THE PARTITION

Ireland Divided, 1885–1925



CHARLES TOWNSHEND

'A timely and important book'
Diarmaid Ferriter, *Irish Times*

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THE PARTITION

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Diarmaid Ferriter, *Irish Times*

'Charles Townshend has routinely displayed both scholarship and objectivity. In *The Partition*, he shows how the necessity arose to divide Ireland into unequal parts, down roughly Protestant and Roman Catholic lines'
Simon Heffer, *Daily Telegraph*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charles Townshend is the author of the highly praised *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* and *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence, 1918–1923*. *The Partition* forms the third part of his trilogy on how Ireland became independent. His other books include *When God Made Hell: The British Invasion of Mesopotamia and the Making of Iraq, 1914–21*.

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To my grandchildren

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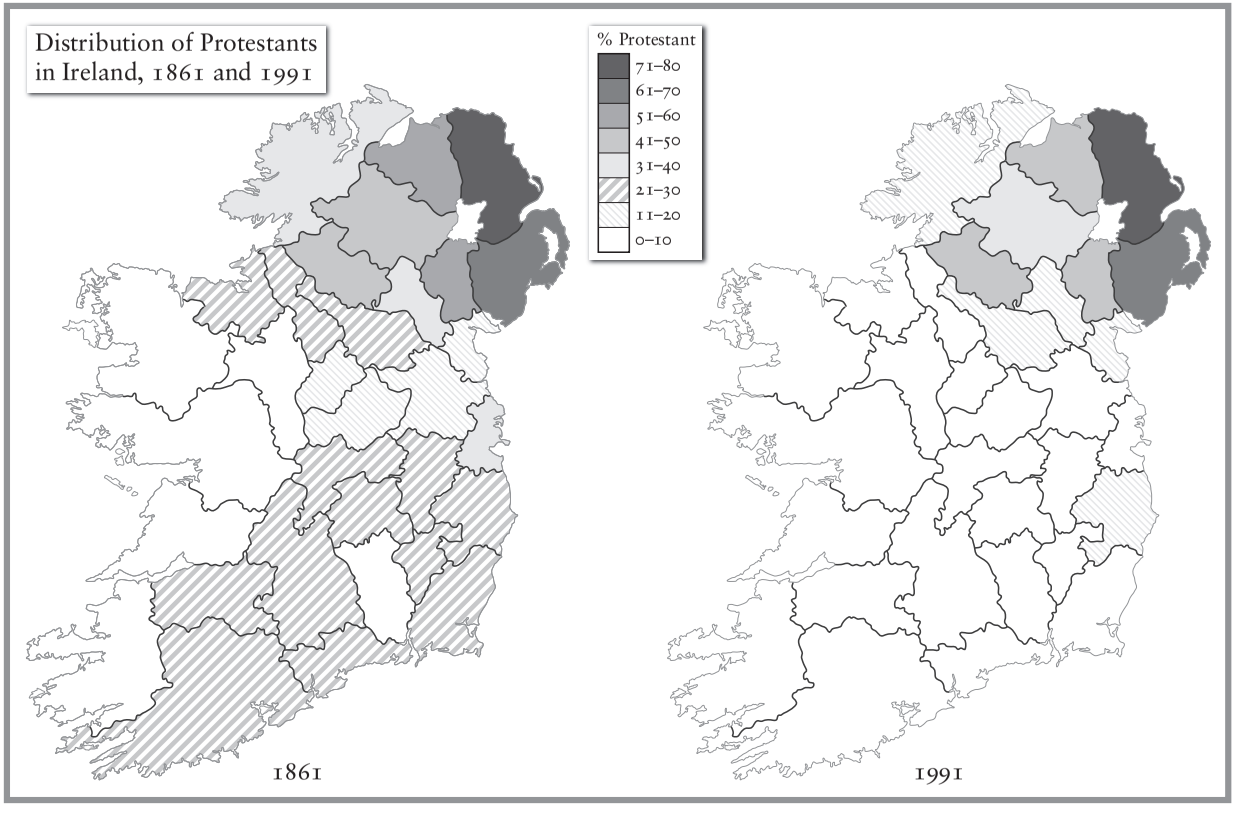
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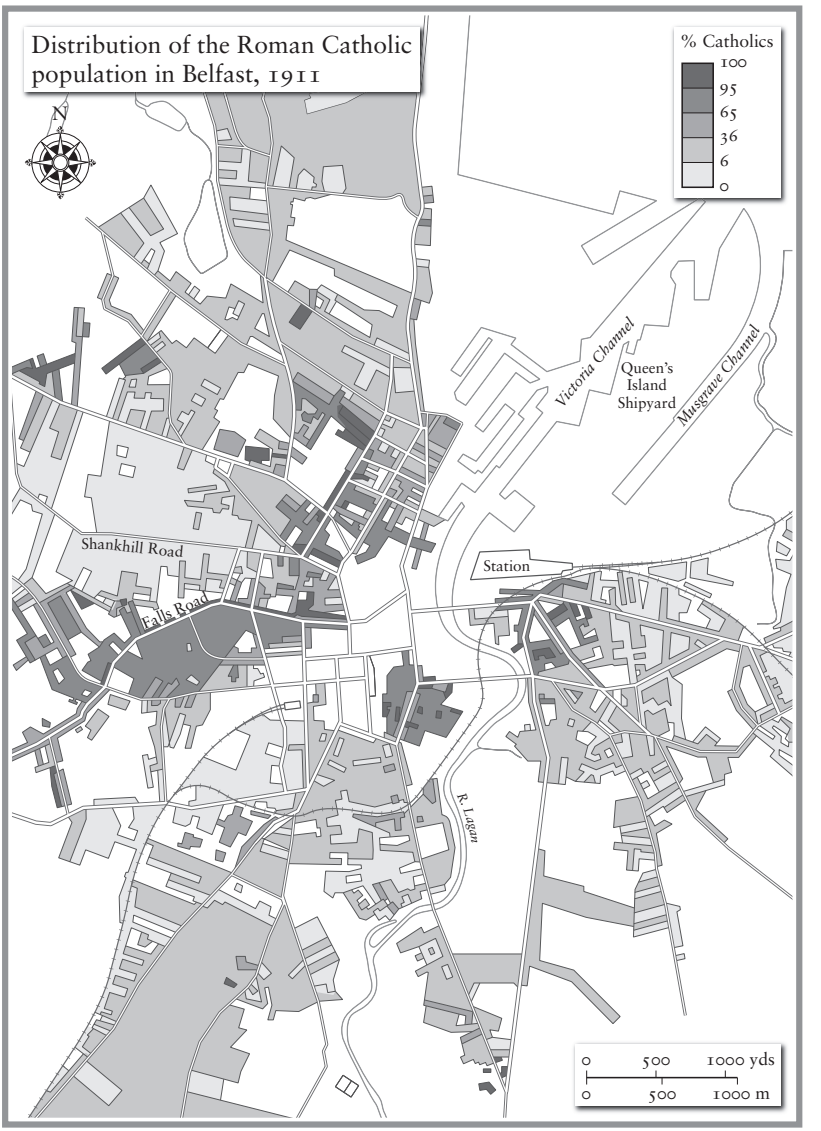
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List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the text and the notes

AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
BP	Belfast Protestant Association
BLSUU	British League for the Support of Ulster and the Union
BMH	Bureau of Military History
BNL	*Belfast News-Letter*
CCBS	Centre for Cross-Border Studies
GIA	Government of Ireland Act
GOC	General Officer Commanding
HC Deb	Parliamentary debates, House of Commons
ILPU	Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union
INA	Irish National Archives, Dublin
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IUA	Irish Unionist Alliance
NA	National Archives, London
NEBB	North-Eastern Boundary Bureau
NLI	National Library of Ireland, Dublin
PA	Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords
PR	proportional representation
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
ROIA	Restoration of Order in Ireland Act
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SC	Special Constabulary
UCDA	University College Dublin Archive

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UIL	United Irish League
USC	Ulster Special Constabulary
UUC	Ulster Unionist Council

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Prologue

Two days before Christmas 1920, the Government of Ireland Bill – or fourth Home Rule Bill – became law. It set forth two devolved governments in Ireland, southern and northern. Southern Ireland remained in the realm of political imagination, but Northern Ireland was firmly established when its parliament met in June 1921. The three previous Irish home rule bills had precipitated what may have been the most serious political and constitutional crisis in modern British history. The first two, introduced by the Liberal leader William Ewart Gladstone in 1886 and 1893, had split one of the two great governing parties; the third bill, introduced by his successor Herbert Henry Asquith in 1912, had brought the kingdom to the brink of civil war. Hundreds of thousands of men in Ireland had enlisted in citizen militias opposing or supporting home rule, and at Westminster the leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party had pronounced Asquith's Liberal government 'a revolutionary committee which has seized on despotic power by fraud'. Political negotiations were deadlocked, and the British army in Ireland was in turmoil. The 'Ulster crisis' was overwhelmed by events on an even vaster scale in Europe in August 1914, but it was never resolved.

