

Beyond the Rhetoric:

Politics, the Economy and Social Policy in
Northern Ireland

edited by Paul Teague

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avoid becoming still poorer and more dependent on Britain.

There remains one important point. As mentioned earlier, this is a pluralist book: the contributors approach the Northern Ireland crisis, whether it is the economic or political one, from differing perspectives. It should be reported that all those involved in this project have done so with considerable eagerness and enthusiasm. There was full recognition that promoting a full and open debate on Northern Ireland would lead to a wider appreciation of the crisis which is unfortunately missing at present. Perhaps if a similarly co-operative attitude was adopted at the level of formal politics, the opportunity for a lasting peace would be greater, and the need for a book like this would not exist.

Notes

¹ A recent example of this trend is Andrew Boyd's *Have the Trade Unions Failed the North?*, Dublin 1985. In this book Boyd accuses the trade unions of openly complying with sectarian employment practices and British imperialism more generally. He suggests that if the trade unions would have adopted a militant nationalist stance then a major blow would have been struck against imperialism. In his efforts to make this point he portrays the potential of trade union action in a manner which most serious students of industrial relations would, quite frankly, find amazing.

² A good example of this is Anthony Barnett's article in the 1982 *Socialist Register*.

³ See the round-table discussion between Henry Patterson, Bob Rowthorn and Clare Short, *Marxism Today*, January 1986. Although the participants have quite different viewpoints on Northern Ireland, they were unanimous in suggesting that the Agreement would only make a marginal impact on politics in the province.

⁴ Shift-share analysis allows insights to be made into changes in a region's labour market by breaking that down into three different components, namely, national share, industry mix and regional share. National share indicates the employment change that would have occurred if a region's employment growth rate had equalled the national (UK) growth rate over the study period. Industry mix shows the amount of regional employment growth attributable to the region's initial industrial mix: that is, it reflects a region's mix of fast and slow growth industries. Finally, regional share indicates whether a region's industries performed better or worse than the national average for each industry. These three components give an entire series of 'actual minus expected' data. For analytical purposes the industry mix and regional share figures are the more interesting, because they relate regional changes to developments at the national level.

Brendan O'Leary

The Anglo-Irish Agreement: Meanings, Explanations, Results and a Defence

Rhetorical reaction to the Anglo-Irish Accord was predictable. Irish ultra-nationalists interpreted the Accord as an imperialist manoeuvre, targeted against the self-styled 'armalite and ballot box' school of national liberation. Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein (SF) condemned the agreement for 'copper-fastening partition'.¹ Ulster Unionists saw the Accord as a victory for the Provisional IRA, the pay-off for a war of sectarian attrition, a milestone in the liquidation of their cherished union. Ian Paisley, at the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) conference, asserted that the Accord 'rode to victory on the back of IRA terrorism'.² These polarised interpretations are as incompatible as they are individually implausible.

Four major political questions provoked by the Accord signed by the Prime Ministers of the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom on 15 November 1985 are addressed in this essay. Firstly, what is the constitutional significance of the Accord? Secondly, why was the Accord signed? This essay assesses the value of three ways of explaining major state decisions.³ Thirdly, what have been the consequences of the Accord? Finally, there is the political evaluation question: how should the British and Irish democratic left respond to the Hillsborough concordat? Should we condemn it, support it, or as the stale cliché has it, 'offer our critical support'? This essay unashamedly offers critical support for Margaret Thatcher and Garret FitzGerald.

Meanings: What is the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

The Accord is best understood negatively: it is not three things which it is alleged to be. It is not joint authority, the equal sharing of sovereignty of Northern Ireland by two separate states. Contrary to Unionist rhetoric, Peter Barry, the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs at the time, did not become joint governor of Northern Ireland and neither has his successor assumed that role.⁴ The Accord is not a complete acceptance by the British government of one of the proposals made by the New Ireland Forum which reported in May 1984.⁵ The articles of the Accord do not give London and Dublin equal responsibility for all aspects of the government of Northern Ireland. As Article 2 states:

There is no derogation from the sovereignty of the Irish government or the United Kingdom government, and each retains responsibility for the decisions and administration of government within its own jurisdiction.

There is no case for those who contend that the UK government's action represents a formal erosion of the Act of Union of 1801, as a judge ruled in January 1986 in the High Court against a Unionist claim to the contrary.

Neither does the Accord 'put the Unionists on notice that reunification of Ireland will inevitably be enacted on an as yet undetermined date', as one constitutional lawyer has asserted.⁶ The first clause of the agreement simply repeats the often expressed policy of successive British governments since the abolition of the Stormont parliament in 1972 and enshrined in Section 1 of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act of 1973, that Irish unification will not take place without the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland (Article 1a). There is nothing new about the 'notice' being given to the Unionists about their constitutional status with regard to the Irish Republic, and indeed the Accord is a formal recognition by the current Irish government of the rectitude of the British constitutional guarantee. If there is a 'notice' of constitutional significance embedded in the Accord, it is that the Unionist identity has been downgraded to equality with the nationalist identity in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland. Lastly, the

Accord does not represent the *de jure* abandonment of the Irish Republic's constitutional claim to Northern Ireland as Sinn Féin and other ultra-nationalists allege. Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution read as follows:

Article 2: The national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas.

Article 3: Pending the re-integration of the national territory and without prejudice to the right of parliament and government established by this Constitution to exercise jurisdiction of the whole of that territory, the laws enacted by that parliament shall have the like area and extent of application as the laws of Saorstát Éireann⁷ and the like extra-territorial effect.

As the Accord can legitimately be interpreted as an agreement over how the national territory might be 're-integrated' it is not in violation of the letter of the Irish Constitution. Article 1c of the Accord states that 'if in the future a majority of the people of Northern Ireland clearly wish for and formally consent to the establishment of a united Ireland' then the two governments will introduce enabling legislation. However, ultra-nationalists are correct to emphasise that the Accord represents the *de facto* abandonment of Irish unification as a policy goal of Fine Gael (FG) and the Irish Labour Party (ILP) for the foreseeable future, which is not the same as 'in perpetuity' as Tom King bluntly suggested on 3 December 1985 when the ink on the Accord was still fresh.⁸

If the Accord is not joint authority, neither a notice to Unionists of eventual reunification, nor the formal abandonment of territorial irredentism by the Irish Republic, then what is its significance? Firstly, it is the formalisation of inter-state co-operation; secondly it is formal notice that whilst the Unionist guarantee remains, Unionists have no veto on policy formulation within Northern Ireland; and finally, it is the formalisation of a strategy which binds the Irish Republic to a constitutional mode of reunification which is almost unfeasible. Let us take these points in turn. First, the Accord is the formalisation of inter-state co-operation because the Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) which it established is solely a consultative body. The IGC has no executive authority or capacity, no recognisable instruments of state (taxation and

coercion), and has no formal policy implementation function.

