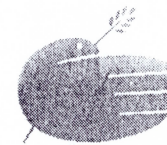


BUILDING
TRUST
IN
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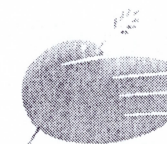
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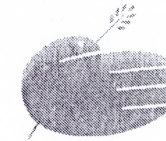
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PREFACE



THE FORUM FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION was established through an undertaking of the Joint Declaration of 1993 and commenced work following the ceasefires announced by the IRA and loyalist paramilitaries in autumn 1994.

The Forum's terms of reference include a statement of intent to consult on and examine ways in which lasting peace, stability and reconciliation can be established by agreement among all the people of Ireland, *and on the steps required to remove barriers of distrust, on the basis of promoting respect for the equal rights and validity of both traditions and identities*. One of the Forum's four Sub-Committees, the Committee on *Obstacles in the South to Reconciliation*, commissioned the five papers collected here to help address those perceptions or misconceptions in the North about life in the South which would make reconciliation difficult to achieve. Trust and reconciliation are themes which have been fundamental to the work of the Forum since its inception.

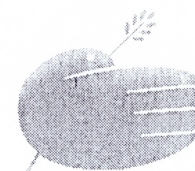
We have been fortunate in being able to draw on the expertise of six leading experts, North and South: Professor Brice Dickson (University of Ulster, Jordanstown), Dr Arthur Aughey (University of Ulster, Jordanstown), Professor Dermot Keogh (University College Cork), Professor Terence Brown (Trinity College Dublin), Professor J. J. Sexton (ESRI) and Mr Richard O'Leary (Nuffield College, Oxford).

All five studies provide new research and important insights into areas which are central to the Forum's work and to the wider peace process.

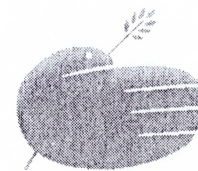
I wish to take this opportunity to record our thanks to the authors of the papers. I hope that the papers will receive the widest possible readership and I am confident that they will make a very constructive contribution to a better understanding between the different traditions on this island.

JUDGE CATHERINE MCGUINNESS SC
Chairperson of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation

OBSTACLES
TO RECONCILIATION
IN THE SOUTH



ARTHUR AUGHEY
UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER
AT JORDANSTOWN



INTRODUCTION

THE DOWNING STREET DECLARATION speaks of a future and hoped for 'meeting of hearts and minds' which would enable a bringing together of all the people of Ireland. The Irish Government promises that there would be no violence nor would there be any coercion of unionists. There would be only persuasion. The Forum for Peace and Reconciliation was specifically dedicated to the task of making 'recommendations on ways in which agreement and trust between both traditions in Ireland can be promoted and established'. This was advanced as an 'opportunity for a fresh start and a new beginning'. To some extent that is true and is to be welcomed. Yet the hearts and minds proposition has its own history within Irish nationalism. It has quite a distinguished pedigree.

For instance, in 1924 Stephen Gwynn argued that:

Nothing that is not Irish stands in the way of its accomplishment [Tone's ambition of cementing the separate traditions of Ireland]; and if it cannot be accomplished by Irishmen no outside power can convert our national aspirations into a reality.¹

That was an early recognition that the British Government had no selfish strategic interest in Northern Ireland. Gwynn also argued that 'complete nationhood can only be achieved by reconciliation of the divergent ideals'. The Free State, he went on, 'may persuade' Northern unionists to 'secure their position in Ireland as a whole'.² Gwynn was a

Redmondite and as one of the authorities on modern Irish history, Paul Bew, has noted it 'is easy to pick up the Redmondite echoes' in the Downing Street Declaration. This 'moving back to the world of Redmond' and a 'more relaxed, less charged version of Irish political destiny', argues Professor Bew, has come to characterize the practical attitude of the Irish State since the late 1950s.³