The partition – the drawing of a political border within Ireland – happened because the Irish home rule project, the British government's acceptance of the Irish nationalist claim that Ireland should not be ruled from London, was resisted by those who refused to accept that claim. The roots of the home rule crisis lie in the original connection between the two main 'British Isles' – as the English call them – cemented by Henry II's expedition to secure the submission of Strongbow (Richard de Clare), the Norman adventurer who had

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seized control of eastern Ireland in 1171. The connection tightened and relaxed over long periods of time, but two key moments shaped the issue which wracked the country in the nineteenth century. Oliver Cromwell's campaign in 1649–50 determined the essentially military nature of English control of Ireland, and fixed in Irish minds its essentially Protestant character. The passage of the 1801 Act of Union ended Ireland's colonial status along with the limited autonomy of the Irish parliament, launching an attempt to turn the 'British isles' into a single political community. Defence or destruction of that union would then form the hinge of what became known as the 'Irish Question'.

Whether or not British statesmen intended the union to end the 'Protestant Ascendancy' and integrate Catholics in a single United Kingdom body politic, the daunting scale of any such project was already established. As a historian of County Monaghan (on the Ulster border) put it, by the end of the eighteenth century 'if a person was a Catholic, it invariably meant that he was of old Gaelic stock, that his ancestors were a defeated race, that he was never to be fully trusted' – in the minds of the 'planter stock', who in turn were seen as foreigners, persecutors, privileged persons, enemies. The political meaning of this cocktail of racial perceptions was unambiguous: the intention of the Catholic was 'some day . . . to become master in his house again'.[1] This 'zero-sum' analysis – in the language of game theory – the belief that a gain for one community must be an equivalent loss to the other, would militate against compromise in all future political negotiations. Political consensus, the animating idea of the English constitution, was hobbled in Ireland. The result was forty years of political crisis.

To speak of such a protracted crisis may seem to abuse an overused word. Can a crisis last so long? In clinical terms, crisis is by definition transient, 'the point in the progress of a disease which is decisive of recovery or death', as the dictionary says. Extended to the social or political sphere, its meaning is not so precise. 'A turning point in the progress of anything . . . or a state of affairs in which a decisive change for better or worse is imminent.' Measuring such serious matters is necessarily more subjective, but in the nature of things 'normal' political crises reach some resolution in a matter of days rather than

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weeks. The head-on confrontation over Irish home rule did not follow normal patterns, and could not be resolved by normal political adjustments. At stake was the self-definition of the United Kingdom.

This composite polity had been put together after the violent upheavals of the seventeenth century in what can look like a deliberately pragmatic manner, avoiding issues of definition. The debates on the fundamentals of politics conducted in the church by Putney Bridge in 1647 would remain unique. (Moreover, that uncharacteristic moment of English self-analysis did not happen in parliament, but the army.) But another moment of national destiny arrived in 1885, when Gladstone's acceptance of home rule – it has often been called a 'conversion' – broke up the conventional parameters of parliamentary politics, producing an extended sense of crisis, widely and repeatedly experienced, over four decades, from 1885 to 1925. At its core, beyond the immediate alarms and excursions, lay a systemic crisis, a fear that the breakdown of consensus rendered all the structures and assumptions of the British political world ineffective.

The intensity of the hostility generated by the home rule project can be difficult to grasp today.[2] Neither of the first two home rule bills offered more than limited devolution of power to an Irish administration, but the fierce and increasingly well-organized opposition which brought Gladstone's bills down raised fundamental questions about the home rule project, the survival of the United Kingdom, and the limits of democratic consensus. Was devolution desirable – was it even possible? Did it defy the laws of politics to propose a status part way to independence? What rights did Irish people who refused to accept home rule have to resist it?

The third Home Rule Bill aimed, just as had the first two, to preserve the union by allowing Ireland limited self-government, and hardly went beyond them in the powers it offered to the devolved administration. But it precipitated the greatest intensification of the recurrent crisis, focusing and magnifying all these issues. Unionists were no readier than they had been in 1893 to accept that home rule would maintain the union: it was, they held (and many believed), simply a new name for the ancestral Catholic longing to secure independence and ultimately dispossess the Protestants. Home rule would be 'Rome rule' – illiberal and incompetent, if not actively malignant.

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The argument convulsed parliament and spread beyond it into popular mobilization. Hundreds of thousands signed pledges to resist home rule. Quasi-military militias with six-figure membership lists were formed to put pressure on the government either to abandon it – or push it through. They raised the spectre of civil war, with political questions that the liberal consensus was unable to answer. Could the threat of armed resistance to the law ever be justified?

