

Whither Northern Ireland?

by

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Whither Northern Ireland?

What is Northern Ireland? Where did it come from? Where is it going?

If it was a state it need not be going anywhere. It might just exist, and get on with the business of governing itself. But it is not a state; it never had been a state; and it is extremely improbable that it ever could be a state. In a world composed of states there is therefore an inevitable question mark over it.

It is a piece of the British state. But it is set apart from the British state in all that makes the British state functional. It is an alien region within the British state.

There is great social variety in Britain. The Scots and the Welsh are different from each other and from the English. And, within England, the people of Yorkshire and the people of Surrey are unmistakably different from each other. But these differences do not prevent them from conducting a common state. They know each other: they are familiar with each other in all that goes into the running of the state, and those who concern themselves with politics participate to some degree in the running of the state.

There are also people in Scotland and Wales who do not want to participate in running the British state. They want national states in Scotland and Wales. But the Scottish and Welsh National Parties are not weird, unintelligible bodies. What they want is easily understood, whether one agrees or disagrees with it.

But how many are there, even amongst those who take an active interest in politics, who could explain what the Democratic Unionist Party, the Ulster Unionist Party, the Traditional Unionist Voice, the Popular Unionist Party, the Ulster Defence Association etc., want? They are incomprehensible to the forms of political understanding in Britain that have evolved in the course of conducting a democratic state. And so they appear alien.

They all make a great display of being British. But these British in Ireland, these Unionists, are the thing in Ireland which the British can least understand.

If what these Unionists want is to be British, why don't they just get on with it, like the other British do? The short answer is that Northern Ireland, however one cares to define it, prevents them from just getting on with the business of being British.

They wave Union Jacks, they love the Queen, and British militarism is one of their great delights. The British Empire was their land of heart's desire. But, in all that has gone into making Britain a functional democratic state, they are not British at all.

Northern Ireland is a piece of the British state—and it is at the same time a place apart.

Jack Straw recently explained that the British are a tolerant society, and if they sometimes seem a bit xenophobic that is only a transient response to the latest wave of immigrants—the latest *Other*. The first Other was the wave of Irish migrants in the early 19th century who fuelled the Industrial Revolution. Many others have followed. There is a degree of resentment of each new Other as it arrives, but in a comparatively short time it ceases to be Other and becomes part of the *Us* of Britain.

What happened with relation to the Unionists in the North of Ireland in the course of the past century is the reverse of this process. They were once very much part of the *Us* of Britain, and they have been systematically reduced to the status of an internal Other—an essential, structural Other anomalous but ingrained.

"Ulster" is not British in any way that counts for the conduct of democratic politics.

Northern Ireland is not a democracy, and it is inherently incapable of being a democracy. It may be made peaceful for short periods, but it cannot be a democracy. It is an inherently unstable Constitutional structure. It was set up by the British *Government of Ireland Act* of 1920 as a perverse method for Partitioning Ireland.

It was held by Britain when the rest of Ireland had to be let go, and the major structures of state continued to be British, but Britain decided not to govern it as part of itself. It farmed out the governing of the area to the Protestants of the area, who made up two thirds of the population. The main job of the Protestants in the farmed-out government was to police the Catholic third of the population, with which they were at war at the moment when they became the Government of Northern Ireland.

The Catholic community was pacified by brutalisation at the outset of Northern Ireland. In defeat it became sullen and obstructionist. There was little else for it to be.

It was cut off from the Irish state, having played an active part in the struggle that brought it about. And it was denied access to the democratic institutions by which the British state was governed. Then, for close on half a century, it was held in resentful subordination to the local Protestant regime acting by authority of Westminster, under Crown sovereignty. A wild Protestant attack of Catholic areas in 1969 brought an end to resentful subordination. War followed.

Forty years ago I did my best to dissuade the Catholic community from resorting to warfare. I failed, but I do not regret having tried. Nor will I now pretend that there was a democratic Constitutional alternative to warfare for a people shocked out of two generations of subordination by a pogrom.

