to Northern Ireland, would not appear in the Irish News.

married population. Ethnographic research also indicates the dominance of endogamy<sup>26</sup>, and also suggests that mixed marriages when they do occur are more likely to be between those of a middle-class background<sup>27</sup>.

Endogamy is important in maintaining Protestant-Catholic segregation since many informal activities are organised around kinship relations and thus will be either Catholic or Protestant. Visiting relatives, going shopping, engaging in leisure pursuits, informal economic co-operation - babysitting, lending tools ... - and activities surrounding life-cycle events such as births, marriages, deaths: all are therefore examples of segregated activities (Donnon and McFarlane 1983).

## HOUSING

The extent of Catholic-Protestant residential segregation is indicated by the finding that in Belfast in 1969 56% of

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<sup>26</sup> See for example Harris (1972:143-146); Leyton (1975); Buckley (1982:64).

<sup>27</sup> Whyte (1986:230) reports research which shows a mixed-marriage rate reaching an extraordinarily high 10% in some 'north coast' towns - very likely the towns with large numbers of students and teachers connected with the university area known as 'the triangle'.

Catholics lived in streets which were over 90% Catholic, and 69% of Protestants lived in streets of over 90% Protestant (Boal 1982:252-253). The onset of the present period of violence exacerbated this residential polarisation. It has been estimated (Darby 1976:29) that from 1969 to 1972, between 5% and 10% of the population of Belfast, as many as 50,000 people, were so intimidated by violence as to leave their homes and seek the security of their own ethnic group. So that by 1972, 70% of Catholics and 78% of Protestants lived in residentially segregated areas (Boal 1982:353). There is no evidence that such polarisation has lessened since 1972.

While such figures indeed indicate a degree of residential segregation which might allow the claim that Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland are two separately housed populations, such a claim can obscure the existence of 'mixed' housing in much of Northern Ireland, and of important material differences in housing within the Protestant and Catholic populations.

The above figures refer to the situation in Belfast, but research by Poole (1982) indicates that housing segregation is much less marked in both rural and urban areas outside Belfast. More recent studies by Compton and Power (1986:90-91) and Smith (1987b:56) allow Whyte (1990:34) to suggest that over the whole of Northern Ireland "about 35 to 40 per cent of

the population live in segregated neighbourhoods". So while housing segregation is indeed obvious and concentrated in Belfast, it is equally possible to claim that between 60% to 65% of the population is residentially mixed.

Many towns in Northern Ireland - especially Belfast - are characterised, as are most other nineteenth century European cities, by their old working-class inner city ghettos; their new and large suburban working-class public housing developments; and their middle-class suburbs. It is the housing in these middle-class suburbs which is most likely to be mixed, with Catholic-Protestant residential segregation being more obvious in working-class areas (Boal et al 1976:104). The very obviousness of material differences in housing has meant that little research has been undertaken to examine it. Any which has been, confirms the obvious; that contact between such working-class and middle-class areas is low<sup>28</sup>.

Where they do so, people do not merely reside in areas of segregated housing, they also live in these areas: many work in them, many go to school in them. Shopping is done in these local areas. The local pub, club, dance-hall, disco, amusement arcade, recreation centre ... all provide for the leisure needs of the community, within the local area.

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<sup>28</sup> See Boal (1969).

Visiting friends and relatives also occurs within the local area. Where friends and relatives live outside the local area, they will still live in a 'safe' area. Indeed when people go outside their local area for whatever purpose they ensure that whenever possible they go only to other 'safe' areas or to 'neutral' ones. Taxi services and to a large extent public bus services, by operating in either Protestant or Catholic or 'neutral' areas, facilitate this. When it is necessary to leave one's own area to visit another, the best route from one to the other will not necessarily be the most direct, but rather the safest - the one which travels through safe and neutral territory.

The boundaries between these living areas are marked in various ways. Graffiti, wall-murals, flags, painted kerbstones - either Protestant red, white and blue or Catholic green, white and gold - for example, will signify different Catholic and Protestant histories or politics. Such symbolic boundaries are often paralleled by the physical ones of fences and walls - 'peace lines'. People attend to such boundaries by walking on their 'own side', using stores on their 'own side', taking buses which honour the boundaries<sup>29</sup>, and so on. These

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<sup>29</sup> While not intentionally designed to do so, experience has suggested that if transport authorities want passengers on their buses, and wish those buses to operate without receiving, at the least, broken windows, then honouring such boundaries is advisable.

boundaries are constantly policed by the local inhabitants - especially youth gangs and paramilitaries - who will often also try to extend them. The most fierce rioting, house-burning and shooting has, not surprisingly, been along such boundaries.

## **SCHOOLING**

Those schools over which the state has full control are in theory non-denominational, but in practice are Protestant. Schools which are not fully funded by the state and over which the state has less direct control, while in theory non-denominational, are in practice Catholic. Barritt and Carter (1962) claimed that at least 98% of all Catholic primary school children attended Catholic schools. Whyte (1986:228) reports a survey in 1976 which found that 71% of schools were either totally Catholic or totally Protestant, with only one school in thirty-three having more than 5% of its pupils from 'the other' religious group.

Data gathered by Darby et al (1977) shows a similar polarisation of teachers in Northern Ireland schools: of the 1,521 teachers studied, only 29 were employed in schools where the predominant religious affiliation was not their own. As

with the schools, so also the teacher-training colleges can be termed either Protestant or Catholic.

The cultures transmitted through the schools are different. While many of the same curriculum subjects are taught in both Protestant and Catholic schools they often follow different syllabi; religious instruction obviously differs; Protestant and Catholic histories are taught - the narratives privileging different figures, events and dates<sup>30</sup> - different cultures are emphasised; and different sports are played - gaelic football and hurley in Catholic schools, rugby and cricket in Protestant schools<sup>31</sup>. Pupils are prepared for a world of work which is also marked by Protestant and Catholic divisions. That pupils recognise this is shown by research by Preston (1983) which found a high correlation between the reality of a split Protestant-Catholic labour market<sup>32</sup> and the occupational aspirations and expectations of Protestant and Catholic pupils.

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<sup>30</sup> With reference to Catholic schooling see for example Coldrey (1988). For Protestant and Catholic histories see chapter four.

<sup>31</sup> The introduction of the Northern Ireland Common Curriculum in 1990 aims to address 'our cultural divisions' through a cultural Heritage programme and a programme of Education for Mutual Understanding (see Daws 1991). Whether these will have any impact on divisions remains to be seen.

<sup>32</sup> See below.

While the Protestant-Catholic division in schooling is obvious, in recent years a number of 'integrated' schools have opened, both at the elementary and secondary school level. However the number of pupils who attend is small. Darby and Dunn (1987:86,93) report that in 1986-7 only 900 pupils out of a school population of over 300,000 attended these new schools<sup>33</sup>. Moreover these schools tend to be situated in, and attract pupils from, more affluent areas.

While Catholic-Protestant divisions within the school system are real enough, concentration on them marginalizes other divisions. While comprehensive secondary level schooling was introduced into the rest of the United Kingdom in the 1960's, until very recently schooling in Northern Ireland operated on a selective system whereby children at age 11 were tested and then - depending on examination results - attended either academically or vocationally orientated schools<sup>34</sup>. Research has shown that the selective schooling system has the effect of segregating children according to class background, and of reproducing class differences between

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<sup>33</sup> See also Daws (1991).

<sup>34</sup> A number of curriculum, assessment, and public examination changes in the late 1980,s have meant that formal differences between vocationally orientated secondary schools and academically orientated grammar schools have ended. Nevertheless this is unlikely to significantly effect school pupil composition (Daws 1991:143).

working-class and middle-class children<sup>35</sup>. In Northern Ireland, grammar schools school middle-class children, while secondary schools school working-class children. These schools are usually situated in class-specific neighbourhoods, as are elementary level schools; they promote different class cultures<sup>36</sup>; and prepare children for class-specific futures (Preston 1983).

Schooling in Northern Ireland is also, to a large degree, segregated by gender - more so in the Catholic sector. Again different sports are played and gender-specific work futures anticipated<sup>37</sup>. Only at college and university level education is the population 'mixed' - both Protestant and Catholic, female and male - and in this respect further and higher education is, for many young people, the first opportunity to develop relationships with people of the 'opposite persuasion'. However, given the selective nature of the schooling system, the proportion of young people who experience this level of education is small<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> See for example Floud (1956), Douglas (1964).

<sup>36</sup> For example, boy's field hockey and cricket are played almost exclusively at grammar schools. See Sugden and Bairner (1991).

<sup>37</sup> See Daws (1991); Sugden and Bairner (1991); Preston (1983).

<sup>38</sup> Eversley (1989:189) shows the figure to be about 23% of 15-24 year old students.

## WORK

Divisions between Catholics and Protestants in the world of work were remarked upon in the early sociological literature<sup>39</sup>, to the effect that Protestants enjoyed higher economic status than Catholics. Data to corroborate early anecdotal observations were generated by Aunger (1975) from an analysis of the 1971 census. This showed that Protestants and Catholics were concentrated in different sectors of the economy, with Protestants more likely to be found in more stable, higher status and higher paid industries such as engineering; and Catholics more likely to be found in high unemployment, low status and low wage industries like construction. Moreover, where Protestants and Catholics worked in the same sector of the economy, most of the professional and managerial jobs were held by Protestants. As Aunger (ibid:8) notes:

"While a clerk may be a Catholic it is more likely that the office manager will be a Protestant; while a skilled craftsman may be a Catholic, it is more likely that the supervisor will be a Protestant".

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<sup>39</sup> See Barritt and Carter (1962:54-55); Rose (1971:280).

Research to date<sup>40</sup> suggests that little has changed with regard to Catholic comparative disadvantage, though with some improvements for the Catholic middle-class<sup>41</sup>. It has been suggested (Rowthorn and Wayne 1989:107) that where Catholics have good representation in professional and related occupations, this is due to the large number of Catholic women in the specific and less prestigious occupations of nursing and teaching - catering mostly to the Catholic community.

Unemployment in Northern Ireland has traditionally been high at around 20%, much higher than the United Kingdom average. Within Northern Ireland however, Catholics have a much higher unemployment rate than Protestants. In many towns the rate is between two and three times as high. Male Catholic unemployment in 1971 was 17.3%, in 1981 30.2%, in 1983-4 35%. The equivalent Protestant figures are 6.6%, 12.4% and 15%

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<sup>40</sup> See for example :F.E.A. (1988); Osborne and Cormack (1987); Smith (1987a).

<sup>41</sup> Though a report in Fortnight of December 1989 notes - with reference to civil service appointments for example, that while appointments broadly reflected the Catholic-Protestant population balance of Northern Ireland, 78% of the personnel in the Northern Ireland Office - the British department which since 1972 has administered Northern Ireland - were Protestants.

respectively (Rowthorne and Wayne 1988:111). In some Catholic areas male unemployment is around 50%<sup>42</sup>.

The major and arguably the only growth area of employment in recent years, and for obvious reasons, has been security work. Rowthorne and Wayne (1989:112) estimate that around 30,000 people are employed in the local security services - the Royal Ulster Constabulary, Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, the Ulster Defence Regiment, the Ulster Defence Regiment Reserve, the Prison Service, civilian searchers<sup>43</sup> - and almost all of these are Protestant<sup>44</sup>. Economic differences between Protestants and Catholics are also reflected in differential emigration rates, with Catholics

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<sup>42</sup> This is the case for example in the town of Strabane in the west of Northern Ireland. Historically, industry developed in the east where most of the Protestant population was concentrated. The west has been industrially undeveloped. It has been argued that this east-west division has also been exacerbated by discrimination in state-sponsored industrial investment which favoured Protestant areas.

<sup>43</sup> Staff employed to search people entering many public buildings and certain fenced city-centre areas.

<sup>44</sup> There are many reasons for this. The security forces are seen in the Catholic community to either represent 'the enemy' or to be anti-Catholic. Those Catholics who do join the security forces have to consider the consequences of collaborating or face the suspicion of being 'fifth columnists'.

accounting for 40% of the population but 60% of net migration over the past 30 or so years (Compton 1985:209,215).

While there are clear economic differences between Protestants and Catholics, there are enough "well-to-do Catholics" (Whyte 1990:65), and a population balance of 60%-40% which favours Protestants, to ensure that "there are more poor Protestants than poor Catholics in Northern Ireland" (Rose 1971:289). This ensures that cultural and material cleavages in Northern Ireland are not co-terminus.

With reference to work, the trade union movement has made much of the claim that it is the only non-divided institution in Northern Ireland<sup>45</sup>. Yet there are British based, Irish based and local Northern Ireland based unions organising in the area, often organising different groups of workers and following different political agendas<sup>46</sup>. Indeed, as has been suggested (Rolston 1980), any unity which obtains in the trade

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<sup>45</sup> See Rolston (1980).

<sup>46</sup> For example, teachers are organised into either the 'Catholic' Irish National Teachers Organisation or the 'Protestant' Ulster Teachers Union: general labourers are organised in either the Irish Transport and General Workers Union or the Transport and General Workers Union.

union movement has been brought about by avoiding contentious issues<sup>47</sup>.

## **POLITICAL PARTY SUPPORT**

Differences between Protestants and Catholics are apparent when party political support is examined. A number of studies<sup>48</sup> have noted the comparatively high degree of 'religious' voting in Northern Ireland, showing that Protestants and Catholics vote for different political parties. Specifically, Protestants tend to support and vote for Unionist political parties - parties which support and seek to maintain the union between Northern Ireland and Great Britain in a United Kingdom. Catholics are more likely to support and vote for Nationalist political parties - parties which support and seek to forge a political union between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Rose (1971:235) provides figures from his 1968 survey showing that 91% of Protestants supported Unionist parties,

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<sup>47</sup> The episode of the Ulster Workers Council strike tends to confirm this. On this event see Fisk (1975).

<sup>48</sup> See for example Lijphart (1971:8-9); McAllister (1975); Whyte (1990:72).

and 51% of Catholics supported the Nationalist Party. Moxon-Browne (1983:84) found that 99.3% of Protestant survey respondents in 1978 identified with Unionist parties. Smith's (1987b) survey shows 84% of Protestants identified with Unionist parties, while 57% of Catholics identified with Nationalist parties.

These figures suggest two fairly monolithic blocs of support for Unionist or Nationalist political parties. However such an interpretation serves to obscure important differences within Protestant and Catholic support. Some of the political parties which may be considered Unionist, insofar as they accept the legitimacy of the union between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, are widely seen as 'middle ground' parties which have been able to attract a degree of 'cross community' support. Thus the Northern Ireland Labour Party in Rose's 1968 survey (1971:235) had the support of 11% of Protestants and 27% of Catholics. Whyte (1990:75) claims that in Moxon-Browne's 1978 survey, the Northern Ireland Labour Party had the support of 4% of Protestants and 6% of Catholics, while the Alliance Party had the support of 13% of Protestants and 21% of Catholics. In Smith's 1986 survey (1987b) the Alliance Party had the support of 10% of Protestants and 14% of Catholics<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> Whyte (1990:4-5) makes the point that survey data tend to exaggerate support for 'middle-of-the-road' parties, insofar as this support

A focus on Unionist and Nationalist political parties tends to also overlook the reality of Unionism and Nationalism as political movements composed of a number of different parties and organisations. With reference to political parties within Unionism, local elections in 1977 for example, were contested by six Unionist parties<sup>50</sup>. Since the late 70's the two dominant Unionist parties have been the Official Unionist Party and the Democratic Unionist Party. The latter is supported more by lower middle class and working class Protestants (Moxon-Browne 1980:96), whereas the former is supported more by the Protestant middle class and some of the working class.

Similarly, Nationalism is not a monolithic movement, and in terms of political parties, while the major Nationalist party up to the early 1970's was the Nationalist Party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party held that position through the 1970's. Since 1981 Sinn Fein has competed with the Social Democratic and Labour Party for the support of Catholics.

Also, strength of support for Unionist and Nationalist ideas within the population is uneven. This has been registered by opinion surveys. Rose's (1971:477) 1968 survey showed 68% of Protestants and 33% of Catholics approving of

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does not translate into electoral results.

<sup>50</sup> See Flackes and Elliott (1989:329-330).

the constitutional position of Northern Ireland, with 34% of Catholics and 10% of Protestants disapproving of it. This seems to suggest that the two communities were not completely polarised on this issue. However, only 4% of Protestants favoured a united Ireland and only 2% of Catholics favoured a close union with Britain (Rose 1971:213). People seem more sure of what they do not favour, than what they do favour.

This is borne out by those surveys undertaken after the onset of the troubles and after 1972, when Northern Ireland became directly ruled by Britain from Westminster. In the period from then until 1989, at most 4% of Protestants ever favoured a united Ireland, while between 6% and 19% of Catholics favoured close union with Britain (Whyte 1990:80).

Given these figures, it is not surprising that Catholics and Protestants differ in their attitudes to the various institutions comprising the state. Moxon-Browne (1981:65) shows Protestants in 1978 overwhelmingly supportive of the security forces - the Royal Ulster Constabulary, Ulster Defence Regiment and British Army. Catholics were not so supportive. Though more surprising is that 73%, 64% and 71% of them thought the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Ulster Defence Regiment and British Army respectively, were doing their job well. By 1986, attitudes towards the security forces had changed, with less approval from both communities, but

particularly from Catholics, with 56% and 68% of Catholics considering the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment as treating Protestants better than they do Catholics.

Protestants and Catholics also differ in their perceptions of the fairness of the legal system. Whyte (1990:87) reports a 1985 survey which found 89% of Protestants and only 36% of Catholics, thought the system fair. While some of the above figures suggest that Protestants and Catholics do not always hold completely polarised opinions on the state, in Northern Ireland the terms 'Loyalist' and 'Republican' are used to refer respectively to those Unionist and Nationalist parties, organisations and individuals prepared to use 'non-constitutional' methods to assert their Unionism and their Nationalism.

It is in the working class areas of Belfast and Derry especially, where Unionist and Nationalist views are held most fervently; these areas being known as 'hard line' areas. Ethnographic studies bear this out<sup>51</sup>. These are the areas in which most of the violence of the conflict is experienced<sup>52</sup>,

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<sup>51</sup> On republican areas, see for example: Burton (1978); Conroy (1988); Sluka (1989). On loyalist areas see for example: Jenkins (1982, 1983); Nelson (1984).

<sup>52</sup> See Poole (1983).

and from which recruits for Republican and Loyalist paramilitary organisations are drawn. Moreover, the violence associated with these paramilitary organisations is widely seen as 'representative violence' (Wright 1987:11) which "can set in motion an endless chain of violence" (ibid)<sup>53</sup>.

### **NATIONAL IDENTITY**

That Protestants and Catholics identify with different national labels was attested to by Rose's (1971:208) 1968 survey which showed most Protestants (39%) identifying themselves as 'British' or (32%) 'Ulster', whereas most Catholics (76%) identified themselves as 'Irish'. It is noteworthy that Rose in 1968 found that 20% of Protestants considered themselves Irish and 15% of Catholics considered themselves British. In 1978 Moxon-Browne (1983:6) found that while 15% of Catholics still identified themselves as British, only 8% of Protestants still considered themselves as Irish. Also, 69% of Catholics considered themselves Irish while 67% of Protestants identified with the label 'British' and 20% with the label 'Ulster'. The author plausibly suggests that

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<sup>53</sup> This allows Galliher and DeGregory (1986:184) to claim that: "it is not so much that economic discrimination, religious or political differences cause the conflict, but rather that violence is its own cause". A claim which begs numerous questions.

the collapse of the Protestant tri-partite distinction of Irish/British/Ulster is - given the onset of the troubles - "more a revulsion against 'Irish' connotations than endearment with 'British'" (Moxon-Browne 1983:5).

Whyte (1990:69) reports a survey<sup>54</sup> which found that by 1986 there was a further polarisation of Protestant and Catholic national identities, with only 3% of Protestants considering themselves Irish<sup>55</sup> and only 9% of Catholics considering themselves British<sup>56</sup>. Such figures, Moxon-Browne (1983:6-7) suggests, show that "Protestants are less sure of their national identity but they know what they are not - ie. Irish".

#### **EXPLANATIONS FOR THE CONFLICT**

This brief survey serves to indicate something of the character and range of differences between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, and while a number of caveats do caution against viewing these differences as absolute, nevertheless the overwhelming evidence is of division.

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<sup>54</sup> Smith (1987b).

<sup>55</sup> Also, 65% British, 14% Ulster, 11% Northern Irish.

<sup>56</sup> Also, 61% Irish, 1% Ulster, 20% Northern Irish.

There are studies which stress similarities between Protestants and Catholics<sup>57</sup> or which point to those elements of lifestyle and values which Protestants and Catholics hold in common<sup>58</sup>, or which suggest in their titles some commonness<sup>59</sup>, or which pose questions such as 'why has the violence in Northern Ireland not been more severe<sup>60</sup>?'; and which stress the geographical variations in Protestant-Catholic relations, the changes in them over time, and the evidence that neither Catholics or Protestants are cohesive groups<sup>61</sup>. However, such works do not so much show an absence of Catholic-Protestant divisions, as indicate the adroitness with which people in Northern Ireland manage these divisions. The divisions still exist, but strategies of 'telling' and 'avoidance' allow them to be dealt with in ways which reduce the divisive qualities of difference<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> For example Buckley (1982).

<sup>58</sup> For example: Rose (1971); Harris (1972); Larsen (1982a); Moxon-Browne (1983); Hickey (1984).

<sup>59</sup> So: Prejudice and Tolerance (Harris 1972); Integration and Division (Boal and Douglas 1982).

<sup>60</sup> Darby (1986:preface).

<sup>61</sup> Darby (1986:25).

<sup>62</sup> Indeed to many visitors, one of the most noteworthy features of Northern Ireland, is how 'normal' life is - despite the troubles.

The sociological literature on Northern Ireland is characterised precisely by its overwhelming emphasis on describing the cultural and material differences within the population. While such descriptions are certainly useful, it could be argued that implicit in most of the said literature is also an assumption that such differences constitute the underlying structures which generate the conflict, and that identifying them is in itself sufficient explanation for the conflict.

Probably the most widely held view of the conflict in Northern Ireland is that which sees it as religious, as a conflict between groups holding different religious beliefs, between Protestants and Catholics. It has already been shown that Catholics and Protestants live in segregated housing, attend different schools, vote for different political parties and so on. Given this, it might seem appropriate to label Northern Ireland a "bi-confessional society" (Rose 1971:248)<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> In this way, and in the absence of an explanation of the significance of the terms 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' within Northern Ireland, the conflict can be read as doctrinal. The concomitant ideological effect of this interpretation - one which is frequently adopted in the media - is the dismissal of the conflict as tribal and therefore incomprehensible in contemporary society. For example: The Vancouver Sun of March 19, 1988 carries an article headlined "Priests, pastors do little to thwart tribal terror". The Vancouver Sun of November 17,

However it is erroneous to assume that because protagonists to the conflict are often labelled - by themselves or by others - as Protestant and Catholic, this then implies a doctrinal dispute and that people are being killed or injured in a theological war. While it is true that some people do indeed see the conflict as doctrinal and act on such perceptions<sup>64</sup>, it is more appropriate to consider the terms "Protestant" and "Catholic" as "proxy words" (Moxon-Browne 1983:3) which can disguise what for most people in Northern Ireland is significant - the non-doctrinal nature of the conflict. This indeed is evident even in those works which wish to hold that the conflict is religious. O'Farrell (1971:306) for example, maintains that: "The internal dynamics of the situation [are] religious", that: "The deepest and most real division is religious". Yet he also states in the same paragraph that:

"There is much more to Irish Catholicism than the official pronouncements of the hierarchy: it is a set of values, a culture, a historical tradition, a view

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1990 carries an article from the British Independent newspaper entitled "Tribalism's Time Is Up". The policy implications are often that the conflict cannot be resolved but only contained.

<sup>64</sup> This is the case for example with the Rev. Ian K. Paisley and his followers in the Free Presbyterian Church who see the conflict as one between the tyrannical, anti-Christian evil of Roman Catholicism and the good of Christian evangelical Protestantism. On this, see for example Bruce (1986).

of the world, a disposition of the mind and heart, a loyalty, an emotion, a psychology and a Nationalism".

O'Farrell is criticised by Hickey (1984:72) for failing to examine these "popular aspects" of religion with respect to Protestantism. In this way, and in his own examination of the historical, cultural and political aspects of both Catholicism and Protestantism, Hickey also shows that religion in Northern Ireland is more than doctrine.

Therefore despite being widely held as an explanation for the conflict, it could be argued that religious-doctrinal differences are also symbols of broader cultural differences. Darby (1976:169) has suggested that: the abundance of literature from the U.S. on race and ethnicity, and the use by the government in the early 1970's of policies which were based on British race relations legislation, led theories of race and ethnicity to be seen as appropriate for analyzing the Northern Ireland situation. While this appropriateness does not appear to be reflected explicitly in much of the literature of the period<sup>65</sup>, implicitly a number of works<sup>66</sup> define Northern Ireland as what Kuper and Smith (1969:415-418) term a 'plural society', wherein cultural differences and identities are maintained through separate institutions and

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<sup>65</sup> With the exception of Harris (1972).

<sup>66</sup> For example: Barritt and Carter (1962); Rose (1971); O'Brien (1972); Darby (1976).

where lack of consensus on major public issues leads to the political dominance of one cultural community over another.

That Catholics have suffered political domination in Northern Ireland there is no doubt. The Unionist Party was the party of government from the establishment of the state until direct rule from Westminster was instituted in 1972<sup>67</sup>. Moreover, Unionist parties have been politically dominant since then. The security forces too have been almost exclusively Protestant since 1921<sup>68</sup>. While this political dominance was assured by a majority Protestant population, Unionists were not averse to using their positions in the state apparatuses to ensure political dominance over Catholics. Much well-documented work demonstrates for example, the gerrymandering of electoral boundaries<sup>69</sup>, and discrimination against Catholics in the civil service<sup>70</sup>.