Whether more relaxed and less charged or not, most unionists still consider with suspicion, if not hostility, the disposition of the Republic of Ireland towards them. Unionist politicians fear that experience obliges them to believe that when the Irish Government speaks of 'reconciliation' it is still reconciliation within a framework set by exclusively nationalist assumptions. Their response to the Framework Documents in February 1995 reveals that belief in action. And nationalist political destiny, of whatever version and however expressed, still remains the unionist apocalypse. In such rigid and highly charged circumstances, profoundly affected by twenty five years of terrorist violence, it is difficult to get a sense of proportion about political possibilities. This is a truth which applies as much to nationalist as it does to unionist expectations. That the Downing Street Declaration achieved some measure of tentative support amongst Ulster unionists is an indication that elements of it — especially the commitment to consent — did approach a sympathetic understanding of their position.

This paper approaches the question of obstacles to reconciliation in the South by examining the implications of the Declaration in terms of a number of recurring distinctions. These distinctions include nationalism and nationality, people and State, integrity and diversity. They may help to focus attention on the boundaries of the politically attainable while also indicating possible avenues along which peace and reconciliation might be pursued. The paper tries to do this by abstracting from unionist argument what appear to be consistent criticisms of the Republic of Ireland and its disposition towards the North. These criticisms are presented in the light of how the Republic has come to understand itself today.

THE POSITION IN THE DECLARATION

In the Downing Street Declaration the Taoiseach makes a number of references to the 'fears', 'uncertainties', 'misgivings' and 'lack of trust'

which inform 'Northern unionist attitudes *towards the rest of Ireland*' [our emphasis]. This phrase could be understood in two ways. On the one hand, the 'rest of Ireland' could mean all other people living in Ireland, North and South. On the other hand, it could mean more specifically the Republic of Ireland as a State.

Often nationalists in the South and usually nationalists in the North (for obvious reasons) understand the phrase in the first sense. They assume that the 'problem' lies in unionist inability to come to terms with the majority on the island. Unionists are cast in the role of a 'national minority' amongst the people of Ireland, a people which has the right of self-determination (albeit North *and* South). In their different ways, that is the message of the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party and of the President of Sinn Féin. The Tánaiste, Dick Spring, introduced a new formulation in a recent speech to the United Nations when he proposed that in future talks unionists would need to confront the nationalist case which would be represented 'in its integrity'.

Often nationalists in the South and less often nationalists in the North mean it in the second sense. They assume — and this is deeply embedded in the political culture of the South — that the problem lies in unionist inability to come to terms with the new social and political realities of the Republic of Ireland. This is a more formal attitude which takes as its starting point the existence of distinct political structures and jurisdictions, though nationalists would seek ultimately to erase these distinctions through mutual understanding. In 1965 this meant dealing directly with a unionist government at Stormont in the mode of the Lemass-O'Neill talks. To a degree, it implied an engagement between equals, even though the Republic was a sovereign State and Northern Ireland was only a regional authority within another State. Since 1972, the Irish State has reverted to an older tradition. The procedure once more is to deal with unionists via the authority of the British Government and via the influence of British public opinion. Some unionists suspect that the purpose of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation itself is to give the impression of a reforming impulse in the South in order to foster a British willingness to 'persuade' unionists towards major political concessions. That suspicion is bound up with a calculation of the objectives of 'pan-nationalism' which are referred to below.

The Irish Government's passages in the Declaration move back and forth between both of these understandings. If this creates ambiguity, that is because Irish nationalism itself is ambiguous. It is most clearly displayed in the attitude of the Republic's Government towards Northern Ireland. There are two key passages in the Declaration which illustrate this ambiguity and which also set the parameters for this study. The first passage states:

In recognition of the fears of the Unionist community...the Taoiseach will examine with his colleagues any elements in the democratic life and organisation of the Irish State that can be represented to the Irish Government in the course of political dialogue as a real and substantial threat to their way of life and ethos, or that can be represented as not being fully consistent with a modern democratic and pluralist society, and undertakes to examine any possible ways of removing such obstacles. Such an examination would of course have due regard to the desire to preserve those inherited values that are largely shared throughout the island or that belong to the cultural and historical roots of the people of the island in all their diversity.