The outcome of the War was the 1998 Agreement which set up a new kind of Northern Ireland system which implicitly acknowledged that Northern Ireland, however it may be defined, is neither an actual, nor a possible democracy. The new system is a kind of benevolent apartheid under which the representatives of each community conduct a piece of the devolved government as of right. Ministers are appointed by parties under a complicated mathematical procedure related to electoral strength, and not be a Prime Minister. The Ministers do not constitute a Cabinet which exercises collective authority. There is a Parliamentary Assembly, but it does not have authority over the Ministers or over the semblance of a Cabinet. And, for the purpose of voting on matters of any consequence, the Parliamentary Assembly does not vote as a unit. It breaks into two units corresponding to the two communal bodies, and measures have to be adopted by each of them.

The majority rule principle of democracy is comprehensively negated in the new Northern Ireland arrangement. And it is right that it should be.

During the 12 years since the arrangement was set up, it has never functioned autonomously. It has functioned at all only because of the active interference of the Government of the state which holds the Six Counties, and some co-operative interference by the Dublin Government.

The normal and proper object of a political party is to govern a state. Amidst the welter of parties in Northern Ireland there is only one party with that object—Sinn Fein. The state which Sinn Fein aspires to govern is the Irish Republic. Its purpose in Northern Ireland is to gain for the Nationalist minority a status of parity with the Unionist majority in the North, preparatory to bringing the North into an all-Ireland state.

It contests elections to both the British Parliament and the Irish. It does not take seats in the British Parliament because it does not aspire to govern the British state. It does take its seats in the Dail.

The SDLP, though it has an Anti-Partition programme, is a purely Northern Ireland party. It does not participate in the political life of the state into which it wants to transfer the Six Counties. Its Anti-Partitionism has become very much a dead letter. And, while it sits in the Westminster Parliament, it remains forbidden by its Constitution from participating in the Government of the UK.

All the Unionist Parties are local Northern Ireland parties (with the possible partial exception of the UUP which, in serious decline, has recently attached itself to the Tories).

The governing of the British state is never the issue in Northern Ireland elections, for all the Union Jackery and love of the Queen.

So how did this weird condition of things come about?

The Horror Story

Ireland was governed as a unit of the British state for hundreds of years because it suited English interests that it should be so.

The Irish were not consulted in the matter. Their consent was not sought. Only their submission was sought.

When they submitted, their submission was depicted in British state propaganda as consent, or even as active participation. At moments when they were not submissive they were depicted as troublemakers, as rebels against lawful authority, as people who could never be satisfied because they did not know what they wanted, as anarchists who could not tolerate government, as people bred to a tradition of violence in the cause of some wild, unrealisable vision. But all the time Ireland was nevertheless treated as a historical unity.

During all those centuries there were major social divisions within Ireland, and the different social entities wanted different things. But that did not matter, so long as it was the will of the English state to override the will of the majority in Ireland.

Then in 1912 a Liberal Government brought in a Bill to establish a measure of devolved government in Ireland within the Empire and within the United Kingdom. That devolved government was to have very limited powers, under British sovereignty and under the supervision of Westminster/Whitehall.

A minority in Ireland declared against this proposed arrangement, and it organised politically and militarily to prevent it from ever being implemented. And one of the major British parties, the Unionist Party, declared its support for resistance to this arrangement even to the point of Civil War. (The British Unionist Party was a merger of the Tory Party and the social reform wing of the Liberal Party led by Joseph Chamberlain. It lasted from the 1890s to the 1920s, since when it has been called the Tory Party.)

The will of a minority in Ireland became sacred to one of the major bodies of public opinion in England in 1912, as the will of the majority in Ireland has never been.