As the crisis intensified, Unionists concentrated in north-eastern Ireland faced a new issue. If home rule could not be stopped altogether, could they be excluded from the devolved Irish substate? The idea of 'exclusion' was rejected in 1912 but never went away afterwards. So was another idea, a kind of federal arrangement, maybe modelled on the Dominion system of Canada and South Africa, which might contain the conflicting democratic rights of nationalists and Unionists. In 1914 Unionists in Ulster prepared to act unilaterally, and the government's monopoly of force seemed to be disintegrating. How real was the threat of meltdown? This issue has always been a matter of dispute, but in the event the threat was submerged by the indisputably greater threat posed by Germany in August 1914. Only when a fourth home rule plan was set out after the war, amidst an armed Irish republican bid to establish a separate state, did it become certain that the hangover of that debate would be a formal division of Ireland.

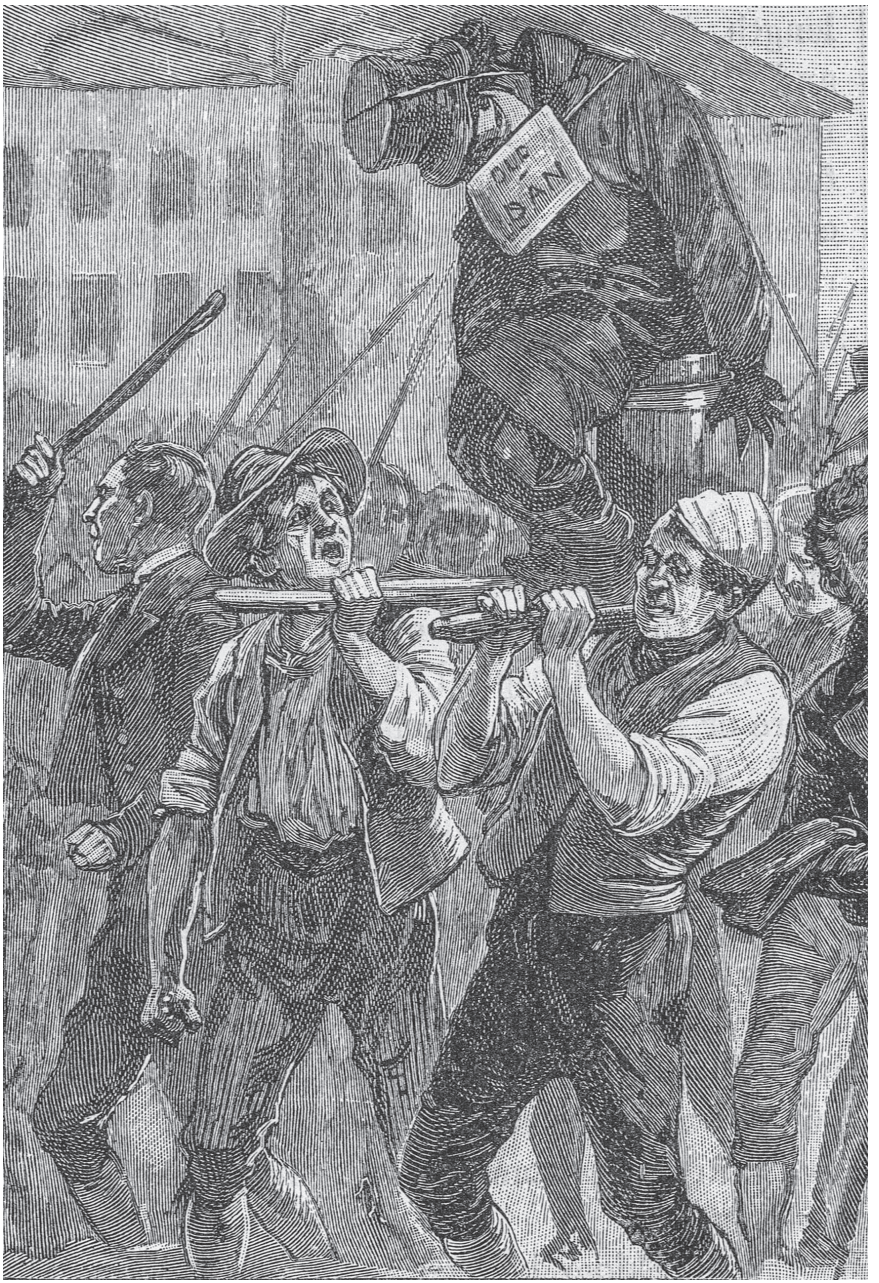
The 1920 Government of Ireland Act, dividing Ireland by devolving powers to southern and northern parliaments, forms the focal point of this book. Its passage was long drawn out, though in parliament it was far less stormy than its predecessors. The storms were outside, as British rule across most of Ireland – Ulster excepted – was paralysed by the IRA's guerrilla campaign to establish an Irish Republic. In Ulster, the pre-war preparations for unilateral action were revived with the (often reluctant) cooperation of the British government. In an atmosphere of civil war, too readily evoking seventeenth-century memories, a 'state under siege' was put together. The 1920 Act established its frontier, the line of partition, but it remained open to question for years. Few people apart from Ulster Unionists saw it as either sensible or just. The Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921, which morphed 'Southern Ireland' into the Irish Free State, with Dominion status, entailed immediate adjustment of