The second passage states:

He [the Taoiseach] asks the people of Northern Ireland to look on the people of the Republic as friends, who share their grief and shame over all the suffering of the last quarter of a century, and who want to develop the best possible relationship with them, a relationship in which trust and new understanding can flourish and grow. The Taoiseach also acknowledges the presence in the Constitution of the Republic of elements which are deeply resented by Northern Unionists, but which at the same time reflect hopes and ideals which lie deep in the hearts of many Irish men and women North and South.

Both passages illustrate inconsistency in the use of language and therefore ambivalence in meaning (which may not be the same thing as confusion of purpose). There are six expressions here — the unionist community, the people of the island, the people of Northern Ireland, the people of the Republic, Northern unionists, Irish men and women North and South. Elsewhere the Declaration speaks of the 'peoples of Britain and Ireland' and 'the people of Ireland, North and South'. In sum, and to avoid labouring the point, it can be argued that it is unclear with what precise authority the Irish State addresses unionists. There are

two possible claims which are being made. Does it speak with the authority and legitimacy of a properly constituted *government* representing the people of the Republic? Or does it speak with the authority and legitimacy of an *ideal* which lies deep in the hearts of all Irish people (except, of course, the unionist community)?

In truth, the Irish State claims to speak with the authority of both and therein lies the initial problem for unionists with the Downing Street Declaration. This was also the problem faced by John Bruton when recently he refused a meeting with John Hume and Gerry Adams. The Taoiseach was challenged for not being a leader of the 'nationalist people', a role which his critics clearly felt was more important than his role as head of an Irish Government, a Government intent on seeking a 'balanced political settlement'. There may be an irresolvable contradiction here and politicians in the Republic need to confront this issue seriously. Tribal posturing may be insufficient when reconciliation with Northern unionists is at stake. If it is not taken seriously then unionists will continue to question the seriousness of the will to reconciliation on the part of Irish nationalism and for the term 'reconciliation' read 'pressure for unity'. For an example of such questioning, one can point to the dismay which was felt when unionists discovered the reasons for cancelling the scheduled British-Irish summit in September 1995.

This double claim — or 'double talk' as the Reverend Ian Paisley would put it — is also the historic difficulty unionists have had with the South. If the Irish Government were speaking on the basis of the first claim, unionists can happily contemplate the value of 'what they have called 'good neighbourly relations' between Northern Ireland and the Republic. They might even acknowledge that at some unspecified time in the future such relations might mean that the border would become a practical irrelevance. Lord Craigavon at one time considered that if the circumstances were right it was possible that there could be a restoration of political unity in his lifetime (he died in November 1940). If, however, the Irish Government speaks on the basis of the second claim, unionists understand this to be the language of 'take-over', albeit the language of take-over articulated in a new liberal grammar. Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution are beyond the remit of this study yet they cast their shadow over unionist trust in the good faith of the Republic. It is the suspicion of pan-nationalism, a suspicion which has actually

grown since the Downing Street Declaration and not diminished. It is a suspicion which Dick Spring's speech to the UN in September 1995 about the importance of approaching all-party talks on the basis of 'nationalist integrity' appears to have confirmed. As the distinguished historian of Irish nationalism D. George Boyce put it recently, 'Irish nationalism has so often confounded itself through its mixture of pluralist rhetoric and sectarian activity that it may yet stumble over its past, and lose sight of Unionist fears yet again.'⁴ This stumbling over the past is something which the Declaration seeks to avoid by overcoming 'the legacy of history'. It may be useful to remind ourselves, therefore, of what that legacy in part has been.