The conflict, in Britain, over the 1912 proposal for Irish devolution (called Home Rule), grew in intensity between 1912 and 1914 as the Bill was going through Parliament. In the Summer of 1914, as the Bill approached its final stage, the conflict verged on civil war—civil war in Britain between the Liberal Government and the Unionist Opposition which openly supported military resistance to the measure.

The Liberal Government did not apply the law against the Unionist Army that was being illegally drilled and armed. It did not dare to do so because the Unionist Party strengthened its position with British public opinion with its open defiance of Parliament in support of a minority in Ireland.

What the Liberal Government did was float the idea of dividing Ireland politically so that the minority would not come under the authority of the majority, even in local government matters.

What it suggested was temporary Partition—for six years. This was rejected out of hand by the Unionists. So the crisis continued.

A European War blew up in late July/early August 1914. The Government had no Treaty arrangements with any of the belligerents, and was under no obligation to take part. It denied repeatedly in Parliament that it had any secret undertakings. But it seized the opportunity presented by the European War to join in the strong alliance against Germany. This enabled it to sideline the crisis that was threatening civil war at home.

It soon became evident that the Liberal Government while professing love of peace to keep its back benches happy, had not only had a secret understanding with France to join it in war against Germany, but had in fact made detailed military arrangements for doing so.

And central to the making of these secret military arrangements with France was Sir Henry Wilson, a staunch supporter of the Unionist cause.

In March 1914, at a moment when it seemed possible that the Government would implement the Home Rule Bill once it was enacted, the officer corps, based at the Curragh near Dublin, indicated that there would be resignations if the Government pursued this course. In the light of the secret military arrangements made with France, it could be seen why this could not be allowed to happen.

The Minister for War (things were called by their right names in those days), Sir John Seeley, sacrificed his political career to ward off the Curragh Mutiny and save the Government. He made a deal with the mutinous officers which he was not authorised to make, and which was against stated Government policy. And he resigned. That warded off the military crisis for the time being.

A replacement for Seeley in the War Office could not be found immediately because very few people in the Liberal Party—and even in the Government—knew about the secret military arrangements with France. So the Prime Minister doubled up as War Minister for a while—until a reliable replacement for Seeley could be found.

But the opportunity for war with Germany came sooner than expected. And it had to be seized, even though the Government was in disarray. If that opportunity was missed, it might not recur. And the seizing of it averted the civil war danger at home.

The crisis over Home Rule was peaking just as the European War began. There were shootings by the Army in Dublin on 26th July 1914 which would have set off a major crisis for the Government, if the European War had not begun just then.

Prime Minister Asquith was not a superman, though he sometimes seems to have thought he was. He could not give his whole attention to the domestic crisis, and conduct the War Office adequately with relation to the European situation, at the same time. And therefore it seems that Britain slipped into a kind of engagement in the European War that was far greater than it had prepared for.

Britain's established mode of warfare was all-out naval war—having a Navy bigger than any other two Navies combined—and engagement on land with a small Army. The small land Army—the Expeditionary Force—was all ready and waiting to go in August 1914. It was despatched by Lord Chancellor Haldane, who had made the arrangements when he was War Minister. But things then got out of hand. General Kitchener, hero of the colonial wars, was put in the vacant War Office by popular demand. And Kitchener wanted to fight a big land war.

It was Britain's boast that, unlike Continental states, it never introduced compulsory military service. Its wars were fought with volunteer armies—though of course the Royal Navy, the Senior Service, was staffed by the Press Gang. But Kitchener's War had an insatiable appetite for cannonfodder. And in 1915 there was virtual conscription. Actual conscription in Britain followed in 1916.

The Curragh mutineers were in their element. The Unionist Party flourished. The Liberal Party went into decline under the stress of the War it had launched—the World War, which the European War became after Britain joined it.

The Unionists forced their way into the Government, in Coalition with the Liberals, in 1915. In 1916 they became the dominant force in the Government, with Lloyd George as their Prime Minister and Asquith's Liberals in futile Opposition.