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the border in line with 'the wishes of the inhabitants', but the civil war within the Free State delayed this until 1924. The eventual Boundary Commission did not report until December 1925, so border revision remained a hope or fear in the air for five years after the 1920 Act.

The Irish border has always been contentious, both its course and indeed its very existence. A recent study of Ireland's long century within the United Kingdom concludes that partition was not inevitable, but it was logical.[3] So was partition just a mistake, a failure of statesmanship, or an unavoidable necessity? Or was it, perhaps, as Irish nationalists have always believed, a deliberate device to preserve British power? The question whether it should, or could, be reversed has driven political action and paramilitary violence on both sides, nationalist and Unionist, but as its centenary approached the border seemed to be more settled than ever before. The decision of the United Kingdom in 2016 to leave the European Union unexpectedly brought the status of the frontier back to the centre of the political vortex; at its centennial moment an understanding of the forces which brought it into existence is more than ever necessary.

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1
The Union

'What can we say for a set of Irishmen, that fell out with each other in a state of ebriety, for private animosity, and when the law has sobered some of them, then to fall a quarreling about their respective creeds?'[1]

John Byrne, Armagh 1787

THREE BATTLES

By a crossroads near Loughgall in County Armagh, on 21 September 1795, a group of Protestants with firearms on the hilltop beat off an assault by 'swarms of Defenders', killing perhaps thirty. It was a one-sided fight, a 'turkey shoot'; the fact that the assault was pressed in such an unfavourable situation testified to the desperate determination of the Catholic assailants, members of a semi-secret semi-vigilante society. Colonel William Blacker, who wrote an account of the conflict a generation later, lamented, 'Happy had it been for the Protestant name if the Protestants had contented themselves with the defeat of their enemies at the Diamond and the formation of a protective society. Unhappily it was not so, a spirit of vengeance and retaliation had sunk too deeply in many of their minds to be thus easily satisfied . . . A determination was expressed of driving from this quarter of the country the entire of its Roman Catholic population.' ('Many were "quiet in the land" and had taken no share in such proceedings, but revenge, like love, is blind.')[2] The 'protective society' became known as the Orange Order; Blacker had in fact been one of its senior officers.

The 'battle of the Diamond', superficially a scruffy local set-to,

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achieved a kind of immortality for this reason. It signalled and symbolized an unwavering repressive streak which ensured that whereas anti-Catholicism in Britain gradually faded, ceasing to be the defining attribute of Britishness, in Ireland it retained a living function in the construction of collective identity. British anti-Catholicism sometimes burst into public discourse, as it would famously do in 1850 when the Liberal leader Lord John Russell denounced the re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in Britain as 'insolent and insidious' Papal interference, but it no longer routinely erupted into public violence. Outbursts of sectarian conflict in Ireland became more noticeable as they declined in Britain.

In July 1813, when England was gearing up for the final showdown with Napoleonic France, another fight was going on in Garvagh, County Londonderry. Several hundred Catholic 'Ribbonmen' attacked the King's Arms, where the Orange lodge met; Protestants flocked to the tavern bringing enough yeomanry muskets to disperse the attackers (who had only bludgeons). This 'battle of Garvagh' was kept from obscurity by an Orange ballad and took its place in a ritual succession of Orange triumphs.[3] The Catholic losers also memorialized these battles in song and story.

In July 1829, at Mackan in Fermanagh, when Orange marchers attacked youths who had jeered at them, Catholics replied by gathering with pitchforks and billhooks and attacking the Orangemen. Three were killed, and four Catholics sentenced to death for the murders. Three of these were transported, and the fourth executed. They became the subjects of folk legend, ballads of 'the battle of Mackan Hill', still repeated in the late twentieth century. One of the longest chapters in the anthropologist Henry Glassie's remarkable study of the border village of Ballymenone charts the recurrence of this tale. Mackan Hill, he judged, 'coils with the live force of "serfs" in rebellion against "bigotry" '; it 'becomes the tale of Catholic frustration . . . just vengeance is meted out on men who do no real harm, who are not the cause but only the medium . . . men who are available . . . neighbours'.[4] For the anthropologist, this was a strategy of using the past to frame the present.