What is important about differential political incorporation of course is its restriction of access to political power and its spoils in the form of scarce resources. That Catholics in Northern Ireland have been

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<sup>67</sup> See O'Dowd (1980:10-11).

<sup>68</sup> See Farrell (1983); Bew et al (1979:49-50, 58-59).

<sup>69</sup> See for example Buckland (1979:331-346).

<sup>70</sup> See for example Bew et al (1979:49-50, 58-59).

relatively disadvantaged materially has been well documented. As mentioned, Aunger (1975) shows that Protestants were more likely to work in comparatively well-paying and secure jobs than were Catholics - an employment pattern which is reinforced by the importance of informal networks of job recruitment (Murray and Darby 1980:5). While it has been suggested that factors such as: living in economically peripheral regions, being unskilled, and having large families (Compton 1981:137); differences in educational credentials and age (Smith 1987a:39); and availability of transport and housing (Eversley 1989:198-214); are all factors which explain degrees of Catholic-Protestant difference in employment and unemployment, discrimination against Catholics explains much of it also<sup>71</sup>.

Research also suggests that Catholics have been discriminated against in terms of housing (Tomlinson 1980). Indeed the government sponsored Cameron Report (1969:91) found inadequate public housing provision for, and unfair methods of public housing allocation to, Catholics, was a precipitate cause of the present troubles. So while the claim that Catholics in Northern Ireland have been disadvantaged materially - a disadvantage often the result of active

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<sup>71</sup> There is disagreement in the literature on the extent but not the existence of discrimination. See for example, the various contributions to the debate in Fortnight from December 1987 - March 1988.

discrimination - can be accepted, more problematic is the often implicit assumption that an unequal distribution of scarce material resources by itself leads to conflict between the advantaged and the disadvantaged<sup>72</sup>. In this regard a number of studies assume a relationship between economic position and certain political ideas which are implicitly evaluated as progressive.

Farrell (1976:81) for example considers that because Protestant workers enjoyed less unemployment than Catholics, and dominance in skilled and comparatively well-paid jobs, this renders them reactionary. Implicit also is the claim that Catholic workers are therefore progressive. The conflict may be a political one but is a conflict of class. Progressiveness is given by class location, or at least by comparative material advantage.

Using the same economic reductionism, Boserup (1972:177) arrives at an alternative position which claims that Protestant workers:

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<sup>72</sup> In this regard Budge and O'Leary (1973:89) show how riots from 1813 to 1912 were precipitated rather by Protestant or Catholic processions or parliamentary elections.

"are not the lumpen-proletariat of Ireland but the most advanced sector of the Irish working class"<sup>73</sup>,

and the conflict in Northern Ireland is a class conflict fought on the level of politics between a reactionary local bourgeoisie and a progressive international capital (ibid). It is important to note here that while Catholics may see themselves as materially disadvantaged, Protestants do not see themselves as materially advantaged. Therefore an economic identity does not distinguish Protestants from Catholics.

#### **THE IMPORTANCE OF POLITICS**

Arguably, one of the most obvious characteristics of much of what has been written about the conflict in Northern Ireland, is the sheer number of different explanations proffered. Most explanations advanced by academic observers may be considered, as shown above, to be religious, cultural, or economic explanations, with different authors stressing that one or other matters most. In this sense a cultural and economic reductionism characterises much of the sociological literature on Northern Ireland. The assumption that cultural and economic differences between the Protestant and Catholic

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<sup>73</sup> This despite the evidence that Protestant workers do not see themselves as part of the Irish working class.

communities explain the conflict, reduces the conflict to an effect of anthropomorphized social structures. What is missing from much of the literature is a recognition of the importance of politics.

Perhaps it is more appropriate to suggest that the conflict has at least and at once, religious, cultural, and economic dimensions, but it is politics which has given particular cultural and economic differences significance in Northern Ireland, and has effectively marginalized economic issues, since these do not effectively distinguish Protestants and Catholics: that is, not all Protestants are capitalists, middle class, well off, or employed; nor all Catholics, proletarians, working class, poor or unemployed.

In Northern Ireland, Nationalist politics and Unionist politics are dominant. As political discourses they have been successful in condensing within them a number of other discourses. More precisely, discourses of religion, culture, and nationality have been successfully linked with the political discourses of Nationalism and Unionism, so that in the thinking of most of the population, politics is closely associated with religion, culture, and nationality.

When economic issues are addressed within these discourses, they are constructed as 'cultural' issues<sup>74</sup>, that is: unemployment or poor housing in the Catholic population is explained by Nationalism, as being due to discrimination against Catholics by Unionist employers, local councillors, and sometimes Protestants generally. The material advantages of some Catholics are despite discrimination, and still fewer than for Protestants. Protestant unemployment, poor housing and poverty does not exist in Nationalist discourse.

For Unionism, Catholic unemployment, poor housing and poverty is a consequence of congenital idleness and of Catholicism, which encourages large families. Protestant unemployment or poor housing is caused by Catholics who take over Protestant jobs and more than their share of society's resources.

In Northern Ireland, Nationalism has been able to merge together and overdetermine Catholic, Gaelic and Irish discourses, while Unionism has done the same with Protestant, 'Anglo' and British discourses. In this way Catholic, Gaelic, Irish and Nationalist discourses and identities are constituted as equivalent, and Protestant, Anglo, British and Unionist discourses and identities are constructed as

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<sup>74</sup> Somewhat of an artificial distinction of course, since the economic is cultural.

equivalent. Discourses and identities of course require their opposite - the 'Other' - for success, and in this respect Nationalism and Unionism have each other.

That religious, cultural, national and political differences overlap to a great extent in Northern Ireland, allows people then to carry with them what may be termed a 'discursive map' of Northern Ireland whereon Nationalist connotes Catholic, Gael and Irish as equivalent, and Unionist, Protestant, Anglo and British as different.

So while the widespread use, by people in Northern Ireland, of the terms 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' and of the term 'sectarianism' to refer to the conflict, suggests to Nairn (1981:228), for example, the "religious overdetermination of the conflict", the importance of the terms lies more in the chain of significations of which they are a part. Much more important than knowing a person's theological views is knowing their views on the very existence of the state and its institutions. Such political concerns can be known through the terms 'Catholic' and 'Protestant'.

This chapter has outlined a number of characteristic features of Northern Ireland social life. Quite clearly, Northern Ireland is a divided society, with cultural differences between Catholics and Protestants providing a

resource for Irish Nationalist and Ulster Unionist politics - a politics which in gaining widespread support - in turn reinforces such divisions.

Political discourses and identities are also helped in becoming popular by claims to heritage. The past provides a material legacy which constrains people in the present and importantly provides the materials out of which traditions which lend legitimacy to the present are constructed. The success of Nationalism owes much to its ability to claim a tradition which includes Catholic, Gaelic and Irish heritage . In this respect therefore Nationalism is also an ethno-political movement. Unionism likewise has been able to lay claim to Protestant, Anglo and British traditions, and in this sense is also an ethno-political movement. The past is clearly important in contemporary Northern Ireland. The following chapter attempts to show how and why.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### NORTHERN IRELAND HISTORIES

One perceptive historian of Northern Ireland (Stewart 1977:16) has written:

"To the Irish all History is Applied History, and the past is simply a convenient quarry which provides ammunition to use against enemies in the present. They have little interest in it for its own sake. So when we say that the Irish are too much influenced by the past, we really mean that they are too much influenced by Irish history, which is a different matter".

This chapter seeks to show both how the past has left a legacy which has influenced later events and how ethno-politicians have used the past to lend the legitimacy of tradition to more current concerns.

#### THE CONQUEST OF IRELAND

It has been claimed elsewhere (MacDonagh 1983:2) that Nationalist history sees the past "in terms of a degeneration from an initial purity" whereas Unionist history sees the past

in terms of "a triumphant ... emergence from barbarism". For Nationalists, England's domination of Ireland begins with the Anglo-Norman invasion<sup>1</sup> of 1169. This then makes it possible to write of '800 years of oppression'.

By 1169 of course, the people of Ireland were already a product of waves of human immigrant intrusions over previous millennia<sup>2</sup>. The mesolithic hunter-gatherer populations who constituted the original inhabitants of Ireland, were subsequently affected by settlements of neolithic peoples with their domesticated plants and animals, and by Bronze Age metal using peoples<sup>3</sup>. By the beginning of the first millennium B.C., Celtic-speaking peoples from Britain and Gaul began to settle and establish chiefdoms, which expanded through military conquest and alliance. By the sixth century A.D., 'Irish' - a distinctive variation of the Celtic language - was the dominant language throughout Ireland. Despite changing regional alliances, this allowed for what de Paor (1986:46)

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'invasion' has an ideological importance here, since it refers to what was rather a series of small settlements.

<sup>2</sup> This history relies heavily on de Paor (1986).

<sup>3</sup> Some recent unionist history lays claim to a heritage originating with these peoples - the 'Cruthin' - who inhabited Ireland before it was invaded by the Gaels (Adamson 1974, 1982). See also Buckley (1989). These claims have had little influence on popular Protestant politics.

suggests was a unity of peculiarly Irish Celtic - 'Gaelic' - culture throughout the island.

Intellectuals played an important part in achieving such cultural unity. It was the 'oes dana' (class of learning) (de Paor 1986:46) - the poets, judges, doctors, skilled wood- and metal-workers - who engaged in the work of producing what Anderson (1983) might refer to as the 'imagined community' of Ireland.

Although the Romans conquered Britain, they did not attempt to conquer Ireland. Nevertheless they influenced Ireland through their Christian church which, through missionary, work had established Christian communities in Ireland by the fifth century A.D.. Through a long period of accommodation with the pagan Celtic world of the Gaels, and because the clerics were useful to the chieftains<sup>4</sup>, many Christian leaders were also members of the dominant families of the Irish chiefdoms. The federation of monasteries established under the protection of the chiefdoms provided both the organisational framework for christian religious mobilisation and sites of accumulation of wealth.

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<sup>4</sup> Especially in their intellectual role of "counterparts of the poets and historians and genealogists of the 'oes dana'" (de Paor 1986:58).

The monasteries were thus the first places attacked by the Vikings when they began to raid Ireland at the end of the eighth century A.D. By the middle of the ninth century the Scandinavians had established settlements mainly along the south and east coasts. As with other intrusions, the Viking settlements influenced, and in turn were influenced by, the prevailing culture. They were also influential in the struggles for dominance between regional Irish chieftains throughout the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries.

While scholarly evidence therefore shows that the Gaelic people of Ireland were the product of centuries of human cultural mixing, the myth of an original Gaelic culture has, nevertheless, been a powerful resource in the construction of Irish ethno-nationalism - a myth first fashioned to political effect in the Gaelic revival of the late eighteenth century<sup>5</sup>.

Moreover the 'invasion' of 1169 was by invitation. Since early in the eleventh century the Normans had ruled in England after defeating the Saxon King Harold in 1066. The twelfth century witnessed the beginnings of Anglo-Norman involvement in Ireland through Norman knights and men-at-arms being brought to Ireland as mercenaries to fight alongside Irish Kings in their internecine struggles (de Paor 1986:94-95).

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<sup>5</sup> See below.

They subsequently settled, expanded their territories and established their English institutions.

While King Henry II of England (and of Normandy, Anjou, Aquitaine, Brittany ...) countenanced such adventures, it is somewhat ironic that he did so on the basis of papal authority. In 1154 Pope Adrain IV had granted Henry possession of Ireland:

"... in order to subdue the people to the obedience of laws and extirpate the vices which have there taken root, and ... to pay an annual pension to St. Peter of one penny from every house therein, and to preserve the rights of the church in that land inviolate and entire, we ... are well pleased, that for the enlargement of the bounds of the church, for the restraint of vice, the correction of evil manners, the culture of all virtues, and the advancement of the Christian religion, you should enter into that island ... and reserving to St. Peter and the most holy Roman church the annual pension of a penny from every house"<sup>6</sup>.

For the next four centuries, Norman colonization ebbed and flowed throughout most of Ireland, with the Irish Kings, Norman colonists and English monarchs, players in a constantly shifting pattern of allegiances and control (de Paor 1986:96-112). The colonists were both a means of controlling Ireland for English monarchs, yet also potentially a threat to the monarch, especially when the colonists - as other settlers

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<sup>6</sup> Bull Laudibiliter quoted in Carlton (1977:4-5).

before them - adopted many gaelic customs, and positions in Irish society. Indeed by the mid-fifteenth century, invasions by Scots, a black plague, as well as absorption into the native Irish society, had reduced the colony to an area around Dublin known as the Pale.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, because of the importance of the Atlantic to the emerging European imperialisms, Ireland had assumed a strategic importance to the English monarchy and it became necessary in this regard to secure greater control over both the Anglo-Norman colony and the Irish chieftains. This became especially obvious after 1533. In that year King Henry VIII severed his ties with Rome and, Protestantism became the official faith in England. With English dominance in Ireland confined to the Pale and a few walled towns, most of Ireland remained Catholic. The threat which this posed to English monarchs was underlined by a rebellion in 1534 which associated its cause with that of the papacy (Carlton 1977:7-8).

Thus in 1541 Henry VIII took the title 'King of Ireland' and put into effect a policy of "surrender and regrant" (de Paor 1986:123) designed to impose English feudal tenures upon the gaelic customs of both the Irish chiefs and "gaelicized colonial magnates" (ibid) who were encouraged to surrender their territories, abandon their Irish titles, disown the pope

and acknowledge Henry as King. In return they received back their lands by feudal grant and had English titles of nobility bestowed upon them (ibid)<sup>7</sup>. While this was effective in securing a degree of loyalty, areas outside English control could only be secured by force. So began the military conquest of Ireland which continued through the latter half of the century.

The English military view of the native Irish is captured in a sixteenth century chronicle<sup>8</sup> where they are seen as a:

"... wicked, effrenated [ungovernable], barbarous and unfaithful nation<sup>9</sup> who ... are a wicked and perverse generation, constant always in that they be always inconsistent, faithful in that they be always unfaithful, and trusty in that they be always treacherous and untrusty".

Moreover:

"... withdraw the sword, and forbear correction, deal with them in courtesy, and treat them gently, if they can take any advantage they will surely skip out, and as a dog to his vomit, and the sow to the dirt and puddle, they will return to

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<sup>7</sup> See also Carlton (1977:6-7).

<sup>8</sup> Chronicles of Ireland, John Hooker reprinted in Carlton (1977:9).

<sup>9</sup> The term nation was used throughout the middle ages as descriptive of a group of people with different customs and habits - it was not a political term.

their old and former insolence,  
rebellion, and disobedience" (ibid:10).

The conquest of the sixteenth century was indeed marked by continuing dispersed rebellions, and their suppression was often accompanied by massacre, famine and disease, then often by confiscation of lands and their settlement by loyal and non-native populations. By 1607 the resistance of the gaelic chieftains was decisively broken. The English conquest of Ireland was complete.

#### **THE PLANTATION OF ULSTER**

The eastern seaboard of Ulster - the province of the north of Ireland - had, through centuries of coming and going across the Irish sea, more in common with Scotland than with the rest of Ireland. Indeed some parts of Ulster had been privately settled in the 1570's<sup>10</sup>. It was the north and west of Ulster which had been the last stronghold of the Irish chieftains - the most gaelic and the most resistant to English control. In order now to ensure control, a scheme of plantation was begun, which forced the native Irish off their lands which were then colonized by loyal Scots and English settlers (de Paor 1986:142). In this respect colonization was also Anglicization. Upon contact therefore, native and settler

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<sup>10</sup> See Stewart (1977:31-34).

populations differed culturally, the natives Gaelic, the settlers Anglo-Saxon. Moreover for each population a cultural heritage ensured a consciousness of cultural distinctiveness. In this respect therefore contact was between two distinct ethnic groups.

That ethnic contact had taken a particularly violent and thorough form of colonization ensured that ethnic relations would be those of dominance and subordination, leading to antagonism and conflict. More significant than cultural distinctiveness and different heritage, was that settlers and native differed also by religion. Conquest and colonization brought not only Anglicization, but also brought the Reformation to Ireland.

Cultural, ethnic and religious differences between the two populations very clearly paralleled the material differences attendant upon the plantation, the aim of which was to clear the native Irish population off their lands by force and to completely replace them with an English and Scots population. To this end settlers from all economic classes of Scotland and England were encouraged to settle in Ulster.

Not surprisingly many of the dispossessed native Irish "withdrew to the woods, hills and bogs to harass the planters" (de Paor 1986:142), but a complete displacement of the Irish

population was found to be impossible<sup>11</sup>, for in the absence of sufficient numbers of settlers, many native Irish became involved in the settler's economy, but as the most disadvantaged members in the most marginal areas<sup>12</sup>.

The Nationalist theme of English repression and dispossession of Ireland is certainly attested to by the whole period of the wars of conquest and the plantation. For Unionist history, the theme of a people besieged by barbarism undoubtedly had its origins in this period of frontier settlement. The siege ideology is constantly affirmed by reference to the events of 1641 - events which also provide Nationalism with evidence of a tradition of heroic rebellion against English misrule. From October 22, 1641 the Irish - both the 'Old Irish' of Gaelic heritage and those known as the 'Old English' of Norman heritage, rose in rebellion against the new Protestant planters. The rebellion secured the blessing of Catholic bishops, ironically gave allegiance to the English monarchy in its civil war with parliament, and became organised as a confederacy of Irish Catholics<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> The theory and actual practice of the plantation is examined in detail in Foster (1988:59-78).

<sup>12</sup> Foster (ibid) mentions a number of disadvantages faced by native Irish in this respect: poorer land holdings, shorter leases, higher rents...

<sup>13</sup> See Foster (1988:79-100) for details.

"The scattered settlements of the plantation were overwhelmed one by one, and the character of the rebellion changed to that of a religious war. The slaughter of the planters and their families followed" (Stewart 1977:52).

As has been noted (ibid), while:

"the depositions of the survivors tell of men and women butchered with revolting cruelty, it is not the historical facts of the rebellion, nor the actual numbers of those slain ... but the circumstantial details of those depositions which have survived in the Protestant subconscious" (ibid).

If the rebellion is part of Unionist heritage, then its quelling and aftermath is part of Nationalism's. It was Cromwell who exacted revenge for the 1641 massacre of planters by in turn massacring the civilian population in the towns of Drogheda and Wexford in 1649. The vengeful reputation preceded Cromwell in Ireland in 1649 - and indeed has followed him into the present - and the massacres, and transplantations of disloyal populations, secured English and Protestant control in Ireland once again<sup>14</sup>.

An Act of Settlement of 1652 served to consolidate such control by confiscations of land belonging to anyone connected

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<sup>14</sup> In this regard it has been noted (Foster 1988:101) that Oliver Cromwell: "Trode on Irish soil for only nine months, but few mens footprints have been so deeply imprinted upon Irish history and historiography".

with the 1641 rebellion. Many were executed, many transported as slaves to the West Indies, and many more deported to the westernmost Irish province of Connaught<sup>15</sup>. The confiscated lands were for the most part turned over to officers of the Cromwellian army. As Foster (1988:115-116) notes, the importance of the confiscations was that whereas in 1641 60% of land was in Catholic hands, by 1660 the figure was 9%. Protestant economic and political dominance was thereby ensured.

## **RELIGIOUS WARS**

The Protestant dominance in Britain and Ireland was threatened by the period of the Restoration of the monarchy over Parliament. With the accession of the Catholic King James II in 1685, the restored monarchy embarked upon a policy of Catholicization of institutions of the state. de Paor (1986:161) suggests that Catholics generally expected toleration and compensation for the privations suffered after 1649, and there was a revival of Catholic activity - the

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<sup>15</sup> The Act of Settlement also prohibited Catholic public worship in an attempt to encourage Catholics to become Protestants and thereby loyal subjects. The choice for Catholics was then 'to Hell or Connaught', which Foster (1988:115) suggests has for some, provided a symbolic vision of the Irish as Israelites.

restoration of ruined abbeys and churches for example - throughout Ireland.

Many Protestants feared the establishment of a Catholic dynasty which would reverse the Act of Settlement. So the Restoration was ended by what for Protestants was the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, when James was deposed by a group of English aristocrats and then fled to France. The Protestant and Dutch William of Orange - next in line to the throne - was crowned King.

As part of a wider European war the deposed James, with the support of Louis XIV of France, landed in Ireland in 1689 with Irish, French, German and Walloon soldiers, to attack William's flank (Foster 1988:148). Protestants outside Ulster were disarmed while most of Ulster sided with the 'glorious revolution' and resisted the progress of James' armies which besieged the towns of Londonderry<sup>16</sup> and Enniskillen. Londonderry held out for nine months until relieved; Enniskillen broke its siege and attacked James' army, which was subsequently defeated in battles at the river Boyne and

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<sup>16</sup> Formerly known as Derry, after its gaelic name. As part of the Ulster Plantation, the City of London was given responsibility to settle the area - hence the name change. In contemporary discourse which label is used, is considered to reveal contemporary political allegiances.

the town of Aughrim by Williamite armies composed variously of Irish, English, Dutch, German and Danish soldiers<sup>17</sup>.

The importance of these events in ensuring Protestant dominance in Ireland is popularly reflected in the following toast of 1690<sup>18</sup>:

"The glorious, pious and immortal memory of the great and good King William, not forgetting Oliver Cromwell, who assisted in redeeming us from popery, slavery, arbitrary power, brass money and wooden shoes. May we never want a Williamite to kick the arse of a Jacobite! And a fart for the Bishop of Cork! And he that won't drink this, whether he be priest, bishop, deacon, bellows-blower, gravedigger, or any other of the fraternity of the clergy, may a north wind blow him to the south, and a west wind blow him to the east! May he have a dark night, a lee shore, a rank storm, and a leaky vessel to carry him over the River Styx! May the dog Cerebus make a meal of his rump and Pluto a snuffbox of his skull! May the devil jump down his throat with a red-hot harrow, and with every pin tear out a gut, and blow him with a clean carcass to hell! Amen!".

The continuing importance of these seventeenth century events are attested to in the still continuing annual commemorative parades and in an iconography of 'King Billy'

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<sup>17</sup> For a detailed account of these events see Sheperd (1990).

<sup>18</sup> M. J. MacManus, Irish Cavalcade, 1550-1850. London: Macmillan, 1939, pp. 64-65, extract reprinted in Carlton (1977:37).

which is a dominant element in Unionism<sup>19</sup>. For Nationalism such commemorations are merely a continuation of Protestant triumphalism.

Events of 1689 and 1690 had shown the tenacity of those Catholics in positions of influence in Ireland - remnants of the Gaelic Irish and Old English populations. A series of Popery laws designed to break such influence were consequently enacted. Roman Catholics were not allowed to enter parliament; were disarmed; were not allowed foreign education; were excluded from the professions and public life. Clergy were banished, inheritance rights abolished, purchasing and leasing rights restricted (Foster 1988:154; de Paor 1986:167). In that some of the penal laws restricted Dissenters<sup>20</sup> as well as Catholics, they had the desired effect of ensuring the ascendancy of the established Episcopalian Church of Ireland and the English land-owning ruling class.

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<sup>19</sup> Arthur (1984:3) points to the contemporary importance of the Boyne as a symbol of Protestant triumph over disloyal Catholics by relating an incident in 1933 when a painting by the Dutch court painter Pieter van der Meulen entitled 'The entry of King William into Ireland' was hung in the new Northern Ireland Parliament building at Stormont. The painting acknowledged the tacit papal support of Pope Innocent XI for William's endeavours against James II and particularly Louis XIV, by showing William and the Pope in the same picture. The painting was removed when it did was pointed out that this did not quite accord with unionist history!

<sup>20</sup> Presbyterian Protestants.

While it was in differential access to the material resource of land that material and cultural differences became related, this relationship in Ulster was not however one in which these differences were always parallel. For while landowners were indeed almost exclusively Protestant and tenants were mostly Catholic, given the aims of the plantation, many tenants were also Protestant. Indeed immigration from Scotland during the seventeenth century to the eastern coastal area of Ulster, ensured great numbers of Presbyterian Protestants who were not large landowners<sup>21</sup>.

That Catholic and Protestant tenants often had similar concerns is shown by the activities of the agrarian secret societies of the 1760's<sup>22</sup>. The 'Oakboy' movement mobilized Catholics, Presbyterians and Anglicans against landlords using forced labour for road-building, and against tithes to the established Church of Ireland. That landlord-tenant antagonisms could easily become antagonisms between Protestant and Catholic tenants however, is shown by the activities of the 'Steelboys' - a mostly Presbyterian movement - who in protesting large lease-renewal fines by attacking houses of the gentry, also expressed resentment at land being given to Irish tenants prepared to pay the high rents. Such movements,

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<sup>21</sup> On the historically close links between Ulster and Scotland see Stewart (1977:79-110).

<sup>22</sup> See Stewart (1977:113-122); de Paor (1986:197); Foster (1988:222-223).

and others throughout Ireland<sup>23</sup>, were part of a tradition of rural violence; a tradition which was to find its way into the towns and developing cities in Ulster.

The close political and cultural links between the settlers and Britain were paralleled by commercial ties which in time provided the capital used for the industrialisation of Ulster. The development of machine industry in Ulster was encouraged by the density of the planted population which found itself in possession of small farms. This in turn encouraged the diversification of farming operations and the combining of them initially with textile production, which developed into the factory production of linen (see Gibbon 1975:14-18).

Linen-weaving became particularly important in County Armagh which by the 1770's had the highest density of rural population in Ireland. This population, with a growing number of looms, coupled with expanding markets which encouraged increasing production, meant rising rents and increasing competition between weavers (de Paor 1986:215). Groups of Protestants under the claim of enforcing the penal laws, in raiding the homes of those they suspected of having weapons, also tended to concentrate their suspicions on houses where there were working looms (de Paor 1986:219). These gangs

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<sup>23</sup> See Stewart (1977:116).

became known as the 'Peep-o'-Day Boys' - from their time of operation.