Irish Home Rule was off the agenda—though there was a dead letter Home Rule Act on the Statute Book. Militarism had been brought into Irish politics by the raising of the Unionist Army. And the Irish populace—quiescent for two centuries, with only an occasional local protest in arms—was blooded. The Irish Home Rule leaders supported the British war on Germany, and then on Turkey, and recruited for it. Warfare was in the political atmosphere in Ireland as it had not been since the late 17th century. The whole society was infected with it.

There was a small Irish protest in arms against Britain in 1916, quickly suppressed. There should have been an election in 1915, but elections were suspended, and an unelected Government remained in office until December 1918.

A new Irish Party was formed after the 1916 Rising. It took the name Sinn Fein. It absorbed the old party of that name. Its programme was the establishment of independent government in Ireland. It won three quarters of the Irish seats, on that programme, in the election of December 1918. The British Government and

Parliament—which had just won a Great War using the slogans of "*democracy*" and "*the rights of small nations*"—took no notice whatever of the Irish vote. It continued governing Ireland.

The MPs elected on a programme of establishing Irish independence met in Assembly in Dublin in January 1919. That Assembly declared itself the Irish Parliament. It declared Irish independence, and elected a Government. That Government then set about establishing functioning departments of government around the country.

In 1920 there were County Council elections. In a majority of Counties candidates supportive of Irish independence gained control, and the Councils switched allegiance from the British Government to the Irish.

In 1919 the British Government declared the elected Irish Government illegal. And, when it was deprived of the means of Governing Ireland through Constitutional forms, it set about governing on the basis of military force.

There was a profound belief in Britain that the Irish could not sustain a position hostile to Britain if the British took no notice of what the Irish said they wanted and just carried on governing them with a firm hand.

The Irish vote for independence counted for nothing in the British view. If the Irish who voted in the majority for independence had allowed the British Parliament and Government to carry on governing Ireland, the Irish election result of 1918 would soon be seen as one of those bizarre and inexplicable happenings that were best forgotten by sensible people. That attitude had worked very well in the past. Under a firm English hand, most people usually did fall into line and become sensible.

But that did not happen this time. The Irish took their vote seriously. They defended the Government they had elected from the British attempt to sweep it aside by force. When Britain tried to continue governing Ireland on the basis of mere force, the Irish applied force in support of the Government they had elected. And so there was a war.

Many of those who fought the British Army in Ireland in 1919-21, in defence of the elected Irish Government, had fought in the British Army against Germany and Turkey in 1914-18.

In 1914, for the purpose of recruiting in Ireland, Britain said it was making war

on Germany for no gain to itself and its Empire. It said its purpose in making war was to establish an ideal as part of the real structure of world affairs. That ideal was summed up as *"democracy and the rights of small nations"*. The Irish said they were democratic and they claimed their rights as a small nation—so let them show that their words were not idle by joining the other peoples of the Empire in arms in a War to give this ideal real force in the new World Order that was being established.

It is astonishing that this English appeal did not fall on deaf ears among the nationalist majority in Ireland. But it didn't. In defiance of all their experience of English ways, the Irish believed. And they enlisted in large numbers.

They were no longer blusterers. An ideal was sold to them, and they bought it, and they killed and were killed for it. And then they were not of a mind to write it off as a swindle that had been practised on them. They held the swindler to account.

The small tradesmen, peasants and labourers who made up the Army that defended the elected Irish Government in 1919-21 did not break up under the influence of British military power—conducted in terrorist mode for the most part—or of British propaganda. So, after a couple of years of a war which it was not winning, the British Government decided to try negotiation. Its Irish War was doing it no good in the world. Although it had won the World War, and expanded its Empire, it had to borrow heavily from the USA in order to buy from America the weapons with which to fight the Germans when Germany did not collapse as expected in 1915. In 1919 it found itself heavily in debt to America, where the Irish exerted strong political influence. And those American Irish—the product of the mass migration set off by British conduct of economic affairs in Ireland culminating in the The Famine—were strongly anti-British.