The IGC represents little more than the institutionalisation of the talks which the two governments have been having in the Anglo-Irish Inter-Governmental Council since 1980. (In the communiqué which accompanied the Accord it was stated that British and Irish ministers had met on over twenty occasions in the previous year, a clear sign of the extent of existing collaboration as much as proof of the impending agreement.) The IGC is a policy-formulation forum which the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland can choose to concur with, take into consideration or ignore. The policy arenas open to the two governments in the IGC are spelt out in Article 2a of the Accord: '(i) political matters; (ii) security and related matters; (iii) legal matters, including the administration of justice; (iv) the promotion of cross-border co-operation'. The possible agenda is thus extremely wide-ranging. Article 6 of the Accord elaborates these four fields, and specifically entitles the Irish government to discuss the work of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR), the Fair Employment Agency (FEA), the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), the Police Authority for Northern Ireland (PANI) and the Police Complaints Board (PCB). These five agencies are the fruit of British attempts to reform Northern Ireland, and a direct input from the Irish government is clearly intended as a confidence-building measure for the Catholic population.

The Accord signifies the formal end of Unionist supremacy within Northern Ireland: Unionism without an Ulster Unionist veto on the structure of the union or policy-making within the union. The Unionists are denied formal access to policy formulation unless they take advantage of the possibilities for devolution which are built into the Accord. The Assembly set up under James Prior's rolling devolution proposals in 1982 was not mentioned in the Accord, and its subsequent demise in June 1986 in the face of continued SDLP abstention and Unionist abuse of its facilities to attack the Accord came as no surprise.⁹ Unless the Ulster Unionists accept an agreed form of devolution the British government will act as representative for Unionism in the Inter-Governmental Conference. On the other hand, the Northern Ireland minority can have its grievances articulated in the IGC without agreed devolution, through the offices of the

Irish government. The fact that the Accord gives the Irish Republic a *de jure* interest in the affairs of a minority within another state border is symbolic affirmation of the legitimacy of the minority's complaints about the government and politics of Northern Ireland, both before and after 1972.¹⁰ Before the signing of the Accord the official British position blamed all the discreditable features of Northern Ireland upon Unionist hegemony in the period of devolved government (1920-72), but the British signature affirms that Direct Rule (1972-85) has not reformed Northern Ireland.¹¹ The Accord explicitly recognises that an Irish dimension and agreed devolution (Article 4) are necessary to complete the reform of Northern Ireland. Since these arguments have been dominant in the SDLP from its inception, it is plain why the Accord symbolically establishes the constitutional equality of the Northern Ireland minority. Ian Paisley made the point graphically when he suggested that the Accord has made John Hume the 'uncrowned King of Northern Ireland'.¹²

The Accord signifies the end of a united front amongst constitutional Irish nationalists. It has crystallised divisions which have long been apparent. Fine Gael, the ILP, and the new party in the Irish Republic, the Progressive Democrats (PD) support the Accord, whereas Fianna Fáil (FF) opposes it. Within Northern Ireland the SDLP supports the Accord, whereas the small Irish Independence Party (IIP) rejects it. Since the Accord was signed, FF has shown signs of wanting to support a revamped IIP against the SDLP in Northern Ireland.¹³ Consequently FF and the IIP now represent the brand of constitutional nationalism which simply disagrees with the IRA and SF over means rather than ends, whereas most sections of the SDLP, FG and ILP are making the reform of Northern Ireland a higher priority than any putative unification. This fissure between constitutional nationalists, if permanent, is of potentially immense significance on both sides of the border. The SDLP has its nationalist flank protected from criticism by SF and the IIP because of the Irish dimension in the Accord, and therefore is freer to bargain for the reform of Northern Ireland. The consequences for the politics of the Irish Republic are also far-reaching, as Mair's essay in this volume illustrates.

Three final points should be made about the constitutional significance of the Accord. It is not permanent, and envisages renewal after three years. The Accord does not form part of the domestic law of the United Kingdom, and thus the manner in which the British government manages the IGC is not amenable to judicial regulation. Finally, the Accord is a framework which permits other constitutional settlements to be built on top of it: it is compatible with substantial, albeit necessarily agreed, devolution (Article 4b and 4c); alternatively, it could be the basis for joint authority, as envisaged by the New Ireland Forum or the Kilbrandon Inquiry of November 1984.¹⁴ However, to repeat, the Hillsborough agreement does not currently amount to joint authority.

Explanations: Why was the Accord Signed?

The communiqué which accompanied the Accord declared that the promotion of reconciliation was its main objective. What are we to make of this claim? Was the signing of the Accord prompted by more ignoble intentions? Was it, in the words of disgruntled Unionists, 'a mixture of the vilest cunning on the one hand, and the most enormous stupidity on the other'?¹⁵ There are three ways of explaining the signing of the Accord which are worthy of serious attention.

The first approach suggests that the Accord was the outcome of a clear rational strategy reached by the British and Irish governments in pursuit of mutually acceptable goals. This approach underpins several markedly different interpretations of why the Accord was signed: one, the anti-imperialist perspective, sees it as an attempt to redefine and reconstitute British domination in Ireland; another sees it as a clever and calculating way of establishing power-sharing in the province; the final explanation sees the Accord in a light similar to that presented by the British and Irish governments — as a framework for establishing peace and security in the province. These different scenarios are examined in turn below.

Imperialist manoeuvres?

The anti-imperialist school assumes that the Northern Ireland conflict is caused by British imperialism and will only cease with

the latter's termination.¹⁶ Adherents to this view see the Accord as an attempt by the British state, fearful of what James Prior once described as the threat of an Irish Cuba off the British mainland, to re-establish its hegemony in Ireland by obtaining the consent of the 'comprador' government of the twenty-six counties to the continuation of British rule in Northern Ireland, and indeed to direct British intervention in the affairs of the twenty-six counties. To these ends the Accord was explicitly conceived to de-mobilise the radical nationalist movement built by Sinn Féin in the wake of the hunger strikes of 1980-81, to restore the social base and credibility of the SDLP and to cement the conditions for a military and political counter-offensive against the IRA. Promises of symbolic gestures towards nationalist sentiment were traded by the British government in return for the Irish government's support for Britain's real objectives: a security agreement on extradition, a Europe-wide offensive against terrorists and the Irish government's support for an assault on the American havens of support for Republicans.

Such an account is to be found in the Sinn Féin press, *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, and is echoed by some sections of the British ultra-left. The analysis presupposes clear and well defined objectives for the Accord: the maintenance of British rule in Ireland, the incorporation of the Irish Republic into NATO and the repression of Sinn Féin and the IRA. The circumstantial evidence for the anti-imperialist school includes symbolic British attempts to appease the SDLP, the Irish government's decision to join the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, EEC defence arrangements which seem to violate the Republic's traditional conceptions of neutrality and the co-ordinated efforts by Thatcher and Reagan to ensure that the US Senate pass an extradition treaty against the opposition of a well-organised Irish-American lobby. There can be no doubt about such evidence, only about its significance.