By the time the Orange Order was taking form, and the 'Defenders' were reacting against it, the sense of a frontier was already etched

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into what has been called the 'shatterbelt' – a zone on the fringe of Ulster 'where both religious groups had significant demographic strength', and a wider zone where they 'felt vulnerable to attack or colonization'. The reciprocal dynamic has been likened to Newton's third law of motion: every Orange action 'created equal and opposite support for the Defenders'.[5]

INVADING ULSTER

Less than a year before the Mackan fight, when Daniel O'Connell's Catholic emancipation campaign was reaching its climax, his lieutenant Jack Lawless, vexed by the dramatic shortfall in Ulster contributions to the 'Catholic rent' (the penny subscription to the Catholic Association) – just £204 out of £2,899 – launched an 'invasion of Ulster' – the first use of a fateful label. Leaving Carrickmacross on the Monaghan frontier on 17 September 1828, he planned to hold a series of mass meetings, declaring he would have 50,000 followers by the time he reached Ballybay six days later. Ballybay, a Presbyterian town, was an inhospitable place for Catholic agitators, and 8,000 Orangemen reportedly mustered there – 'in general armed with muskets; but failing these, swords, bayonets, pitch-forks, scythes, &c.' – to stop Lawless, many of them having made their wills before they set out. Lawless was headed off by a force of police and troops, but even so there was a clash near Rockcorry in which two of his followers died. In Lawless's next proclaimed objective, Armagh, where once again armed Protestants assembled on 30 September, local Catholics persuaded Lawless to stay away.[6]

The invasion was a fiasco and has largely been forgotten; but its motivation remains important. The Catholic Association leaders assumed that Protestant resistance to emancipation was weak, manipulated by elites rather than spontaneous eruptions, and could be called out and overawed. This assumption would recur repeatedly over the next century. And while the Ballybay standoff passed without major violence, it might have triggered a truly destructive conflict, a civil war in which the 'massacre of the Catholics of the North' might have been followed by a mass invasion of Catholics from the

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south.[7] O'Connell's campaign in the 1820s cemented an informal process of politicization which had taken shape over the previous generation. At many social levels, Catholics picked up the tools of the day-to-day trade of democracy – 'organising the signing of petitions, electing delegates, drawing up agendas, conducting debates' – and many once unpolitical social occasions 'took on a highly charged political character'. It has been argued that even before O'Connell launched his movement, this wide skein of communal activities represented 'the emergence of the Irish Catholic nation'.[8] The consequences of this could hardly have been more epochal.

UNIONISM?

After Catholics were eventually conceded the vote in 1829, O'Connell began campaigning to repeal the 1801 Act of Union, requiring Irish candidates in the 1832 election to take the 'repeal pledge'. It was resistance to this Irish nationalist mobilization against the union which would, ultimately, lead to partition. The centre of that resistance was in Ulster, and the resistance movement was labelled unionism. That much is plain enough; but what the union was, not so. Unionism did not exist before the creation of the United Kingdom in 1801, and at that point, beyond the rudimentary motive of national security, there was no Unionist programme or ideal underpinning the union. Those who forced the union through the Irish parliament did not know what it was for, nor how it should be made to work. 'Incorporation', the idea of full integration, was advocated by some, but without ever becoming a definite policy. Even for William Pitt (the Younger), the prime minister, who had spoken long before of 'making England and Ireland one country *in effect*', the creation of a United Kingdom identity as such was not a significant objective.[9] He did of course see Catholic emancipation as a crucial step which could not be taken without union, but it was merely a preliminary one. And this policy had negative origins; ministers were criticized – in terms that would echo throughout the union's life – for never thinking of Ireland 'except when she became troublesome'.

In the absence of any coherent governmental impulse towards

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'incorporation', Britain's Irish policy drifted; the two countries remained separate in almost every respect after 1801. The Irish administration would be seen time and again – as it was by the future Lord Melbourne when he served as chief secretary – as 'anomalous and unsatisfactory'; yet it was left that way. Twenty years into the union, one advocate of integration, who maintained that it had been 'expected . . . that Ireland should become the same as a county of England', fumed that since Ireland was being governed 'as our slave colonies were' – by a viceroy and colonial establishment – 'Jamaica might be called, with as much propriety, a part of the United Kingdom as Ireland'. This was an exaggeration, certainly: Ireland sent a hundred MPs to Westminster. But they did little to establish Ireland's status of 'equality of laws' (one of Pitt's favoured ideas). Westminster did not ignore Ireland exactly, indeed it passed many special Irish laws, but that very fact displayed the absence of 'blending' (another such idea). For London, Ireland remained a foreign land (if not, as the future Duke of Wellington bluntly described it, 'an enemy country'). The cheerful confession of ignorance of Irish matters would be a standard line for British statesmen over the next hundred years. Against it, Irish MPs battled in vain, even though, as the Anglo-Irish playwright and Whig politician Richard Brinsley Sheridan said, the union made such protestations 'as ridiculous as to say they knew nothing about Middlesex or Yorkshire'.[10]