So the British Government, in the Summer of 1921, decided that it would negotiate with the Irish leaders who it had been describing for two years as a *"murder gang"*.

But it still did not negotiate with them as the elected leaders of the Irish. Although the 1918 Election result had been reinforced by the local elections of 1920, and an Irish election in early Summer 1921, the British Government did not recognise Sinn Fein as having any Constitutional standing. It did not negotiate with it as one Government with another. It only negotiated with them as rebels—to see if it could do a deal with them under which it would confer some authority on them in return for their submission to the sovereign authority of the Crown.

Before engaging in these negotiations with Sinn Fein rebels, to see what it could make of them, the British Parliament had Partitioned Ireland by means of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, which established Northern Ireland as a separate entity in May 1921, with elections being held in the same month and a Government being set up in June.

The British intention was that there should also be a Parliament and Government of Southern Ireland, on a par with the Northern Government. The Irish election of May 1921 was held under that Act, but the Nationalist electorate voted against it *en masse*. Not a single supporter of the Government of Ireland Act was elected in the democratic constituencies in the 26 Counties—but a couple were elected by the elite University constituency.

Sinn Fein held all the 26 County seats in the Autumn of 1921 when its negotiations with the British Government began, but it refused to negotiate as the representative of Southern Ireland under the British Act, and Britain would not recognise it as a democratically elected independent Government.

In early December 1921 the Sinn Fein delegates negotiating with the British Government in London were suddenly presented with a British ultimatum. They were given a document and told to sign it instantly, without consulting their Government in Dublin, or else Britain would launch an "*immediate and terrible war*" in Ireland.

The understanding was that Britain was preparing to apply in Ireland the methods by which it had won the war against the Boer Republics twenty years earlier—when the country was criss-crossed with chains of heavily garrisoned blockhouses, and the population was swept up into Concentration Camps.

The delegates complied with the ultimatum. They signed what came to be called the 'Treaty' without consulting their Government.

The 'Treaty' was not a Treaty. Treaties are made between sovereign authorities and Britain did not recognise the Dail as having any legitimate standing. It only recognised the Sinn Fein delegates as leaders of a rebel band with whom it might do a deal. And, by signing the 'Treaty' without consulting their Government—and doing so against the express instructions of their Government—those delegates reduced themselves to the status of mere rebels.

In Dublin a couple of weeks later the Dail expressed agreement with the 'Treaty' by a small majority—and thus accepted the status of a bunch of rebels deriving legitimate authority from Britain.

The minority who would not accept rebel status withdrew. The majority then met as the Parliament of Southern Ireland under the British Government of Ireland Act. They formed a Provisional Government on British authority. And they set about making a new Army, armed by Britain, to do battle with the Republican Army that had contested the issue with Britain for two years.

'Civil War' followed. The leaders on both sides did their best to avert it, but Britain insisted on it. The main 'Treatyite' leader, Michael Collins, tried to fudge things so that both sides could find ways of going along together, but he was brought to heel by a series of sharp ultimatums from Whitehall. On June 29th 1922 he fired the first shots in the War, with British artillery, after Whitehall threatened that the British Army proper would begin operations if the subordinate 'Treaty' Army did not.

It was the strangest Civil War ever. Both sides were in full agreement about what they wanted. They wanted the same thing—an independent Irish state. But they fought each other because one side could not face the prospect of a renewed British assault if it refused to make war on the party which refused to kow-tow to Britain.

In Westminster Churchill frankly recognised the Treatyites as a British proxy. And he said it was better that the Irish should be fighting each other than that Britain should intervene directly and unite them against it.

The Treatyites won the 'Civil War', but within ten years the defeated Anti-Treatyites came to power electorally, and that party has been in government for most of the time since 1932. And the party formed to implement the Treaty then reverted to Republicanism.