There are fundamental problems with this analysis. The Irish Republic is implausibly portrayed as a puppet-state rather than as one of the most independent of small capitalist nation-states. No rigorous rationale is provided for why the British state, let alone British capital, should be so concerned to maintain Northern Ireland as part of Britain.¹⁷ Northern Ireland is not a

good source of surplus value, and it is no longer tied by aristocratic lineage networks to the dominant echelons of British society. The Unionist political movements no longer form a key component of mainland Conservatism. The importance of the province as a military training ground is much disputed by British army officers, and its geo-political significance in the era of thermonuclear warfare is negligible, despite the arguments advanced by the Troops Out Movement, Tony Benn, Sean MacBride and the odd British general. Northern Ireland's principal exploitative value seems to be as a testing ground for experiments in public and social administration. And with the notable exceptions of repressive law and military policing, its use as a testing-ground is not as detrimental to the general citizenry as one might suspect.¹⁸

Fear of an Irish Cuba exists amongst the more paranoid sections of the British administrative and political class, but there is little evidence that such paranoia has been paramount in British policy-making. The Provisionals and their fellow travellers have a vested interest in exaggerating the mortal threat which Sinn Fein poses to the British state, but there is no reason why the serious left should accept such claims. The British state exists in Northern Ireland because of past imperialism, and British policy-makers display the customary arrogance and ignorance of their imperialist precursors. But, these observations do not mean that the present conflict in Northern Ireland is an artefact of current British imperialism. Successive British governments have not left Northern Ireland because they have respected the wish of the overwhelming majority of Northern Irish Protestants to remain British citizens, because the Irish Republic's governments since the 1950s have never seriously wanted the British to withdraw, and because neither state has wanted the submerged civil war to become a full-scale holocaust.

The anti-imperialist explanation of the Accord falls at the first hurdle because it has an implausible conception of British objectives, based on an outmoded and falsely applied theory of imperialism. It also lacks a well developed account of the evolution of the Irish state. But the failings of this explanation are best illustrated by its incomprehension of Ulster Loyalist reaction to the Accord, which holds that the Protestant reaction

to the Accord is either wholly irrational, or based upon a misperception of devious Albion. Both of these readings are sectarian and false. The Loyalists are not stupid. The Accord presents them with painful dilemmas, ends their supremacy within Northern Ireland and threatens their interpretation of the Union if not in the way that the IRA would prefer. Other than Sinn Fein supporters, the only personality to have consistently maintained an interpretation of the Accord as an imperialist plot is Enoch Powell who regards the Anglo-Irish Agreement as part of American expansionism.¹⁹ It is rather strange that the Left only take Powell seriously when he shares its most far-fetched conspiracy theories.

From voluntary to coercive power-sharing?

This interpretation of the Accord portrays it as an attempt to coerce the Unionists into accepting a new version of the Sunningdale agreement of 1973-74. British policy-making between 1972 and 1975 was in favour of voluntary power-sharing in a devolved regional government in Northern Ireland, and was marked by a willingness to concede an Irish dimension to assuage minority grievances. The Sunningdale agreement had some features of what political scientists call the consociational model of liberal democracy which is considered appropriate for societies with deeply divisive non-class cleavages.²⁰ A power-sharing executive in which a cross-bloc majority – Faulkner's Unionists, the SDLP and the Alliance (APNI) – composed the government, was the pre-eminent feature. More widely however, political representation, civil service composition and the allocation of public funds were to be made on a proportional basis. Why did the Sunningdale settlement fail? Its Irish dimension, the Council of Ireland, created a furor amongst Unionists opposed to power-sharing (35.5 per cent of the total electorate of 1973), and left Faulkner without the backing of his party as the experiment began. The British General Election of February 1974 then intervened at a critical stage in the experiment. The plurality electoral rule meant that anti-Sunningdale Unionists were able to rout Faulkner Unionists, and obtain 51 per cent of the popular vote and eleven of the twelve Northern Ireland seats at Westminster.

Whilst poll evidence showed that strong Protestant support for the experiment had dropped after the general election to 28 per cent of their bloc,²¹ the SDLP's discontent at internment and repression meant that it was neither willing nor able to save Faulkner by making concessions over the Council of Ireland. Finally, the new Labour government proved spineless during the Ulster Workers Council (UWC) strike which led to the collapse of the Executive. More generally, the Sunningdale settlement's fate showed that the conditions for voluntary power-sharing were not present. There was no multiple balance of power amongst the blocs, and there was asymmetry between the majority of the Unionist bloc's attitudes towards power-sharing and that of the majority of the nationalist bloc. Moreover, the blocs were fragmenting just when their cohesion was essential to facilitate power-sharing. The political élites of the nationalist, and especially the Unionist bloc, were not sufficiently autonomous from their supporters to bargain and make concessions, even if they wanted to, because they had good reason to fear being outflanked by opposing groups favouring their bloc's version of 'no surrender'.²² These features of Northern Ireland precluded voluntary power-sharing.

It is possible to understand the Accord as an attempt to create the conditions for power-sharing to work by coercing key fractions of the Unionist bloc to accept some version of the 1973-74 settlement as the lesser of several evils. On the one hand the Accord confronts the Unionists with an Irish dimension, the Inter-Governmental Conference, of far greater political salience than the Council of Ireland proposed in 1973. But on the other hand the Accord offers Unionists devolution as a mechanism for removing the agenda-setting scope of the IGC provided they are prepared to accept agreed devolution – which would mean power-sharing because the SDLP cannot settle for anything less. The unpalatable choices which the Accord puts before the Unionist bloc – which are discussed below – look designed to divide them, and to create a fraction sufficiently significant and autonomous to do business with the SDLP and the APNI after ultra-loyalism has been tried and defeated. Unlike 1973-74, the Unionist ultras are being given the initiative to do what they will first, in the hope that their defeat will create a new and more stable Faulkner-style grouping. Thatcher's

remarks in her famous interview in Belfast certainly lend credence to such an interpretation: 'The people of Northern Ireland can get rid of the Inter-Governmental Conference by agreeing to devolved government.'²³ This interpretation of the Accord makes sense. The political education of the British and Irish élites since 1973 must have persuaded them that a voluntary internal settlement was impossible as long as important fractions of Unionists outside the APNI have no selective incentives to induce them to accept power-sharing, and as long as the SDLP have felt threatened from the Provisionals and other extreme nationalists.

But the interpretation is, unfortunately, implausible if it is understood as a deliberately conceived rational policy in which all costs and benefits were calculated and all permutations of possible consequences known in advance. To take one counter-example, according to civil servants, the scale and depth of Unionist opposition to the Accord was not anticipated by the Northern Ireland Office or the relevant Cabinet ministers in the UK.²⁴ Likewise Garret FitzGerald was startled by the reaction of moderate Unionists to the Accord. These surprised reactions of officials from both states are not those of people implementing a well defined and elaborately worked out rational policy. As a result, whilst the consequences of the Accord may eventually conform to the pattern expected if the British and Irish policy-makers did plan coercive power-sharing, the reasons for the signing of the Accord do not wholly conform to this rational policy-making scenario.

The establishment of peace and security?

The British and Irish governments highlighted peace, reconciliation and security as their principal objectives when presenting the Accord to their respective societies. Could it be the case that both governments were truly motivated by these objectives? The British government has constantly underlined the security dimensions of the Accord to both dissident Conservatives and the Ulster Unionists. Increased cross-border security liaison, the Republic's accession to the Suppression of Terrorism convention and the American extradition Bill have figured prominently in British rhetoric. Embarrassing incidents

like the Glenholmes affair²⁵ and the emergence of 'Stalkergate'²⁶ have not stopped both governments claiming early successes from the increased harmonisation of the intelligence and resources of the RUC and the Garda Síochána. However, as the table below makes apparent, there was no overwhelming case for a security offensive on the part of the British and Irish states prior to the signing of the Accord. The most intense phase of political violence was in the early 1970s, during the collapse of Stormont and the failure of the Sunningdale settlement.

