

NIGHT OF THE LONG KNIVES - IRISH STYLE

Ulster remained in sullen subjection and endured the gerrymandering of voting boundaries which ensured their voice would rarely be heard.

Though about a third of the population, only about three of the fifteen or so Ulster M.P.'s in the London Parliament could be said to represent the Catholic interests. The IRA kept alive the smouldering flame of Irish nationalism during the 1950's by occasionally blowing up mail-boxes in England, or taking pot-shots at Orangemen in Ulster.

This then was the situation in 1967: Ulster: self-governing in domestic matters, run by a Protestant elite which ensured its dominance by encouraging religious division among the workers.

The economy of Ulster depressed, like Liverpool in England, Clydeside in Scotland, its dependence on traditional industries such as ship-building ensuring a high unemployment rate. The Republic of Ireland, completely independent of Britain is even poorer, with the worst strike record in the whole industrialised world. Those minerals it has are shipped off to feed the American colossus have drained it. The government of the Republic can best be described as a Catholic, liberal-conservative-nationalist; pressured on one side by the all-powerful Catholic Church (contraceptives are illegal in the Republic) and on the other by more energetic nationalist groups.

White supremacy

The elite in Ulster can best be compared to the white colonialists of Kenya in the 1950's or Rhodesia in the 1960's, espousing English nationalism with a fervour that is regarded with distaste in England itself. The Stormont government is run by nominees of the Orange Order, no-one has become a minister in that government against the will of the Order.

Since 1967 what has taken place. Ulster has seen the growing consciousness of the working class of its miserable position, thus throughout the past few years Ulster has suffered a series of bitter strikes. At the same time the Catholic population has become more militant in its demands for civil rights.

Faced with this dual threat to their privileged position the elite has gradually become more reactionary. The mild-mannered Captain O'Neil, Prime Minister of the Stormont government, was manoeuvred from power in 1968 and replaced by the more easily manipulated Chichester-Clark, who was re-elected in favor of the hard-liner Faulkner who now rules.

The British Labour government sought to maintain some sort of liberal influence in the Ulster regime with little success.

1970 Heath and the Tories seemed to have opted for the hard-line approach.

The British army was introduced into Ulster in 1968 to the relief of the Catholics who were being terrorised and being diverted from industrial action to face the "threat" of Catholics demanding equal rights. Thus as Catholic demands were made, the elite became more reactionary, thereby driving moderate Catholics into the welcoming arms of the more extreme nationalist groups who are prepared to answer violence with violence.

Wilson's labour government pressured Stormont into legislating for equal rights for Catholics, none of the reforms however have actually been put into practice. The official position of the British government now is that before the reforms can be implemented the "gunmen", meaning the Catholic gunmen, not the Orange men, must be defeated.

At the same time as the reforms were passed by Stormont, the police force known as the "B-specials" was disbanded. This force, auxiliary to the Royal Ulster Constabulary was an armed Protestant controlled force which specialized in terrorising Catholic house-holds under the guise of legitimate police activity! Since 1968 they disbanded, and disarmed members of this force, have been joining gun-clubs which have proliferated in Ulster over the last three years, and thereby represent a reserve of gun power, if ever the Catholics get too uppity.

The British army, originally intended to be impartial has over the last year adopted, unofficially, an anti-Catholic role. This has come about due to the increasing number of British deaths which have all been blamed on the IRA. In fact it seems likely that a proportion of these deaths has been due to Protestant extremists. The death of three soldiers in February of this year outside a pub in Belfast, was a turning point in relations between the Catholics and the army. It took place in a Protestant area outside a Protestant pub. The deaths were denied by the IRA, which usually is only too anxious to claim credit for such incidents.

By June of this year the situation for the future seemed hopeless. The British government has the power to dissolve the Stormont government and rule directly. Such an action would be welcomed by the IRA which could then shout "British Imperialism," however, it would be disliked by the Ulster elite who fear the loss of their power.