Britain gained substantially from the 'Civil War' that it brought about in 1922-23. It broke up the stubborn and competent Irish body politic that had confronted it in 1919-21. When the Republicans regained power in 1932, it was in a State that had been badly damaged. The body politic has not yet recovered from what Britain did to it in 1922. But, within its limits, it has been a functional democracy.

How The North Was Handled

When Britain decided, in 1921, that it would have to withdraw from the greater part of Ireland, it inflicted the greatest possible damage on that part in the course of leaving it. Its object was to weaken the State which it would have to deal with in that part of the country, make it as dependent as possible on Britain, and render it vulnerable to British influence.

That might be described as a standard practice of Imperial statesmanship. There is nothing puzzling about it. And it was discussed so openly in the British Parliament at the time that it cannot even be described as devious.

Where deviousness—the perfidiousness of Albion—comes in is in its handling of the part of the country which it retained within the UK.

It would be fair to say that the damage it decided to do to the North in the course of retaining it was even greater than the damage it did to the South in letting go of it.

It did not merely divide Ireland, let one part of it go, and let the other part find its place within the political life of the British state in accordance with the wishes of the majority in the Six Counties. What it did was set up a separate political system in the Six Counties, Northern Ireland, and cut it out of the political life of the state.

The thing called Northern Ireland was imposed by Britain on two warring communities. Neither of those communities asked for it. Both were obliged to live within it, with one of the communities being the policeman of the other. The notion that the Westminster Government, made up of the most experienced body of politicians there has ever been in a British Cabinet, thought they were providing for good government of the Six Counties, when they set up the Northern Ireland system, is laughable.

The Northern Ireland system is not a state. In recent decades it has been described as a state by a range of academic authorities: Professor Dermot Keogh of Cork University, Professor David Fitzpatrick of Trinity College Dublin, and Professor the Lord Bew of Queen's University Belfast. But it is not a state.

Some leaders of the Ulster Unionist Party conceived the illusion forty years ago that Northern Ireland had become a kind of state. They began to describe it as a Dominion. Canada and Australia were Dominions. In 1972 the Whitehall Government struck down the Northern Ireland system with the stroke of a pen. It would not have dared to attempt such a thing in Canada or Australia.

In both form and substance, Northern Ireland is a kind of local government subordinate to Westminster authority. The major institutions of state in it are an integral part of the British state. It is only the political life of the Six Counties that separates them from the state. The major institutions of the state carry on functioning regardless of what is happening in the separated political life of the region.

When devolved government was established in Scotland, it was in response to a demand for it in Scotland. The power exercised by the Scottish Government is greater than the power of any Northern Ireland Government. And a change of government is possible in Scotland in the normal way, while that was not imaginable in the Northern Ireland system. But one never hears of the Scottish State.

When Scottish devolution was set up, the political parties which governed the United Kingdom did not withdraw from Scotland and oblige it to produce a politics of its own. On the contrary, the Labour, Liberal and Tory Parties redoubled their efforts in Scotland in order to keep British politics alive there. But, when Northern Ireland was set up, the British parties ceased to operate there, leaving the Protestant two thirds and the Catholic third confronting each other in a system neither of them wanted.

The Protestants and Catholics in the North were at war with each other when the system that required the former to govern the latter was imposed by Westminster. But they were not then at war with each other as isolated bodies. The Catholics were part of the Irish nationalist movement which had won a General Election on a programme of Irish independence, while the Protestants formed part of the British Unionist Party of the time (a Tory/Liberal merger) whose purpose was defeat of the Irish independence movement, and even to ward off all-Ireland Home Rule—a form of devolution.

In the midst of this war the country was Partitioned and Northern Ireland was set up. The Nationalists in the North were suddenly cut up from the national movement in which they had been active and were held within the UK, but at the same time they were cut off from British political life, in which it is probable that they would have participated. And the Ulster Unionists were set up in a devolved government in which their main business was to police the Nationalists, and their position as an organic part of the British Unionist (Tory/Liberal) Party was ended, leaving them to their own devices.

