Belfast Blues, II

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In the October issue Pastor Neuhaus described the climate of fear and uncertainty that pervades Northern Ireland and underscored the importance of March, 1974, as the date mandated by the British “White Paper” for the restoration of a modicum of political order in Ulster. He explained why he believes the troubles must be understood in terms of religious conflict, rather than as the result of class struggle, of differing nationalisms or of British imperialism. He offered his personal impressions of the Reverend Ian Paisley and reported the divergent perceptions of Paisley’s political role in some possible futures. The first installment of this article concluded with an account of extended conversations with William Cardinal Conway, Roman Catholic Primate of All Ireland, and with other Church leaders about the current troubles and the prospects for a “New Ireland” that might peacefully unite North and South in the foreseeable future.

Among Protestants in Northern Ireland, especially Presbyterians, there is a stronger tradition of individual clergies involved in politics than among Catholics. The tradition is traced over the last hundred years by Andrew Boyd in his Holy War in Belfast and is represented today by, for example, Ian Paisley and the Reverend Martin Smyth, head of the Orange Order, vice president of the Unionist Party and an important factor in the “loyalist” opposition to the White Paper. The three major Protestant groups are the Church of Ireland, which is in communion with the Church of England, the Presbyterians and the Methodists.

Church of Ireland leaders make a point of stressing that the North-South political division has never seriously threatened the unity of their body. While 75 per cent of their members live in Northern Ireland, the central administrative headquarters are in Dublin, “and therefore there are more cross-border meetings, contracts and clerical interchanges in the Church of Ireland than in any other denomination.” As the two most important Protestant groups, the Church of Ireland and the Presbyterians have a curious but generally cooperative relationship, at least on “the Irish question.”

During the years of triumphant British hegemony, the Church of Ireland had a favored position, with most of the political, economic and social aristocracy in its fold. Indeed politics, economics and social status were all of a part. By early century the Presbyterians, largely settlers from Scotland, had again demonstrated Calvinism’s legendary affinity to capitalism, and in very recent years they have also gained the political ascendancy, replacing the Church of Ireland aristocracy that reigned over Stormont for almost fifty years. One Presbyterian church executive describes his body as “the sandwich church,” with the Church of Ireland aristocracy on top and with the working class, mainly Church of Ireland and Methodist, on the bottom. No doubt much of the old landed money and whatever remains of “Society” in Ulster is Church of Ireland, but one gathers that the Presbyterians are now more on top than the sandwich metaphor implies. Church of Ireland spokesmen tend to emphasize the lower-middle and working-class makeup of their constituency, one going so far as to argue that Church of Ireland people are as underprivileged compared to Presbyterians as are Catholics compared to the general Protestant population.

In any case, the hardest core of Ulster resistance to Irish unity would seem to be located among the Presbyterians. In addition to the factors above, one remembers that many Church of Ireland churchmen, like their Anglican brethren elsewhere, share a “high church” tradition that makes for a more am-
bivalent attitude toward Roman Catholicism, whereas Presbyterianism has a more irrefragable history and theology of opposition to the Whore of Babylon with all her works and all her ways. The flammability of such anti-Catholic passions, especially when exploited by the Orange Order, can never be far from the minds of Presbyterian leaders who strive to take a more temperate approach to the problems of Northern Ireland.

Even those Protestant leaders who seem most sensitive to questions of social justice evidence a curiously relaxed approach to the inequities from which the Catholic community suffers. No one denies that there are inequities, but it is suggested that they are much exaggerated and that, in any case, the Protestants are not to be blamed for them. In fact, evidence of the historic and systemic exclusion of Catholics from economic opportunities is clear even to the short-term visitor and is documented in detail in the 1969 “Cameron Report” issued by a government-appointed commission. These injustices were the core of the grievances behind the Catholic “civil rights movement” that gained such international sympathy a few years ago. I left Northern Ireland with little confidence that the Protestant establishment was ready to treat these complaints with a real sense of urgency.

“Oh, the Cameron Report. Well, my goodness, I haven’t heard that mentioned for nine months or more.” Such was the amused response of a former Stormont minister, whose chief responsibility was for economic development. Other church and political leaders acknowledge the existence of inequities but also have an abundance of explanations that remove any onus from the Ulster establishment. If 90 per cent of the shipyard workers are Protestant, it reflects not discrimination but the housing patterns around the yards. The wealth is in Belfast with the Protestants because that is where the port and industrial facilities are. The western parts of the Province are deprived of jobs, not because there are more Catholics there, but because there are few roads and other requirements for industrialization. There are almost no Catholics in many parts of the civil service and police organizations because fifty years ago few Catholics thought this government would last and they didn’t bother to apply. The Protestant preponderance in many jobs simply reflects the way in which job contacts are made through family, church and pub connections, and Protestants generally associate with other Protestants. Anyway, it is no secret that Catholics are not as attuned as Protestants to the demands of labor in a modern technological society.