ZONES OF MAJORITARIANISM

In 1933 Craigavon famously or infamously remarked that he was glad to preside over a Protestant parliament and a Protestant State in Northern Ireland. That remark was made in response to the claim by Éamon de Valera that Ireland of the twenty six counties and later, if Articles 2 and 3 of the 1937 Constitution were to be fulfilled, Ireland of the thirty two counties, was a Catholic State. Craigavon explained his position in the Northern Ireland House of Commons some years afterwards. He argued that while he accepted that the government of Southern Ireland should be carried on along lines which were appropriate to its Catholic majority it was surely right that the government of Northern Ireland should be conducted in a manner appropriate to the wishes and desires of its Protestant majority. For unionists like Craigavon and in practice for most Irish nationalists, the settlement of the 1920s had divided Ireland effectively into zones of majoritarian democracy. The Southern Parliament embodied Catholic majoritarianism (which it defined as Irish) and the Northern Parliament embodied Protestant majoritarianism (which it defined as British). These were the realities. Despite all of the massive changes which have taken place in Ireland, North and South, in the sixty years since the enunciation of what we might call the Craigavon/de Valera doctrine the great divide on the island is still understandable in these *terms* if not in that *form*. As Ernest Gellner has argued, without a 'sacralized religious

differentiation, there is no real cultural boundary in Ireland'.⁵ Nor would the playing or not-playing of 'God Save the Queen' at a Queen's University graduation cause such a fuss.

Of course, in the last twenty five years there have been changes in the character of policy in Northern Ireland such that unionists would laugh at the proposition that it is today a Protestant State for a Protestant people. Indeed, they are concerned that legal changes, especially in fair employment legislation, mean that Protestants are now the ones discriminated against. On the other hand, there is something of an irony about the claims of greater pluralism in the Republic. As the Republic has apparently become more pluralist it has also become more (nominally) Catholic. The numbers of Protestants have diminished further into political insignificance. Whereas pluralism in Northern Ireland has come to mean greater *inter*-community tolerance, pluralism in the Republic means almost entirely *intra*-community tolerance. The argument that there is little or no discrimination against or hostility to Protestants in the modern Republic is a fair argument. However, one reason may be that Protestants have little or no political significance as a community. They tend to be encountered purely and simply as individuals. As such they disappear more easily into the body of the nation.

In other words, the debate in the Republic takes place within a set of assumptions which is often invisible to the public in the South both Protestant and Catholic but is all too visible to people in the North, both Catholic and Protestant. As Arthur Balfour once said about the parties in the House of Commons, they can safely afford to shout and bicker because on fundamentals they tend to share so much. That may well be the case in the Republic and it invites a preliminary consideration of the spectrum of opinion there about Southern society and its relationship to the North.

SOUTHERN APPROACHES

There are two questions which have been central to political debate in the Republic in recent years. They are, first, which aspects of life and the State in the South, from a Northern unionist or Protestant perspective, might constitute barriers to better relations on the island of

Ireland and, second, which aspects of life and the State might inhibit the development, for its own sake, of a more pluralist society in the South?

For constitutional nationalists, at least since the publication of the Forum Report in 1984 if not before, the assumption has been that these two areas are *related*. There has been an expectation that better relations on the island of Ireland between unionists and nationalists will emerge from the development of a more 'pluralist' Republic; and that a more pluralist Republic will be the condition for the transformation of political relationships between North and South towards a settlement which would be, ideally, Irish unity. Or, if not unity, then a settlement in the North which would be substantially Irish and only residually British. There exist, of course, different views about what is meant by the term 'pluralism' in the Republic (see also Church and State p. 20). These understandings range from a radical liberal and secular agenda, which would involve considerable change in Southern society, to a limited conservative one, which would involve very little change at all. It is notable that the formula in the Downing Street Declaration which addresses this issue is carefully drawn to balance both understandings. It invites critical comment on the practices of State and society in the Republic while reserving the right to dismiss such criticism in the light of 'inherited values' and of the 'cultural and historical roots' of these practices. Article 6 of the Declaration is an example of that creative ambiguity which reflects accurately the traditional ambivalence of politicians and public in the Republic about the North.