Catholic gangs called Defenders were organized partly in response to such activities but also took up broader issues of taxation and tithes<sup>24</sup> and became organised as a federation. It was after a pitched battle in County Armagh in 1795 between Defenders and local Protestants when more than 30 people were killed, that the Protestant Loyal Orange Order was established<sup>25</sup> to defend and promote the interests initially of Protestant tenant-farmers and craftsmen. The 'Orangemen', as they became known, soon, however, came to be patronised by the Protestant gentry as a counterweight to the threat of the Irish Nationalism of the Republican United Irishmen<sup>26</sup>.

The legacy of these events is well expressed by Stewart (1977:137), who writes:

"The conflict in Co. Armagh passed on two traditions to the wider Orange movement of the nineteenth century and after. The rural labourers and the new urban working class created by Belfast's linen mills and shipyards inherited the Peep-o'-Day Boys' militant anti-Catholicism and their rituals of confrontation. The Armagh gentry of the Established Church were succeeded over the years by the Ulster

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<sup>24</sup> But see Foster (1988:271-273).

<sup>25</sup> See Gray (1972:50-59); Stewart (1977:128-137).

<sup>26</sup> On this see Stewart (1977:101-110).

landed classes, the clergy and the politicians, for whom the Order provided a loyal vassalage, an electorate and ultimately a citizen army".

Throughout the eighteenth century, elements of the Protestant ascendancy, constrained in their endeavours - either in business, government or church - developed a sense of Irish colonial Nationalism<sup>27</sup> which, in the absence of actual Irish heritage was rather a patriotism<sup>28</sup> for the institutions of Protestant ascendancy Ireland and a desire for them to be independent of England. One manifestation of this was the establishment of a number of United Irishmen clubs from 1791 onwards - clubs which also celebrated the Republican ideas and activities of the French revolution. This movement, led by dissenting Presbyterian and middle class Protestants mainly in Belfast and in Dublin, held that a degree of Catholic emancipation was necessary for independence from England and the collapse of the Anglican Protestant ascendancy<sup>29</sup>. To this end the movement rose in rebellion in 1798. The rising was spectacularly unsuccessful, and in some parts of the country was openly Catholic and sectarian<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> See Foster (1988:167-289).

<sup>28</sup> Adam (1991) makes this useful distinction.

<sup>29</sup> See Carlton (1977:45-47) for the United Irish constitution and manifesto.

<sup>30</sup> See for example Stewart (1977:101-110. Carlton (1977:48-49) provides the words of two songs which commemorate respectively the Catholic and the Protestant versions of the events of

Nevertheless, the United Irishmen and the '98 rising have become an important element in later Nationalist and also in socialist politics. For Nationalists it is another example of an oppressed people attempting to throw off the English yoke. Indeed in its advocacy of armed rebellion to achieve an independent republic the rising has been claimed as part of the heritage of the Republican tendency within Nationalism. For socialism, the episode is an example of a united movement of Protestant and Catholic pursuing class interests.

In the following excerpt from the autobiography of Wolfe Tone - one of the leaders of the United Irishmen - are exhibited the themes of natural unity between Catholic and Presbyterian Protestant - and their division by English manipulation; themes central to much contemporary Nationalist and socialist analysis:

"The dominion of England in Ireland had been begun and continued in the disunion of the two great sects which divided the latter country. In effectuating this disunion, the Protestant [Episcopalian] party were the willing instruments, as they saw clearly that if ever the Dissenters and Catholics were to discover their true interests and, forgetting their former ruinous dissensions, were to unite cordially and make common cause, the downfall of English supremacy, and, of course, of their own unjust monopoly, would be the necessary and immediate

consequence. They therefore laboured continually, and, for a long time, successfully, to keep the two sects asunder ..."<sup>31</sup>.

The immediate result however of the 1798 rising was the Act of Union of 1801, designed to integrate Ireland into the United Kingdom of Great Britain, and thereby to control it.

### **UNEVEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

By the end of the eighteenth century the industrial area of the north-east of Ireland, particularly around Belfast, had more in common with the industrial areas of Britain than with the rest of Ireland. While the whole history of the Anglicization of Ireland - of confiscations, plantations and transplantations - from the sixteenth century had everywhere created a Protestant ascendancy, only in Ulster did these processes - along with continuous immigration from Scotland - effectively displace large numbers of natives and replace them with any density of settler population. The ascendancy in the southern provinces, by contrast, acquired large estates which were used for extensive farming and ranching (Gibbon 1975:13).

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<sup>31</sup> R. Barry O'Brien (ed.) The Autobiography of Theobald Wolfe Tone (Dublin 1893), in Hepburn (1980:10).

This uneven development of capitalism in Ireland was a development dependant upon Britain. The north-east was dependant upon Britain and the empire for raw materials - variously, coal, cotton, iron ... - and markets; the south and west dependant upon British markets for its corn and cattle.

The new bourgeoisie which emerged in Belfast was almost entirely Protestant, as was the early proletariat. However, industrial expansion and the increasing demand for labour, and the famine of the 1840's, saw the migration of Catholic workers to the city, the population of which increased from 20,000 in 1800 to 90,000 in 1850 (de Paor 1986:259), with the Catholic population growing from 8% to 33% in the same period (Budge and O'Leary 1973:32). In this situation the historic divisions of the tenantry were translated into divisions between Protestant and Catholic workers in competition over skilled jobs and housing.

Most of the Catholic population who came to Belfast in this period, settled mainly along the route into the city from the west, which in the seventeenth century had lain just outside the old town walls (Stewart 1977:144). The pattern of settlement of this time has been essentially maintained ever since through the mechanism of the riot, used to clearly demarcate the boundaries between, and defend the territories of, Protestant and Catholic. The earliest Catholic-Protestant

riot was in 1812, and every decade since - with the exception of the 1930's and 1940's - has witnessed riots<sup>32</sup>.

Before Catholic immigration to the city, many skilled and semi-skilled Protestant workers had already organized into craft associations and Orange Lodges which regulated, through nepotism and patronage, access to jobs. The influx of low-wage Catholic labour threatened the job security of many Protestant workers, who used their organizations, particularly the Orange Order, to intimidate new employees, initiate shop-floor riots and disruptions, and thus force job segregation (Gibbon 1975:94-98).

Such activities lead to the firm establishment of ethnically split labour and housing markets, which are still characteristic of contemporary Belfast and indeed of many other towns across Northern Ireland.

## **IRISH NATIONALISM**

In negotiations surrounding the Act of Union in 1801, in return for dissolution of the dependent Irish parliament, Catholic emancipation had been promised by Westminster.

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<sup>32</sup> See Budge and O'Leary (1973:89); Stewart (1977:137-154); Buckland (1981:46); Darby (1983:21).

However it took pressure to exact reforms. Organisations such as the Catholic Association, established in 1823, sought the admission of Catholics to parliament in London by mobilising - with the help of Catholic priests - the peasant population to attend massive demonstrations. The Repeal Association founded in 1841 was developed to Repeal the Act of Union and re-establish an independent legislature in Ireland. Again tactics of mass mobilization through the Catholic church were used. These organisations helped with - to use Hobsbawm's (1983) expression - the 'invention of tradition' by popularising the symbols of:

"Shamrocks, round towers, wolfhounds, sad young women (symbolizing Ireland, or 'Erin' ...) with stringless harps, and sunbursts to represent the coming dawn of national independence" (de Paor 1986:236-237).

For some, the famines and mass migrations of the 1840's, served to emphasise Ireland's dependence upon England and the impotency of seeking the route of parliamentary reform to independence. The 'Young Ireland' movement attempted an armed uprising in 1848, while the Irish Republican Brotherhood - the 'Fenians' - founded in 1858, attempted an armed uprising in Ireland in 1867<sup>33</sup>. Here in the nineteenth century are the

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<sup>33</sup> The Fenians were essentially a federation of clubs bound by oath to the establishment of an Irish Republic, and had clubs in America, Australia, South Africa, Britain. The Fenians attempted an 'invasion' of Canada in 1867.

origins of the divisions within contemporary Nationalism between 'constitutional' Nationalists and Republicans.

The 1880's saw the development of a Nationalist movement in Ireland, seeking not independence from Britain, but 'Home Rule' - a limited form of self-government within the British Empire. Led by that section of the Irish commercial and farming bourgeoisie in the south of Ireland whose interests lay in breaking their economic dependence on Britain, support for Home Rule came also from extant Irish political organisations<sup>34</sup>, the Catholic church<sup>35</sup> and Gaelic cultural associations<sup>36</sup>. The gaelic revival fostered by these organisations was important in providing a fully articulated Irish heritage for the claims of Nationalist politicians, allowing for the development of a popular Irish ethno-nationalism in the 1880's.

In this respect, Dr. Douglas Hyde of the Gaelic League avers:

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<sup>34</sup> Apart from the Catholic Association and the Repeal Association: the Irish National Land League; the Irish National League; and the Irish Parliamentary Party.

<sup>35</sup> On the role of the Catholic church see Foster (1988:386-7, 417-19); Coldrey (1988).

<sup>36</sup> Such as, apart from the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Gaelic League.

"What we must endeavour never to forget is this, that the Ireland of today is the descendant of Ireland of the seventh century; then the school of Europe and the torch of learning. It is true that Northmen made some minor settlements in it in the ninth and tenth centuries, it is true that the Normans made extensive settlements during the succeeding centuries, but none of these broke the continuity of the social life of the island ... and even after the Cromwellian plantation the children of numbers of the English soldiers who settled ... turned into good Irishmen ... In two points only was the continuity of the Irishism of Ireland damaged. First, in the north east of Ulster, where the Gaelic race was expelled and the land planted with aliens ... and in the ownership of the land, eight-ninths of which belongs to people many of whom have always lived, or live, abroad ..."<sup>37</sup>.

Popular journalism also linked Irish Nationalism with Catholicism. So an editorial in The Leader of July 27, 1901:

"It has been hinted to us that it is our opinion that no one but a Catholic can be an Irishman. We never said so, nor do we think so ... When we look out on Ireland we see those who believe, or may be immediately induced to believe, in Ireland a nation are, as a matter of fact, Catholics. When we look back on history we find also, as a matter of fact, that those who stood during the last three hundred years for Ireland as an Irish entity were mainly Catholics, and that those who sought to corrupt them and trample on them were mainly non-Catholics ...

Such being the facts, the only thinkable solution of the Irish national

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<sup>37</sup> D. Hyde, The Revival of Irish Literature and Other Addresses, (T. Fisher Unwin, London) 1894, in Hepburn (1980:61-62).

problem is that one side gets on top and absorbs the other until we have one nation ... As we are for Ireland, we are ... on the side of Catholic development; ... If a non-Catholic Nationalist Irishman does not wish to live in a Catholic atmosphere let him turn Orangeman ..."<sup>38</sup>.

By the turn of the century the Irish Nationalist movement already had many of its contemporary hallmarks: Gaelic culture, Catholic religion, the Gaelic heritage of an Irish ethnicity, and constitutional and Republican tendencies.

#### **ULSTER UNIONISM**

In opposition to such Irish Nationalism and to Home Rule, an Irish Unionist movement which was strongest in Ulster emerged at the same time; dedicated to maintaining the constitutional and political arrangements between Britain and Ireland established by the Act of Union of 1800. Led by the industrial bourgeoisie of the northeast, whose interests lay, as did those of the mainly Protestant working class, in becoming more closely integrated into the British economy, Ulster Unionism was able to garner support from Protestant churches and the Orange Order.

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<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Hepburn (1980:64-65).

Although the Orange Order had been officially dissolved in 1836, its revival was justified in the following terms by a leading advocate in the Belfast Newsletter of May 15, 1861:

"...The Orange Institution is a religio-political institution ... But Popery is something more than a religious system; it is a political system also. It is a religio-political system for the enslavement of the body and soul of man, and it cannot be met by a mere religious system, or by any mere political system. It must be opposed by such a combination as the Orange Society, based upon religion, and carrying our religion into the politics of the day. We must tell our representatives in Parliament that they must support Protestantism in their politics as well as go down on their knees before God on the Sabbath Day. "<sup>39</sup>

Home Rule, for Unionists meant 'Rome Rule', signalling:

"... not only economic disaster but also the interruption of the extension of social reforms to the working class, reforms 'guaranteed' by the participation of Ireland in the empire" (Gibbon 1975:137).

While the first Unionist organisations were developed in 1886, it was the establishment of the Ulster Unionist Council in 1905 which centralized Unionist forces, determined policy and made representations in Britain (Buckland 1981:10). The strength of popular Unionist feeling was indicated by mass meetings throughout Ulster. In particular, on September 28, 1912 - declared 'Ulster Day' - nearly half a million people,

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<sup>39</sup> Reprinted in Hepburn (1980:32).

over half of the Protestant population, signed a 'Solemn League and Covenant' which read:

"Being convinced in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster, as well as of the whole of Ireland, subversive of our civil and religious freedom, destructive of our citizenship, and perilous to the unity of the Empire, we, whose names are underwritten, men of Ulster, loyal subjects of His Gracious Majesty King George V, humbly relying on the God Whom our fathers in the days of stress and trial confidently trusted, do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn Covenant throughout this our time of threatened calamity to stand by one another in defending for ourselves and our children our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom and in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a home rule parliament in Ireland. And in the event of such a parliament being forced upon us we further and mutually pledge ourselves to refuse to recognize its authority. In sure confidence that God will defend the right, we hereto subscribe our names. And further we individually declare that we have not already signed this Covenant. God Save the King".<sup>40</sup>

By 1914 a private volunteer army, the Ulster Volunteer Force, of some 90,000 men was fully armed to resist Home Rule<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Reprinted in Hepburn (1980:76).

<sup>41</sup> The Ulster Volunteer Force also possessed a cavalry, a motor-car corps, signallers, dispatch riders, and nursing units. See Stewart (1967).

That Ulster Unionism was identified with British culture and Protestant religion, and claimed the British and Protestant heritage of an Ulster ethnicity was obvious by 1914. This Ulster ethnicity is not to be seen as a nationalism - though it is a form of ethnic politics - for as has been noted (Aughey 1990:9), separate political development for Ulster people was precisely what Unionists did not want. Rather, "Unionists wanted to be the same as, and not different from all other British citizens" (ibid).

That Unionists were prepared to use force against the British state to assert their loyalty is to be understood, not in terms of a nationalist ideology but of what Miller (1978) considers is a contractarian ideology whereby loyalty is conditional upon reciprocity. That the loyalty of Unionists was to be rewarded with a Home Rule they did not want, was considered - and still is today - a breaking of a bargain between the Crown and the people<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> Failure to take seriously the claims of unionism and indeed to believe in the "myths of ... nationalism" (Patterson 1980:147), leads Nairn (1981:236) to consider unionism an inadequate - because not nationalist - response to the impositions of uneven capitalist development.

## MILITARY CONFLICT

In response to the arming of the Ulster Volunteer Force, a number of Irish Nationalist organisations established the Irish Volunteers in 1913. As Padraig Pearse - a Nationalist leader - wrote: "Personally I think the Orangeman with a rifle a much less ridiculous figure than the Nationalist without a rifle"<sup>43</sup>. Pearse was to give Irish Republican Nationalism one of its enduring themes when he wrote:

"We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, to the sight of arms, to the use of arms. We may make mistakes in the beginning and shoot the wrong people; but bloodshed is a cleansing and a sanctifying thing, and the nation which regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood. There are many things more horrible than bloodshed; and slavery is one of them"<sup>44</sup>.

The Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish Volunteers were not the only military forces in Ireland at this time. In 1913 the socialist James Connolly was instrumental in establishing the Irish Citizen Army to protect members of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union from police and employer attacks. Connolly's socialism is reflected in, for example,

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<sup>43</sup> Quoted in de Paor (1988:283).

<sup>44</sup> The Coming Revolution. (November 1913), in P.H. Pearse, Political Writings and Speeches (Dublin, 1924), reprinted in Hepburn (1980:80).

the foreword to his pamphlet entitled The Reconquest of Ireland where he claims:

"...the Labour Movement of Ireland must set itself the Re-Conquest of Ireland as its final aim, that that re-conquest involves taking possession of the entire country, all its power of wealth-production and all its natural resources, and organising these on a co-operative basis for the good of all. To demonstrate that this and this alone would be a re-conquest, the attempt is made to explain what the Conquest of Ireland was, how it affected the Catholic natives and the Protestant settlers, how the former were subjected and despoiled by open force, and how the latter were despoiled by fraud, and when they protested were also subjected by force, and how, out of this common spoliation and subjection there arises to-day the necessity of common action to reverse the Conquest, in order that the present population, descendants alike of the plebian conquerors and the conquered plebeians, may enjoy in common fraternity and good-will that economic security and liberty for which their ancestors fought, or thought they fought" (Connolly 1972:X).

Connolly's subsequent involvement in the events of 1916<sup>45</sup> allowed him to be co-opted into both Nationalist and socialist traditions.

The outbreak of war in 1914 gave an opportunity for Unionists to demonstrate their loyalty to the British Crown, with the Ulster Volunteer Force being constituted as a division in the British army - one which was virtually wiped

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<sup>45</sup> See for example Greaves (1976).

out at the Somme in 1916. While the British government refused to have a similar division of Irish Volunteers, Volunteer leaders called on the Volunteers to join the British army in the hope that such a show of loyalty would be rewarded. The Volunteers split on the issue, with those opposed to fighting England's war retaining the title Irish Volunteers.

It was the Irish Volunteers along with Connolly's Citizen Army and the Irish Republican Brotherhood which staged a rising in Easter week 1916 to establish a Republic of Ireland, with the following declaration by "The Provisional Government of the Irish Republic to the People of Ireland":

"Irishmen and Irishwomen: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom ... We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies ... The Irish republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman ... And declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts ... oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past ..."<sup>46</sup>

The rising was ended after a week, failing to get widespread support. But the event and in particular the

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<sup>46</sup> Reprinted in Hepburn (1980:94-95).

summary courts martial and execution of 15 participants, including the seven signatories of the proclamation, one of whom - Connolly, because already wounded - was shot while tied to a chair; fostered a moral outrage which was reflected in the collapse of support for the parliamentary route to national independence and overwhelming support for the Republican Nationalism of Sinn Fein.

In the general election of 1918 Sinn Fein won an overwhelming majority of Irish seats at Westminster - except in Ulster where Unionists were supported. Sinn Fein members had already pledged themselves to abstain from Westminster and to assemble as the parliament of the Republic declared in 1916. The first meeting of 'Dail Eireann' - the parliament of Ireland - was thus held in January 1919. When the British authorities attempted to suppress the Dail the Anglo-Irish War - the War of Independence - began.

#### **NORTHERN IRELAND: THE POLITICS OF ALLEGIANCE**

While the British government sought to reconcile Nationalist and Unionist political aspirations through the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 which partitioned Ireland into two states, Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland, this

was something which neither Nationalists nor Unionists wanted (Buckland 1981:1).

Indeed many Nationalists continued to fight against the British presence until December 6, 1921, when the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed. The terms of the Treaty established Southern Ireland as a twenty-six county area with dominion status within the Commonwealth. That this was not acceptable to many Nationalists, since it constituted an acceptance of partition, led to the Irish Civil War between Anti-Treaty Republicans - to become known as the I.R.A. - and the Pro-Treaty Free State forces.

On the newly created state<sup>47</sup> of Northern Ireland, the effect was to concentrate within the state, the political antagonisms between the Irish Nationalist minority who aspired to a unity between Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland, and the Unionist majority who sought to maintain a unity between Northern Ireland and Great Britain<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> By the terms of the Government of Ireland Act, Northern Ireland was to be an integral part of the United Kingdom with its own devolved government with a wide range of powers.

<sup>48</sup> Those unionists who, as a result of partition lived in what became the Free State, were too small a minority to be politically significant. This was not the case with the nationalist minority in Northern Ireland who constituted in 1921, about 34% of the population.

Since 1921, the dominant politics in Northern Ireland has been a politics of allegiance. Allegiance, on the part of Unionism to Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom, and to all those practices which maintain this union: and on the part of Nationalism, to Northern Ireland as part of a unitary Irish state, and to all those activities which might bring this about.

The dominance of this politics is illustrated in a number of ways. In the first general election in Northern Ireland on May 24, 1921 in which 89% of the electorate voted by proportional representation<sup>49</sup>, Unionists obtained 40 seats in the 52 seat Northern Ireland House of Commons; while Nationalist parties obtained 12 (Buckland 1981:33).

Nationalists boycotted the new parliament, and refused to take their seats. Nationalist controlled local authorities also refused to acknowledge the new government and pledged allegiance instead to Dail Eireann. The Catholic clergy endorsed this boycott and numbers of Catholic teachers refused to co-operate with the newly established Northern Ireland Ministry of Education, looking instead to Dublin for direction (Buckland 1981:35). Some Nationalist organisations - the

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<sup>49</sup> A form of voting instituted by the Government of Ireland Act for a period of 3 years after partition.

I.R.A. - indicated their view of the Northern Ireland state by carrying out guerilla raids against it.

At the same time, and no doubt encouraged by the Nationalist boycott, Unionists dominated the new state apparatuses. The Unionist Party supported by a majority of the electorate, remained in power until 1972 when the government of Northern Ireland was prorogued by Westminster. While Unionist dominance was not achieved, it was certainly aided, by a host of dubious practices such as gerrymandering, abolition of proportional representation, nepotism and discrimination<sup>50</sup>. The importance of the issue of partition, of 'the border' between north and south is attested to by the large numbers of votes gained by Unionists - who want to keep it - and Nationalists - who want to remove it -, to the virtual exclusion of other parties and issues<sup>51</sup>.

The class alliance constructed by the unifying ideology and practices of Unionism has always been under pressure from within - from Unionist working class demands<sup>52</sup>. The socialist

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<sup>50</sup> On this see above. See also Whyte (1983); Buckland (1979:179-276).

<sup>51</sup> For example, Barritt and Carter (1962) show how Newsletter editorials at each election made this an issue.

<sup>52</sup> These pressures are considered by Bew et al (1979) to have been the main ones determining the activities of the Northern Ireland state from 1921 until 1972. More recent events - the

tradition has it that working class unity is a natural state of affairs, that disunity is consciously fostered. Indeed in 1918, in a period of international revolution, when socialist ideas threatened to gain support, Unionist leaders did consciously establish the Ulster Unionist Labour Association and a number of Unionist Working-Men's Clubs precisely in order to harness labour issues to the discourse and practices of Unionism. A Unionist organiser is quite explicit on this in a letter to a Unionist leader, when he writes that:

"The working people in Belfast have felt for a very considerable time past that means should be placed at their disposal whereby domestic matters could be discussed by them under Unionist auspices ... The absence of such means ... frequently leads to the younger members of the working classes joining socialist and extreme organisations ... where they are educated in views very different to those held by our body ... "<sup>53</sup>.

Patterson (1980:92-114) shows how the '44 Hour Strike' of 1919, when Belfast shipyard and engineering workers struck for a 44 hour work week bringing the city to a standstill, was defeated by, amongst other things, appeals to the overwhelmingly Protestant workers by the Unionist press and Unionist political organisations, such as the Ulster Unionist

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Ulster Workers Council strike of 1974 for example - show the continuing importance of such pressures on direct rule.

<sup>53</sup> Letter from Dawson Bates to Sir Edward Carson, June 30, 1919, reprinted in Hepburn (1980:150-152).

Labour Association, which claimed that the strike was playing into the hands of the 'enemies of Ulster'- Nationalists. So when the strike was defeated, not surprisingly, there was also a "mass expulsion of Catholics and workers identified with the labour movement from the shipyards and engineering plants" (Patterson 1980:92) - an expulsion of elements disloyal to their ethnic group.

Bew et al (1979:102-28) show how a number of post-war and potential class issues were successfully articulated to a Unionist discourse by Unionist politicians. Unemployment was claimed to be at least exacerbated by 'Fifth Columnists' - workers coming from Southern - Catholic - Ireland into Northern Ireland. The introduction of welfare programmes, the result of successful class politics in the rest of the United Kingdom, was claimed by local Unionist politicians as a benefit of the link with Britain - in this way binding the Protestant working class to the local bourgeoisie and against things Irish. Such Unionist politicians often also portrayed Catholics as 'two-faced' in accepting welfare benefits from the state while remaining 'disloyal' to it.

It would be more surprising if Unionist politicians did not attempt to manipulate and unify their constituency. Nevertheless to assume that manipulation is in itself sufficient to determine the politics of whole populations is

at once both a naive and paternalistic analysis. Such a viewpoint, with reference to Northern Ireland has, quite appropriately, been termed 'sectarian voluntarism' (Bew et al 1979:215).

In this regard, the outdoor relief riots of 1932 in Belfast, when both Protestant and Catholic workers in parts of Belfast fought - occasionally alongside each other - against the police, is considered in much socialist discourse to be another instance of real class interests overcoming less real ethnic interests. Thus the Communist paper the Irish Workers Voice of October 15, 1932 claimed:

"The working class of the North is razing to the ground the disunity barriers erected by generations of imperialist deception and intrigue. A new era is opening up in the Irish working class movement"<sup>54</sup>.

That the riots of 1932 were followed by sectarian riots in 1935 when 11 people were killed (Buckland 1981:70-71) then has to be explained in terms of successful manipulation by bourgeois and Unionist politicians<sup>55</sup>. As Munck and Rolston (1987:5) suggest, rather than considering sectarian politics - of Nationalism versus Unionism - and class politics as "two

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<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Munck and Rolston (1987:8).

<sup>55</sup> See for example Farrell (1976:ch.6); Devlin (1981:32). For a detailed consideration of these events see Munck and Rolston (1987).

sides of the same coin" with their fortunes rising and falling in opposition, it is more appropriate to consider them as "two tides lapping on the same shore".

The fortunes of the Northern Ireland Labour Party illustrates the distinctive nature of class politics in Northern Ireland. Established in 1924 with trade union support, the party attracted both Catholic and Protestant workers. While operating within the constitution of the state, it remained formally neutral on the border issue<sup>56</sup>. In a situation where this issue successfully dominated the political agenda, support for the party remained small.