One heard these and other explanations with some frequency. No doubt most of them contain elements of truth and half-truth, and most of them are painfully familiar to Americans from the debate over black-white relations in this country. Government statements in Northern Ireland have even borrowed a leaf from our late Office of Economic Opportunity and speak of “affirmative action” as a necessary instrument in giving a better economic break to the Catholics of Ulster. The mention of “affirmative action” drew a complete blank from every Protestant church and political leader I spoke with, except for one Church of Ireland churchman who responded: “Affirmative action? Oh, that must be what you Americans call reverse discrimination.” He thought it an altogether bad idea.

Scammon and Wattenberg to the contrary, we Americans are in no position to offer complacent advice about achieving economic justice for minorities, and it is true that the Irish situation is tortured by complexities quite different from our own. But I was nonetheless disappointed by the absence of any sense of urgency about righting the historic economic wrongs done the Catholic community. No doubt priorities demand a primary focus on ending the violence and restoring some form of political sanity, but neither of these is unrelated to economic justice. The neglectful attitude exhibited toward justice seems very shortsighted indeed.

In the area of explicitly religious bias and hatred, Protestant leaders readily admit that they have a lot to atone for. They had neither pressed hard enough for ecumenical understanding, nor had they clearly enough repudiated the vicious anti-Catholicism that has marked, and still marks, Protestant life in Ulster. One senses a strong readiness, even eagerness, for the advancement of ecumenism. Among the lay people, however, that eagerness is more than restrained. A recent poll asked people whether they favored closer relations between the Catholic and Protestant churches. More than 70 per cent of the Catholics and a little more than 20 per cent of the Protestants responded positively. Why this discrepancy between the groups? Both Protestant and Catholic leaders agree it is because Protestants see the Roman Catholic Church as a monolithic threat of ecclesiastical tyranny (“Don’t tell them how badly divided we are,” quipped one Catholic bishop), while Catholics see no real threat from the several Protestant churches. Their perceived enemies are the Unionist Party and, most specifically, the Orange Order. An additional reason for this discrepancy in popular attitudes toward ecumenism is no doubt that anti-Catholicism is historically more constitutive of Protestantism than is anti-Protestantism essential to being Catholic. Working in such an atmosphere, the ecumenical efforts of many Protestant church leaders must be viewed as courageous, in some cases even heroic.

Even the more ecumenical Protestants have their own anxieties about Rome when it comes to questions of civil liberties, mixed marriages and family
The school system is another major point of contention. Northern Ireland has “maintained” schools (largely Roman Catholic) and “transferred” schools (largely Protestant), both supported by public funds. This arrangement is highly unsatisfactory to those people who believe there ought to be a unified public school system through which Protestant and Catholic children are integrated into one society. Ulster Protestants have a much higher estimate of the wisdom and possibility of using schools to achieve fundamental change, such as social integration, than do many Americans who have had to learn from experience about the limitations of schooling in rectifying larger social injustices. Catholic bishops are understandably suspicious of supposedly nonsectarian schools that would, in the North, be de facto Protestant, and it does not seem likely that they will give up their insistence upon Catholic education. If the formation of a “New Ireland” is contingent upon Catholics surrendering their publicly supported school system, a New Ireland is a very long way off.

A ten-year-old Protestant boy is asked whether the tricolor, the flag of the Republic, will ever fly over Belfast City Hall. “Maybe, but there’ll be no City Hall under it!” A sweet little old lady assures her rector: “I vow I’ll burn my house down before I’ll see it joined to the Republic.” But the Catholics are not the only ones on the receiving end of Ulster Protestant spite. There is a love-hate relationship too with the British. Recent months have witnessed an upsurge of Protestant paramilitary violence. A British army officer remarked: “If the Protestant gunmen want a fight, we’ll give it to them. We’re ready to smash them ruthlessly and they know it. We won’t treat them like these IRA chaps. If they really want a battle, they better be ready for six hundred dead Prods in the first week.” Of course, said a Presbyterian church executive when told of the officer’s statement, “It is just as Protestants have been saying: The British have a double standard, one for Protestants and another for Catholics. Because they are supposed to be the poor minority, the Catholics can literally get away with murder, while a Protestant better take care if he doesn’t tip his hat. We have no one else to count on but the British, and we can’t count on them, so more and more of our fellows are thinking they better start counting on themselves.”