Three general and reasonably consistent approaches to the question of unionist attitudes and Southern reform may be abstracted from the general debate in the Republic. These three approaches are not the only imaginable abstractions from the diversity of Southern opinion. (There may even be many people in the South who do not want to think about Northern Ireland at all.) Distinctive contributions have come from many quarters. For instance Professor Joe Lee, throughout his *Ireland 1912-1985*, describes the unionist condition as one of a 'Herrenvolk democracy' only to finish by describing them as 'no petty people'. It should be remembered, of course, that the fate of Yeats and his 'no petty people' is hardly an enticing prospect for Northern unionists. Lee was fairminded enough, however, to define Southern Catholics as being covetous tempered only by sloth. This disappointment with the Irish as they were and as they are is a recurring theme of much intellectual

opinion in the Republic and will be addressed below. President Mary Robinson has also made her own distinctive and imaginative contribution to thinking about peace and reconciliation in Ireland. One could go on. However, the three approaches discussed below have a scope which, at a pinch and at an obvious risk of oversimplification, can accommodate a wide range of particular or even idiosyncratic viewpoints.

The first approach is that of latter-day *social republicanism*. Its most articulate and interesting exponent has probably been Tim Pat Coogan, in whose writings one can detect clearly the main outlines of the case. There are three propositions which sustain the social republican argument. These comprise two related negatives which together become transformed into a final shining, unified, positive. First, Ulster unionists, it is claimed, inhabit a political and cultural wasteland into which they have been led by 'political witchdoctors such as Ian Paisley'. Paisleyism is taken to represent the essential character of this deformed communalism. 'A society which exalts that type of political culture is a disaster society; the stone of history rests on it and nothing wholesome flourishes under it.'⁶ This is part of a broader triumphalist assertion frequently found in the North and sometimes in the South that unionist Ulster is in terminal decay, entrapped as it is within a decadent constitutional form — a 'failed political entity' according to first Charles Haughey and latterly to Gerry Adams, an 'unnatural political entity' according to John Hume. Because all of the virile elements in contemporary Irish life are held to be nationalist the future belongs to them. The dull, uncultured Protestants need the 'alien, external power' of 'Britain' to spell it out for them in a clear and persuasive fashion.

Second, the attitude towards Southern society is one of promise unfulfilled, an attitude often conveyed in tones of undisguised loathing for current practices — a loathing for the confessional influence, a loathing for the gombeen politics, a loathing for the business culture of the poor mouth, a loathing for the failure to address the problem of emigration. What is interesting about such an attitude to the Republic is not so much its particular criticisms. What is interesting is the totality of the criticism which implies that the Republic is itself a 'failed political entity' and that its political culture is 'unnatural'. The irony here is that unionist demagoguery propounds much the same view of the Republic.

Third, these negatives of unionist backwardness and republican social frustration become miraculously transformed in the positive of Irish unity. The roadblocks to social and economic modernization will be pushed aside as the energies of the black North invigorate the new Ireland. Coogan noted a conversation he had with an Irish cabinet minister in 1987. The minister argued that they (the unionists):

... talk about us trying to subjugate them, wanting to take them over.

The truth is that when the border goes, and go of course it must some day, Leinster House will not be big enough to contain them all — they'll be running us, and why not? We could do with their energy.⁷

Social republicanism shows an astonishing lack of confidence in the Irish State; and that lack of confidence is married to a set of astonishing illusions about the qualities, negative or positive, of Northern unionists.

The second approach shares some of the elements of the first but is very different in tone. If the first is old testament republicanism, the second is new testament republicanism. It is liberal in its breadth of vision and is possibly best represented in the writing and in the disposition of Garret FitzGerald. The most appropriate label is possibly *liberal constitutionalism*. In this view, unionists are not the one dimensional Paisleyite loyalists, that 'essential' character to which social republicanism so consistently reduces Protestant society in Northern Ireland. The approach which FitzGerald epitomizes claims to be sensitive to the nuances of unionist opinion and recognizes the diversity of views within Northern Protestantism. However, such sensitivity need not mean that this approach will properly gauge the depth of unionist feeling or recognize its potency. As his autobiography candidly reveals, FitzGerald miscalculated the unionist response to Sunningdale in 1973-74 and also to the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. Today, he cannot understand their obvious hostility to the Framework Documents. Irrespective of the possibility that FitzGerald might have been correct in his judgements and unionists misguided, that is not a very good track record.