It was undoubtedly in the interests of Unionist politicians to use the threat of a united Ireland to construct a unity within the Protestant population, and in this regard the irredentism of the southern Irish state was a useful resource<sup>57</sup>. The 1937 constitution in the South marked "the

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<sup>56</sup> The issue of whether or not the border between Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland should remain. An issue of the legitimacy of the state of Northern Ireland.

<sup>57</sup> It is quite clear that just as the issue of partition was a useful resource for unionists in the North - who wanted to keep it - it was also a useful resource for nationalists in the South - who wanted to abolish it. O'Halloran (1987) shows clearly that anti-partitionist rhetoric in the South was more a demonstration of nationalist credentials for domestic political advantage than a commitment to bringing about the reality of unification.

high point of official anti-partitionist rhetoric" (O'Halloran 1987:174), with Article 2 stating:

"The national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas" (ibid:175).

Article 44 recognized the 'special position' of the Catholic Church in Ireland - now called Eire.

Eire's neutrality during World War II, its declaring a Republic in 1948 and leaving the British Commonwealth, and an upsurge of Nationalist political activity in Northern Ireland after 1945; all were resources for the prosecution of Unionist politics and made the non-sectarianism of the Northern Ireland Labour Party difficult to sustain. In this context, the party conference of 1949 explicitly decided:

"to maintain unbroken, the connection between Great Britain and Northern Ireland as part of the Commonwealth ..."  
(Harbinson 1966:232).

With the resulting departure of many Catholic members the Northern Ireland Labour Party could appeal directly to the Protestant working class for support, and so became essentially a Protestant labour party, providing an opposition within the Protestant community to the Unionist Party. Its peak of success was reached in the 1950's and 60's. It was able to capitalise on the increasing unemployment in

Belfast in the late 1950's to increase its support, particularly from Protestant working class areas - winning 4 seats in the 1958 general election, and achieving, in the 1962 election, 76,842 votes (O'Dowd 1980:12) - its highest ever.

The obvious lack of support amongst Northern Ireland Catholics for the I.R.A. border campaign of 1956-62, the actions of the Republic against the I.R.A., and the low level of Nationalist political activity within Northern Ireland at this time, meant that the Nationalist threat was not as available as a resource for Unionist politics as it might have been in other times. Bew et al (1979) show how, in the absence of the Nationalist threat, Unionist leaders in the 1960's turned to the rhetoric of planning and modernisation in an attempt to regain Protestant working class support.

The low level of Nationalist activity in the 1950's and 60's is partially explained by the general improvements in living standards throughout Northern Ireland in the aftermath of the war and the election of a Labour government in Britain in 1945. Increased financial aid to Northern Ireland<sup>58</sup> allowed the government - though under increasing British Treasury scrutiny - to implement welfare state measures, won by the working class in Britain; which slowly improved living standards of the working and middle classes in Northern

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<sup>58</sup> In gratitude for the war effort.

Ireland<sup>59</sup>. At the same time, the expansion of the administrative apparatuses of the state - particularly at local authority levels - gave greater scope for discrimination, particularly in local authority employment and public housing allocation - issues which particularly affected the Catholic middle and working classes, and which traditional Nationalism failed to act on<sup>60</sup>.

These were the conditions under which a number of new political groups were able to mobilize sections of the Catholic population and smaller sections of labour supporters, into the civil rights movement of the 1960's. While many people had hopes that such a movement would bring an end to the divisive politics of Nationalism versus Unionism, subsequent events were to show that the pattern of politics established in the formative years of the Northern Ireland state:

"a pattern based not upon the wholehearted consent of the entire community but upon the indifference of the minority and the determination of the majority to monopolise power" (Buckland 1981:81),

was to endure.

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<sup>59</sup> Though they still remained below those in Britain.

<sup>60</sup> See Bew et al (1979:163-171).

The past, quite clearly is of importance to contemporary politics. This chapter has attempted to illustrate how the past - through military conquest, religious proselytizing and uneven economic development - has divided the population of Northern Ireland; providing the historical experiences around which ethnic identities formed. Such identities in turn have provided the resources with which the ethno-political movements of Irish Nationalism and Ulster Unionism of today have invented their traditions and been built. The result is a society where religious, cultural ethnic and political differences parallel each other to divide the population into two distinct and antagonistic communities. It is the sheer depth - historical and psychological - of this fracture which makes Northern Ireland unusual in many ways. The following chapter makes some comparisons with other divided societies, to underline this point.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### COMPARISONS

While this dissertation makes no claims to be a comparative study of Northern Ireland and other ethnically divided societies, some schematic, cursory and speculative comparison usefully underlines Darby's (1976:197) observation that "Northern Ireland is at least remarkable for its peculiarities as for its general characteristics"<sup>1</sup>.

There are many contemporary examples of divided societies, with which Northern Ireland might usefully be compared<sup>2</sup> - societies in which conflict is the normal form of ethnic relations. At the same time, and probably more importantly, it is a specific conjunction of international,

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<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that there are not situations with which Northern Ireland has much in common, but that is another issue.

<sup>2</sup> For example, works comparing Northern Ireland and: Rhodesia, see Schutz and Scott (1974); New Brunswick, see Aunger (1981); India and Palestine, see Fraser (1984); Quebec, see O'Sullivan-See (1986); U.S. and Algeria, see Wright (1987).

national and local influences which makes the Northern Ireland conflict so intractable.

Many of the features of contemporary Northern Ireland stem from its origins as a settler society. In such societies, the initial and invariably coercive act of dispossession and displacement of native populations, not surprisingly engenders antagonisms and a situation in which the native population is, for good reason, perceived by settlers as threatening. It is this which gives Ulster Protestants, Israeli Jews and South African whites for example, what is often considered a 'siege mentality'. Of course such a mentality is not a primordial given. For descendants of original settlers it has to be learned, a learning process which is helped by real attacks on the settler community.

Many settler societies have dealt with the native threat by genocide<sup>3</sup>, or by assimilation<sup>4</sup>. Assimilation is made difficult in situations where differences between native and settler are both persistent and mutually reinforcing. Thus religion distinguished Protestant settlers from Catholic

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<sup>3</sup> As was the case in Australia, the United States and early South Africa. On the role of the ethnic state in genocide see van den Berghe (1990).

<sup>4</sup> As for example with European settlers in Brazil, Argentina and indeed with early Nordic and Anglo-Norman settlers in Ireland.

natives in Ulster, Jewish settlers from mostly Muslim natives in Palestine, and Christian settlers from non-Christian natives in South Africa. In these three cases, other cultural practices paralleled religious ones - different conceptions of property, land usage, domestic relations, dress, food preferences and so on. Such cultural differences, because not given, are reproduced through parallel institutions and practices. In this respect certainly, Northern Ireland, Israel, South Africa, Liberia, Rhodesia, and indeed a host of other societies; Lebanon, Cyprus, Belgium, Canada; are plural or deeply divided societies (Kuper and Smith 1969) - societies where a common identity is problematic.

In situations where genocide or assimilation do not occur, settler communities must develop the means to resist the real or imagined native threat. Weitzer (1990:26-29) usefully suggests that in this respect three things are necessary: "autonomy from the metropole in the exercise of political authority and coercive power" (ibid:26); the consolidation of "control over the indigenous population" (ibid:27), and; maintenance of settler "solidarity and state cohesion" (ibid:28).

The inability of settlers variously in Algeria, Kenya and Zambia, Mozambique and Angola, and Namibia; to become autonomous from France, Britain, Portugal and South Africa

respectively, and to control state power meant eventual loss of settler dominance (Weitzer 1990:36-38).

In the case of Israel and South Africa it was military conflict which detached the settler state from its metropole. For Rhodesia it was a unilateral declaration of independence. Northern Ireland however is unique among settler states insofar as de jure autonomy from Britain was neither wanted by the settlers, nor indeed was it required by them in order to control the Northern Ireland state. The Government of Ireland Act of 1920, by which Ireland was partitioned, and British government policies and practices from then until 1972, effectively gave the settler community de facto control of the state.

The Government of Ireland Act, by making provision for a Council of Ireland as a forum wherein both the North and the South of Ireland could resolve their differences, clearly showed that Britain hoped to extract itself from Ireland (Buckland 1981:20-21). Its arms-length policy until 1972 suggests this<sup>5</sup>, as does Britain's acknowledgement (Guelke 1988:4) of Northern Ireland's right to secede. It has been argued (Guelke 1988) that insofar as it is unusual for a state

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<sup>5</sup> Episodes such as Churchill's offer to the Irish Prime Minister de Valera during World War II to exchange Northern Ireland for the ending of Irish neutrality, also suggests this. See Bew et al (1979:175).

to grant the right of secession to a part of its territory, this illustrates the conditional nature of Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom<sup>6</sup>. In not being fully integrated into the United Kingdom, yet enjoying more than colonial status, Northern Ireland is in an anomalous position in terms of international opinion, which makes it easier for Northern Ireland's legitimacy to be questioned, and this, contends Guelke (1988:195) has made the conflict more intractable.

Giliomee (1990:303-305) also considers the conflict in Northern Ireland to have been made intractable by the external involvement of both Britain and the Republic of Ireland. Also that the situation in Israel has likewise been made more intractable by the external involvement of various Arab states and the U.S. This gives rise to a situation:

"where the main parties address the external players rather than their opponents in the communal conflict" (ibid:305).

However, it could be argued that while the relationship between Northern Ireland and Britain has been tenuous enough to allow for international involvement in Northern Ireland, it

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<sup>6</sup> Certainly this adds to the insecurity of the settler community and helps explain their conditional loyalty to Britain, and provides a resource for nationalist challenges to the settler state.

has also been strong enough to ensure that such involvement remains rhetorical and not practical. Indeed it could further be argued that were this not the case, Northern Ireland may well have undergone a process of 'Lebanonization'<sup>7</sup>. In this respect intractability might well be preferable!

Similarly, the influence of the U.S. upon Israel in the 1990-91 Gulf War, in restraining Israel, and in the 1991 peace process, by pressuring Israel; illustrate the positive - in terms of avoiding greater conflict - influence of external patrons. Giliomee (1990:306) suggests also that it is the lack of a foreign factor which distinguishes the South African situation from that of Northern Ireland and Israel, though he goes on nevertheless to mention the influence of Soviet and U.S. foreign policies, the Frontline states and sanctions. Indeed it has been argued that South Africa represents a case of "complete internationalisation" (Johnson 1990:283-85).

The point here is that de jure autonomy from the metropole does not guarantee a settler state freedom from outside interference, but may indeed leave it open to wider international pressures. In this regard it has been suggested (Johnson 1990:287-294) that in the past decade South Africa has faced a 'collective metropole' of western powers pushing

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<sup>7</sup> With, as Kuper (1981:204) suggests, attendant genocide perhaps.

for internal changes. It is arguable that a similar constellation of forces now challenges the Israeli state to implement internal change also<sup>8</sup>.

Weitzer's (1990:27) second condition for stable settler rule is the consolidation of control over the indigenous population. In this regard settler states have used the entire spectrum of measures of social control<sup>9</sup>. Control is conditioned by resistance<sup>10</sup> and often by international opinion. This is what Ackroyd et al (1977:43) refer to in claiming, with respect to technologies of political control, that maximum repression is "subject to a constraint that any political backlash must be kept to manageable proportions"; and backlashes often depend not upon how harmless control actually is but upon how harmless it seems to a wider audience.

Northern Ireland and Israel are unusual in having a settler population which is a majority in the state - about

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<sup>8</sup> This has undoubtedly been aided by the withdrawal of unconditional U.S. support for Israel in recent years.

<sup>9</sup> In this respect, on Northern Ireland see for example Ackroyd et al (1977); on South Africa see Adam and Moodley (1986:129-69); on Israel see Lustick (1980). For some comparisons see Brewer et al (1988).

<sup>10</sup> See Adam (1990) with reference to South Africa and Israel.

63% and 86%<sup>11</sup> respectively - in comparison with, for example, South Africa, Rhodesia until 1980, Kenya until 1963, Liberia until 1980, with 15%, 5% and 3% respectively (Weitzer 1990:32). This allows the settler population in Israel - excluding the territories of Gaza and the West Bank - and Northern Ireland to dominate native populations yet generally adhere to what are held to be democratic practices of electoral politics. Dominant majorities are not, however, averse to using gerrymandering or restrictive voting qualifications to make quite certain of their dominance.

A majority settler population also makes it possible for the state apparatuses to be manned entirely or predominantly by settlers thereby ensuring the loyalty of state forces. This is not a luxury the South African settler population enjoys. This is part of what Weitzer (1990:28) considers a third pillar of settler dominance - settler solidarity. Because settlers differ on any number of criteria, if maximum solidarity is to be obtained, differences must be marginalised by stressing similarities between settlers which gives the population its unity; and by stressing the differences between settler and native, and the threat which natives pose.

In this respect the perceived and actual threats by the Arab population both outside and inside Israel are effective

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<sup>11</sup> Excluding the territories.

in ensuring that differences between Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews are submerged in the face of the threat against all Jews. That 'Arabs' are not a unified population in practice is overcome by unifying them discursively.

Similarly in Northern Ireland, denominational differences between Presbyterians, Anglicans, Methodists and so on become insignificant in the face of the perceived and actual threat which the Catholicism of the natives presents to all Protestants. When such religious differences are coterminous with the threat which Gaelic culture poses for Anglo culture, settlers can claim to be doubly threatened. Add to this the threat to the settler state by a disloyal domestic population and a foreign irredentism, and internal differences between settlers effectively disappear.

Settler ideologists in South Africa use the category of race to produce a discursive distinction between the white-skinned settler population and the native population and thereby attempt to achieve settler solidarity in the face of a threat which is also discursively unified as 'black'. That a plethora of apartheid regulations has been needed to ensure that race differences are practised, shows - as has been noted elsewhere (Adam and Moodley 1986:16) - the non-voluntary nature of such groupings, and indeed this has contributed to

their rejection as a basis for mobilization by most oppositional organizations in South Africa.

That phenotypical similarities do not automatically translate into shared ethnicity is interestingly attested to in the case of Liberia, where the settlers were former American slaves, yet:

"their views of Africa and Africans were essentially those of nineteenth century whites in the United States. The bonds of culture were stronger than bonds of race, and the settlers clung tenaciously to the subtle differences that set them apart from the 'tribal savages' in their midst (Liebenow 1987:23)<sup>12</sup>.

The Northern Ireland situation also illustrates the importance of ethnicity rather than race for political mobilization, as do Shona-Ndebele antagonisms in Zimbabwe for example. While a history and experience of racial division and forty years of apartheid in South Africa has indeed created black and white identities, that these are insufficient to overdetermine ethnic and cultural differences within racial categories, is attested to by antagonisms between Afrikaners and English speaking settlers; and between for example Xhosa and Zulu natives.

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Weitzer (1990:32). See also Gershoni (1985:21-32).

Horowitz (1990) has suggested that what distinguishes 'hot' from 'cooler' cases of ethnic conflict is a combination of external threats to the dominant group; experience of ethnic domination; the existence of ethnically based political parties, and in particular; intra-ethnic party competition. Further (ibid 456-458), these factors serve, for example, to distinguish Northern Ireland from Belgium and Canada, Sudan from Nigeria, and Sri Lanka from Malaysia.

What Horowitz's factors underline is the importance of politics. The situation in Israel is one in which the Israeli Arab population within pre-1967 borders is a small threat to Jewish hegemony. This allows Jewish political parties a degree of latitude on a range of issues - the Labour Party and the Likud for example, are not competing for an ethnic vote. In South Africa the native population is effectively excluded from electoral politics, and its political organisations are not competing for ethnic allegiances - though this is not to say that ethnic allegiances are not a factor in 'black politics', or that making them more important is in the interests of the settler state<sup>13</sup>. Also, the settler community itself in not being ethnically unified cannot mobilise the white population on the basis of ethnicity, so that white allegiances are divided mainly between the Conservative Party,

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<sup>13</sup> Something which recent revelations of state funding to Inkatha illustrates.

the National Party and the Democratic Party. Moreover such allegiances are constantly shifting. This is not to say that white allegiances to the state are completely fickle<sup>14</sup>. Indeed insofar as the South African state and particularly its repressive institutions are dominated by Afrikaners, it is an 'ethnic state' (Adam and Moodley 1986:passim).

In Northern Ireland, 'ethnic entrepreneurs' have been able to successfully fashion political parties - Unionist and Nationalist - which rely exclusively upon ethnic allegiances, and some of which are in competition for the same ethnic vote and support<sup>15</sup> - a competition which ensures a continual striving to display ethnic credentials on their part. Any issue which fails to mobilize an ethnic constituency behind it, is a threat to ethnic solidarity. This means that the opportunities for the development of a non-ethnic politics are rare, and the space within which such a politics might develop is small. Nevertheless in the stalemate of ethnic politics which prevails in Northern Ireland - particularly since the official demise of the ethnic state in 1972 - even small scale

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<sup>14</sup> See Gagiano (1990).

<sup>15</sup> So the Democratic Unionist Party and the Official Unionist Party compete for the Protestant vote, while the Social Democratic and Labour Party and Sinn Fein compete for the Catholic vote.

non-ethnic developments have a symbolic importance<sup>16</sup>. In the absence of the alternatives which are potentially open to and increasingly likely in South Africa - that is non-racial democracy, with transitional minority party guarantees - or in Israel - some form of partition<sup>17</sup> - is this the most which can be expected of a socialist politics - that it be merely symbolic?

This chapter and the previous four chapters serve to provide a context - theoretical, social, historical and comparative - for the examination of socialist politics in Northern Ireland of chapters seven and eight. The following chapter - chapter six - will provide some details of the research upon which chapters seven and eight are based.

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<sup>16</sup> The media in this respect are consistently over-optimistic about such developments - as with the 'Peace People' movement of 1976, and the 'Brooke Talks' of 1991.

<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to speculate on the consequences of such an outcome. Would the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel prevent irredentist claims and actions of the new state to the Israeli Arab population and territory of Israel: is Northern Ireland Israel's future?.

## CHAPTER SIX

### UNCOVERING SOCIALIST POLITICS

The Northern Ireland conflict is very obviously an ethnic conflict, and as has been claimed elsewhere (Bew et al 1979:212), against this orthodoxy it takes considerable effort to insist that what is called "the problem of the two communities" is rather "the problem of the reproduction of two class alliances" - Protestant bourgeoisie and working class and Catholic bourgeoisie and working class. The very dominance of an ethnic discourse, not just as a highly abstract and elaborated set of ideas but more importantly as a material force when embedded in the everyday activities of the population of Northern Ireland, makes the promoting of such a class discourse, whether as theory or as part of common sense discourse, difficult. Nevertheless there are groups of people who attempt it.

The dominance of ethnic politics must pose problems for those organisations seeking to construct a class politics in Northern Ireland today. While the virtual invisibility of such organisations in public discourse indicates something of the

magnitude of the problems such organisations face, it should not obscure their existence. In order to identify those political organisations promoting a socialist class politics, some definition of what constitutes socialism might be considered useful. Minimally socialism is "a political ideology based on the objective of constructing planned and non-commodity forms of production and distribution ... cooperatively organized and democratically administered" (Hindess 1983:10).

Since the development of the 'scientific socialism' of Marx and Engels, the dominant strategic tendency within socialist politics has been that the only force in whose 'interests' it is, to pursue a socialist ideology, or which is likely to be able to bring about a socialist society, is the working class. While there are of course a number of difficulties with such notions as 'class interests' or classes as 'political actors'<sup>1</sup>, this particular strategic approach to socialism has been dominant.

By such a definition, and indeed by self-definition, the Communist Party of Ireland (C.P.I.), People's Democracy, the Workers Party, the British and Irish Communist Organisation (B.I.C.O.), Militant, the Socialist Workers Movement (S.W.M.), the World Socialist Party (W.S.P.), the Progressive Unionist

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Hindess (1987).

Party (P.U.P.), the Irish Republican Socialist Party (I.R.S.P.), Labour Party '87, and Sinn Fein<sup>2</sup>; are all organisations which claim adherence to the aim of promoting class politics and socialism<sup>3</sup>. **Concern here is with how the dominance of ethnic politics affects the activities of these organisations.**

While information on Northern Ireland's ethnic politics is readily available, the marginal status of most of the socialist organisations active in Northern Ireland means that information about them and their activities is not. Most published works may make mention of one or other organisation but few deal in any detail with them. As a result, bibliographies are few<sup>4</sup>. The organisations themselves of course are quite prolific in their production of materials which provide information about the political situation, other socialist groups and themselves. Darby (1983:231) makes the point that underground and political newspapers generally are

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<sup>2</sup> Some of these organisations at times operate under other names.

<sup>3</sup> While this list may not be exhaustive, for there may be individuals who attempt to promote class politics outside of these organisations, 'on the ground' in Northern Ireland these are the organisations which - to varying degrees - actively promote their socialisms.

<sup>4</sup> But see Goodwillie (1986)

a "strangely underused and very valuable source of information" about Northern Ireland.

One of the reasons for such material not being widely used is the difficulty in gaining access to it. The major bibliographies available - the British National Bibliography, which aims to include new works published in the British Isles, the Irish Publishing Record which covers works published in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland within a preceding year and, the local Northern Ireland Local Studies - all ignore this type of political literature (Gray:1987). The Linenhall library in Belfast is the only library which systematically collects political literature, including that produced by the various extant socialist groups, and its Northern Ireland Political Ephemera Collection is indeed a singularly valuable source of information<sup>5</sup>.

Much information about the socialist organisations was provided therefore by an examination of original published documents - mainly political newspapers and pamphlets<sup>6</sup>. That such information is propaganda material, that is, consciously constructed to achieve a certain ideological effect, makes it

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<sup>5</sup> I was privileged in being allowed unrestricted access to the material in this collection.

<sup>6</sup> Other elements of the Linenhall Library collection were useful, for example the poster collection.

useful in a particular way. While there is no category of discourse which is free from ideological effects and somehow 'neutral', discourse which is consciously constructed to achieve a particular effect reveals much about the thinking of those producing it. Information from such sources was supplemented with direct observation of the political activities of the socialist groups where possible - on demonstrations, marches, picket lines, paper sales ... - or evidence of their activities - posters, leaflets; and by informal interviews with participants. Again, while providing useful information, such methods do not allow for a systematic and detailed study of the various socialist organisations. Formal interviews with leading figures in each of these groups were arranged where possible to provide this more detailed information. The appendix gives details of the organisations and of the sources of information about them. The mechanics of these interviews were as follows. A contact address for as many organizations as was possible was obtained from the literature held in the Linenhall Library, or from the librarian of the Northern Ireland Political Ephemera Collection - who in order to ensure supplies of political literature often had to visit the premises of various organisations. In two instances contact addresses were obtained from other organisations.

A first contact visit was then made to the contact address<sup>7</sup>, where I introduced myself as a research student studying at a Canadian university, concerned to study the Northern Ireland situation not in terms of its sectarian politics, which have received much attention, but in terms of socialist politics which have received little. I then asked if it was possible to interview someone about the organisation and its analysis, and about the problems faced in getting the socialist message out.

With the exception of one organisation<sup>8</sup>, interview dates and interviewees were established, though for a couple of organisations this took more than one visit to arrange. In each case a schedule of interview questions was left with the organisation when interview arrangements were made - although only two organisations seemed to consider this necessary.

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<sup>7</sup> With respect to the I.R.S.P., I was advised by a number of people from other socialist organisations, against contacting the organisation. Since the I.R.S.P. had just emerged from a period of internal feuding which had left twelve dead and a number of injured, I took this advice!

<sup>8</sup> The British and Irish Communist Organisation were not willing to talk about organisational issues. This was not surprising since at the time they were attempting to efface themselves to allow involvement in a particular political campaign - the Campaign for Equal Citizenship.

The questions were intended to provide information on the above organisations, their discourses and their activities; and on the effects of the ethnic politics of Nationalism and Unionism upon these. The schedule of questions to be asked was as follows:

The Organization: When established? Established by whom? Why established? Why established at that particular time? Major changes in fortunes/influence/support? Why such changes? Effects/consequences of changes?

Aims: What are they? Are you successful? If yes - why/how? If not - why not? Why not more successful? Main obstacles to success?

Membership: How many active supporters? Has this fluctuated over the years? If so - why and when? How do you recruit? Where - geographically and institutionally - do you recruit? Who do you recruit? Characteristics of members? Problems in attracting members/support?

Influence: How influential is the organisation? Why is this? Where is it most influential? Is this intentional?

Political Activities: What sort of activities are engaged in? Why is this? Any problems faced? When do these activities take place? Where do they take place?

Problems: Main problems faced by the organisation? How to be overcome?

Artifacts: Is a paper produced? Other Productions? Why? Where?

The Informant: How get involved in socialist politics? How long involved? How long in this particular organisation? Extent of involvement - daily, weekly,

monthly activities? Personal fears about being involved?

Northern Ireland: How is the conflict to be resolved? Why Unionism and Nationalism get so much support?

Sectarianism: How does it affect your political activities? Connection between socialism and either Nationalism or Unionism?

Other Socialist Organisation: All of the above questions (where appropriate) with reference to other socialist organisations.

Concerns that interviewees may not be in a position to answer questions on the various organisations were overcome by my initially asking to interview someone who had been in the organisation for a long time, and no doubt by the organisation's concern to give politically correct answers.

I assured the informants of the complete anonymity of the interviewee in the interview material - though this did not seem to be of much concern to them - and in each case permission to tape the interviews was granted, though at a number of points during interviews, respondents requested that the tape recorder be turned off or that a particular piece of information or opinion not be used<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Since such information or opinion involved 'naming names', respecting these requests did not adversely effect the research.

I began the interview by stressing an interest in how socialists operated in the seemingly objectively difficult situation of Northern Ireland. This was often enough to encourage informants to talk about the troubles and their organisation. The conversation was directed by my asking either scheduled questions, or non-scheduled questions which attempted to elicit pertinent information.