It is impossible to overemphasize the degree to which Protestants view themselves as a minority threatened by the overwhelming Catholic majority of all Ireland. Catholics in the North, of course, see themselves as a one-third minority oppressed by the two-thirds Protestant majority. Both are right. As has been pointed out by others, the dilemma of Northern Ireland in a nutshell is the conflicting fears...
of two minorities. In the search for metaphors that illumine the situation, the "two minorities metaphor" is a good starting point. Other metaphors are drawn from other situations. British public opinion increasingly views Northern Ireland as "Britain's Vietnam." Catholics in Ulster see strong parallels with the racial struggle in the United States. Some Protestant militants identify with Rhodesia and contemplate a Unilateral Declaration of Independence in order to defend their outpost of Christian civilization against the threatening sea of pagan barbarity. Metaphors abound.

The Protestant identification with Israel, both biblical and modern, is pronounced. Like Israel of old, a million Protestants came to the promised land. Like Israel of today, they claim to have turned a desert land into a place of prosperity. As Israelis point to the improvidence of their Arab neighbors, so Ulstermen point to the much poorer Catholic South. Like Israel, Ulster sees itself surrounded by enemies; as Israel is uneasily dependent upon the U.S., so Ulster's fate is tied to an even less reliable Great Britain. The Catholics of Ireland also make an identification with ancient Israel, although it is less pronounced. Conor Cruise O'Brien cites from a Gaelic poem:

Clann Israel uair san Éigipt  
Fá an-bhruid nínt námhad Dé  
"The children of Israel in Egypt under the oppression of the power of the enemies of God." The "enemies of God," of course, were the Protestants. O'Brien remarks: "One could say that Ireland was inhabited, not really by Protestants and Catholics, but by two sets of imaginary Jews."

The major Protestant churches are committed to trying to work within the context of the White Paper. The two archbishops of the Church of Ireland (Armagh and Dublin) have declared: "We welcome the White Paper as a fair and workable basis from which to move forward towards overcoming the problems of Northern Ireland." The "Role of the Church Committee" of the Church of Ireland recognizes that the church's contribution must go beyond the simple call for an end to the fighting. "The activities of private armies are in fact only one manifestation of conditions where 'violence-politics' appear to be successful. The niceties of moral judgement do not enter into the thinking of many ordinary people living in conditions where law and order have broken down and where traditional political institutions no longer seem to have any relevancy." These are certainly the realities that make it possible for the IRA to operate in Catholic communities where ordinary people have learned they can expect little justice from the Protestant-controlled Royal Ulster Constabulary and where internment and other policies of the British are viewed as distinctly anti-Catholic. The other side, of course, is that Protestant private armies are justified on the same grounds, namely, that Northern politicians and the British Army cannot be trusted to guarantee the security of the Protestant majority against IRA terrorism.

The Role of the Church Committee is insistent that "the Irish Republic cannot provide a framework within which all Irishmen can live peacefully together. If Ireland is to be united, then the Republic and Northern Ireland must both alike disappear and be replaced by some radically different structure." Religious leaders with whom I spoke—Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist—generally agree that the role of Dublin is crucial to the future of Northern Ireland. Not all would agree with the Church of Ireland churchman who claimed that "90 per cent of the game is now in Dublin's court," but there is general acknowledgment that Dublin will have a decisive say in whether or not a New Ireland is in the works.

There is widespread criticism of the former Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Jack Lynch for issuing ambiguous and frequently conflicting signals about Dublin's intentions. Sometimes the unification of Ireland was asserted as a sacred principle, and there were even a few vague gestures of overt military support for the IRA, thus lending credence to the Provisionals' propaganda claim that, in the case of all-out war, the Republic would come to the aid of the Catholic minority of the North. At other times Lynch spoke in terms of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence with the North, but the fears of Ulster Protestants were not allayed by the Taoiseach's more ironic moods. The present Prime Minister, Liam Cosgrave, is reported to be open to dropping the Republic's constitutional claim to the six counties of the North, to making the White Paper's proposed Council of Ireland really work, and to coordinating Dublin's policy more closely with that of Westminster. The signals emanating from Dublin during Cosgrave's first year in government have given Northerners who hope for a New Ireland some encouragement, although they insist that anything like optimism would be premature.