Table 1: Political Murders in Northern Ireland 1969-84

	Catholic Civilians	IRA, INLA, etc.	Protestant Civilians	UVF, UDA etc.	Local security forces	British security forces
1969	7	1	6	0	1	0
1970	8	5	8	0	2	0
1971	62	17	31	0	16	43
1972	166	65	74	10	42	107
1973	75	32	50	8	21	58
1974	95	17	50	4	24	27
1975	104	17	69	18	18	13
1976	124	14	95	5	40	14
1977	33	6	19	6	30	16
1978	9	7	21	0	19	12
1979	17	5	14	0	30	38
1980	20	4	19	1	19	12
1981	27	16	15	3	33	11
1982	20	9	18	4	21	20
1983	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	28	5
1984	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	19	9

Source: *New Ireland Forum*, Dublin 1984, and Northern Ireland Office press releases.

Since the mid-1970s the IRA has altered its organisation and switched its military strategy. Economic targets have been abandoned to concentrate on attacking local security forces. The reasons for this change were the comparative success of British security policy in the mid-1970s, and the Provisionals' need for a strategy less likely to alienate their own social base. A cell structure and attacks on local security forces served both goals. The consequence has been a dramatic fall-off in civilian

deaths. The policy of Ulsterisation (the replacement of the British army by the RUC) has also led to a considerable reduction in the numbers of British Army personnel killed since the mid-1970s. The brunt of the IRA's strategy is now carried by local security forces (the RUC, the UDR, and on occasions, prison officers), but their fate does not cause the same concern to British policy-makers as civilian or Army deaths. It is perfectly sensible to suggest that British strategists had achieved their goal of 'acceptable levels of violence' within Northern Ireland before the signing of the Accord. But the high-risk initiative embarked upon at Hillsborough puts Catholic civilians at risk, has caused ferocious conflicts of loyalty within the RUC and the UDR, and compels the British into increasing the Army presence.

On the Irish side, the Accord left the Fine Gael-ILP coalition government exposed to Fianna Fáil charges of violating the Republic's sovereignty, giving retrospective recognition to RUC cross-border pursuits, and abandoning a well established constitutional freedom for the protection of political exiles. When one recalls that Haughey's deft playing of the 'green card' over RUC cross-border incursions in the 1982 Irish general election caused severe damage to Fine Gael, there are reasons for suggesting that the security dimensions of the Accord were not in the short-run rational interests of the Irish government. Furthermore, as John Taylor of the OUP pointed out with sublime subtlety, the prospects of bombs on the streets of Dublin have risen greatly since the Accord was signed.²⁷ Finally, the Irish government's presence at the Inter-Governmental Conference binds it against making wholesale criticisms of the RUC and the UDR. Its desire for the RUC to stand firm in the summer of 1986 restrained it from making political capital over the Stalker affair.²⁸

No one in either government believed that the Accord would bring immediate peace and reconciliation, but the prelude to the Accord did not help matters. The exclusion of the Unionists from participation in the negotiation of the agreement, whilst entirely practical, made their opposition all the stronger. In the short run the Accord has undoubtedly exacerbated rather than ameliorated the existing levels of polarisation, raised sectarian attacks on Catholics, induced Protestant assaults on the RUC

and encouraged the IRA to reap the whirlwind. There is also evidence that both the British and Irish governments have been genuinely surprised by the levels of animosity towards the Accord amongst the Unionists, and by the apparent intransigence of John Hume to those 'feelers' which some Unionists have made towards the SDLP.²⁹

To summarise, if both governments believed their own rhetoric, they miscalculated the scale of short-run conflict which the Accord would produce. But it should be added that on the conventional security front, their administrators' advice suggested that the Accord would worsen the security front, at least for the time being.

The three interpretations outlined above of why the Accord was signed are all crucially defective. They either impute too much cohesion and clear-headed foresight to the respective policy-makers, or assume incredible naivety on questions of security and the prospects for peace.

The Institutional Approach

The institutional approach analyses the reasons for the Accord in an entirely different light, and suggests that diplomatic or political initiatives are rarely launched by a government or governments pursuing a fully developed and coherent master plan. Instead such initiatives are the product, for the most part, of the workings of state institutions – the way they perceive problems, and the manner in which they define solutions to them. Thus from the point of view of the institutional approach, the Accord, far from being a radical departure on the part of the British and Irish governments, was, in fact, the outcome of the policies and actions of state institutions and agencies in the two countries. The plausibility of this approach is examined below.

On the British side the state agencies involved in the prelude to the Accord were the Foreign Office, the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), the Cabinet Office (the Overseas and Defence Committee chaired by Margaret Thatcher), and, according to press briefings, the pertinent intelligence services. Whilst the Northern Irish NIO officials were not influential, the NIO's British officials certainly were. Interviews have established a

most interesting jargon amongst NIO officials for dealing with Northern Ireland. Since the early 1970s they have developed what they call 'internal' and 'external' tracks. The internal track tells them to pursue policies to encourage the broadest possible agreement within Northern Ireland for an internal settlement. The external track tells them to pursue the maximum feasible good relations with the Irish Republic and the USA on the Ulster crisis, and to ensure minimum feasible international embarrassment.³⁰ The jargon of internal and external tracks captures the basic thrust of British policy-making, or more strictly, the administrative advice of the NIO, since 1972. The Accord has both these tracks built into it – agreed devolution and good relations with the Irish Republic. Consequently, apart from timing and formality, the Accord is consistent with the 'broad thrust' of British policy-making in the province. The Accord made sense to the British because it fitted their existing definitions of the 'problem' and their pre-established policies for managing it. Such an interpretation makes better sense of the facts than the coercive power-sharing scenario precisely because it does not assume a comprehensive master plan on the part of the British government.

On the Irish side, since the partial success of the modernisation programmes embarked upon in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the standard modes of defining the Northern Ireland question have altered, amongst both administrators and the policy élite. The legitimisation of the Irish state is altering from the assertion of national sovereignty through cultural autonomy from the UK, to achieving support through the material prosperity of advanced industrial capitalism. Irish state officials, outside the ranks of Fianna Fáil, have come to define Northern Ireland as a problem for the stability of their state, as a threat to their programmes of modernisation, and as an anachronism rather than a question of burning injustice or uncompleted national revolution. Thus the Northern Ireland conflict is primarily managed by them through two strategic methods. Firstly, playing the role of guardian of the Northern Ireland minority rather than prospective ruler of Ulster Unionists (advocating reform and power-sharing within Northern Ireland and using the international stage to proclaim this guardian role). And secondly, increasing co-operation with the British state,

through the EEC and other forums, to contain the conflict ('unique relationships amongst these islands', and 'interdependence is not dependence' provide the bureaucratic codes here). The Accord again fits neatly with these well established routines, and also makes better sense of the facts than the other interpretations. Fianna Fáil, not having made the full transition from a party of cultural nationalism to a party of economic nationalism, is the only major organisation yet to accept in its rhetoric these decisive alterations in the foreign policy routines of the Irish state. But in practice, FF governments have both initiated such changes and furthered them.