The informants in the formal interviews were all veterans of Northern Ireland politics. Nearly all had experienced the dangers of being politically active in Northern Ireland - specifically and variously: imprisonment, detention, being shot at, beatings, having premises blown-up ... The abiding dangers of political activity were reflected in the security cameras, high mesh fencing, heavy-duty locks, security mirrors, intercoms and so on in premises, as well as multiple door-locks, thick perspex door-sheeting and metal barred gates at the top of the stairs in some homes. There were also the continuous personal safety behaviours such as checking visually and through voice before opening doors, checking under cars before getting into them, sitting away from windows and so on.

All interviewees were keen to take time to talk about their socialist politics, their political analyses of, and solutions to, the Northern Ireland problem, yet were candid as

to the limitations of their respective organisations. The interviews were conducted in a friendly and open manner, and it was obvious that a number of informants were quite used to answering questions from researchers! None of them required any more information about me than had already been offered, though it is certain that they knew a lot more about me by the end of our interview even though I was the one asking questions.

I was born in Northern Ireland and grew up in the Protestant community. For a number of years I was involved in socialist politics in Northern Ireland. This provided a working knowledge of the practical problems facing socialists in Northern Ireland<sup>10</sup>. The 'insider' perspective which these experiences provided was put into a broader framework by a number of years in academia and permanent residence in Canada.

Such close connections with the subject under investigation might be construed as leading to a situation in which the 'objectivity' of the research would inevitably be compromised. While this is of course a concern of all social

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<sup>10</sup> An example: during a local election campaign in the city of Derry in support of a labour and trade union candidate, we were stoned out of a Protestant housing estate which we were canvassing when residents objected to the presence in our slow moving cavalcade, of a car with red licence plates, which identified it as being from 'over the border'.

research, the author follows Moore (1966:522) in holding a conception of scientific endeavour within which objectivity is the objectivity of dealing honestly with evidence which is disturbing to one's own moral stance. This, in contrast to a neutrality which claims no moral stance at all. The methodological technique used to maximise this objectivity is what Abrams (1982) terms "practical historical explanation"; involving a continual dialogue between concepts on the one hand, and the results of empirical research on the other (Thompson 1978:231).

Moreover, the experience of being both an 'insider' and to an extent an 'outsider' was probably useful to this study in a number of ways. Insider knowledge facilitated my negotiation through the interviews, and indeed in informal discussions. It allowed me to camouflage a Unionist background by the use of appropriate Nationalist terminology, and to camouflage associations with Nationalists with appropriate Unionist terminology. This was important in a situation where contacts were being made in both communities<sup>11</sup>. Thus for example I was careful to speak of Londonderry when interviewing the Progressive Unionist Party, and Derry when interviewing the People's Democracy, or referring to Ulster and the six-counties respectively.

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<sup>11</sup> Most research in Northern Ireland concentrates on one community or the other.

Such considerations had more to do with a personal sense of security than sensitivity to informants - who undoubtedly 'placed' me in any case - though the two are related. In this regard, when conducting an interview in what might be termed a 'hard line' area, I avoided using a car, which if parked in such an area would be so obviously from 'outside the area' to be a source of suspicion. There was no point in drawing unnecessary attention to a stranger! When using a bicycle - often more convenient than buses - it was necessary to ensure as much as possible that I was not obviously crossing from one 'area' into another - especially crossing the peace line. Again such behaviour might arouse unwanted attention.

Backup fieldnotes were written as soon as was possible after the interviews, recording information given in conversation prior to and after the taped interviews, and details of the conduct of the interview and the surroundings. The taped interviews were later transcribed and, along with general fieldnotes recording observations and informal discussions, provided the primary information upon which the dissertation is based.

The different sources of information, plus the asking in formal and informal interviews about the activities of other groups, allowed for a degree of triangulation in assessing the 'veracity' of many 'political answers' to questions! This

research<sup>12</sup> allowed for an examination of the ways in which the dominance of ethnic politics affects the activities of those who espouse a socialist class politics in Northern Ireland.

The above mentioned primary sources of information were supplemented by an extensive review of the academic literature on the Northern Ireland situation wherein numerous - though usually superficial and brief<sup>13</sup> - references are made to various of the socialist organisations.

Past and contemporary issues of the 3 major daily newspapers, the Belfast Telegraph, the Irish News and the Newsletter as well as regional and local papers, also provided snippets of information, as did magazines such as Fortnight. Occasional contemporary radio and television broadcasts were also useful. Discussions with a number of other researchers in the field also provided useful data<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> The research was carried out between September 1986 and December 1987 and in July and August of 1990.

<sup>13</sup> Exceptions to this were Milotte (1984) on the Communist Party of Ireland; Arthur (1974) and Devlin (1969) on People's Democracy; Coogan (1970) and Bell (1970) on the Sinn Fein split.

<sup>14</sup> Particularly useful in the early stages of the research were discussions with Robert Bell, the Linenhall Library's Political Ephemera Collection librarian.

It is upon the information gleaned from these sources that is possible to attempt to assess how the dominance of ethnic politics effects the activities of socialist organisations in Northern Ireland. In order to do this, the following chapter will chronicle the involvement of the aforementioned socialist organisations in Northern Ireland's ethnic politics from 1968 - the beginning of the present troubles - to the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985; and will seek to show how socialist theory and analysis directed this involvement, and how this involvement in turn affected socialist theory and analysis.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SOCIALIST POLITICS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1968-1985

#### CIVIL RIGHTS

The history of socialism in Northern Ireland has for the most part been a recent one, with most socialist organisations emerging in the early period of the present "Troubles". Most commentators consider October 5, 1968 to be the start of the Troubles, for on that date a police attack on a civil rights march in Londonderry, was captured by television cameras and broadcast widely across the United Kingdom and internationally. For the British government, Northern Ireland became the "Northern Ireland problem"!

Historical points of origin are always elusive, and while October 5, 1968 is an important date in the history of Northern Ireland, the events of that day were a result of prior political activity, and importantly of a meeting held on the weekend of the 13th and 14th of August 1966 in the town of

Maghera<sup>1</sup>. The meeting was between members of the General Headquarters staff of the I.R.A., Sinn Fein and members of the Campaign for Social Justice<sup>2</sup>, and the discussion centred on the formation of a civil rights movement in Northern Ireland. The meeting had been initiated by Sinn Fein as part of a strategy to democratise Northern Ireland, a strategy which had already seen the establishment in 1963 of a number of Wolfe Tone Societies<sup>3</sup> "to foster Republican cultural and political heritage" (Heatley 1974); and, beginning in 1965, the establishment of a number of Republican Clubs in Belfast, as vehicles for open and legal political activity, allowing Sinn Fein to engage in agitation on social and economic issues.

The strategy of involvement of Republicans in popular social and economic struggles was prompted by the failure of the I.R.A. military "border campaign" of 1956 - 1962 to either inflict much damage on the Northern Ireland state or to mobilize any section of the Catholic population behind the

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<sup>1</sup> On this see for example Farrell (1969); The Sunday Times Insight Team (1972); Sweetman (1972).

<sup>2</sup> The Campaign for Social Justice was an organisation of middle class and professional Catholics which had formed in 1964 to collect facts and figures on, and publicise, the gerrymandering of electoral boundaries to the advantage of Unionist politicians; and discrimination against Catholics (Farrell 1976:243).

<sup>3</sup> Named after Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763-98), one of the leaders of the United Irishmen.

campaign. There was an obvious need to make the Republican movement more relevant to the lives of the population. The new strategy of less emphasis on militarism and more on political activity, won Sinn Fein both former supporters who had become disenchanted with pure militarism, and a number of new adherents encouraged by the political direction of the organisation. Some such adherents through their involvement with the Irish "section" of the Communist Party of Great Britain - known as the Connolly Association - encouraged the Republican movement to move towards involvement in "popular democratic struggles" as the first stage of the class struggle for socialism<sup>4</sup>.

This approach to class politics was similar to that of, and indeed encouraged by, the Communist Party of Northern Ireland. This party had been established in 1941 as the Northern Ireland "section" of the Communist Party of Ireland. The Communist Party of Ireland was originally founded in 1921 but disintegrated soon after, in the face of the difficulties of keeping a national party together after the partition of Ireland into two states that same year. The party was reconstituted in 1933, but the Second World War again presented the party with substantially different situations in pro-British and anti-German Northern Ireland and a neutral

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<sup>4</sup> On the relationship between these organisations see Bell (1970); Millotte (1984).

Irish Free State. This forced a split in the organisation with the southern section of the party in 1948 becoming the Irish Workers League and the northern section becoming the Communist Party of Northern Ireland (C.P.N.I.). Indeed it was during the war that the C.P.N.I. won support in Protestant working class areas, especially in East Belfast, for its anti-fascism, and many of its members who held trade union positions in the 1960's and 1970's were elected to their positions in this period.

The C.P.N.I. had been involved in many activities directed towards the democratisation of Northern Ireland. For example, it played a significant role in the establishment of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in the 1950's. In May 1965 it organised a Conference on Democratic Rights in Northern Ireland under the auspices of Belfast Trades Council; and in April 1965 in Britain under the auspices of the National Campaign for Civil Liberties.

The analyses of the C.P.N.I. and - because of Communist Party of Great Britain influence - Sinn Fein, claimed the legitimacy of the Irish marxist James Connolly<sup>5</sup>, who considered that the basis of the divisions between Protestant and Catholic workers in the north-east of Ireland were the small material advantages which Protestants enjoyed over the

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<sup>5</sup> See Greaves (1976).

material deprivation of Catholics, and, who also held that socialism required the economic and territorial independence of Ireland from Britain. So in this regard, for the C.P.N.I. and Sinn Fein, democratic reforms would abolish the discrimination which allowed the Unionist ruling class to ensure material differences between Protestant and Catholic. This in turn would lead all workers and importantly, Protestant workers, to see that their material interests could better be met in unity with their Catholic fellow workers in a free and independent - and socialist - Ireland. Thus agitation for democratic reforms was the first stage of a class politics.

In the mid-1960's, the Northern Ireland Labour Party was also giving consideration to civil rights issues, calling for "one-man, one-vote"<sup>6</sup>, fair boundaries in elections, measures to end housing and employment discrimination, fair representation for the Catholic minority on public boards - and an ombudsman (Farrell 1976:243). Throughout the 1960's the

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<sup>6</sup> Under the Elections and Franchise Act (N.I.) of 1946, only ratepayers had the vote. This disenfranchised many, more likely to be Catholic, and gave more than one vote to property owners, more likely to be Protestants.

Northern Ireland Labour Party achieved comparatively high levels of electoral support<sup>7</sup>.

That issues of civil rights were being mooted within Northern Ireland, and were being fought over elsewhere in the 1960's seemed to some to suggest that civil rights would soon become part of a popular political agenda. The Maghera<sup>8</sup> meeting attempted to ensure such a situation and, indeed, led to the formation in January of 1967 of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association. The constitution of the Association was modelled on that of the British National Campaign for Civil Liberties, and sought as wide a membership as possible. This was reflected in the political make-up of the initial steering committee of people from the C.P.N.I., Republican Clubs, the Northern Ireland Labour Party, the Republican Labour Party<sup>9</sup>, United Labour Party<sup>10</sup> and even the Unionist

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<sup>7</sup> In 1958 it obtained 16% of the vote, 26% in 1962, and 20.4% in 1965. In 1969 the vote collapsed to 8.1% (Elliott 1973:96).

<sup>8</sup> See above page 156.

<sup>9</sup> Founded in 1960 by two Independent M.P.'s as a non-violent republican party with some socialist objectives. Although the party fielded five candidates in the 1969 general election, from its foundation to its demise in 1973 it was, for the most part, the personal electoral machine of Gerry Fitt, who was M.P. for West Belfast from 1966 until 1983.

<sup>10</sup> Established in 1978, essentially as an electoral machine, by Paddy Devlin, a former and well known N.I.L.P. member. Contested a number of elections. Absorbed into Labour

Party (Heatley 1980:11). The basic aims of the Civil Rights Association were:

- (1) Universal franchise in local government elections in line with the franchise in the rest of the United Kingdom.
- (2) The redrawing of electoral boundaries by an independent Commission to ensure fair representation.
- (3) Legislation against discrimination in employment at local government level and the provision of machinery to remedy local government grievances.
- (4) A compulsory points system for [public] housing which would ensure fair allocation.
- (5) The repeal of the Special Powers Act.
- (6) The disbanding of the U.S.C.<sup>11</sup>.

When, in March 1967 Republican Clubs were declared illegal as Sinn Fein fronts by the Minister of Home Affairs, the ban was condemned by the Civil Rights Association. The ban also led to a number of protest marches in Belfast by students - marches organised by the Young Socialists, at that time the youth section of the Northern Ireland Labour Party, and by the Young Socialist Alliance - a group of young Marxist influenced people in Belfast with connections to various political

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Party '87 in 1987.

<sup>11</sup> Ulster Special Constabulary. Established in 1920 to counter the I.R.A.. An entirely Protestant force, it was generally distrusted by the Catholic population. By 1969 it had about 10,000 members. It was disbanded in 1970 after a government report was critical of its conduct in the events of late 1969. See Farrell (1983).

groups. The Young Socialist Alliance was to play a not insignificant role in events in the following months.

The initial role of the Civil Rights Association came to be one of giving blessing to civil rights protest marches initiated by local groups of civil rights activists. Thus in August of 1968 the Campaign for Social Justice decided to hold a protest march from the town of Coalisland to the town of Dungannon. The event on August 24 attracted some 4,000 people who, despite singing "we shall overcome", were prevented by the police from entering the centre of Dungannon where a counter-demonstration organised by the Ulster Protestant Volunteers and the Ulster Constitution Defence Committee<sup>12</sup> was being held. Both of these organisations considered the civil rights marches and activities, in being supported predominantly by those from Catholic backgrounds, to be fronts for the I.R.A. and a threat therefore to the constitutional position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. This politics of loyalty ensured that counter-demonstrations and therefore antagonisms, often violent, attended all civil rights movement activities.

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<sup>12</sup> Ulster Protestant Volunteers - a loyalist paramilitary organisation associated with the Ulster Constitutional Defence Committee - an organisation established in 1966 under Rev. Ian Paisley to mount counter-demonstrations to Republican parades and, later, civil rights marches.

The success, in terms of numbers, of the Dungannon march encouraged a group of local activists in Derry to consider organising a similar march. The initiative was taken by the Derry Housing Action Committee, an organisation established in 1968 to "disrupt public life to draw attention to the housing problem" (McCann 1974:27). The Derry Housing Action Committee was an ad hoc alliance of left-wing members of the local branch of the Northern Ireland Labour Party and of the local Republican Club. In organising a civil rights march they were "anxious to assert socialist ideas" (McCann 1974:38) since they considered the Civil Rights Association to be "a liberal body with no pretensions to revolutionary politics" (McCann 1974:39).

The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association agreed to sponsor the march, which was scheduled for October 5, 1968. On October 1, the Protestant Apprentice Boys<sup>13</sup> gave notice of their intention to parade over the same route. The calculated result was the banning of all parades by the Minister of Home Affairs; and the Civil Rights Association consequently considered cancelling their march. However the Derry Housing Action Committee and the Belfast Young Socialist Alliance stated that they would continue with the protest march

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<sup>13</sup> Protestant loyalist organisation which holds annual marches to commemorate the action of thirteen apprentice boys in closing the gates of Londonderry on the armies of Catholic King James during the siege of 1689.

regardless. This had the desired effect of forcing the Civil Rights Association to agree to support the march.

The march went ahead resulting in a police break-up of the demonstration, with consequent press and television reports ensuring that, in the words of the government commission set up to investigate the events of the day:

"some very damaging pictures of police violence were seen throughout the United Kingdom and abroad" (Cameron 1969:31).

It was not only the break-up of the demonstration which was widely seen, so also was the ensuing police pursuit of dispersed protesters into the Catholic Bogside area of Derry where the local population threw up barricades and where petrol bombs were used for the first time against police.

A direct consequence of the Derry events was the establishment in Belfast on October 9, 1968 of what came to be called People's Democracy. A joint action committee which had been formed at Queen's University in 1967 to protest the banning of the Republican Clubs, was resurrected a few days after the Derry march and announced its intention, at a meeting of almost 800 students on October 7, to hold a march from the university to the Belfast City Hall to protest police brutality. The march was to be held on October 9. Over 1,000

students set out to march on the day, but their route was blocked by a counter-demonstration organised by the Ulster Constitution Defence Committee and the Ulster Protestant Volunteers. A three hour sit-down strike followed, with the students eventually marching back to the university where a mass meeting was held, at which the People's Democracy was established as a loose activist body committed to civil rights reforms. Specifically, its aims were: one-man (sic), one-vote; fair drawing of electoral boundaries; freedom of speech and assembly; repeal of the Special Powers Act; fair allocation of houses; and fair allocation of jobs (Devlin 1969:101).

The strategy of People's Democracy for achieving support was one whereby activists would visit various towns; distribute leaflets in the morning, hold an open air meeting in the afternoon, followed by an indoor meeting in the evening to encourage the establishment of local civil rights groups (Devlin 1969:103-106). As with N.I.C.R.A. marches, such attempts at mass education, in being countered by Ulster Constitution Defence Committee and Ulster Protestant Volunteer organised demonstrations, inevitably were attended by a trail of violence.

The response of the Northern Ireland government to the civil rights campaign was the announcement on November 22, 1968 of a 5-point program of reforms: a points system for

public housing allocations; an ombudsman; the ending of the company vote in council elections; a review of the Special Powers Act; and the establishment of the Londonderry Development Commission. In the words of one commentator these reforms were "too little too late, being enough to outrage the Loyalists without satisfying the Civil Rights movement at all" (Farrell 1976:248).

However the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association executive agreed to the government's request for a "cooling-off" period, its intention being to organise a series of monthly marches beginning in the spring of 1969, if reforms were not implemented (Heatley 1981:10). Other fractions of the civil rights movement however decided to continue civil rights agitation. The People's Democracy in particular decided to stage what became known as 'The Long March' from Belfast to Derry from January 1 to January 4, 1969.

The differences within the civil rights movement follow from the different political strategies adopted by the Young Socialist Alliance and the C.P.N.I., differences which were also apparent within the Northern Ireland Labour Party Young Socialists and the Republican Clubs. These different strategies were based on the different analyses of the Northern Ireland situation, which in turn were based on different theories of class politics.

Reforms under capitalism were considered by the C.P.N.I. and by the leadership of the N.I.L.P. and Republican Clubs to be both possible, and indeed necessary, before any consideration of political demands which would change the fundamental property relations in society. The Y.S.A. and some people in the youth sections of the N.I.L.P. and Republican Clubs, considered such a stagist approach as a barrier to the development of mass revolutionary class consciousness. For them it was important to show the impossibility of lasting reforms under capitalism. Indeed reforms would only be possible if linked to a fundamental transformation of society.

Not surprisingly perhaps, the influence and Trotskyist class politics of the Young Socialist Alliance in the events of late 1968 is acknowledged disapprovingly by the British Government's Cameron Report<sup>14</sup> which considered them:

"extremists of the left ... anxious to ensure that there was a violent confrontation with the police, and to organise opposition on class lines" (Cameron 1969:27-28).

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<sup>14</sup> A commission of inquiry under the chairmanship of Lord Cameron was established in January 1969 to inquire into the violence since October 5, 1968, to trace the causes of the violence, and examine the organisations involved. The report was published in September 1969.

The report also refers to Young Socialist Alliance members - who were also leading and influential members of People's Democracy - as "an extremist element within the Civil Rights movement" (ibid:33).

From a different perspective, the influence of the Young Socialist Alliance is acknowledged positively by one of the People's Democracy activists as moving People's Democracy "gradually and inexorably left" from its foundation to the end of 1968,

"due to the fact that the most effective solutions to the problems we discussed always turned out to be the solutions offered by the left (Devlin 1969:117),

and in this the Young Socialist Alliance "were effective because they were more consistent than anybody else about what Northern Ireland needed" and "they did the donkey work" (ibid:119).

The Cameron Report was less unfavourably disposed to the class politics of the C.P.N.I., the report acknowledging its influence as being:

"exercised in favour of peaceful demonstrations and against the pursuit of courses designed or likely to lead to violence" (1969:77),

while Devlin (1969:147) sees the role of the party as being "as reactionary as the Unionists".

The Long March was undoubtedly a major turning point in the troubles. "Denounced by every establishment organ" (Farrell 1976:249), 70 marchers set out from Belfast City Hall on January 1, 1969 and faced constant harassment from Loyalists en route. The most serious incident was at Burntollet Bridge in County Derry when the marchers were ambushed by some 200 Loyalists, well prepared with sticks and stones<sup>15</sup>. A number of marchers were hospitalised. News of the Loyalist attack and the apparent complicity of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in not preventing it, travelled ahead of the march, so that when the remaining marchers straggled into the city of Derry, they received a rapturous reception from a largely sympathetic Catholic population. Serious rioting erupted in Derry that night.

The experience of the Long March moved People's Democracy from a "vague to a committed socialism" (Devlin 1969:146), and encouraged its change from a consciously unorganised mass democratic organisation to a more organised and disciplined one. The status of People's Democracy after the Long March was reflected in the Northern Ireland general election of February

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<sup>15</sup> See Egan and McCormack (1969) for a participant's account of the incident.

24, 1969<sup>16</sup>, when it stood 8 candidates and received 23,645 votes - 4.2% of the poll. Indeed one member of People's Democracy - Bernadette Devlin - stood as an anti-Unionist Unity candidate and was elected as a Member of Parliament to the British House of Commons in a by-election on April 17, 1969.

However the Long March and the February and April elections marked, in the words of one commentator "the apex of PD's influence on popular politics" (Arthur 1974:58), and certainly as a former member claimed, "the more socialist and the more determined PD grew, the fewer its numbers became" (Devlin 1969:152).

The General Election of February 24 also gives an indication of the strength of the Northern Ireland Labour Party at the time. The party polled 8.1% of the popular vote, receiving 45,113 votes. In the same election the Republican Labour Party received 13,155 votes - 2.4% of the poll<sup>17</sup>.

It is important to put these results into perspective to show what they mean in the context of Northern Ireland's ethnic politics, for while the combined percentage of the

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<sup>16</sup> These and all subsequent electoral data are adapted from Flackes and Elliott (1989).

<sup>17</sup> Much of the vote for the R.L.P. was a personal vote for its leader Gerry Fitt .

valid poll for these socialist organisations was 14.7%, Unionist parties received 68.3%, Irish Nationalist parties 12.7%, while others received 3.9%<sup>18</sup>.

From April 1969 through the summer months, rioting between various Protestant and Catholic communities and the police, escalated. In July, Republican Clubs in Derry formed the Derry Citizens Defence Association in anticipation of the outcome of an annual Loyalist march through the city in August. This march, of August 12, was attacked<sup>19</sup> by stone throwing youths. The police reaction to the ensuing riot was to lay seige to the Catholic Bogside area of the city in which barricades had been thrown up. Thus ensued what became known as the 'Battle of the Bogside'. The confrontation between police and residents continued for days, until the arrival of British troops held the sides apart. Rioting spread to Belfast, partly as a spontaneous expression of Catholic

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<sup>18</sup> The category "others" here is composed of independents, many of whose politics could be considered as either unionist or nationalist, and of the Alliance party. The Alliance party, formed in 1970 to bring together people from both sides of the ethnic divide, while often labelled non-sectarian, nevertheless in accepting the status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom, is in this respect a unionist party, although it does indeed attract mainly middle class members and voters from both sides of the population.

<sup>19</sup> As many marches in Northern Ireland are, since they are seen by "the other side" for what they indeed are - displays of ethnic chauvinism.

solidarity but partly also as a purposeful tactic of People's Democracy to stretch police forces.

In Belfast this rioting led to what became known as the "pogrom" on the night of August 14/15, when a part of the Catholic Lower Falls area of the city was attacked by Loyalists. 150 homes were burned and 7 people killed on the night. Barricades were erected in many Catholic areas of the city as local Citizens Defence Committees and street committees were formed to protect the areas.

The Civil Rights movement effectively ended in August 1969, and with it the mass meetings and mobilizations which provided the medium within which a number of socialist organisations had worked and been influential. The next few months were something of a transition period which saw the decline of the early socialist influence on popular politics in Northern Ireland, and the reassertion of the dominance of ethnic politics.

### **BEHIND THE BARRICADES**

The period behind the barricades in August of 1969, proved significant for People's Democracy in exposing the weakness of their student based support, for the organisation

was only able to muster a few supporters to work behind the barricades, had little influence on local events in the Catholic working class ghettos, and were not represented on any of the Citizen's Defence Committees (Arthur 1974:66-72). The lesson learnt was that People's Democracy had to become a much more disciplined political movement.

The experience also cemented the organisation's relationship to the Catholic community, and in particular to the Republican movement. Before the August events the activists in the People's Democracy leadership were convinced that the most progressive social force, in terms of prosecuting class politics, was a united working class. They were further convinced that this united working class could be mobilized around civil rights and socialist demands. Since the Long March however this possibility had become less and less likely, and by August, the only social force which seemed to be challenging the capitalist state was not a united working class but the Catholic fraction of it behind their barricades. Moreover, within this section of the working class, the Republicans were the most active in their resistance to the state.

For the British and Irish Communist Organisation (B.I.C.O.), however the period behind the barricades showed the futility of a Republican orientated socialism. The

B.I.C.O. had its origins amongst Republican Irish in Britain in the 1960's, when the Irish Communist Group was established in 1964. This organisation split in 1965 into Trotskyist and Stalinist factions - the Stalinist faction becoming the Irish Communist Organisation (I.C.O.), establishing a Belfast branch of the organisation in the late 1960's<sup>20</sup>. While its objective was the development of working class unity in Ireland, its program came to be shown wanting in the face of the realities of ethnic politics in Northern Ireland.