The London and Dublin administrations remained separate through inertia rather than deliberate choice, except perhaps for the theory, sometimes embraced, that only 'the man on the spot' could deal with the peculiarity and ungovernability of the Irish. The racial perception of Irish 'mendacity, corruption and violence' may have been toned down over the years, but a sense of fundamental difference would still be an underlying presence at Westminster when partition was debated in 1920. (Lord Hugh Cecil, for instance, clinically identified 'the kind of exaggeration which so often makes Irish speeches quite ineffective to an English audience'.)[11] Time and again British policy was reduced to the hope that once the country was 'reduced to obedience', as one lord chancellor put it, it might ultimately converge towards English values and behaviour.[12] This hardly qualified as a constructive or coherent programme of unionism, and

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it is hard to deny that the union was a major example of what has been called 'state-building failure'.[13]

Small wonder it was unpopular in Ireland – or rather, as Wellington put it, detested. If the positive meaning of the union was ill-defined, its negative effects were definite. As one pioneering student of devolution remarked, 'After 1801, the will to Irish unity disappeared'.[14] Although nationalists would always summon up the history of the democratic movement (embodied in the Volunteers) as proof of Irish unity, the 'generous enthusiasm which had for one flickering moment illuminated the Irish political scene' was lost, and lost for good. The psycho-political and social significance of the union changed with the uneven economic development of Ireland in the nineteenth century; Belfast and the north more generally came to see it as the framework of prosperity.

Even Catholic emancipation, the union's only positive achievement, was so long delayed that its constructive character was lost. The union was premised on Catholic consent, offered in the belief that it would be a prelude to emancipation; the failure to deliver it lost perhaps the last chance of legitimizing the British state by enrolling the Catholic elite.[15] Catholics were pushed into a political posture in which the only solution was reduction or removal of 'British rule'. And the ineffective performance of the state in reconciling Catholics left the field open to a very different project, the 'Protestant Crusade' to complete the union by converting Catholics to Protestantism. In the 1820s, O'Connell's mobilization for emancipation coincided with the so-called 'Second Reformation', a proselytizing campaign which not only failed to achieve mass conversion, but seriously exacerbated sectarian animosity.[16] Catholic resistance could take violent forms, and the fear of proselytism became etched deep in the attitude of the Church.

In one crucial sphere the union did attempt a constructive Irish policy, one which was ahead of Britain's own. In 1831 the Irish national system of education was launched to establish primary schools throughout the country. School building grants, teachers' salaries, and approved textbooks were centrally directed by an unpaid commission. Within two years over 100,000 children were enrolled in 789 schools; by mid-century there were half a million in 4,547 schools,

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and by the time a British national system was set up in 1870 there were nearly a million in 6,800 schools. All were non-denominational – in theory. In practice, despite the original aim of having schools run jointly by Protestant and Catholic clergy or laymen, by mid-century fewer than 4 per cent were under joint management; three-quarters were run by clergy of a single denomination. By 1870 the system was effectively denominational – 'almost as denominational as we could desire', as the Catholic hierarchy noted at the end of the century. The main result of the national system, as one leading historian has put it, 'was to bring about a dramatic increase in the educational resources of the Irish Catholic Church'.[17]

This unintended outcome was in large part the product of denominational geography; in overwhelmingly Catholic or Protestant areas, if the government had insisted on mixed schools, it would have ended up with no schools. In areas where the population was mixed, the failure of state policy was more serious. In the north-east, the education issue was a long-running battleground, with the Catholic Church unyielding in its determination to secure control – not least because so much Protestant support for 'non-sectarianism' was couched in terms of hostility to Catholicism.[18] In consequence, as a leading historian of Irish education puts it, 'now not only were the schools effectively segregated institutions, but the Protestants and Catholics assumed directly polar ideological positions concerning schooling'.[19]