While Dublin's role is crucial to the future of Northern Ireland, no one should underestimate the importance of Irish Catholic opinion in the United States. It is acknowledged on all sides that America is the primary source of money and arms for IRA militants, and American public opinion is perceived as a major support in the cause of unification "by any means necessary." The Wilfrid Sheeds and Pete Hamills of New York and Boston beat the drums for the holy war to get the British out of Ireland and return the sacred sod to the rightful heirs of history's promise. They are joined by such right-wing Catholics as Father Daniel
Lyons, who writes (National Catholic Reporter, June 22, 1973): "Catholics in Northern Ireland must rely on the Catholic press in this country to come to their defense." He goes on to describe the job discrimination practiced against Catholics, claiming, with some exaggeration: "Now that England has assumed direct rule of Northern Ireland, nothing is ever said about reducing discrimination." The biggest violence in Northern Ireland is the job discrimination. . . . When we talk about peace, let it be peace with justice, not peace at any price." The last refrain echoes Father Lyons's fervent support for U.S. policies in Indochina over the years. Some people are just not happy without a war to boost.

More influential than the views of Father Lyons and of the literary lions of Irish-American pubs are those of Senator Edward Kennedy, undoubtedly the American most hated by Ulster Protestants and most admired by Ulster Catholics. The Protestants, and most of the British responsible for Irish policy, criticize Kennedy for what they view as his reckless exploitation of Ireland's suffering for his own political purposes among his large Irish-American constituency. Of course it is not nice to judge a man's motives, but one may surely forgive the suspicion that political considerations are not entirely absent from the Senator's mind.

Kennedy recently spoke his mind in a Foreign Policy article, "Ulster Is an International Issue" (Summer, 1973). If for no other reason than that people in Ulster believe Kennedy is key to American policy regarding Ireland, the article deserves careful attention. He offers a curious argument. He begins with some kind words for the 1973 White Paper: "Britain has now succeeded in wiping the slate largely clean, so that a new compact of future representative government is capable of being written." And he ends with a vigorous and entirely gratuitous demand that the British should do everything possible to make the provisions of the White Paper work. Along the way, however, he repeats and reinforces many of the misperceptions and Fenian fantasies that stand in the way of the White Paper's success.

The bulk of the article is devoted to rehearsing Britain's sins in Ireland from the time of Gladstone to the present. Certainly the continued policy of internment warrants the most severe challenge. As Kennedy notes, between August, 1971, and December, 1972, more than two thousand Catholics were detained, but only one Protestant. The figures for those now being held are 367 Catholics and 22 Protestants. One is understandably indignant that "the nation that gave Magna Carta, habeas corpus, due process and the common law to the world imprisoned hundreds of citizens in Northern Ireland without warrant, charge or trial, often on evidence of the rankest hearsay and deception."

The complete end of internment and the creation of an entirely new Ulster constabulary are among the chief demands of the Catholic-based Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP) representatives to the new Assembly. These demands must be met. Meanwhile the British have ended the wholesale internment, provided significant protections for those detained and placed more effective checks upon the abuse of police power. The Senator acknowledges in passing that changes have occurred, but the emphasis of his remarks is oblivious to the acknowledgment. His general tone of high dudgeon is both dated and imbalanced, although it could conceivably be helpful in further pressuring the British to accede to SDLP demands.

Thoroughly unexceptionable is Kennedy's assertion that the violence and terror must be ended. "I condemn the violence of the IRA. I condemn the violence of the UDA. I condemn the violence of the British troops. . . . I condemn the flow of arms or any funds for arms from the United States or any other country to Northern Ireland." The last point does not ingratiate the Senator with the IRA supporters in the Bronx, but, as they have explained to me, they could make the same statement. They too condemn the flow of arms and money to Northern Ireland, especially from the British Government. But so long as the British continue the war they have no choice but to "help our boys defend themselves." More troubling is Kennedy's condemnation of everyone's violence, as though all violence were morally equal. (To the best of my knowledge, the Senator has yet to declare his commitment to absolute pacifism.) Although his grief over the killing is undoubtedly sincere, Kennedy's anathemas appear largely rhetorical in view of his agreement with the legitimating reasons for the violence of one side, that is, the side of those devoted to the unification of Ireland.

In their view and Kennedy's Ireland suffers from an "unnatural partition," which, it is strongly implied, is the sole cause of the violence. The idea that violence is a result of the division of the country is untrue, since violence preceded and accompanied the division, and dangerous, since it provides a legitimation for open-ended sectarian warfare.