The institutional approach explanation is plausible. Ensnared in the vacillations of personalities and crisis episodes, behind the zig-zags in British policy postures highlighted by Bew and Patterson,³¹ buried under the rapid turnover in Irish governments during 1980-82, and indeed behind the aberration of Thatcher's reaction to the New Ireland Forum proposals ('Out! Out! Out!'), compatible strategies for managing the Northern Ireland conflict have developed amongst the agencies of both states. With the Thatcher and FitzGerald administrations both in mid-term, and determined to make a symbolic initiative, 1985 proved to be the opportune moment for the cementing of the two states' approaches. It was also timely because memories of the hunger strikes of 1980-81 and the Irish Republic's studied neutrality during the Falklands/Malvinas war in 1982 were fading.

Other Contributory Factors

But the institutional approach, despite its considerable merits, does not fully explain why the Accord came about. Other factors such as political symbolism, the role of key personalities – Thatcher, FitzGerald and Hume – and party manoeuvres must also be taken into account. The symbolic dimensions of a major initiative and agreement appealed to both Prime Ministers. FitzGerald claims to have entered politics to solve the Northern Ireland problem and to hasten the secularisation and pluralisation of the Irish Republic. The rationality of Thatcher's political project is always greatly exaggerated on the Left, but she has displayed a penchant for tackling head-on what are

perceived to be the major unresolved crises of the British state, and a preparedness to break through existing conventional wisdom and inertia.³² Escape from death at Brighton also concentrated Thatcher's mind on the Northern Irish question in a way the IRA did not anticipate. Her commitment to the Accord is 'total' according to NIO officials. There seems little doubt that both leaders not only enjoyed the symbolism of a major initiative but shared a similar resolution to embark upon a 'leap in the dark', a propensity few of their predecessors have displayed.

The Accord was good domestic politics in both states. The Irish Coalition enjoyed a brief renewal of support and enjoyed overwhelming approval for the Accord in opinion polls. Such a response was anticipated. The split in Fianna Fáil, its opposition to the Accord in the Dáil, and the formation of the Progressive Democrats were unexpected, and briefly enjoyed, bonuses. The Conservative government counted on and received all-party support in the Commons and thrived on playing the role of acting in the national interest until the Westland affair besmirched its reputation. However, successive governments have shown Northern Ireland does not matter electorally (unless one MP or TD can affect the stability of the executive), and as the Accord comes under pressure for producing few immediate tangible results, much more radical initiatives might be acceptable to both the British and Irish electorates. As a result some contend that both leaders' preoccupation with symbolic politics have set in train a policy fiasco which could defeat their respective objectives.

Whatever the truth of these contentions, the decisive actor in the politics of the signing of the Accord, has been the SDLP and its leader John Hume. Content that the British and Irish premiers obtain whatever short-run glory on offer, the SDLP leader has been reticent about his role in the Accord. But as the instigator of Anglo-Irish discussions and the New Ireland Forum, as the leader who advocated abstaining from Prior's Assembly on the grounds that a boycott would produce something more, as an actively consulted advisor to the Irish government during the negotiations, Hume has contributed more than any other political leader towards the Accord. Ulster Unionists are far more aware of this fact than the Republic's or

British mainland commentators who have vied to credit the Accord to Cabinet Secretaries, Foreign Affairs or Office staff, ambassadors, Thatcher or FitzGerald. To Ulster Unionists, Hume is the evil genius behind the Accord. Hume has always said that agreed devolution is acceptable to the SDLP provided that it is part of a broader Anglo-Irish process. The SDLP's welcome for the Accord and its willingness to give both the RUC and the British government some trust confirm both its prior interest in the Accord and its willingness to exploit it to maximum advantage within the nationalist bloc. These facts explain why Hume has been condemned by the OUP, the DUP, SF and even the Workers' Party as the villain behind the agreement. There is some plausibility in the charge that the Accord was made to save the SDLP from Sinn Féin, but there is also truth in the Unionist charge that the Accord was the SDLP's minimum price for abandoning abstentionist politics.

Thus, on current evidence it seems best to conclude that the Accord was signed because of the confluence of well established institutional strategies, symbolic politics and jockeying for position on the part of the SDLP. Hume's description of the Accord as a 'framework' rather than a political blueprint is correct, but he also knows that it is a framework potentially weighted in favour of SDLP solutions. These conclusions are at odds with most ultra-left analyses of British and Irish policy-making on Northern Ireland. They are also at odds with the two sophisticated left-wing analyses of the character of British direct rule since 1972 relevant to explanations of the Accord. The first, that of O'Dowd and his associates, argues that British policy-making has *reproduced* rather than *reformed* sectarian relations in Northern Ireland, and implicitly regards the British state as functionally structured to do so.³³ These authors have a functionalist account of the state, which they deploy to 'explain' policy outputs. The second theory, put forward by Bew and Patterson, contends that the *unintended* consequences of British policy-making have been to exacerbate sectarian conflict between Catholics and Protestants.³⁴ This second view is more theoretically and empirically sophisticated, unspoiled by the functionalist fallacies of much Marxist thought.³⁵ The logical extrapolation of Bew and Patterson's position is to suggest that the Accord may end up reinforcing

sectarian relations, but that the Hillsborough agreement itself must be explained by the decisions of politicians and administrators who genuinely thought themselves to be engaged in a process designed to weaken sectarianism. By contrast, this essay contends, in conclusion, that the unintended consequences of the Accord will, and should be, the coercion of key fractions of the Unionist bloc to accept some form of power-sharing thereby creating conditions for the eventual dissolution of sectarianism.

Interim Results

The most significant result of the Accord so far has been its own survival, the regular inter-ministerial meetings, the institutionalisation of an administrative Secretariat at Maryfield in Belfast, and striking evidence of attempts to harmonise their statements by both governments. As yet it is impossible to assess objectively the consequences of formal increases in police co-operation. The major move on the Irish side has been to sign the Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, but that was specifically promised in the communiqué accompanying the Accord. The British have so far reciprocated with two very minor changes — ensuring that Irish citizens will have the same rights in Northern Ireland which they enjoy in the UK and facilitating the use of the Irish language in street-naming.

The most conflictual items on the policy agenda are obvious: the demand for a code of conduct for the RUC; the existence and character of the almost wholly Protestant UDR; the idea of an entrenched Bill of Rights; the symbolic demand for the repeal of the Flag and Emblems Act of 1954; and, the indefensible administration of justice by Diplock (no-jury, one judge) courts and 'supergrass' trials. On all of these items movement so far has been confined to chairs, helicopters and press-briefings. The Irish government has promised that major changes in the administration of justice will be forthcoming, signalling to the nationalist minority that it should wait until Unionist civil disobedience ends before it can obtain its just deserts. The British government, while willing to move on the RUC's code of conduct, has remained adamant on the retention of the UDR, has shown little willingness to give on a minor reform of the

Diplock courts (three judges instead of one) and is procrastinating in the face of Unionist opposition to the Accord.

The bind that the British government faces can be expressed simply. To display to the Unionists that the IGC does not amount to joint authority, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland must show himself capable of ignoring Irish representations at its deliberations. But to show the Irish government that the IGC is worthwhile, he must make concessions to nationalist feelings. However, he must present any concessions that he does make as measures he would have taken without Irish intervention. The Secretary of State is thus obliged to zig-zag. To date King has chosen to show that the IGC is operational, and will not be suspended or postponed, but has refused rapid reforms in order to ease his most visible difficulty, managing Unionist discontent. Apart from his statement on the Union's perpetual existence and 'misleading' Barry over the Stalker inquiry, the Irish government has shown comprehension, even empathy, for the complex logic of King's position.