Liberal constitutionalism is also severely critical of the reality of the republican State. Nevertheless, that criticism is not comprehensive. It is a limited criticism, confined to certain practices and assumptions of the State. It assumes that reform of provisions in the Irish Constitution and changes in the workings of public institutions are sufficient to transform

the nature of Southern society. That transformation will be the key which can open the door to Irish unity. FitzGerald's 'constitutional crusade' of the early 1980s revealed its premises. He believed that 'the thrust of the legislative changes introduced in our State since 1922' had 'tended to encourage the perpetuation of partition' and the political challenge for politicians like himself was to see if 'our people actually *wanted* a non-sectarian State' [emphasis in the original].⁸ As he suggested, if constitutional reform were to take place then there might be a basis for Protestants in Northern Ireland to engage constructively with the Republic. However, FitzGerald famously admitted that if:

I were a Protestant today, I cannot see how I could be attracted to getting involved with a State that is itself sectarian...the fact is our laws and our Constitution, our practices, our attitudes reflect those of a majority ethos and are not acceptable to Protestants in Northern Ireland.⁹

An assumption about Northern unionist opinion — that it would be attracted towards involvement with a non-sectarian Irish State — was to be the reason for reform in the Republic. Like the first approach, this liberal constitutionalism is also informed by the politics of 'unfinished business'. It still believes that the formal task of Irish statesmanship is to bring closer the day of unity. Bringing that day closer often remains one of the key justifications for reform of Southern society. Perhaps it is also one of the key excuses to reform Southern society (a rather different interpretation of the same style of argument).

The third approach believes that it is this very politics of unfinished business, in its social republican or in its liberal constitutional guises, which is destabilizing for Irish democracy as well as for democratic politics in Northern Ireland. This approach might be called *critical realism* (for want of a better expression). This politics of unfinished business, it is held, fosters a romanticism which is sharply focused on a mythical, idealized Ireland yet poorly focused on the real Ireland, North and South. It is destabilizing because siren 'ancestral voices' may lead politicians away from the limits and conditions of constitutional politics towards the mirage of 'a nation once again'. It is also critical of the fundamental lack of self-confidence in the achievements of the Irish State which the other two approaches show (ideological variations on a theme of cultural cringe). It is not, however, an approach which is smugly self-satisfied. Indeed it also targets many of those

elements in Irish life challenged by both social republicans and liberal constitutionalists. It believes that such challenges must come from within the life of the Irish State and must be convincing on their merits alone and not on a spurious cause of forcing the Protestants to be free or on an equally spurious cause of showing the Protestants how nice the Republic really is. There is also a willingness to accept Ulster unionists on their own terms and not as nationalist ideology would have them be.

Of course, the most prominent exponent of this approach has been Conor Cruise O'Brien who, in the eyes of many in the Republic, has committed the ultimate sin of being sympathetic to the unionists (not so much a case of 'going native' as of 'going colonial'). Yet O'Brien's only sin is that of being politically incorrect, of challenging nationalist convention (which is often confused with being a unionist). It is what Eoghan Harris has called 'acting with good authority', challenging the comforting illusions of one's own tribe. O'Brien has argued that:

There has always been a good deal of ambivalence around, and Northern Ireland has been a kind of joker in the pack of Catholic-nationalist ambivalence. On the one hand, one wants peace with it; on the other hand, one wants to destroy it. And there is an underlying synthesis, in many minds; peace will be achieved, eventually, through the destruction of Northern Ireland.¹⁰

That may appear shocking only because it is true, albeit in very different ways, of both the social republican and liberal constitutional approaches. There are many ways to destroy Northern Ireland. Even killing it with kindness, as some in the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation might prefer to do, is only another variant. O'Brien's might be a unique voice but his is not the only voice of critical realism to be found in the Republic. Nor is it without sympathy amongst a wider public.