The nub of the argument is Kennedy's denial of a scintilla of legitimacy to the existence of Ulster. Ulster is "the uncouth entity that Britain spawned in 1920." At another point Kennedy speaks favorably of recent talk about a New Ireland; it is "a fertile concept." But the essence of the idea of a New Ireland is mutual respect between the Republic and Ulster as partners of equal legitimacy, the very thing Kennedy refuses to concede to Ulster. "Half a century is not enough to stamp the Ulster state with any acceptable seal of legitimacy in the eyes of those who truly believe in self-determination."

If Ulster has not been historically legitimated as
a state, it should be remembered that Ulster is part of the United Kingdom, which, in one form or another, has been around for a bit longer. It is not at all clear that Kennedy's vague criteria for state legitimacy would not consign half the countries in the United Nations to being "uncouth entities spawned by sundry colonialisms." Without getting into the tangled problems of what constitutes a legitimate nation, a commonsensical starting point is that a nation is a group of people who believe themselves to be a nation and who are ready to fight in support of that conviction. If chronological nit-picking is relevant, the South's constitution dates only from 1937 and its existence as an independent republic from 1949.

The Senator's call for the withdrawal of British forces and their replacement by "appropriate procedures for law enforcement and criminal justice, acceptable to all the parties" is less than helpful, since it is precisely over such "procedures" that the battle has raged so long. The suggestion that a U.N. peace-keeping force might take over meets with little enthusiasm in the U.N. and is viewed as insufferable insult by the British, who would almost certainly exercise their veto power in the Security Council to prevent it. The Senator's alternative proposal that "a Common Market force" might do the job is an admirable instance of the kind of fantasies about the European Economic Community that John Holmes recently decried in these pages ("The Illusion of Europe," *Worldview*, October, 1973).

The chief point, however, is that it is utterly confusing for the Senator to write that he wants to see the promise of the White Paper fulfilled and then proceed to spend most of his essay assaulting the key assumption of the White Paper, namely, a continued British control with a gradual "devolution" of political and police powers as the two communities of Ulster work out more fair and stable institutions. Finally, Kennedy's belief that popular opinion in the Republic and among the Catholics of the North is relentlessly pressing for unification is, if I am to trust my impressions, a grave miscalculation. Especially in the Republic I should think Taoiseach Cosgrave a better judge of public opinion than the Senator from Massachusetts, and Cosgrave's actions suggest he is keenly aware of the widespread weariness and wariness most citizens of the Republic feel toward what is happening among "those lunatics up there."

In short, such pronouncements on Northern Ireland reveal two Senators Kennedy: the one responsibly deploring universally recognized injustices and hoping the White Paper will be given a chance to work; the other speaking for domestic consumption to the Irish in America and sparking all the flamable rubbish of impassioned patriotism that can most certainly destroy any hopes the White Paper may offer. Those who look favorably upon the Senator's prospects for some higher role of leadership would do well to caution him against statements that might not only prove to be a grave embarrassment in the future but also—and not so incidentally—can greatly diminish the chances for peace and justice in Northern Ireland now.

In contrast to the Senator's vague and contradictory proposals for an activist U.S. role in solving the problems of Ulster is the private remark of one State Department official. "American policy toward Northern Ireland is, quite deliberately and frankly, to have no policy. The United States has no state interest in Ulster. We have formal and friendly relations with two parties relevant to the conflict, Dublin and London. Our policy, if you can call it that, is to be helpful to Dublin and London in solving any problem, including Ulster—if and when they ask for help." One gathers that this is precisely the kind of U.S. policy, or nonpolicy, as the case may be, that is most agreeable at present to Prime Ministers Cosgrave and Heath, who are now actively and publicly trying to coordinate their approaches toward the future of Ulster.

In *States of Ireland* Conor Cruise O'Brien tried to project the alternative scenarios for the future as he saw them two years ago. I am indebted to his projections as I try to fit together the different futures now being discussed by various parties to the conflict. First, however, one must at least mention two futures that "responsible" people consider wildly improbable but which insinuate themselves in haunting ways into everybody's calculations. They are the futures projected by the IRA Provisionals on the one hand and by the most extreme Protestants on the other.

The first envisions the British pushed into the sea, and Ulster reclaimed for the Republic, by the force of escalated violence. One of the most truly frightening things about the Provisionals is their inability or unwillingness to talk about anything other than escalating the battle. The political, economic and social questions about the Ireland they envision are dismissed as being premature and distracting from the struggle. What speculation can be elicited ranges from an Ireland set up along lines of conventional British Labor-style socialism to a restoration of Gaelic tribalisms, to a Maoist Ireland that will be the launching pad for the revolution in Europe. The chief thing, indeed the one thing, now is fighting the British. Once the British are gone, it is suggested, there will be time enough to take care of more mundane matters.