Given the number of political uncertainties surrounding the Accord, it is too precarious exactly to predict its future, but two broad scenarios are proffered. The first is the benign scenario which envisages the British and Irish governments waiting until Loyalist mobilisation against the Accord tails off. At this point, it is hoped that a split will emerge in the Unionist camp, with a sufficiently large fraction prepared to bargain with the SDLP on power-sharing. Militant Unionists may make a half-cocked bid for independence, but this will only work to hasten a deal between the SDLP and moderate Unionists. In short, the benign scenario predicts short-run protest followed by an internal settlement incorporating power-sharing and an Irish dimension.

The second, malign, scenario is that the whole Unionist bloc will unite in an unstoppable drive towards independence, sparking off the long heralded repartition and civil war. However the malign scenario is improbable both because it forgets that both governments can put an end to a Unionist uprising either by force, or by repudiating the agreement. Consequently the risks of allowing the benign scenario to play itself are worth taking.

Should the Accord be Supported by the Left?

This author wants the Accord to work, that is, for it to result in an internal power-sharing settlement within Northern Ireland, with an Irish dimension. But, why should the British Left support the Accord? After all, the standard orthodoxies of the Labour Left are either to support Irish unification and adopt an ultra-nationalist stance which tails Sinn Féin,³⁶ or to take a class-based line like the Workers' Party or Militant, and adopt a *de facto* Unionist position on partition whilst arguing for democratic reforms (Workers' Party line) or a common economic class-based revolutionary strategy (Militant line). These positions exemplify the two standard faults in socialist analyses of national questions. One, the romantic nationalist line, swallows national self-determination rhetoric, identifies the underdog, and supports the people so chosen in their national liberation struggle. The other, the class-utopian line, ignores nationalist or cultural consciousness, and attempts to bypass it, or transcend it, through raising the slogans of class unity. The Austrian social democratic Marxists were exceptional in not falling into either the nationalist or class-utopian traps, and in not accepting the doctrines of sovereignty associated with the rise of the capitalist nation-state, and indeed contemporary state-socialist regimes.³⁷ They argued that national identity must be recognised without necessarily accepting wholesale the central doctrine of nationalism: that each separate culture (*ethnos*) must have its own separate sovereign state. Conversely national identity should not be ignored in the pious belief that it will be dissolved by class unity or wither away in a prospective socialist paradise. Whilst the Northern Ireland conflict has both religious and nationalist dimensions, the Austrian socialist tradition is worth re-examination and adaptation.

A power-sharing settlement in the North with an Irish dimension, or co-operative devolution on the Kilbrandon lines, tackles head-on the central grievances of a considerable majority of Northern nationalists whilst not ending the British citizenship of Northern Protestants. It ends Unionist/Protestant supremacy, not their identity. (Those who believe that the Unionist/Protestant identity consists solely of triumphal

supremacism are as blindly sectarian as those they condemn.) A power-sharing settlement recognises that the central cleavage is between nationalist and Unionist, but the evolution of power-sharing institutions need not preclude other cleavages developing, based on class, socialist or liberal ideology. The evidence of other states, such as Belgium or the Netherlands, which have experienced power-sharing coalitions across religious, cultural or ethnic divides, shows not only that they are feasible, but also, that they are frequently transitional — their success weakens the importance of the primary non-class based cleavage, and facilitates the complication of politics with a liberal/socialist cleavage. Accordingly, if the bulk of British Left can stifle its usual impatience and romanticism, and reflect upon its strange and 'unholy' partisanship for Catholic nationalism against Protestant Unionism, there is every reason why it should come to support the opportunities opened by power-sharing arrangements.

These abstract arguments may seem absurdly optimistic in the face of contemporary realities, but they have been sketched to suggest that there is no reason why socialists should not consider power-sharing and an Irish dimension sensible ways of eventually getting their politics on the agenda. The Left should stop analysing Northern Ireland as a set of traffic lights where the choices are green, red or orange. The task is to facilitate the reddening of green and orange in a co-operative fashion. Such a strategic perspective does not constitute naïvety, but rather a determined effort to defeat politically both ultra-loyalists and Sinn Féin. Contrary to Left mythology, Northern Ireland is not unreformable.³⁸ The major problem of social democratic reformism, in all parts of the British Isles, is that it has barely begun.

Policy Objectives

What realistic policies should a future Labour government pursue in Northern Ireland? Six main objectives should be paramount. In descending order of importance they should be: co-operation with the Irish Republic, the promotion of local power-sharing, the implementation of equal citizenship, the liberalisation of the legal and policing system, the promotion of

secularism, and finally, the development of the Labour Party and movement within Northern Ireland.

1. Co-operation with the Irish Republic

A Labour government and an Irish government will have shared interests in cross-border security co-operation, security within Northern Ireland, promoting investment in the whole island of Ireland, and the functioning of joint agencies to deal with EEC-related expenditures and activities, especially agriculture. Bilateral co-operation in the areas of public transport, mass communications, and energy provision will be mutually beneficial for people on both sides of the border.

2. Local power-sharing

Local power-sharing has already been defended in this essay. How can Labour promote it? If Unionists refuse agreed devolution at the level of Northern Ireland as a unit, then as part of its broad commitment to de-centralisation, Labour should contemplate creating local governments with greater powers. Incentives for power-sharing at the local level can be built into the statutes establishing them. For example, it can be stipulated that councils can only make policy with the support of two-thirds of the members, and that committees have to represent parties in proportion to the numbers of members elected. In the absence of agreement, policy-making will return to the Northern Ireland Office, the Councils will not function, and politicians cannot draw expenses. The boundaries of local governments can be drawn to ensure that nowhere will there be a permanent extraordinary (over two-thirds) majority of Unionists or nationalists. Whilst these details are simply suggestions, the project should be to create the incentives, negative and positive, for power-sharing across the sectarian divide. In 1975, the Labour government, with Merlyn Rees in the NIO, made the mistake of holding a Convention which essentially relied on the parties to agree amongst themselves. A future government must intervene and offer selective incentives to induce power-sharing.

3. Equal citizenship measures

The economic constraints any government of Northern Ireland will face are well documented in the essays which follow. Labour's objective is simple to formulate, but difficult to implement: raising the aggregate welfare of the working class whilst rectifying the substantial material disadvantages of Catholics who are disproportionately concentrated amongst the unemployed and low-skilled. The difficulties in generating economic growth will make more arduous the redistributive policies required to rectify the legacies of discrimination against Catholics in both private and public sector employment. However, the experience of affirmative action and quotas in anti-discrimination policies pursued in the United States has shown, if proof were required, that racism and sexism in employment can be tackled substantively, if slowly, in capitalist America. Religious discrimination should prove no more obdurate in a social democratic Britain. Giving teeth to the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Fair Employment Agency – for instance, allowing them the right to inspect at random, fix quotas, fine discriminatory organisations and so on – should not be beyond the competence of a reform-minded Labour administration.