But the Partition Act, the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, did not itself enact the division of the country. An Act which simply divided the country, let part of it go, and let the other part get on with life within the UK, would not have had the consequences that the 1920 Act had.

The country was Partitioned by the device of setting up a 6 County devolved Government, which might join with the rest of Ireland or separate from it as it saw fit. And, after a new deal was made with the South by the 'Treaty', the situation was that the North would be within an all-Ireland system unless it seceded from

it. Of course it did secede, as those who made this provision knew perfectly well that it would.

The country might have been divided by a clear Westminster decision, which would stand until a substantial challenge to it arose within the North. There would then have been something like a *status quo* in the North, and within that *status quo* a semblance of a democratic system might have arisen.

Instead of doing that, Westminster took on its Pontius Pilate mode. It did not itself make a functional division. It left it to 'the Irish' themselves to decide what to do, but enabled the Ulster Unionists to decide that there would be Partition. But the arrangement was that the Ulster Unionists were under obligation to re-enact Partition at every election, lest it should lapse.

Disagreement over Partition was all that any election could be about. And Catholics could never choose Partition, because the choice of Partition did not mean a choice of the political life of the British state. There were times when Catholics pressed for admission to British politics. But Britain always refused Northern Irish admission to its political life.

Partition did not mean British politics. It meant the Orange Order.

The 'British Connection'

The Ulster Protestants were allowed to have their 'British connection'. But the mode in which the British connection was made available to them had the effect of making them less British with every year that passed. And the less British they became, the more frantically anti-Irish they became.

When I got involved in Six County politics about forty years ago, I tried to show the Ulster Protestants what was happening to them under the system they had never asked for but which Britain had got them to operate. And I tried to get them to demand involvement in the political life of the British state. There was then a readiness on the part of a substantial part of the Catholic community to support a campaign to open up British political life to the Six Counties. But all British administrations, Labour and Tory, were completely opposed to the project. I kept up the attempt for twenty years. In the end British influence on the Unionists prevailed and they decisively rejected the project of entering British politics.

At the start I wondered why Britain should be so insistent that politics in Northern Ireland should be confined to the communal conflict of Protestant and Catholic. Nobody I discussed it with—and I discussed it people who were later

in government—ever argued that it was a good system, or that normal government was ever likely to arise from it. But in practice they all opted for the maintenance of this system of which they could make no principled defence. I concluded from this that operating behind the scenes in Whitehall there was an understanding that the Northern Ireland system was good for something, even though it was bad for the people of the Six Counties, and that this understanding was conveyed in one way and other another to all who hoped to rise in the Westminster hierarchy.

What the bad system of government of the Six Counties is good for is the influence that can be exerted on the political life of the Irish state through it.

In a remarkable feat of propaganda, Britain has during the past generation persuaded 'respectable' people in the Republic that it is they who are responsible for the trouble in the North—because they once expressed a sentiment in favour of Irish unity, or expressed sympathy with the Northern Catholics, or said nasty things about the Unionist regime, or once sang a rebel song—or even because they had thought it was right for the people who voted for Irish independence in 1918 to fight for it in 1919-21 when Britain refused to heed their vote.

Britain set up the diabolical system in Northern Ireland, and it has made the South feel guilty over what it led to.

Northern Ireland was set up as an instrument of British policy towards Ireland as a whole. It was not set up for its own good, as a means conducive to good government. It was set up for a purpose beyond itself. It has been used effectively to demoralise 26 County politics and shatter Republican historical understanding—with the said Professors Keogh, Fitzpatrick and Lord Bew to the fore in this work.

The British development of the region has been closed off. The only question is whether Northern Ireland is to be a means of ideological subversion of the South, or a means of restoring the political and historical morale of the Republic in the light of the real history of the island.

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