PRESBYTERIANS INTO ULSTERMEN

The north-east of Ireland would become politically distinct for one key reason: its concentrated Presbyterian population, a very distinct community – fissiparous yet dynamic – with its centre in the growing city of Belfast.[20] Not all Protestants were Presbyterians – indeed until the Church of Ireland was disestablished in 1869, 'Protestant' meant 'Anglican'; Presbyterians were 'dissenters'. In this lay their special quality. The potency of a sense of victimhood in driving and sustaining resistance – sometimes violent – has come to be widely recognized. It existed long before the recent rise of 'victim culture'. For Irish

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Presbyterians the sense arrived early on, shortly after the great triumph over Catholicism of 1690. The 1704 Test Act effectively expelled them from local government, and a series of disabilities gave 'frequent fortification' to their 'sense of persecuted purity'.[21]

James Craig, who would become prime minister in the first Northern Ireland government in 1921, belonged to the first generation of Presbyterians who would be unambiguously labelled 'Protestants'. In his biography, *Craigavon: Ulsterman* – a book 'so angry even Lady Craigavon and the Stormont Cabinet were upset'[22] – the playwright St John Ervine announced that his project was not to write a formal biography but to explain why the once anti-establishment Presbyterians had become conservatives; 'why was the Henry Joy McCracken of my childhood a Unionist when his renowned kinsman a century earlier was hanged as a rebel in Belfast?'[23] Ervine doubted 'if there are many Presbyterians in Ulster who cannot claim at least one rebel in their family history', and that reflects a view still widely held. The prominence of radical Protestants in the revolutionary movement was striking at the time and even more so in hindsight. But as an eminent historian of Ulster Presbyterians has cautioned, 'those who mourn the extinction of the pre-lapsarian Presbyterianism – enlightened in religion and republican in politics – which supposedly prevailed' before the emergence of the firebrand populist preacher Henry Cooke in the 1820s, 'would do well to recall its fragile and conditional nature'.[24] Presbyterians were at the forefront of the United Irish rebellion in 1798, but in the United Irish mobilization 'the basic categories of ethnic and denominational identity', and the seventeenth-century colonial settlement patterns, determined the geography of Ulster republicanism. The 'Scotch' (as Presbyterians were widely known) had been involved in sectarian violence for years and their Catholic antagonists never dropped their guard.[25] And 'the speed with which the Presbyterian radicals shifted their ground' after the failure of the 1798 rebellion 'tells its own story'.[26]

An account of 'the evolution of the Ulsterman', written at the height of the early twentieth-century Ulster crisis, argued that the identity was already formed by the time of the union. The 1608 Ulster plantation scheme, R. H. Murray said, had 'planted a new race in the northern province', which, unlike most such migrant groups, 'never

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coalesced with the inhabitants'. They remained 'as distinct as if an ocean rolled between them'.[27] The 'character of the Ulsterman' was shaped in the 'severe school of adversity'. This 'new being', the Ulsterman, it has been suggested, took shape during the crisis over the second Home Rule Bill in 1892; and then a literature developed giving him a special 'character', 'heritage', and 'destiny'.[28] There was ample material to hand already: forty years earlier, in 1852, a series of articles in the newly founded *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, examining 'the origin and characteristics of the population in the counties of Down and Antrim', found them to be Anglo-Saxons with 'the inherited virtues of thrift, capacity for hard work, and respect for law and order'.[29]

The consistency of the characteristics attributed to 'Ulstermen', or northerners more generally, over several generations, has certainly been quite striking. Recently Marianne Elliott boiled them down to 'a peculiar accent, a blunt manner, a philistine outlook on life, an intransigent frame of mind'.[30] The graceless accent has even been explained as a deliberate rebuke to the graceful southern 'brogue'. Others have lengthened the list, or reduced it to, say, 'grit' (versus southern 'grace'). As the human geographer Marcus Heslinga noted, in quoting a raft of such menus 'for what they are worth', quite apart from the fact that regional characteristics are inherently 'rather intangible', appreciations of them are highly subjective. But both regional and denominational differences have been repeatedly registered. So, for instance, northerners are more provident whereas southerners lean more on Providence; the southerner works to live while the northerner lives to work; and so on. Northern Catholics are northerners – Eoin MacNeill said 'hardly less grave, sedate, unresponsive, taciturn, laconic, keen on a bargain, tenacious of his own . . . than the typical Ulster Presbyterian' – and, however hospitable, have a hard core not found in the south.[31] For James Winder Good (an acute critic of unionism) the Ulster 'temper' had become so distinct that 'the Ulsterman of all creeds contrasts more sharply with the natives of the other provinces than the Black Country does with the Home Counties'.[32] Jack White would later point to the 'mixture of contempt and defensiveness' that marked the Ulster provincial character.[33]

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