4. Genuine law and order

Reform cannot do its work with counter-productive repression. The Labour Party is already committed to the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and, less clearly, to the reform of Diplock courts. Labour can and must show that the defeat of terrorism does not require 'state terrorism'. Political mobilisation, the abolition of emergency legislation, and the re-establishment of due processes of law (with jury trials in Britain if necessary) will be more effective, and achieve more support, than emergency legislation and 'assembly-line' justice. The Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights and the Police Complaints Boards can be given teeth with a Bill of Rights to sustain them, and power-sharing party members nominated to sit on them. A Labour government should also contemplate splitting Sinn Féin and the IRA by offering

commuted sentences and partial amnesties to the IRA (and Loyalist paramilitaries) in return for surrender. Should the Provisionals refuse, as is likely, defeating them through legitimate policing will be easier as the government's generosity will have been repudiated. And provided that legitimate Catholic grievances, articulated in the Inter-Governmental Conference, or in the forums of agreed devolution, are being dealt with, the social base of the IRA will crumble. A major recruitment drive for Catholic applicants for a re-named police force could then be conceivable. The UDR should be abolished, or purged. Until the impact of these measures has worked itself through and is successful, British troops cannot be withdrawn, but they can be regulated by the law.³⁹

5. Secularisation and community

Northern Ireland's population is comparatively more secularised than the Irish Republic's (with the exception of sections of the Dublin bourgeoisie). Whilst religious belief has not caused the conflict, it has exacerbated it, and Labour should self-consciously advance existing levels of secularisation, without making it the leitmotif of its policies. For example, whether or not education is devolved to power-sharing local governments, it can be stipulated that central grants will be progressively withdrawn from schools in which the religious imbalance amongst teachers and pupils cannot reasonably be explained. Whilst coercive educational intergration would be foolish, and no attempt should be made to close schools, the available selective incentives to concentrate minds should be manipulated. Steps can also be taken to encourage the integration of the teacher-training colleges. The right to restrict leisure-activities on Sundays should be removed from local councils and, similar secularisation steps taken across the Northern Ireland legal and social policy systems.

A far more difficult task will be to try to overturn the residential segregation which has increased since the 'troubles' erupted in the late 1960s. Frankly, I can see no simple and feasible policy prescriptions which might achieve residential integration rapidly.

6. Building a Labour foothold

Labour must abandon constitutional support for Irish nationalism, the 'unification by consent' policy, as unworkable folly, but not for the reasons advanced by Clare Short.⁴⁰ It is not folly simply because Unionist consent will not be forthcoming. It also would make Northern Ireland more ungovernable. Serious commitment to the policy would imply that a Labour government would spend its whole time exhorting Loyalists to negotiate unification with the Republic, encouraging power-sharing only as a means towards an eventual British departure, and so on. Such a strategy would amount to a more or less permanent incitement to riot, and remove the prospects of obtaining Unionist consent for the Anglo-Irish Accord and the reform of Northern Ireland. Labour should *retain*, for symbolic reasons, the clause in the Anglo-Irish Agreement which states that unification would be legislated for if desired by a majority of the population of Northern Ireland, but *abandon* the NEC resolution of 1981 which obliges Labour to work towards that end. Why should a democratic socialist party work towards persuading Northern Irish Protestants to accept cultural subordination in a polity which most feminists and socialists find more repugnant than Britain?

No better signal could be given to Unionists of Labour's intention to maintain the union, albeit with the Inter-Governmental Conference, and with power-sharing, than a commitment by the party to enter Northern Ireland politics itself. Normally this suggestion is made by wide-eyed members of Militant who possess an amazing faith in Labour's electoral capacity to win the votes of the Northern Ireland working class even though it has major difficulties obtaining a majority of the British working class. My support for the entry of Labour into Northern Irish politics does not derive from Militant. Rather, Labour's participation in Northern Ireland politics, as a reformist unionist, and trade-unionist, party in favour of power-sharing and an Irish dimension, will modestly assist the re-alignment of Northern Irish politics around issues which are not exclusively focused on territory, religion and atavistic hostilities.

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¹ *Guardian*, 16 November 1986.

² *Irish Times*, 21 April 1986.

³ The assumptions of these models are expounded by Graham Allison, 1971, *Essence of Decision*, Little, Brown and Company.

⁴ Jim Allister, the DUP Chief Whip in the Northern Ireland Assembly, claims that the Accord has made Northern Ireland a 'shared colony' - *Irish Times*, 11 May 1986. Harold McCusker, Deputy Leader of the Official Unionist Party (OUP) asserts that the British have already conceded sovereignty over Northern Ireland to the Irish Republic - *Irish Times*, 24 February 1986.

⁵ *New Ireland Forum*, Stationery Office, Dublin, May 1984. The Forum report was agreed by the four major constitutional nationalist parties in the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland (Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, the Irish Labour Party, and the Social Democratic and Labour Party). The Forum deliberated, received evidence and commissioned research for a year. In conclusion it offered three possible models of a new Ireland: a unitary state, a federal/confederal state, and joint authority. FF preferred the first model. FG, the ILP and the SDLP preferred the second, and especially the third models. To obtain an agreed report FF's preference was the nominally agreed first choice.

⁶ Claire Palley, 'When an Iron Hand Can Beckon a Federal Union', *Guardian*, 20 January 1986. Palley's article is a perfect specimen of wishful thinking: she assumes into existence what she would like to occur. She starts with the premise that in 'about' 35 years the Protestant and Catholic populations will be about equal, and reasons that a majority will then be forthcoming for 'reunification'. She concludes that Protestant awareness of their demographic destiny should lead them to negotiate the best deal possible in an Irish federal union. Both her demography and psephology are dubious. Paul Compton, 'The Demographic Background', in D. Watt (ed.), *The Constitution of Northern Ireland*, London 1981, shows that most assumptions of an inevitable Catholic majority are ill-founded. There are also considerably more Catholic Unionists than Protestant Irish nationalists, so even a future hypothetical Catholic majority will not be sufficient for a nationalist majority - see Edward Moxon-Browne, 1983, *Nation, Class and Creed in Northern Ireland*, Aldershot, 1983. Breeding for victory, or negotiating federalism because of the other side's fertility rates, are not sound political strategies ...

⁷ The 26 counties of the Irish Free State (1922-37).

⁸ 'In Northern Ireland now we have signed an agreement in which the Prime Minister of Ireland, notwithstanding the fact that he faces and has to live with a Constitution which has aspirations of sovereignty over Northern Ireland,

has in fact accepted that for all practical purposes and unto perpetuity, there will not be a united Ireland because he has accepted the principle of consent that the will of the majority in Northern Ireland must predominate and that Northern Ireland, which is our fervent wish, remains part of the United Kingdom.' *Irish Times*, 4 December 1986. King's message was substantially accurate, but had to be 'clarified' because the gloss 'in perpetuity' is incompatible with the Irish Constitution. King's message, designed to placate Unionists, caused uproar amongst Nationalists.

⁹ The Assembly (1982-6) was the ill-starred child of Jim Prior's rolling devolution scheme. It foundered upon a nationalist boycott by both SF and the SDLP. Since late 1985 it had become simply an agitation-forum against the Accord, prompting the moderate Unionists in the Alliance Party (APNI) to withdraw. King was forced to dissolve the Assembly as he did not want the elections due in the autumn of 1986 to occur amidst the current levels of polarisation.