The political theory which informed the I.C.O.'s approach at the time was the traditional 'Connollyist' position that ethnic divisions within the working class were consciously created by the Protestant bourgeoisie to cut across what would otherwise be a natural affinity between workers. Overcoming such divisions required appealing to Protestant workers to see where their real interests lay - in an Irish socialist Republic. However, as the organisation states:

"Through taking Republican Socialism in earnest, and through its involvement in the Falls area in August 1969 the [I.C.O.] came to the conclusion that Republican Socialism was not a possible basis of working class unity" (Irish Communist October 1982:3).

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<sup>20</sup> Bell (1976) underscores the Stalinist credentials of the organisation by suggesting that what distinguished it was its rallying to the defence of Stalin when Khrushchev denounced him.

More precisely, this conclusion was reached after an attempt to:

"put Connolly to the test in Belfast during the moment of truth in the summer and autumn of 1969" (Irish Communist May 1982:9) -

specifically by publishing Connolly's article "Socialism and the Orange Worker" as a broadsheet and attempting to circulate it to workers in predominantly Protestant North and East Belfast. The intervention however "didn't strike a chord" (Irish Communist *ibid.*). The reassessment of political theory which this engendered was certainly consequential for the Irish Communist Organisation.

The premise basic to most socialist analyses of Ireland had been - and still is - that Protestant workers were a part of the Irish nation. Unless a bureaucratic definition of nation is held then such a claim is indeed, as Darby (1976:181) suggests, "fundamentally an act of faith", for it is quite clear that Protestants generally do not consider themselves Irish. This became obvious to the I.C.O. in 1969, and shortly afterwards, arguably in being true to the principle of the right to self-determination, they began promoting the view that:

"there are 2 nations in Ireland, one of which, the Ulster Protestant nation had chosen to exercise its right to self-determination within the multi-national British state" (Keenan 1989:15).

The realization that Protestant workers did not consider themselves Irish and were not going to be won over to an Irish socialism, is reflected in the strategy which holds that:

"If you are primarily a socialist, you set about developing working class power in support of socialist objectives in whatever state you happen to find yourself in. We happen to find ourselves in the U.K.. If we insist that the socialist movement in Northern Ireland has to be developed in separation from the socialist movement in the rest of the U.K., then we are only socialists on [Irish] Nationalist conditions" (Workers Weekly February 28, 1981:3).

However, by taking the status of Northern Ireland as a region of the U.K. as given, the I.C.O. effectively adopted a Unionist approach to their socialism, and indeed argued that:

"there is no contradiction between Unionism and Socialism, and socialists who have made anti-partition part of their socialist programme have done great damage to the working class movement in Ireland " (Workers Association 1975).

Further:

"For a couple of years after 1969 [the Irish Communist Organisation] concentrated on severing relations with Nationalism and establishing the political legitimacy of the Unionist movement" (Irish Communist January 1981:14).

This reassessment of political theory was symbolised by the organisation changing its name to the British and Irish Communist Organisation in 1971.

The whole period behind the barricades was one of reassessment, precipitated by the reassertion of popular ethnic politics, a reassessment whereby a number of socialist organisations, in identifying the working class in one or other community as the agent of socialist change, effectively became absorbed into the ethnic politics of these communities.

## **MILITARISM**

The events of August 1969 and, in particular, the Belfast pogrom were also a turning point for another organisation - Sinn Fein - for it showed that its military wing, the I.R.A., which had traditionally claimed to defend the interests of the Catholic minority, had been unable to do so. This was graphically displayed by the slogan 'I Ran Away' which began appearing on gable walls in Belfast. The August events brought

to the surface of the Republican movement antagonisms which had hitherto remained submerged.

The strategy of less militarism and more politics which had been followed by Sinn Fein throughout the 1960's, had always been questioned by the "physical force men" within the Republican movement. Differences in thinking paralleled the North - South membership divide, with socialism, involvement with the people, and the winding down of military activity being seen as "Dublin's new policies" by much of the Belfast membership of the I.R.A. (Sweetman 1972:190). Such differences were not surprising given the different political situations with which the Northern and Southern Republicans were faced - differences which became irreconcilable when the events of August 1969 occurred. By turning their energies<sup>21</sup> in the direction of a socialist politics, the Dublin based leadership of Sinn Fein were popularly seen to be either unwilling or unable to defend the Catholic population of the North. The result was that when the I.R.A. met in convention in December of 1969, critics of the political direction of the leadership, of the end of abstentionism and the de facto recognition of the 2 governments in Ireland; withdrew and formed a Provisional Army Council, stating:

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<sup>21</sup> Indeed not only energies. There are claims that the I.R.A. had sold most of their guns to the Free Wales Army!

"We declare our allegiance to the 32-County Irish Republic proclaimed at Easter 1916, established by the first Dail Eireann in 1919, overthrown by force of arms in 1922 and suppressed to this day by the existing British-imposed Six-County and Twentysix-County partition states" (Irish Times December 29, 1969)<sup>22</sup>.

No mention of socialism here. On this basis the Provisional I.R.A. was formed, whose members then turned their attention to the January 1970 Ard Fheis - annual convention - of Sinn Fein, where the military men walked out, gave allegiance to the Provisional Army Council, and created a caretaker executive of Sinn Fein. This executive later gave specific reasons for the break with the parent organisation, among which was "the leadership support of extreme socialism leading to totalitarian dictatorship", the failure to protect people in the North in August, and the internal workings of the movement since 1964, which had expelled the faithful and replaced them with those interested "in a more radical form of movement" (Bell 1970:368).

The socialist politics of Sinn Fein and the Republican Clubs<sup>23</sup> throughout the 1960's had worried more than the physical-force Republicans. On August 22, 1968 an Irish Army

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Bell (1970:366).

<sup>23</sup> Because Sinn Fein was a proscribed organisation in Northern Ireland, it operated under the label Republican Clubs.

intelligence officer met with a number of these physical-force men and offered them weapons and money if they would sever connections with the Dublin G.H.Q., concentrate on military activities in the North, and abandon socialist agitation<sup>24</sup>.

The split in Sinn Fein was indeed essentially between what became the political Official Sinn Fein (Republican Clubs in Northern Ireland) though still with its military wing, the Official I.R.A. - and the military Provisional I.R.A. and what became its political support group, Provisional Sinn Fein. The acrimony between the two organisations was manifest itself in numerous ways over the succeeding years, the earliest being a gun battle which killed one person and injured several others.

The events in Derry throughout 1969 also had the effect of radicalizing the Derry branch of the Northern Ireland Labour Party, particularly its youth section - the Young Socialists - which was already well to the left of the parent party. From this radicalisation the Militant organisation was formed in 1970 as a "revolutionary socialist organisation" (Militant interview:5), distinguishing itself from the N.I.L.P., the C.P.N.I. and Republican Clubs by insisting that lasting reforms of the Northern Ireland state were not possible under capitalism, and that democratic rights,

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<sup>24</sup> On this see for example Sweetman (1972); Insight (1972); Farrell (1976); White (1983).

including national self-determination require socialism. The organisation aimed:

"to bring together - to make concrete -  
workers unity, not just in the  
North, but then to tie in with the labour  
movement in  
the South" (Militant interview:2).

The organisation extended its support in small numbers to other areas of Ireland over the succeeding years.

Also in 1970, the Communist Party of Ireland was reconstituted by the bringing together of its "northern" and "southern" sections, the C.P.N.I. and the Irish Workers Party.

With the formation of the militaristic Provisional I.R.A., and the already existing direct involvement of British troops in Northern Ireland - military activity dominated throughout 1971. On August 9 the Northern Ireland Government introduced internment without trial, and British troops entered Republican areas to arrest I.R.A. suspects at 4 a.m. on that day. 350 people were arrested. Serious rioting and shooting followed quickly after the initial arrests and 23 people had died by the end of the following day.

The effect of internment on socialist politics was that it brought the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association - two

leaders of which were arrested - back into the forefront of political activity, to co-ordinate a massive civil disobedience campaign involving the withholding of rent and rates. People's Democracy took part in organised resistance to the British Army in the Catholic ghettos and gave support to the P.I.R.A. (Provisional Irish Republican Army) military campaign. By this time, People's Democracy had developed through a series of splits and refinements - moving "out of the student milieu into the young Nationalist workers in the Catholic areas" (People's Democracy interview:12). The splits and refinements were to continue through the 1970's with the organisation becoming smaller and declaring itself a "Marxist-Leninist" organisation.

While the events of August 1969 had moved People's Democracy closer to the Republican movement, internment moved it closer to the provisional Republicans. Indeed one commentator (Sweetman 1972:179-180) claims that upon his release from internment one of People's Democracy's leading members recognized the P.I.R.A. as "objectively attacking capitalism". On October 17, 1971 Provisional Sinn Fein and People's Democracy formed the Northern Resistance Movement<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> More a symbolic gesture than one having much practical effect.

Another organisation which adopted a Trotskyist position on the impossibility of reform and the necessity of socialist demands - the Socialist Workers Movement - was founded in 1971, its political position being one of supporting "workers revolution, then national liberation" (S.W.M. interview:3). Most of its support was, and remains, in the south of Ireland.

The years 1969 - 1971 had witnessed arguably the most concentrated period of change in Northern Ireland history. From internment in 1971, the military moment of the Northern Ireland conflict overdetermined all others for the succeeding number of years.

The year 1972 witnessed Bloody Sunday, Bloody Friday, Operation Motorman<sup>26</sup>... Also, on March 24 the British Government prorogued Northern Ireland's government at Stormont, and established Direct Rule over Northern Ireland. On October 30 the British Government published a discussion paper on Northern Ireland's political future - a paper which gave a guarantee of Northern Ireland's constitutional position as safe within the United Kingdom, but recognising what was termed the "Irish dimension" to the situation. This recognition was to have important consequences in the following months.

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<sup>26</sup> Code name of security forces operation - in which 36,000 personnel were involved - to clear barricades in 'no-go' areas.

Also in 1972 the B.I.C.O. began publication of Workers Weekly as the "Belfast Bulletin of the B&ICO"<sup>27</sup>.

After the 1969 split in the Republican movement, the Officials had maintained their dual approach of combined military and political activities towards the establishment of a 32-County Democratic Socialist Republic, but were required by popular pressure and "competition" from the Provisional I.R.A., to maintain a high military profile.

However on May 29, 1972 the Official I.R.A. declared an unconditional ceasefire. The incident which brought this about was the killing in Derry by the 'Officials' of a soldier of the Royal Irish Rangers<sup>28</sup> who turned out to be a 19 year old local Catholic home on leave. Bitter reaction led to local women taking over the headquarters of the Officials in Derry, and the organisation announcing its ceasefire. While one

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<sup>27</sup> It is interesting to note that the last issue to have this subtitle coincides with the start of the Ulster Workers Council strike of May 1974 and the organisation's attempt to intervene in it. The next issue was subtitled "Bulletin of the Workers Association" - arguably in an attempt to remove both Irish and Communist associations with the ideas being disseminated - thus attempting to make them more acceptable to a unionist audience. It seems that the organisation called the Workers Association was established at this time as a front to allow publication of the Workers Weekly, again it would seem for the same reasons.

<sup>28</sup> A regiment of the British Army.

analyst (Rooney 1984:82) claims that the ceasefire was simply a tactical ploy to take pressure off the Officials - and indeed that their military activity actually increased in the subsequent period - another claims that tensions between the militarists and politicians within the organisation were the cause, with the "leadership now completely committed to a strategy of gradualist reform" (Farrell 1976:294) allowing them to call off a military campaign "they had never wanted" (ibid).

Certainly by 1972 Republican Clubs effectively controlled the Civil Rights Association, and by April of 1973 the proscription which had declared the organisation illegal in 1967, was removed - allowing Republican Clubs to field candidates in the District Council elections of May 30 in which a system of voting by proportional representation was used for the first time in Northern Ireland since the 1920's and in which the Republican Clubs obtained 3% of first preference votes.

In these elections the only other socialist organisation with any electoral impact was the Northern Ireland Labour Party which received 2.5% of first preference votes. The Republican Labour Party received 0.4%.

To put these results into the wider ethnic context and perspective: while the total socialist vote was 5.9% , Unionist parties received 56.6 %, Irish Nationalist parties 15.8% and others received 21.7%.

Two months earlier, on March 20, 1973 the British Government had proposed to establish a Northern Ireland Assembly, elected by proportional representation with the British Parliament retaining law-and-order powers. Elections to this Assembly were held on June 28, in which the Northern Ireland Labour Party obtained 2.6% of the valid poll and Republican Clubs, 1.8%. Republican Labour received 0.2% of the vote. Once again however, ethnic voting dominated these elections, with Unionist parties receiving 61.9% of the vote, Irish Nationalist parties 23.3% and others 21.7%.

Elections in the following year - Westminster General Elections in February and in October - saw the Northern Ireland Labour Party obtaining 2.4% and 1.6% of the votes respectively, with the Republican Clubs polling 2.1% and 3.1% respectively. This in comparison with Unionist parties receiving 64.2% of the vote in the February election and 62.1% of the vote in the October election; Irish Nationalist parties receiving 24.8% and 26.7% of the vote in the February and October elections respectively; and others receiving 6.5% of the vote in each of these elections.

The winding down of the military struggle of the Official I.R.A. meant a continuing loss of their more militaristic members to the Provisionals. At the same time the greater involvement of the Republican Clubs in electoral politics within Northern Ireland was seen by other members as leading to greater and greater dilution of its Republican and socialist politics as the leadership moved rightwards towards respectability (Dunne and Kerrigan 1984:46-58). So when one of its leading members in the South - Seamus Costello - was court-marshalled by the Official I.R.A. and dismissed from Official Sinn Fein in 1974, for sanctioning too many armed robberies, he was able to tap such sources of internal dissatisfaction and gain support for the establishment in 1974 of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (I.R.S.P.). The aim of the organisation was the establishment of a:

"32-County Democratic Socialist Republic with the working class in control of the means of production, distribution and exchange" (Saoirse November 1984:3).

The new party immediately gained socialist supporters from outside the Republican movement, including former People's Democracy members, and by March of 1975 the organisation could claim 700 members in Belfast.

The day on which the I.R.S.P. was established, a military wing, the I.N.L.A. (Irish National Liberation Army), was also

set up. Animosity between the Officials, and the ex-Officials in the I.N.L.A. erupted into a military feud almost immediately, continuing through to April 1975 when it fizzled out after 5 deaths. The feud however had, as Dunne and Kerrigan (1984:61) suggest, "a politically deadly effect on the I.R.S.P.", for as a matter of survival the organisation had opened its doors wide, recruiting anyone with a gun, rather than a political position, and the militarists, and an image of violence, came to dominate the party. Less than a year after its formation the socialist "McAliskey"<sup>29</sup> wing left en bloc in November 1975 claiming that the organisation was now indistinguishable from either the Official or Provisional wings of the Republican movement.

While in Northern Ireland-wide elections on May 1, 1975, ethnic politics dominated, with Unionist parties receiving 62.5% of the vote, Irish Nationalist parties receiving 23.7% of the vote, and others receiving 10.1% of the vote; Republican Clubs obtained only 2.2% of the poll (the N.I.L.P. and the Communist Party receiving 1.4% and 0.1% respectively). Despite the small vote, the developing importance of electoral politics to the organisation was indicated in 1976 by the addition of the title "The Workers Party" to its southern and northern political organisations. Thus in Northern Ireland the

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<sup>29</sup> Labelled after one of its most well-known figures, Bernadette McAliskey nee Devlin.

Republican Clubs became "Republican Clubs the Workers Party". Also the 1976 Ard Fheis - annual conference - witnessed both a call for an end to the use of violence and a threat to expel any members with sympathy for military activity. The ending of the dual political/military approach to socialist struggle was formally recognised the following year with an Ard Fheis resolution which rejected the use of "militarism and terrorism".

1976 proved an important year for the Provisional Republican movement, which more and more could be seen as moving to occupy the ground vacated by the Officials. March saw the ending of Special Category Status for prisoners in Northern Ireland gaols, who were no longer to be considered political prisoners but criminals. This was an issue around which Provisional Sinn Fein was to organise over the next 4 to 5 years.

In September of 1976, the trade union movement, its leaders forced into action by rank and file members and especially by a campaign within it by Militant, established the 'Better Life For All Campaign'. This campaign was established as a response to a particular sectarian assassination, though reflecting a general revulsion against all such assassinations. It issued calls for peace and prosperity for all, and statements against paramilitaries and

sectarianism. While the campaign initially brought some trade unionists onto the streets to demonstrate this view, that was essentially all it did, and this only for a short time. Without a concrete program, general abstract slogans were insufficient to sustain mobilisation. Similarly without an organisational framework, mass rallies, while euphoric initially, could not for very long be sustained especially in the absence of any obvious effect. The 'anti-political' position of the trade unions prevented the campaign from establishing either an organisation or a program to overcome ethnic conflict.

In 1977 Militant established the Labour and Trade Union Co-ordinating Committee - soon after to become the Labour and Trade Union Group - from left-wing members of the Northern Ireland Labour Party. The aim of the new organisation was to work for the establishment of a trade union based Labour Party in Northern Ireland, committed to socialist policies, and from which Militant could then recruit to its "more clearly defined socialist ideas" (Militant interview:5) of revolutionary socialist politics.

Also in 1977 the B.I.C.O. established the Campaign for Labour Representation as a front to allow it to engage in a broader range of activities. Its stated aim was to convince the British Labour Party to organise branches in Northern

Ireland. The logic here was that: "if you take the view that Northern Ireland is part of the U.K. state, you should be able to vote for what passes for a socialist alternative" (CLR interview:16). To this end the Campaign for Labour Representation attends British Labour Party conferences to lobby members; and produces a literature outlining their position.

The Progressive Unionist Party was also set up in 1977 by some "independent people, socialistically inclined" (P.U.P. interview:1). The P.U.P. proclaims itself "the only Socialist Unionist Party", and "a fiercely British one" (Policy Document 1986:3). Its military wing the Ulster Volunteer Force displays this ferocity through armed propaganda against Nationalists.

July of 1977 witnessed a feud between the Official I.R.A. and the Provisional I.R.A. in which 4 members were killed and 18 injured. On October 5 the leader of the I.R.S.P. was shot dead by "armed members of the [R.C.]W.P." (Saoirse October 1984:11) - a claim generally accepted. Of those socialist organisations which stood candidates in the 1977 District Council elections, Republican Clubs the Workers Party received 2.6% of first preference votes and the N.I.L.P. received 0.8%. The ethnic political context is given by the 51.8%, 22.1% and 22.7% of the votes received by Unionist, Irish Nationalist and other parties respectively. The United Labour Party was

launched in the following year, 1978: "with the declared aim of trying to establish a government in Northern Ireland based on democratic socialism" (Flackes and Elliott 1989:290) - which it tried to promote through standing a candidate in elections in 1979 and 1982 without much success<sup>30</sup>.

In the Westminster General election of May 3, 1979, R.C.W.P. received 1.7% of the vote and the N.I.L.P. received 0.6%, with ethnic allegiances again dominating the voting, and ensuring that Unionist parties received 59% of the poll, Irish Nationalist parties received 26.4%, and others received 13.9%.

In the following year, 1979, Sinn Fein, the I.R.S.P. and People's Democracy were involved in establishing a support organisation - the H-Block/Armagh Committee - for the P.I.R.A. and I.N.L.A. prisoners who, since 1976 had been protesting the ending of their status as political prisoners. The support Committee and its local counterparts which were established throughout Northern Ireland (and beyond) were able to mobilise thousands of people in demonstrations in support of the prisoners - especially when the prisoners protest became a hunger strike through 1980 and 1981.

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<sup>30</sup> Its candidate, P. Devlin received 1.1% of the valid first preference votes in the 1979 European election - mostly on the basis of his personal stature. In a 1982 by-election for Westminster the party received only 303 votes!

## THE IMPORTANCE OF POLITICS

The entire prisons protest and particularly the Hunger Strike - which resulted in the deaths of 10 hunger strikers - was an episode of importance to the development of a number of socialist organisations. Membership of the I.R.S.P. and Sinn Fein grew enormously, as did the public influence of Sinn Fein, the I.R.S.P. and People's Democracy. Widespread sympathy for the situation of the prisoners allowed one of the hunger strikers - the Officer Commanding P.I.R.A. prisoners, Bobby Sands, to stand and be elected as a member of the British Parliament on April 9, 1981<sup>31</sup>. Although Sinn Fein policy towards elections in Northern Ireland had always been one of abstentionism, the election of Bobby Sands occurred in unique circumstances.

The death of Sands on May 5 led to a period of heightened tension in which District Council elections took place on May 20. In these elections the Workers Party The Republican Clubs received 1.8% of the valid first preference votes<sup>32</sup> and the N.I.L.P. received 1.5%. Sinn Fein, true to its abstentionist tradition, did not stand candidates. In Belfast however, the

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<sup>31</sup> Soon after this the British government passed legislation making it illegal for a convicted prisoner to be an M.P.

<sup>32</sup> A proportional representation system whereby the voter ranks his or her preferences.

I.R.S.P. and People's Democracy won 2 seats each on the City Council. Over Northern Ireland as a whole R.C.W.P. won 3 seats and the N.I.L.P., 1. The wider context however was that Unionist parties received 58.3% of the vote, Irish Nationalist parties 22.8%, and others received 15.6%. In the by-election of August 20, 1981 to fill the vacant Westminster seat caused by the death of Bobby Sands, a Provisional Sinn Fein member standing as an Anti-H-Block Proxy Political Prisoner, was elected M.P.

The development of Provisional Sinn Fein from 1970 parallels the development of what was then Sinn Fein from 1962 - 1970. In each period a purely military struggle to end British involvement in Ireland became progressively more politicised towards a socialist politics. Certainly by the late 1970's there was a growing realisation that the: "militarist trend in the Republican movement wasn't getting it anywhere" and there was little understanding within the leadership "that people cannot be free by putting a gun to their heads, that winning the peace was more important than winning the war" (Sinn Fein interview:3). Hence the importance of politics.

The political theory of Sinn Fein today holds that "to achieve socialism you have to achieve national self-determination" (Sinn Fein interview:1). Socialism for Sinn

Fein "includes and is a stage in advance of Republicanism" (Adams 1986:128). So, in the words of a Sinn Fein informant:

"If someone says I'm a Republican I'm happy enough with that because that for me means you must be a socialist. That is a socialist position, a revolutionary position" (Sinn Fein interview:2).

This elision of Republicanism and socialism, though not surprising given the origins of Sinn Fein, requires a theoretical justification which is found by Sinn Fein in the concept of imperialism. Again, as expressed by the Sinn Fein informant:

"If you say you're a Republican it means that you're adopting an anti-imperialist stance on Ireland" (Sinn Fein interview:2).

Imperialism here is British imperialism, made clear in the statement:

"The major obstacle to class politics in Ireland is the British presence - and that has to be withdrawn ... that is our primary objective now ..." (Sinn Fein interview:1).

Further: "being a Nationalist means opposing imperialism and that is a progressive stance" (Sinn Fein interview:2).

For Sinn Fein, the nationalism which is progressive is an Irish Nationalism, and it is progressive because it opposes British imperialism. The obverse of progressive Irish Nationalism is a Unionism, reactionary in constituting a Protestant labour aristocracy whose material privileges - gifts of imperialism - keep them from recognising that their true interests lie in the Irish Nationalist and socialist cause. This is expressed in the Sinn Fein respondent's view that:

"The Northern Ireland conflict is a colonial conflict and you will not have class politics here as long as you have this class aristocracy. this sort of white trash; people who believe that because they've a better job or because they have a job, they're better than Nationalists" (Sinn Fein interview:12).

A similar stagism, privileging of Irish Nationalism and concomitant exclusion of the Unionist working class, is apparent in the I.R.S.P. strategy that:

"only when the R.U.C. and their orange and British masters have been smashed can the Irish working class proceed towards national liberation and socialism" (Saoirse August 1980:1),

and in the assurance to:

capitalist bosses and imperialist powers that neither the I.R.S.P. or the I.N.L.A. will disappear on the British military leaving Ireland (Saoirse July/August 1984:10).

The differences between Sinn Fein and the I.R.S.P. are mainly tactical. Although both organisations have a degree of overlapping membership with their own respective military wings, the I.R.A. and the I.N.L.A., the I.R.S.P. has always been the more openly socialist and militarist in emphasis, claiming a "clear revolutionary socialist viewpoint and ... staunch support for the armed actions of the I.N.L.A." (Saoirse August 1981:1). By contrast, Sinn Fein merely upholds the right of the I.R.A. to engage in armed struggle, though with the president of Sinn Fein claiming that without the armed struggle "the issue of Ireland would not even be an issue" (Adams 1986:64). The greater distance between militarism and politics within the provisional Republican movement (Sinn Fein/I.R.A.) is illustrated by Sinn Fein cautions to the I.R.A. on the negative effects of certain of its military activities. The closeness of militarism and politics within the I.R.S.P./I.N.L.A. is evidenced by the military forms which many of its internal differences have taken<sup>33</sup>. In 1981 the I.R.S.P. could claim of Sinn Fein, that as an organisation it was not totally committed to a Socialist

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<sup>33</sup> For example the 1986-7 feud in which twelve members were killed.

Republic. While Sinn Fein leaders admit that the policies of the leadership "would be more radical than a lot of our membership" (Sinn Fein interview:2), by the mid-1980's Sinn Fein leaders could claim that "we're a socialist group and ... we want to achieve socialism" (Sinn Fein interview:1). The leftward movement of Sinn Fein in the intervening years had to some extent, in the view of one observer, undermined the "political raison d'etre" of the I.R.S.P./I.N.L.A. (Clarke 1987).

While claiming to be socialist, the Sinn Fein leadership nevertheless cautions that:

"the Republican struggle should not at this stage of its development style itself "socialist-republican". This would imply that there is no place in it for non-socialists" (Adams 1986:132).