At this point it might be worth briefly considering, by way of introduction, what is the general unionist perspective on these matters. For most Ulster unionists these two questions which have been prominent in Southern debate in recent years — which aspects of life and the State in the South might constitute barriers to better relations on the island and which aspects of life and the State might inhibit the development of a more pluralist society in the South — are *unrelated*. While unionists might applaud the emergence of a more pluralist society

in the Republic they do not see any *necessary* connection between such developments and better relationships on the island of Ireland. Certainly, they see no connection at all between such changes and the claims of Irish political unity. Unionist politicians have made and continue to make unfavourable comment about the Catholic and Gaelic ethos of the South and it is possible to examine the nature of their criticisms. However, this does not mean that they or those whom they represent are prepared to discuss the conditions for the removal of these elements in the life of the Southern State. To do so, as they see it, would implicate themselves in negotiating their place in a united Ireland. That is the reason why no official representatives of traditional unionism have involved themselves so far in the work of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. Ulster unionists of whatever variety have been concerned to prevent a redefinition of unionism from a definitive constitutional status — British citizenship for the people of Northern Ireland — to a cultural identity — one of the 'two main traditions which inhabit the island of Ireland' as the Downing Street Declaration so felicitously puts it. The terms of reference for the Forum — rightly or wrongly — have been interpreted by most unionists to involve precisely such a redefinition of their position. That is a reality, the implications of which will be brought out in the course of this study. What have been the specific unionist perceptions of the Irish Free State/Irish Republic and to what extent do they correspond to contemporary reality?

ALTERNATIVE IDEAS OF POLITICAL SOCIETY

The most complete theories of separation between the Republic and Northern Ireland would be based on the assumption that the two jurisdictions in Ireland express competing principles of political and cultural life. It is from these complete theories that one should start. Unionist formulations of such distinctive principles have, not unexpectedly, been reactions to, altered images of, those developed by Irish nationalists. As F. E. Smith put it at the time of the third Home Rule crisis, the fundamental choice in Ireland was between 'parochialism and Imperialism; between ultramontaniam and religious

liberty; it is between stagnation and economic progress' (Irish nationalists had their own sets of negative/positive alternatives). Ever since then there has been a tradition of presenting the choice between Union and separation in stark terms. For instance, Robert McCartney's *Liberty and Authority in Ireland* of 1985, possibly one of the most intelligent restatements of the unionist case, advances the Idealist proposition that the division between North and South represents the working out of two antagonistic ideas of the nature of the individual and society.

In the first of these ideas 'man is seen as a free spirit, naturally good, but stunted, limited and frustrated by archaic and restrictive institutions whether of Church or State.' According to the second idea man is a 'creature of limited freedom, only partly good and whose only salvation is within the great authoritarian frameworks of States, Churches or parties.' For McCartney, the Union expresses the idea of liberty whereas it is Irish nationalism and the Irish State which has been the modern carrier of authoritarianism. The confessional character of Irish nationalism meant that individual freedom and liberty of conscience were 'to be sacrificed for values which were regarded as being higher and which were determined by no subjective standard but by the objective requirements of Church doctrine and dogma.' The political choice in Ireland, according to McCartney, has been posed in the following manner: either one remains within a liberal, tolerant United Kingdom 'with all its faults' or one owes allegiance to an Irish State constructed on the principles of homogeneity and religious authority. If, argues McCartney, the nationalist claims 'no man has a right to fix the boundary to the march of a nation' then the answer of a unionist must be that 'no nation has the right to set limits upon the development of the individual liberty and the unique nature of man.'¹¹