The second projection, advanced by some Protestants, is that of a Rhodesia-style Unilateral Declaration of Independence. Several Protestant leaders assured me that nobody in Northern Ireland today entertains the idea of UDI, but that is not quite accurate. Among those who have vowed to give "Not
One Inch” there is frequent allusion to an independent, Protestant-dominated Ulster as a bastion of freedom and righteousness holding out against an otherwise pagan Ireland. I am assured by some that this is not just rhetoric, that Ulster could make it on its own. I am more impressed, however, by those who point out that UDI would be a formula for economic suicide, since it is impossible to overestimate the economic dependence of Ulster and, for that matter, of the Republic on Great Britain. Unlike Rhodesia, Northern Ireland has neither valuable natural resources nor—and this is more important—a neighboring South Africa to play big brother.

One may agree that these two scenarios are “wildly improbable” while remembering that it is the fears and hopes of the wildly improbable that have written the modern history of Northern Ireland.

The White Paper represents in large part what O’Brien termed “the benign model” for the future of Ireland. It assumes that the Provisional offensive will be definitely stopped and that the Dublin government will drop all “we must have unity” propaganda and cooperate with an Ulster reconstructed upon the basis of economic and political justice. There will be no talk about a united Ireland without the free consent of a majority of the Protestants in the North. Now, more than was the case when O’Brien wrote, there seems to be strong hope for the proposed Council of Ireland and a great interest in the idea of a New Ireland. One Protestant businessman, active in Unionist politics, casually informed me that he assumed Ireland would be united within ten years. He assured me that this is a majority opinion in “the informed business community” of Belfast, that continued division is an economic absurdity, especially in light of the greater coordination required if Ireland is to survive in the Common Market. I have no way of checking out the majority sentiment of Belfast’s business elite and am generally dubious about the power of economic rationality to control political and social forces, but I hope that the Protestant businessman and others who expressed similar hopes know what they are talking about.

The alternative is not pleasant to contemplate. It is basically an updated version of what O’Brien called “the malignant model.” The Provisional offensive continues and escalates. The British line up with regressive elements in the Ulster establishment, refusing to end internment, or to reform the Ulster constabulary along lines that secure the confidence of both communities, or to address seriously the economic injustices suffered by the Catholics. Meanwhile the Provisional offensive provokes and legitimates a massive Protestant counteroffensive, resulting in the systematic murder of prominent Catholics and Protestants. The Protestant militants attack Catholic ghettos, despite the efforts of the British Army, thus driving Catholics more firmly into the arms of the IRA, which will be their only hope for defense.

In such an atmosphere politicians on all sides are afraid to risk the accommodations essential to making it work, so the new Assembly goes quickly down the tubes. The Ian Paisleys make the most of their opportunity to claim “I told you so.” In Britain the Labor Party breaks from its bipartisan agreement and campaigns on a promise of immediate withdrawal from Ireland. The British Government, Labor or Conservative, announces it is “leaving Ireland to the Irish” and is rewarded by “many telegrams of congratulation from America, and urgent private messages of alarm from Dublin” (O’Brien). The loyalists rally in Belfast, swoop down on the Catholic ghettos to get rid of the IRA once and for all and to punish Catholics generally. Thousands of Catholics are killed and scores of thousands flee to the South in terror. In the western areas, where Catholics dominate, Protestants are killed or flee to the Protestant east. Dublin appeals to the United Nations, but, says O’Brien, who has some considerable experience with the ways of the U.N., the Security Council “would certainly stall: that is, it would call for a cease-fire, send a team of observers and adjourn.” Much later a U.N. force might be able to patrol whatever ends up as the cease-fire line, which would be, in effect, the new border hermetically sealing Protestant from Catholic.

Both states, the Republic and the geographically contracted but totally homogeneous Ulster, would be under “right-wing governments, scruffily militarist and xenophile in character. The principal cultural activities would be funerals, triumphal parades, commemorations, national days of mourning, and ceremonies of rededication to the memory of those who died for Ireland/for Ulster.”

On most of the essential points, what I saw and heard this summer confirm O’Brien’s analysis. As I said at the start, things are much worse than I was prepared to believe. The White Paper is the alternative at hand. A New Ireland is the hope at heart.