This is reflected in the Sinn Fein respondent's claim that "we don't run about saying we are a socialist party" (Sinn Fein interview:1) and that "I'd be wary of Republicans, of members of our own party, who would use the terminology "we're revolutionary socialists" - I don't see any need for that" (Sinn Fein interview:1). In any case: "One does not become a socialist merely by calling oneself that" (Adams 1986:128)<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Here is an example of an organisation claiming the mantle of 'true' socialism, one which all the other organisations claim. This

Arguably, it is precisely by appealing as Republicans to a broad constituency within the Catholic community, that Sinn Fein has been able to gain a greater degree of support than appealing as revolutionary socialists, or even as socialists, would have garnered.

However it is exactly the absence of a clear class programme on the part of Sinn Fein that People's Democracy is critical of. While the overall aim of People's Democracy is the establishment of a Socialist Republic, its immediate aim is to unite a vanguard of the most conscious militants around a Marxist programme. The largest and most conscious vanguard, in the estimation of People's Democracy, are the Republicans. This is reflected in the statement by the People's Democracy informant that:

"we've got fragmented layers of people who are in struggle. But we wouldn't give them all equal weight. The people who are struggling for house repairs up in Galwally<sup>35</sup> aren't the same as people who are doing life imprisonment for shooting Brits" (People's Democracy interview:6).

The Republican movement is thus considered the "only mass revolutionary organisation in Ireland"; revolutionary because

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illustrates the necessity of working with an open 'self-definition' of socialism - for research purposes at least.

<sup>35</sup> A suburb of Belfast.

Ireland is ruled by imperialism, and "if the imperialist masters are kicked out, that is a revolution" (ibid). This allows People's Democracy to consider Republican paramilitaries as freedom fighters fighting "a tough revolutionary war" (Unfree Citizen November 19, 1973:7).

In this identification of British control as the major problem for the Irish people (People's Democracy interview:6), People's Democracy considers Sinn Fein correct, but as an organisation, People's Democracy considers Sinn Fein deficient in not having a clear class politics. Neither does its membership have a class consciousness. Bringing these two things about is the aim of People's Democracy, an aim considered to be aided by the fact that the Republican movement in general "is overwhelmingly a movement of working people based in the working class communities" (An Reabhlóid Spring 1987:15). This translates into a qualified support of Sinn Fein and an emphasis on socialist appeals to the Irish Nationalist working class. Unionist workers are considered "a backward section of the Irish working class" (People's Democracy interview:12) which constitute a "big counter-revolutionary current " within it (ibid). For People's Democracy this has to be broken: "the Unionist tradition doesn't have a place in a united or socialist Ireland"; it is "an aristocracy of labour" and has "to be smashed" (ibid). The privileging of Irish Nationalism and the Catholic working

class, and the exclusion of the Unionist working class, is obvious in such analysis.

### **PROBLEMS OF THEORY**

There are a number of problems in the theory which informs the strategy of Sinn Fein, the I.R.S.P. and People's Democracy, which calls into question the implicit claim that their common general approach is necessarily the only approach to connecting ethno-nationalism with class politics.

It could be argued that merely identifying a social force as imperialist is not by itself sufficient justification for socialists to consider anti-imperialist national movements by definition progressive, in terms of furthering class politics. Without a concrete analysis, which demonstrates that the effects of a particular national movement are such that they weaken imperialism and strengthen proletarian internationalism, such an abstract anti-imperialism is surely dogma.

Also, Bew et al (1979:22) suggest that the conception of imperialism adopted by much Republican socialism is not a Leninist conception:

"by which imperialism was a particular stage in the development of the capitalist mode of production to which a special form of colonialism corresponds, but rather is identified with the British presence in Ireland. Imperialism is regarded as synonymous with the foreign policies of the British ruling class".

As the authors further point out, it is debatable whether removing the British presence - either British troops or British financial support for Northern Ireland - would challenge or weaken British imperialism internationally or merely change British policy with regard to Northern Ireland. Indeed it could well be argued that the British would be more than happy to "wash their hands" of what is after all "the Northern Ireland problem"<sup>36</sup>. The term anti-imperialism is often used more as a political slogan for ethnic mobilisation rather than as an assessment of the effect of that struggle.

While the analyses of Sinn Fein, the I.R.S.P. and People's Democracy identify "imperialism" as the class enemy,

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<sup>36</sup> Partition was one such attempt to "get out of Ireland", as was the particular arrangement made after the Northern Ireland state was set up: it was not integrated into the United Kingdom the way Scotland, England or Wales were, but was theoretically a semi-autonomous, and practically an almost fully autonomous, statelet until 1972. Indeed O'Dowd et al (1982) argue that the policy of successive British administrations since 1969 has been one merely of containment; arguably an attempt to keep the Northern Ireland problem "at arms length".

they also identify the Protestant working class as a labour aristocracy - an ally of imperialism and a barrier to class politics. The claim here is that the Protestant working class seeks to maintain its position of having better jobs and better houses than the Catholic working class by giving allegiance to the state and social order which guarantees these privileges.

While this is at least an attempt to go beyond notions of Protestant politics as merely illusory, as false consciousness; towards specifying the material basis for Protestant working class support for Unionism and against Nationalism, it nevertheless adopts a conception of labour aristocracy which is far from Lenin's original usage of the term - which again was a political usage. Rather it is being used in an imprecise way in identifying the skilled and trade unionised section of the Protestant working class with the entire class<sup>37</sup>. The term is also being used in a reductionist manner in seeing a "simple correlation between degree of privilege and political .... behaviour" (Stedman-Jones 1975)<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> On the distinctiveness of the skilled Protestant proletariat see Reid (1980).

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Bew et al (1979:219) who make the apposite point that Catholics have been no more radicalised by their deprivation than Protestants made reactionary by their advantage.

In the following claim by a leading People's Democracy member are compressed a number of these theoretical flaws. The claim<sup>39</sup> that if support of the Irish Nationalist and Republican movement:

"alienated the Protestant working class well that's just too bad. The revolution can't be held back because the Protestants are deluded into joining a fascist organisation like Vanguard<sup>40</sup>".

Here a class politics requires Irish national unity and the entire Protestant population to be seen as "dupes", a barrier to progress.

The concepts of imperialism and labour aristocracy can be used, however, to reach a completely opposite analysis of the way forward for class politics. In the hands of the B.I.C.O., these concepts serve to privilege precisely that social force which in the analysis of Sinn Fein, the I.R.S.P. and People's Democracy are underprivileged!

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<sup>39</sup> Attributed to a leading People's Democracy leader, Michael Farrell, by Sweetman (1972:179-80).

<sup>40</sup> A loyalist organisation established in 1972 and which organised huge rallies in opposition to the British Government's suspension of the local Stormont parliament and introduction of direct rule.

The B.I.C.O. operate with a stagist approach to class politics wherein democracy on the basis of capitalism is a necessary pre-requisite for socialism. Moreover in Ireland capitalism has been fostered by the policies and practices of the British state. Therefore in terms of class politics, imperialism - which the B.I.C.O. equate with the British presence in Ireland - has been, and is, progressive (B.I.C.O. 1975:11-12). It is on this basis that the Protestant proletariat, as a product of the British presence and of British capitalism are the most skilled, unionised and class conscious sector of the proletariat. Boserup (1972:177) as earlier mentioned makes the point this way, that in most socialist analyses of Northern Ireland:

"There is a failure to recognize that the Unionist workers are not the lumpen-proletariat of Ireland, but the most advanced sector of the Irish working class".

The author adds that there is a further "failure to account for this in terms other than those of conspiracy and mystification" (ibid). Of course the B.I.C.O. would not consider Protestant workers as part of the Irish working class, since they hold the view that there are two nations in Ireland.

It is clear that socialist theory is flexible enough that it can be used to arrive at, and justify, different - and polar - socialist positions.

#### **AFTER THE HUNGER STRIKES**

In April of 1982 Republican Clubs the Workers Party changed its name to the Workers Party, and claimed to be "the only socialist party in Northern Ireland with a clear, coherent, working class programme" (Northern People June 11, 1982:1). It further insists on:

"a reality which all others deny, the primacy of class in political struggle. For us every citizen is a worker or exploiter. Our central objective is to bring all workers to this recognition, that they are workers - first and last" (Manifesto June 1987).

While the long-term goal of the Workers Party is the "establishment of a democratic secular socialist unitary state - a republic" (Workers Party interview:1), it sees this as "a long way off", while the immediate concerns are the "defeat of terrorism" and achieving "democracy in public life" (Workers Party interview:1). This reflects its stagist theory of class politics whereby democratic reform of capitalism is a prerequisite for socialism.

In the October 20 Assembly elections, the party received 2.7% first preference votes. Sinn Fein received 10.1% and the N.I.L.P. for the first time in its history did not stand a candidate. The context here was one in which Unionism received 58.4% of the votes, Nationalism 18.8% and others 10%.

In 1983 the World Socialist Party was re-established in Northern Ireland. The organisation had originally been set up in 1948/9 around the ideas of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, that: "common ownership of the machinery of production and distribution by society as a whole through democratic control" could only be achieved by "a conscious democratic effort of the majority" (W.S.P. interview:4). The organisation had engaged in sporadic limited activity, mainly in Belfast and Dublin through the 1950's and 60's.

In the 1983 Westminster General Election, Sinn Fein received 13.4% of the vote and the Sinn Fein president was elected as Member of the British Parliament for West Belfast. The Workers Party received 1.9% of the poll. In the 1984 European Parliament election Sinn Fein received 13.3% of the first preference votes and the Workers Party polled 1.3%. Again the wider ethnic electoral results put these figures into context. In 1983 and 1984, Unionist parties received respectively 57% and 58% of the vote, while Irish Nationalist parties received 17.9% and 22.1% and others received 8.3% and

5.3% of the vote. Nevertheless the electoral showing of Sinn Fein was sufficient to worry both British and Irish governments, fearful that constitutional Nationalism was in danger of losing ground within the Catholic community to the more radical Nationalism of Sinn Fein. The Anglo-Irish Agreement - between the British and Irish Governments and signed in 1985 - is widely read as an attempt therefore to improve the fortunes of the constitutional nationalism of the Social Democratic and Labour Party by showing the ability of constitutional nationalism to further the interests of the Catholic community - on this occasion by allowing the Irish government a voice in the administration of Northern Ireland.

The impact of the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement between London and Dublin, and especially the fact of its implementation over the heads of Unionist politicians and the Protestant population was characterised by one interviewee as widely felt to be "a stab in the back for the prods<sup>41</sup>" (CLR interview:3). The perceived undemocratic nature of its implementation and its giving Dublin a say in the affairs of Ulster, created a situation in which the B.I.C.O. and the C.L.R. were able to galvanise a substantial degree of support for their position of "British rights for British citizens" - meaning that people in Northern Ireland should be able to vote

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<sup>41</sup> Colloquial term for 'Protestants'.

for the political parties of government<sup>42</sup>. The belief here was that if they were able to, then the British government would have to take notice of the concerns and views of the Northern Ireland population. Organisationally this support was demonstrated by the establishment of the Campaign for Equal Citizenship (C.E.C.) in 1987. The C.E.C. was set up as a broad movement which has organised a number of large rallies, and fought elections. During one such election campaign, opponents made much of "communists" being involved. This led to the B.I.C.O. attempting to efface itself, surfacing since 1987 under the name of the Ingram Society.

The C.L.R. and the C.E.C. are the organisational incarnations of the B.I.C.O. since it adopted a Unionist socialism in 1971. Its Unionism has been reflected in its propaganda since then. Indeed the organisation claims to have been "doing the intellectual work in history and politics which the Unionist middle class had neglected for a century" (Clifford 1987:24). Indeed it claims of one of its publications: "Workers Weekly. Now it seems, the only voice of Ulster Unionism" (Workers Weekly March 1, 1986:6) - a Unionism often manifest as criticisms of the "Republican aims" (Workers Weekly March 8, 1980:1) and "Nationalist domination" (Workers

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<sup>42</sup> The parties which are likely to form the government of the United Kingdom, the Labour Party and the Conservative Party, do not organise or stand candidates in Northern Ireland.

Weekly April 19, 1980:3) of the trade union movement. It is also critical of other socialist organisations. So for example the Communist Party of Ireland is seen as "more Nationalist than class conscious" (Workers Weekly April 26, 1980:2), and Militant "when scratched hard enough ... are Nationalists (Workers Weekly June 28, 1980:2).

The B.I.C.O. in Northern Ireland has always only been a propaganda organisation of no more than a handful of people, although it claims it "exerts more influence than other organisations a hundred times as big" (Irish Communist May 1981:9). Certainly this is true in terms of its impact on recent Unionist politics where it has been, in the words of one interviewee, the "strength and intellect behind the C.E.C." (C.L.R. interview:4). The B.I.C.O. claim that it has developed many political ideas which perhaps only now are passing into common currency (Irish Communist February 1984:7), although as one of its publications points out (Clifford 1987) only now on the basis of money, since some of its ideas are being espoused through the C.E.C. by "prominent barristers and eminent surgeons". Certainly within Unionism the C.E.C. campaign has "made things simpler - you either support the union with Great Britain or you support local sectarian/communal politics" (C.L.R. interview:8). Within other areas of Unionism, it is claimed that Workers Weekly is read regularly by one Unionist Euro-M.P., and certainly a

number of Loyalist paramilitary organisations regard as positive the organisation's rehabilitation of the Protestant working class.

It is probably true to suggest as one interviewee did (W.S.P. interview:20) that in the past the B.I.C.O. "acquired the influence of being mentioned". This is certainly the case in the academic literature on Northern Ireland where the "two-nations theory" attributed to the B.I.C.O. is considered in, for example Bell (1976), Nairn (1981), Bew et al (1979), Morgan (1980), - citations which often give the impression that the organisation has played an important role in Northern Ireland politics when this is not the case. A two-nation theory is the implicit theoretical underpinning of many Unionist political positions and indeed, as one interviewee suggests (People's Democracy interview:19), has been embraced by sections of the southern Irish bourgeoisie as articulated in the work of O'Brien (1972) as a theoretical support for their arms-length position on Northern Ireland. The importance of B.I.C.O. has been in their being explicit on the theory.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement in effect gave official recognition to the influence of Sinn Fein. It is Sinn Fein's socialism which has become the dominant socialist politics in Northern Ireland - a politics which is required by its theory

to identify the Nationalist community as the agent of socialist change.

This dominance was not challenged by the establishment of the latest socialist organisation to operate in Northern Ireland - Labour Party '87. This organisation was set up in May 1987 by former members of the Northern Ireland Labour Party, with the hope of obtaining trade union affiliations and developing policies further to the left of the old N.I.L.P., in order to establish a class politics which it considered would be different from class politics in Britain because in Northern Ireland there is "real deprivation, real hardship, real poverty" (L.P.'87 interview:4).

In the 1985 District Council elections which Sinn Fein was fighting for the first time, it received 11.8% of first preference votes, giving it 59 councillors across Northern Ireland. The Workers Party received 1.6% of the first preference votes and 4 district council seats. In this election Unionist parties received 56.9% of the vote, Irish Nationalism 20.2% and others 8.9%.

The foregoing illustrates that the history of socialism in Northern Ireland is indeed as Morgan (1980:187) suggests, a recent one. It also illustrates the uneven influence of socialist organisations in Northern Ireland's recent politics.

The civil rights period of 1968 and 1969 - a time of mass activity, open meetings, dramatic events and fluid changes - was one in which a number of socialist organisations were at the very vortex of the events, taking initiatives and channelling popular unrest.

The period behind the barricades however, was a turning point in the fortunes of a number of the organisations. It was a time during which old animosities became re-established and ethnic politics became dominant. It was a time of rethinking for many organisations. The year 1971 saw the decisive militarization of the situation, whereby the British Army and the local Unionist state became involved in a war of mutual attrition with Republican para-military organisations, the combatants vicariously playing out the antagonisms between Unionist and Nationalist.

The change in the nature of the conflict has served to strengthen ethnic divisions. In a situation where responsibility for pursuing ethnic aspirations has been displaced onto the shoulders of those with the guns, the opportunities for socialists to intervene to direct pressure for change in a socialist direction is much reduced.

Indeed it has been the fate of socialists to react to circumstances and events which are initiated and effectively

controlled by the ethnic politics of Unionism and Nationalism. In this respect the Ulster Workers Council strike of 1974 and the Hunger Strikes of 1980 - 1981 were ethnic events which mobilised thousands, and to which most socialist organisations had to reactively take a position<sup>43</sup>.

So while the foregoing shows the involvement of socialists in Northern Ireland politics, it also clearly shows the weakness of socialist politics in comparison to ethnic politics. Therborn (1983) suggests that electoral campaigns are useful indicators of ideological relations in a society. In the case of Northern Ireland a comparison of the electoral performances of socialist organisations and ethnic organisations shows clearly the dominance of ethnic allegiances.

Of course it might be argued, especially by some socialist organisations that electoral performance is only one element of politics and indeed not a good indicator of socialist influence <sup>44</sup>. Influence might be more properly measured by numbers of members or at least sympathizers. In this respect although it is impossible to be precise, given the reluctance of many organisations to divulge membership

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<sup>43</sup> See chapter eight.

<sup>44</sup> Indeed some might argue for an inverse relationship between electoral success and socialist credentials.

figures<sup>45</sup>, a liberal estimate would be that there were in 1987 no more than 3,000 socialist activists and sympathizers in Northern Ireland. This is quite obviously a very small number of people, and indeed of these probably only some 1,200 would be the activists. In Northern Ireland socialist class politics has few advocates.

Regardless of the measures, socialist politics, after a brief period of influence in 1968 and 1969, has either been effectively absorbed into the ethnic politics of Irish Nationalism and Ulster Unionism, or rendered insignificant by it. The following chapter illustrates some of the mechanisms by which this has occurred.

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<sup>45</sup> Indeed one respondent remarked that for some organisations such information was a "revolutionary secret"! (W.S.P. interview :15)

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### ETHNICITY AS RESOURCE AND CONSTRAINT

#### ETHNICITY AS RESOURCE

The weakness of class politics in Northern Ireland is perhaps not surprising given the historical dominance of Protestant and Catholic ethnic identities and their respective ethnic politics of Unionism and Nationalism. In any case much class politics, as should be evident from the foregoing, does not challenge the dominance of ethno-nationalism, but rather privileges it.

With reference to Northern Ireland, this has been documented. Indeed Martin (1982) is able to categorise both academic and some activist political analysis of the conflict as either "anti-imperialist" or "revisionist", according to whether they lend support to Irish Nationalism or to Ulster Unionism respectively<sup>1</sup>. Likewise, Morgan (1980:188) is able to claim that:

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<sup>1</sup> Which serves to indicate the difficulty even for academic studies of avoiding the ethnic divisions.

"the left has reproduced the North's indigenous sectarian theory and practice within the socialist subculture".

Morgan uses what he terms a "chromatic metaphor" to categorise class politics as therefore green or orange<sup>2</sup>.

By lending support to either Irish Nationalism or to Ulster Unionism, much socialist theory and analysis effectively supports positions already appropriated by the ethnic politics of Northern Ireland wherein Nationalism is a Catholic politics and Unionism is a Protestant politics. The result is indeed either a green or orange, Catholic or Protestant, class politics.

The political theory and analysis of Sinn Fein, the I.R.S.P. and People's Democracy leads these organisations to privilege the Catholic and Nationalist fraction of the working class. The fact that this fraction of the working class is already constituted as an ethnic community means that these organisations are able to use ethnicity as a resource in pursuing their socialist politics.

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<sup>2</sup> This colour-code, whereby Catholic politics are green and Protestant politics orange, is a system of labelling widely used in everyday life in Northern Ireland.

In this respect Sinn Fein propaganda in all its forms<sup>3</sup> is addressed to the "Republican movement", the "people of West Belfast", the "people in the North", the "Irish working class" ... The use of gaelic in the name of the organisation<sup>4</sup> and the production of propaganda material in gaelic, serves to interpellate only the Catholic working class.

While the I.R.S.P. is not as prolific as Sinn Fein in its cultural production, it nevertheless addresses the Catholic working class in the propaganda it does produce. For example the gaelic title of its paper - Saoirse<sup>5</sup> obviously excluding the Unionist fraction of the working class from its audience. The paper prints statements issued by the I.N.L.A. through the Republican Socialist Publicity Bureau on its operations<sup>6</sup> along with interviews with I.N.L.A. members on policy. In this

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<sup>3</sup> Sinn Fein is prolific in its propaganda forms, producing: books, pamphlets, poetry, posters, calenders, diaries, newspapers, wall paintings, audio and video cassettes.

<sup>4</sup> Sinn Fein meaning "ourselves alone".

<sup>5</sup> meaning "freedom".

<sup>6</sup> Thus for example Saoirse February 1982 lists: "shooting dead of prominent loyalist"; "critically wounding U.D.R. man"; "setting booby trap under R.U.C. mans car"; "On the 14th of February an I.N.L.A. cell attempted to execute a full-time member of the Armagh U.D.R.; in this issue of the paper is also mentioned: "punishment shooting of man guilty of rape"; "hood shot in the knees".

regard it does not address the Unionist fraction of the working class.

The less formal, non-policy, non-organisation pieces in the paper also address only the Catholic fraction of the working class. This is illustrated for example, in a paragraph in Saoirse of August 1981 headed "Mother of the Week":

"Congratulations are in order for a well known Republican Socialist woman who is bringing up her children well, at least as far as brits are concerned. A bemused crowd looked on the other day at a brit in Castle St. who was doing a jig. No, he wasn't coming over to the Irish way of life. It seems he was trying to avoid kicks from the 4 year old daughter of our mother of the week. When questioned about her actions the youngster replied glibly, 'I was only kicking a brit'".

Armed propaganda is a "vital cutting edge" (Adams 1986:63) for both these organisations. The military wings of Sinn Fein and the I.R.S.P. - the I.R.A. and the I.N.L.A. respectively - are engaged in a military campaign against the state. Since the state apparatuses are peopled almost entirely by those from the Protestant working class population<sup>7</sup>, the killing of members of the state forces is considered by many

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<sup>7</sup> The specific apparatuses here are the police, police reserve, U.D.R., U.D.R. reserve, prison officers, judges. Civilians who have connections with the security forces are also considered "legitimate targets". British soldiers generally are also seen by the Protestant population as being "one of us".

Protestants as part of a sectarian campaign of genocide against them. Sinn Fein claims, and the I.R.S.P. would undoubtedly concur, that "the responsibility ... for "sectarianising" the conflict lies with the British government" (Adams 1986:121) with its "Ulsterization" policy<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless, the effect of the armed propaganda is to exclude in a very obvious way the Protestant fraction of the working class from the socialism of Sinn Fein and the I.R.S.P.

The intentional privileging of the Catholic fraction of the working class in the political analysis of the People's Democracy, leads that organisation to hope that its journal will be read by "every socialist, Republican and trade union activist" (An Reabhlóid Spring 1987:16). It is certainly less likely to be read by any socialist or trade Unionist who is not also a Republican, since it is titled in gaelic - An Reabhlóid<sup>9</sup>. The exclusion of the Protestant working class from the socialism of People's Democracy is obvious in an address for example to "the anti-imperialist people of Ireland, the

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<sup>8</sup> The British Government policy in the period 1974-79 whereby locally recruited, and therefore effectively Protestant, security forces (the Ulster Defence Regiment, Royal Ulster Constabulary and their respective Reserves) took over much security work that had previously been undertaken by the British Army. See Tomlinson (1980); Bew and Patterson (1985:75-110).

<sup>9</sup> "The Revolution"

Catholic working class of the 6 counties" (Unfree Citizen November 19, 1973).

While the political analyses of Sinn Fein, the I.R.S.P. and People's Democracy allow these organisations to use the discourse of ethnicity as a resource for the prosecution of their class politics, this in turn secures them a further resource - the physical terrain in which this ethnic discourse is dominant. So it is within the physical space of Catholic West Belfast that Sinn Fein, the I.R.S.P. and People's Democracy have their party headquarters' and book-stores'. It is within Catholic areas that Sinn Fein has its advice centres. It is also within these areas that political activity takes place - meetings, paper sales, canvassing, demonstrations ... Engaging in political activities in Catholic areas ensures an audience that is ethnically homogeneous, and which is likely also to therefore recognize itself in many of the interpellations in the propaganda of these particular organisations. While the focus of People's Democracy activity is Catholic West Belfast, it does not exclude activity outside the area - although the example given by the People's Democracy informant at interview was that of the May Day march through central (and therefore "neutral") Belfast - arguably a unique occasion when usually neutral space is 'officially' penetrated by 'class' organisations.

Sinn Fein claims that it is not policy to restrict its political work to Catholic areas but for security reasons it is not possible to do any work at all in Protestant areas (Sinn Fein interview:6). Very clearly, the political position which allows Sinn Fein - and the I.R.S.P. and People's Democracy - to use Catholic space, at the same time prevents them from operating in Protestant territory, again ensuring that their class politics remains outside the purview of the Protestant fraction of the working class.

For other socialist organisations however, it is precisely this fraction of the working class which is privileged in theory, analysis and also in practice. Since the B.I.C.O. sees national self-determination of the Ulster Protestant nation as a pre-requisite for socialism, it is not surprising that it addresses its class politics to the Protestant working class; and while the B.I.C.O. is prolific in terms of its propaganda output, it does not often actively disseminate it<sup>10</sup> - though when it does so, is in situations where its discourse is likely to be recognised, at Unionist rallies, during Unionist political strikes and meetings.

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<sup>10</sup> Most of its materials - papers and pamphlets - are available through the organisation's publishing front "Athol Books", and some from book-stores.

The P.U.P., as its name suggests, also operates on the terrain of institutionalised Unionist, therefore effectively Protestant, discourse; that is, areas of West Belfast with a solidly Protestant population or in the shipyards and engineering works of East Belfast with an almost wholly Protestant workforce. Its headquarters is in the staunchly Protestant Shankill Road area of Belfast. For both the B.I.C.O. and the P.U.P., privileging the Protestant working class in their analyses allows them in practice to use Protestant ethnic identity as a resource in pursuit of their class politics. It also at the same time prevents them from addressing their politics to the Catholic fraction of the working class.