¹⁰ In this respect the Accord conforms, intentionally or otherwise, with the prescriptions of the Capotorti Report, 1979, prepared for the United Nations Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities; see also Kevin Boyle and Tom Hadden, *Ireland: A Positive Proposal*, Harmondsworth 1985, p.47.

¹¹ Direct rule has only been interrupted by the brief power-sharing Executive in the first five months of 1974.

¹² *Irish Times*, 29 May 1986.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 8 May 1986.

¹⁴ The Kilbrandon Committee, an unofficial all-party body established in 1984 to give a more considered response to the New Ireland Forum than Thatcher's simplistic 'Out! Out! Out!', favoured a form of joint authority which they called co-operative devolution. A five member ministerial executive composed of one Irish Minister, one British Minister and three Northern Ireland representatives elected by proportional representation (i.e. two Unionists and one Nationalist) would make up the Government of Northern Ireland. The idea was to produce two alternating majorities (a British-Unionist majority, or an Irish-British-Northern Ireland Nationalist majority) depending on the line-up of the participants.

¹⁵ *The Equal Citizen*, No.3, 22 December 1986.

¹⁶ For a good example, see John Martin, 'Marxist Interpretations of Northern Ireland', *Capital and Class*, No.18, 1982, and for a bad example the caucus-group journal *Labour and Ireland*.

¹⁷ See, *inter alia* A. Morgan, 'Socialism in Ireland - Red, Green and Orange' in A. Morgan and B. Purdie (eds), *Ireland: Divided Nation, Divided Class*, London 1980 and P. Bew and N. Patterson, *The British State and the Ulster Crisis*, London 1985.

¹⁸ The scale of the British subvention for public expenditure on non-security related items, even during the high-tide of monetarism, shows that Northern Ireland has enjoyed more than the full-share of benefits of membership of the British welfare state. Fergus Pyle cites the Coopers and Lybrand study which showed that Northern Ireland citizens benefit over 40 per cent more per capita than other citizens of the UK from (non-security) public expenditure -

Irish Times, 14-16 April 1986. See the essays by Rowthorn and Canning *et al* in this volume.

¹⁹ Enoch Powell, 'Dirty Tricks That Link Dublin and Westland', *Guardian*, 20 April 1986.

²⁰ A. Lijphart, 'Typologies of Democratic Systems', *Comparative Political Studies*, No.1, 1968, pp. 3-44.

²¹ NOP Market Research Ltd, *Political Opinion in Northern Ireland*, London 1974, p.16.

²² E. Nordlinger, *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies*, Occasional Papers in International Affairs, No.29, Harvard University, 1972, plausibly argues that both elite motivation and autonomy are essential for successful conflict-regulation in open regimes.

²³ *Belfast Telegraph*, 17 December 1985.

²⁴ Interview with NIO official.

²⁵ Evelyn Glenholmes, a suspected IRA terrorist, walked free from a Dublin court in March 1986 because British officials bungled extradition procedures and compelled the Irish court to quash the British application.

²⁶ The Stalker affair, which is the most threatening episode in the evolution of the Accord, and which is unfolding as of writing, centres on whether the RUC, MI5, the Home Office, or others, have conspired to obtain the suspension from duty on unknown charges of the Deputy Constable of Manchester Police who had been given the task of investigating whether or not the RUC had a shoot-to-kill policy in Armagh during 1982.

²⁷ *Irish Times*, 18 June 1986.

²⁸ *Guardian*, 23 June 1986.

²⁹ Harry West, the former leader of the OUP 1974-79, Austin Ardill and David McNarry, are the first group within the OUP to have offered power-sharing to the SDLP. Hume dismissed their informal talks with SDLP leaders because the Unionists wanted the suspension of the IGC, and because the West group are no longer influential within the OUP - *Irish Times*, 6 March 1986.

³⁰ Paul Arthur, 'Anglo-Irish relations and the Northern Ireland Problem', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 1985 No.2, has cogently argued that British policy-making has been characterised by two features: quarantining the Irish issue from mainstream politics, and maintaining international respectability. These features exemplify the NIO's internal and external tracks respectively.

³¹ Bew and Patterson, *op.cit.* pp. 39-131.

³² Talk of Thatcher as the British equivalent of de Gaulle is wildly exaggerated. There are few appropriate parallels between the Irish government and the Algerian national liberation movement, still less in terms of legitimacy between the Provisionals and the FLN (unless one makes Islam and Catholicism the basis of comparison as the ultra-left is reluctant to do). The impact of Northern Ireland on Britain in the 1970s and 80s, with the exception of attempted assassinations of key political figures, has not been anything as dramatic as that of Algeria on French politics in the 1950s. There is also no evidence that Thatcher or the British state are preparing to withdraw - such speculation misreads both the effective administrative

integration of Northern Ireland into the UK since 1972 and underestimates the *realpolitik* of successive Irish governments.

³³ Liam O'Dowd, Bill Rolston and Mike Tomlinson, *Northern Ireland Between Civil Rights and Civil War*, London 1980.

³⁴ Bew and Patterson, *op.cit.*

³⁵ J. Elster, 'Marxism, Functionalism and Game Theory', *Theory and Society*, 1982, No.11, 453-82.

³⁶ G. Bell, *The British in Ireland: A Suitable Case for Withdrawal*, London 1984, articulates the emotions of most Labour constituency activists.

³⁷ See T. Bottomore and P. Goode, *Austro-Marxism*, Oxford 1978.

³⁸ M. Farrell, *Northern Ireland: The Orange State*, London 1976.

³⁹ Calls for UN troops to go into Northern Ireland are naive. UN intervention is nowadays an admission of a terminal conflict, and a recipe for ethnic partitioning.

⁴⁰ Clare Short, in *Marxism Today*, January 1986, in effect advocates unification by coercion: self-determination for Catholics but not Protestants ... The hazards of being an MP in Birmingham Ladywood must explain this strange partiality.

Paul Bew and Henry Patterson

The New Stalemate: Unionism and the Anglo-Irish Agreement

At the time of writing, nine months since the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed at Hillsborough on 15 November 1985, Northern Ireland is in the middle of a period of vicious sectarian confrontation and violence. This had its initial focus on the Orange marches on 12 July but has subsequently intensified into one of the most ominous developments in the recent period: the first enforced population movements of any size since the early 1970s (in the Oldpark area of North Belfast). In the arena of high politics, the RUC's decision to allow an Orange march through a predominantly Catholic area in Portadown has produced a major public row between the Joint Chairmen of the Anglo-Irish Inter-Governmental Council. Even inveterate Agreement supporters like the *Irish Times* columnist Mary Holland was forced to reflect on the increasingly pathetic nature of the claims being made by Irish and British officials and ministers that the summer would see a major confrontation with the Unionists and, after they had been 'faced down', the beginning of a solution to the Northern problem.¹

The decisive rejection of even an extremely restricted legislation of divorce by the Republic's electorate in the referendum in June 1986, was a major shock to the pro-Agreement forces in the British state and media where support for the Agreement was usually in inverse proportion to any grasp of the political and ideological realities in either of the Irish states.

The major defeat for Garret FitzGerald's Coalition government came just three years after his vaunted 'Constitutional Crusade', launched in 1981 to create the