Such an action is therefore unlikely, especially since the Orange men have very strong links with the Conservatives. (The full title of the Conservatives is "The Conservative and Unionist Party." "Unionist" historically sym-

bolizing the determination to maintain the union of Ireland with England.)

Having decided to reject direct rule Heath communicated with Faulkner in an attempt to persuade him to ban the Protestant marches during the summer. These marches, commemorate various historical occasions:

celebrating the times the Protestants have suppressed the Catholics. They are traditional flash points of protestant gloating.

Get tough

Pressured by the Orangemen, Faulkner refused to ban the marches when harsher measures were taken against the Catholic gunmen.

The British Army in Ulster, now 14,000 men, whose famous impartiality has now been dropped in favour of smashing up Catholic homes every time they search for weapons, was told by Heath to get tough. General Turzo, commander

informed Heath that the army couldn't do much more without massive reinforcements, Heath suggested that if internment, (Imprisonment without trial), were introduced the army could do better. Turzo disagreed, and pointed out that even with special powers of arrest, the army had no idea who the IRA gunmen were. Despite the army's opposition Heath agreed with Faulkner that in return for the banning of the marches, internment powers would be introduced in Ulster, but only if the Protestant extremists were arrested as well as the Catholics. Gleeefully the Stormont administration began to draw up lists of those to be arrested when the Night of the Long Knives came. Unfortunately they too had little idea who exactly comprised the IRA. They therefore chose the more prominent of the civil rights workers as victims.

These workers, mostly members of the People's Democracy Party, a non-sectarian organization aimed at gaining civil rights and also workers rights (the workers in Ulster being the most exploited of any in the U.K.), have, since the shooting began always stressed their commitment to peaceful means. They have never accepted

the terror programme of the IRA. Although they have fought at Catholic Barricades to keep Protestants from attacking Catholic areas.

Internment

Over the weekend of August 23rd Heath declared that emergency powers, including internment were now operating in Ulster. Over the next three days the police and army arrested, usually at night over 300 "suspects" in best Gestapo manner, in a couple of cases the "suspect" in particular was not at home, and they therefore arrested the brothers of the wanted men instead.

Of the three hundred arrested, nearly all were civil rights workers. Even more sinister, only a handful of Protestants embraced the same fate.

Heath had been taken for a ride. Faulkner, and his Orange order bosses, had agreed to ban their marches, only in order to get the power to arrest those initiating civil rights workers who would insist on such ludicrous things as equal rights and industrial democracy.

In the last two weeks the escalation of the incidence in Ulster clearly shows that internment has failed to deal with the gunmen of either side.

The IRA who probably hope to eventually achieve the freeing of the two Catholic counties of Ulster, and link them with the Irish Republic must be well pleased for internment has destroyed the hopes of the moderates once and for all.

The Orangemen are also happy, although some of these interned have since been released, most are still under arrest, without trial, and thereby out of the way. The Orangemen are confident that the British Army will prevent any reduction of Ulster from six counties to five.

The possible future of Ulster has been sketched out in the centre square.

Ian Paisley the extremist Protestant leader is already grooming himself for public office. He has toned down his speeches and the mass media is beginning to portray him as "the man who can control the hard liners". In England where most people are totally amazed that the seething mass that is Ulster exists, there are already calls to bring troops back.

Last summer at the height of the violence the army of the Irish Republic was ordered to the border to set up "field hospitals" for refugees two weeks ago three British soldiers accidentally found themselves in the Republic and were gunned down.

The situation in Ulster has reached the point of no return. If Heath suspends internment, abolishes Stormont, sends 20,000 more troops to nullify the gun power of the Orangemen, pumps 100 million pounds into Ulster to provide employment and makes a determined effort to get Catholic equal rights then a tragedy might be avoided. But he won't. The dominance of one group of people over another is a common feature of life, if the dominance is exercised with sufficient tact and skill violence can be avoided, where the dominance is crude and obvious the result is usually similar to that of East Pakistan this year. There's no reason to believe that Ulster could not become another East Pakistan just because those involved are white.

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