Because ethnic identity is a salient identity in Northern Ireland, those groups which use ethnicity as a resource by appealing to it, tend to be the larger socialist organisations - or at least the ones with the greatest public impact, and, it could be argued, more so because of their ethnic politics than their class politics.

### **ETHNICITY AS CONSTRAINT**

In his "specification of socialism in Ireland", Morgan (1980 :174) identifies green, orange and red socialism. If

the criterion for such a classification is political intent then it is indeed possible to identify a red socialism - one which privileges class and not nation or ethnicity in its political struggle for socialism and which "is largely concerned with the industrial and political unity of the working class" (Morgan 1980:174). However it is arguably of more importance to characterize socialist organisations according to the criterion of effect, and when this is done, much red socialism dissolves, becoming green or orange in practice.

#### **THE ETHNIC DISCURSIVE TERRAIN**

The very dominance of ethnic divisions in Northern Ireland means that there are few situations in which identities other than ethnic ones are salient and opportunities for addressing these identities are therefore few also. Nevertheless a number of socialist organisations attempt to address "workers" or "the working class". The difficulty here is that: **in Northern Ireland the working class does not exist**<sup>11</sup>. Indeed this is recognized in appeals to 'Protestant and Catholic workers'. Yet such a discursive unity of the working class in the propaganda of a few socialist

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<sup>11</sup> That is to say, as a class conscious political force. Politically it exists as two opposing ethno-political movements.

organisations is little reinforced by other discourses or practices in Northern Ireland and has little impact: most such appeals fall on deaf ears since most people do not recognise themselves being interpellated!

Moreover, discourses of ethnicity are so embedded in everyday practical consciousness and have been so successfully materialised as social practices, institutions and artifacts, that they provide a dominant set of meanings through which events are interpreted, and the context within which socialist political practice occurs. As a result they set some of the conditions under which socialist propaganda is "read". In other words, following Morley (1980:173) and with reference to Northern Ireland, the repertoire of possible discursive strategies available to people in making sense of socialist propaganda is limited precisely by the ubiquity of ethnicity.

In this respect ethnic hegemony is obvious in the very language of politics in Northern Ireland. There is no 'ethnically-neutral' language in which to talk about politics. Again this is not a problem for those organisations which see ethnic struggles as of paramount importance for the class struggle. Indeed an ethnically inflected vocabulary is, as has been shown, a resource to be used to address either: the 'Republican movement', the 'Nationalist people', 'the people of West Belfast', 'people in the North' ... or the 'Protestant

working class', the 'Loyalist working class', 'the Ulster Protestant nation', 'the British people'... However for socialists who seek, for theoretical reasons, to appeal to a class rather than an ethnic identity, the saturation of everyday language by ethnic meanings ensures that references to class unity in propaganda are overdetermined by references to ethnic difference.

In this regard the Communist Party of Ireland is in a curious position. Its political theory holds that socialism is not possible unless the national unity of Ireland is first achieved. However the fact of having an historical, though small, base in the Protestant working class - established through its trade union activities - makes the C.P.I. conscious of the need to avoid addressing only Irish Nationalists. However its stagist political theory which privileges the Nationalist moment of the struggle for socialism, surfaces as elements of Irish Nationalist discourse in its propaganda - in phrases such as "the North" or the "Irish working class" for example.

Practically, C.P.I. propaganda is disseminated either in what might be considered "neutral" sites such as city centre book-stores or on city centre paper-sales; or in Catholic areas of West Belfast.

The Workers Party, as mentioned, claims to be "the only socialist party in Northern Ireland with a clear, coherent working class programme" (Northern People June 11, 1982:1).

Its aim is:

"to bring all workers to this recognition, that they are workers - first and last" (Manifesto June 1987).

However its history being one of close connection, both politically and militarily with the Republican movement (as Official Sinn Fein and the Official I.R.A. before 1970) means that much contemporary support has been built on traditional, though possibly radicalised, Republicanism. Most political activities - door-to-door paper sales, public meetings - are located in Catholic areas, as is its headquarters. Therefore, although theoretically espousing working class unity within Northern Ireland, practically and effectively it only addresses the Catholic working class.

This is the case with a number of socialist organisations whose political theory of permanent revolution requires them to privilege the working class as the agent of both national unity and socialism. However this national unity is more often than not an Irish national unity, so that in their political propaganda, both in its elaboration and in its dissemination, Irish Nationalist elements are apparent.

Thus the organisation Militant, in attempting to build "working class unity and socialism", appeals to "the working class" or to "Protestant and Catholic workers". Yet the title of their organ of propaganda, the Militant Irish Monthly, and the inclusion in the paper of articles relating to the south of Ireland have the effect of signifying that it is only the Catholic fraction of the working class which is being addressed.

This is also the case with the Socialist Workers Movement, whose paper Socialist Worker in reporting and analyzing issues of concern to socialists in the south of Ireland - issues 'foreign' to the Protestant working class - signifies an affinity with Irish Nationalism. Despite their authors intentions therefore, the elements of Irish Nationalist discourse which surface in the propaganda of these organisations have the effect of overdetermining others . The effect of this is to identify the organisations with Irish Nationalism, making it difficult or even dangerous for them to disseminate their propaganda in Protestant areas.

So while the political practice of these organisations is not explicitly informed by a political theory which privileges either fraction of the working class, the ubiquity of the ethno- politics of Irish Nationalism and Ulster Unionism, embedded in everyday practical consciousness, constrains the

construction, dissemination and reception of socialist propaganda in a way which makes their political practice divisive of the working class.

### **THE ETHNIC POLITICAL AGENDA**

Another approach to pursuing a class politics is adopted by organisations such as Labour Party '87 or the World Socialist Party of Ireland, and that is to avoid "ethnic" issues and address non-ethnic and usually non-political ones<sup>12</sup> -thus the local epithet "economists". The problem here is that there is little neutral space for non-sectarian issues in Northern Ireland. Ethnic politicians in the past have had it, and today have it, in their interests to make any issue or activity either a Catholic or a Protestant one.

In this respect, ethnic politics dominates the political agenda in Northern Ireland. Issues which cannot be articulated within an ethnic discourse fail to become public issues. As in other capitalist societies, issues which might be thought of as class issues, such as unemployment, low wages, poor housing, factory closures, generally receive little media

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<sup>12</sup> Though that such issues exist in Northern Ireland is debatable!

coverage, only becoming public issues in particular circumstances. In other societies with a strong class politics, issues which might be thought somewhat removed from class, such as environmental issues, 'womens' issues, state repression, can potentially be articulated with a class discourse, making them class issues. In Northern Ireland, however, the virtual absence of a class politics - or any other politics - in the face of the dominance of ethnic politics, means that all issues which become public are necessarily ethnic issues.

So unemployment is an issue if it increases unemployment in Catholic West Belfast; lay-offs at the Belfast shipyard are a blow for Protestant workers; the building of new housing estates is evaluated in terms of its effect on the Protestant-Catholic balance of the local population; strikes are seen as being fomented by Republicans. If socialist organisations are to intervene in the political life of the population they necessarily have to be reactive and adopt 'class' positions on issues already on the ethnic political agenda and are thus arguably disadvantaged from the start. A couple of examples will illustrate.

In late 1973 a conference between the British and Irish governments and a number of Northern Ireland politicians, led to an agreement to establish what was termed a 'Council of

Ireland', made up from parliamentary representatives of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. To a large section of the Protestant population, such an arrangement was 'the South' - a foreign country - interfering in the affairs of Ulster. The Protestant leaders involved in the conference were considered appeasers - appeasing Irish Nationalism. The response of the Protestant working class was the Ulster Worker's Council general strike of May 1974. By cutting power supplies and controlling the movements of people through vigilante activity, the strike halted industrial and other activities. Northern Ireland came to a standstill for almost two weeks. The result was the collapse of the Northern Ireland administration.

This episode, in which ethnic politics visibly dominated people's lives and the political agenda, was an issue on which socialist organisations declared different positions - Protestant positions or Catholic positions. Thus People's Democracy (Unfree Citizen June 11, 1974) saw the strike as a reaction by "Protestant supremacists", by "fascists", to a threat to their privileges; with the outcome likely to be an independent Ulster run by "thugs and hoodlums" which would offer the Catholic minority "the choice of complete submission" or "genocide". "Socialists and all those who support the struggle of the Catholic minority", "anti-Unionists", were called on to defend themselves: "A united

front of all Republican and Socialist Political Organisations' is needed to protect and give leadership to the people of the ghettos and a United Front of some sort must be set up throughout the 32 Counties". The B.I.C.O. on the other hand maintained that the strikers were grossly misrepresented and insulted by the bourgeois media and politicians. Indeed the B.I.C.O. issued strike bulletins during the strike, considered by them to be an example of how effectively Protestant workers could mobilize as a class.

In 1976 Republican prisoners in Northern Ireland began a campaign to retain status as political prisoners - a status which the British government was trying to end. Initially the campaign was a 'blanket protest' whereby prisoners refused to wear prison-issue clothing and so wore only blankets. That became the 'dirty protest' when prisoners refused to wash or leave their cells or use toilet facilities and covered their cell walls with excreta. In 1980 the protest tactic changed and became a mass hunger strike. The first hunger strike ended in a confused deal between authorities and prisoners. In March of 1981 the leader of the Provisional I.R.A. prisoners began 'the hunger strike' which lasted almost eight weeks and saw 10 hunger strikers die in what was basically a battle of wills between the prisoners and the British government<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> See O'Malley (1990).

The Hunger Strike was an issue which socialists had to respond to. They were constrained, however, by the popular ethnic politics in which any support for the Hunger Strike was a Catholic position, and even conditional support was a Protestant position. Thus when People's Democracy claim that "the struggle of the hunger strikers is the struggle of the whole Northern minority" and that "the key to winning the ... struggle is to win over the working class and small farmer supporters of Fianna Fail and the S.D.L.P."<sup>14</sup> (Socialist Republic June 1981:1), they endorse a Catholic position on the issue. The position of Militant that the demands of the prisoners be met and applied to both Republican and Loyalist prisoners, being a form of support for the hunger strikers was identified as a Catholic position. The Workers Party on the other hand, by considering support for the hunger strike by socialists as 'ultra-leftist' and the likely outcome of the strike to be ethnic civil war (The Northern People July 31, 1981) were considered collaborationist by some socialist organisations<sup>15</sup>, and Protestant.

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<sup>14</sup> Fianna Fail: the major and more republican of the political parties in the south of Ireland. S.D.L.P.: the Social Democratic and Labour Party: the main Catholic nationalist party in Northern Ireland.

<sup>15</sup> See for example People's Democracy's Socialist Republic of June 1981.

## THE ETHNIC PHYSICAL TERRAIN

Just as ethnic politics dominate the discursive terrain in Northern Ireland, so also does it dominate the physical terrain in which political discourses are disseminated. Where socialist activities may be carried out is constrained by this dominance. Some organisations can operate in Catholic areas, some in Protestant areas, while others seek ethnically-neutral space. Thus People's Democracy for example, as mentioned, has its book-store and meetings in Catholic West Belfast. The political position which allows it to use this space, at the same time prevents it from operating in Protestant territory. Even though it may claim to appeal to 'the working class', it is only that fraction of the working class in Catholic West Belfast which will hear! Likewise the P.U.P., which, as mentioned, proclaims itself "the only Socialist Unionist Party" (Policy Document 1986:3) has its headquarters in a Protestant area of Belfast, distributes its propaganda materials in Protestant areas and has councillors elected in Protestant areas of Belfast, and is therefore restricted to operating only in Protestant areas.

Given the territorial dominance of ethnic politics and identities, socialist organisations which attempt to avoid being considered either Protestant or Catholic socialists, must base their headquarters and most of their activities in

neutral, often city-centre, areas. Even this concern to avoid being identified with one ethnic group is of course widely considered an admission of sympathy for the other, making neutrality a dangerous business! Because city centres are ethnically-neutral spaces, except on particular occasions<sup>16</sup> they are also places where people spend little time. Class discourses cannot easily become organic when they are disseminated so 'far' from people's daily lives.

In Northern Ireland, what can be said and done, and where it can be said and done, are limited by the dominance of ethnic identities and ethnic politics. There is very little space, either discursive or physical, in which a class politics that does more than merely reinforce ethnic divisions within the working class, can operate.

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<sup>16</sup> For example whenever ethnic organisations hold demonstrations or meetings in these spaces.

## CONCLUSION

This study has sought to address the relationship between class politics and ethnicity in Northern Ireland. It accepted what primordialist approaches to explaining the relationship between ethnicity and class are concerned to register - the ubiquity of ethnicity. Yet the study also sought to avoid the primordialist assumption that ethnicity is necessarily more fundamental in social relations than class identity, for such an approach can be criticized for its psychological - or in its sociobiological variant its biological - reductionism. The study accepted what instrumentalist approaches to explaining the relationship between ethnicity and class are concerned to register - that ethnicity is socially constructed - yet it also sought to avoid an instrumentalism which assumes ethnicity and class equally likely bases of sociality, for such an approach can be criticized both for a voluntarism which suggests ethnicity to be easily manipulated and for failing to acknowledge what is obvious about ethnicity - its ubiquity.

How then is it possible to reconcile the apparently contradictory: to both recognize the ubiquity of ethnicity yet

avoid primordialism? The study attempted this by recognizing ethnicity as being historically prior to class identity, and thereby a feature of the social landscape with which a socialist class politics must come to terms. Recognizing the privileged position of ethnicity in this way is not the same as claiming that ethnicity has the historical guarantees which socialists often claim for socialism, but certainly means recognizing that it has a historical advantage which class politics does not.

If ethnicity is not a given in social relations, then an answer to the question posed in the introduction to this dissertation - 'why ethnicity and why not class?' - cannot be a general answer which will hold for all situations. It is rather a question which must be asked of particular situations - of Northern Ireland or of Sri Lanka for example. Neither, if we are to avoid both reductionism, can an answer to the question 'why ethnicity and why not class?' be given in advance of an examination of the particular ways in which class politics, in attempting to construct a class identity in a particular situation, tries to come to terms with ethnicity, and to what effect.

The value of this way of approaching the relationship between class and ethnicity is heuristic, for in not assuming primordial guarantees for ethnicity or indeed for class, it

directs attention to the practical processes involved in constructing ethnic and class identities and in making them popular - the processes of construction and dissemination of ethnic and class discourses.

In this regard the thesis was concerned to show the theoretical armoury which socialists have at their disposal in trying to advance their politics in the face of ethnicity and it also showed the magnitude of what they have to come to terms with in the particular situation of Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland, ethnicity is expressed through the political ideologies and movements of Irish Nationalism and Ulster Unionism. These two opposing politics have developed over a long period of time, claim a heritage which stretches centuries into the past and have developed networks of institutions and a plethora of mechanisms to ensure their survival into the future. In the process they have both depended on and reinforced religious, cultural and ethnic divisions within the population, so that in contemporary Northern Ireland it is virtually impossible to be anything other than Nationalist or Unionist, Republican or Loyalist, Irish or British, Catholic or Protestant - it is impossible not to belong to one community or the other.

In view of this it is perhaps not surprising to discover that an examination of socialist political practice in

Northern Ireland showed that socialists have failed to have much impact in their attempts to construct a class identity which might cut across ethnic divisions. The thesis has shown some of the mechanisms of this failure. It has shown how, for a number of socialist organisations in Northern Ireland, ethnicity is a resource which is used to mobilize either the Protestant or the Catholic fraction of the working class in the pursuit of class politics. The thesis also showed that some of these organisations have indeed achieved a degree of success in terms of their influence on Northern Ireland politics. Since such success has been within one ethnic community however, it has served to reinforce ethnic divisions, and certainly has not cut across them. The study also showed how attempts by other socialist organisations to cut across ethnic divisions, by appealing to and trying to mobilize the working class, have simply been ineffective against the sheer dominance of ethnicity. As mentioned earlier, socialist politics has either been effectively absorbed into the ethnic politics of Northern Ireland - or rendered insignificant by it.

Northern Ireland is clearly a divided society, and as has been noted elsewhere (Giliomee 1990:315):

"... the weight of evidence about divided societies argues against expectations of prompt or neat solutions..."

This is particularly so in Northern Ireland. Solutions which are palatable to one community are not palatable to the other. This is so for a United Ireland<sup>1</sup>, or for complete integration with Britain<sup>2</sup>. An independent Northern Ireland<sup>3</sup> assumes a willingness on the part of both Unionists and Nationalists to compromise. However, as Whyte (1990:223) suggests:

"If there were enough trust between the communities in Northern Ireland, independence would probably be viable - but then it would probably not be necessary"

It is debatable as to whether conditions favourable to consociationalism (Lijphart 1975) are present in Northern Ireland. Certainly attempts by successive British administrations at establishing power-sharing in Northern Ireland have been singularly ill-fated. Given this, it is easy, as Wright (1987:274) suggests: "to come to the conclusion that consociationalism only works when it isn't very necessary". The practical difficulties of repartition<sup>4</sup>, given the patchwork dispersal of different communities across Northern Ireland, suggest it to be a last resort solution.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Coughlan (1990:48-68).

<sup>2</sup> See for example Roberts (1990:100-136).

<sup>3</sup> See for example Graham and McGarry (1990:162-181).

<sup>4</sup> See for example Kennedy (1990:137-161).

It could be argued in any case, that solutions which are predicated on recognizing and accepting Nationalist and Unionist identities are unlikely thereby to reduce their salience, and may indeed foster it. Arguably it is only when identities other than ethnic ones become salient that a workable solution to the ethnic conflict will be found.

Perhaps in this regard the attempt to construct a class identity which cuts across Protestant and Catholic identities is at least as valid an endeavour as any other, and ought to be recognized as such. For while it is quite clear that socialist politics in Northern Ireland have failed to have any impact on the situation, this is not the same as saying that socialists have failed. Rather, despite being theoretically well equipped and despite having the requisite political will, the situation has defeated them.

Whyte (1990:246), after an examination of research on Northern Ireland, asks the question: 'Why has research on the Northern Ireland problem not been more effective?', suggesting that "if research could solve a problem, the Northern Ireland conflict should by now have been settled several times over". He goes on to suggest variously that: the situation is too complex to solve; there is still not sufficient evidence to suggest a solution; that undertaking research in Northern Ireland is difficult, that people do not read research in any

case and many of those who do, may not be well disposed to its findings.

However, even if the situation was less complex, more comprehensively and more easily researched, and that research widely read and well received, that would not be a guarantee for a solution. The problem in Northern Ireland is not that "there is no solution" (Rose 1976:139) for there are clearly many options (Lijphart 1990:vi)<sup>5</sup>. The problem is mobilizing the political will and the political resources to implement a solution. The example of Northern Ireland socialists suggests that there are indeed people in Northern Ireland with the political will to solve the conflict. The resources, however, are with those who either perpetuate the conflict - Unionist and Nationalist politicians - or who merely contain it to prevent contagion - the British and Irish governments - and until there are significant changes in British and Irish politics there are unlikely to be significant changes in Northern Ireland politics. Whether or not the development of a new Europe has an effect in this regard remains to be seen. In the meantime, unable to make a bad situation better, people in Northern Ireland continue to make the best of a bad situation.

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<sup>5</sup> On these, see for example: Rea (1982); Whyte (1990); McGarry and O'Leary (1990).

## APPENDIX

The following are the socialist organisations whose activities are examined, and the sources of information about them:

### **British and Irish Communist Organisation**

This organisation has its origins in the Irish Communist Group formed in 1964 among emigre Irish in Britain. In 1965 the organisation split into Trotskyist and Stalinist factions, the Stalinist faction becoming the Irish Communist Organisation which established a Belfast branch of the organisation in the late 1960's. In 1971 the organisation changed its name to become the British and Irish Communist Organisation. Since then it has also operated through the Workers Association, set up in 1974; the Campaign for Labour Representation, set up in 1977; the Campaign for Equal Citizenship, set up in 1986; and since 1987, the Ingram Society.

Information on the organisation, its history, politics and activities, was gained through a search of the Linenhall Library holdings of papers published by the organisation - The Irish Communist, The Communist, Workers Weekly and Campaign for Labour Representation Bulletins. Contemporary British and Irish Communist Organisation pamphlets were purchased in various bookstores in Belfast.

Informal discussions with four current and former members of the organisation also yielded pertinent information, as did a 90 minute formal interview with a member of both the Campaign for Labour Representation and the Campaign for Equal Citizenship, at his home on September 26, 1987.

### **Communist Party of Ireland**

The original Communist Party of Ireland was established in 1921, but existed for only a brief period. It was reconstituted in 1933. In 1941 the party divided into separate northern and southern organisations and the Communist Party of Northern Ireland was set up. In 1970 the Communist Party of Northern Ireland and what was then the Irish Workers Party in the south of Ireland merged to reconstitute the Communist Party of Ireland again.

A search of the Linenhall Library holdings of Party publications - Unity, Irish Socialist and Forward - provided information on the party and its activities, as did the party's own published Outline History (Communist Party of Ireland 1973).

Informal discussions with Communist Party of Ireland members and a 2 hour formal interview with the General Secretary of the Party on September 24, 1987, in the Belfast premises of the party were other sources of information.

### **Irish Republican Socialist Party**

This party was established in 1974 as a breakaway from Official Sinn Fein. It established a military wing - the I.N.L.A. (Irish National Liberation Army) - at the same time, a faction of which has since 1986 operated as the Irish People's Liberation Organisation.

A library search of the Linenhall holdings of the party publications Starry Plough and Saoirse, and informal discussions with a former member of the organisation provided data on this organisation.

## Labour Party '87

This party was founded in March 1987 through the merging of the remnants of 3 formerly distinct organisations - the Northern Ireland Labour Party, formed in 1924; the United Labour Party, launched in 1978; and the Newtownabbey Labour Party, formerly a branch of the Northern Ireland Labour Party.

A 90 minute formal interview with the party's vice-chairman at his home on December 12, 1987, provided information on the organisation. Since the informant was a member of the Northern Ireland Labour Party from 1958 until 1970, and its chairman in 1967-8, useful data on that party was obtained also. The informant was also: a Belfast City Councillor from 1956 until 1958 and from 1973 until 1985; an M.P. in Northern Ireland from 1969 until 1972; a member of the Northern Ireland Assembly 1973-4; Head of the Department of Health and Social Services of the Northern Ireland Executive in 1974; and a member of the Northern Ireland Convention 1975-6<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> While the above information clearly identifies the informant, permission to make such references was freely given and indeed with most informants, such exposure was insignificant when compared to experiences of intimidation, beatings, being shot at, having ones' house petrol-bombed and stoned!

## **Militant**

This organisation originated in Derry in 1969-70. From 1974 to 1979 it operated also through the Labour and Trade Union Co-ordinating Group which in 1979 became the Labour and Trade Union Group.

A search of the organisations own holdings<sup>2</sup> of its paper the Militant Irish Monthly and various published pamphlets provided information on the organisation, as did informal discussions with various members and former members. Attending a number of public meetings organised by Militant, and observing a number of activities - paper sales, picket line interventions - was another useful source of information. A one hour formal interview with the organisation's treasurer and National Committee member was also arranged.

## **People's Democracy**

This organisation was established at Queen's University Belfast in 1968 around the Young Socialist Alliance organisation formed also in that year.

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<sup>2</sup> This is one of the few organisations on which the Linenhall Library has little material.

A search of Linenhall Library holdings of People's Democracy materials, especially its papers Unfree Citizen, Socialist Republic and An Reabhloid, provided data on the organisation. Informal discussions with former members yielded more information, as did a formal 2 hour interview with the secretary of the organisation in his home on August 26, 1987.

### **Progressive Unionist Party**

This party was established in 1978. It is associated with the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force.

A search of Linenhall Library's collection of the Ulster Volunteer Force publication Combat, as well as pamphlets and various party leaflets, were a source of data on the party. A formal 1 hour interview at the party headquarters with one of its leading figures - who was imprisoned from 1966 to 1984 - on November 18, 1987 also provided useful information.

### **Sinn Fein**

Sinn Fein was founded in 1907 as an Irish separatist party. From the 1930's it was essentially the political wing of the I.R.A. (Irish Republican Army). A split in the

organisation in 1970 led to the establishment of Provisional Sinn Fein, as the political wing of the Provisional I.R.A..

A search of the publications An Phoblacht/Republican News and Republican News as held in the Linenhall Library, informal discussions with former and current members, and a formal 2 hour and 30 minute interview with the vice-chair of Sinn Fein in Belfast - who is also a City Councillor - at his home on December 16, 1987; all were sources of information on the organisation.

### **Socialist Workers Movement**

This organisation was founded in 1971. Information on it was gleaned from its paper Socialist Worker, as held in the Linenhall Library. Informal discussions with former members, attendance at a public meeting arranged by the organisation, and a 2 hour formal interview with a Central Committee member at her home on December 22, 1987, were the other main sources of data on the organisation.

## **Workers Party**

The Workers Party developed from the 1970 split in Sinn Fein to become Official Sinn Fein. In Northern Ireland it had been organised as and called Republican Clubs. In 1977 its name changed to Republican Clubs the Workers Party. In 1982 it became the Workers Party. Official Sinn Fein and Republican Clubs constituted the political wing of the Official I.R.A. which may still exist.

Linenhall Library holdings of various party leaflets and the publication The Northern People, as well as (for earlier history) Republican News, provided information on the party, as did observation of paper sale activities, informal discussions with former members, and a formal 90 minute interview with a Central Executive Committee member at the party headquarters on December 17, 1987.

## **World Socialist Party (Ireland)**

The roots of this party can be traced to 1948 since when it has dissolved and been reconstituted a number of times. Resuscitated most recently in 1983.

Linenhall Library holdings of party leaflets and pamphlets, and its paper Socialist Standard provided data on the organisation, as did observation of some party activities - postering, paper sales - and a 3 hour formal interview with the party's 'leading member'<sup>3</sup> at its headquarters on August 4, 1987.

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<sup>3</sup> This is a term used by the 'leading member' since the organisation had no 'official' leaders!

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