Nationalists would, of course, repudiate such a stark contrast between liberty and authority, especially if it is suggested that liberty is the dominant principle informing life in Northern Ireland whereas authority is the dominant principle informing life in the Republic. They would be correct to do so, of course. But having done so, they might miss the substance of McCartney's argument and what it reveals of widespread and deep-seated unionist opinion about the South. For the argument is not really about freedom versus authority as distinct political concepts. It is really about opposing views of what is and what is not

politically *authoritative*. That is a rather different point and concerns historical and collective notions of legitimacy. This is the part of McCartney's argument which is held generally by Ulster unionists, even those who would not go so far as to make the absolute distinction to which his logic leads.

The Protestant idea of liberty does not necessarily mean, despite McCartney's eloquent statement of it, that a Protestant society is liberal in the contemporary, idiomatic sense of that word. In so far as it is Protestant at all, this liberty is not the liberty to do as one likes. It is the liberty to do what is right. It is an ordered liberty disciplined by biblical truth. And if it is a liberty informed by Democratic Unionist biblical truth, many unionists themselves would not only feel uncomfortable with it, but also positively hostile to it. McCartney's distinction between libertarianism and authoritarianism, therefore, may not be visible in the ways of life led by Protestants and Catholics in Ireland. On many moral issues attitudes might be almost indistinguishable. Indeed, the outside observer might well think that Catholics are more free in their ways than Northern Protestants (and of course, many Southerners tend to be convinced that Protestants are either 'sourfaced' or 'hard-headed', i.e. terribly dull).

Therefore, the Protestant idea of liberty which McCartney celebrates is an invisible freedom, freedom of conscience. This is a spiritual freedom which may not be embodied in social practice, for example tolerance of difference. What Protestants would reject are not (necessarily) Catholic *views* on abortion or divorce and so on found in the Republic (and it should be noted that homosexuality is formally treated more liberally in the South than in the North). What they would reject is the *source* of authority for those views. They would reject the constitutional provisions — divorce is a long-standing illustration — which reflect that source of authority. Catholic doctrine is not an authoritative source of belief. It cannot be an authoritative source of law. And this has obvious consequences for the Protestant — but not only the Protestant — view of the legitimacy of many of the established practices of Southern society and of the Irish State itself.

This is not the only reason for unionist antipathy to the project of Irish political separatism, as we shall see. But it is a profound one. It is this absence of legitimacy for political separatism which enables

McCartney, in all good conscience, to make the claims that he does, claims which might strike Southerners as substantially untrue. What might otherwise present itself as a *theoretical* issue concerning ideas about freedom or of conflicts about authority is in effect a *political* statement about the character of the Irish State. This is a point which will be considered again in the discussion of Church and State (p. 20) and Symbols (p. 33).

McCartney's distinctions based on the political embodiment of ideas of liberty and authority have their counterparts in distinctions made about the culture of the Union and the culture of Irish separatism. They continue one of F. E. Smith's themes of parochialism versus, if not imperialism, then internationalism. In a recent contribution to this cultural debate, Arthur Green summed up generations of unionist sentiment when he wrote that the impulse of Irish separatism was carried forward by those:

... who narrowed their vision to Ireland, who were petit bourgeois to the marrow, and who left a legacy to Ireland of anti-intellectualism, puritanism, and xenophobia, as well as unquestioned Catholic mores and Gaelic cultural tyranny. It is not surprising that their state was disowned by Yeats, Joyce and AE, not to mention Beckett, nor that a large proportion of Protestants there left, or were forced to leave.¹²

For Green, Irish cultural separatism belongs in the dustbin of history. At the same time he believes that this is impossible for the Irish State to do because (as he cites Denis Donoghue) 'Ireland without its story is merely a member of the EC, the begging bowl our symbol.' The story, whatever its deficiencies, must continue to be adhered to, whatever its consequences for better relations with unionists.

Of course, Green is correct in his view that it is masochistic to suppose that 'our intelligences and our imaginations are uniquely fed by people with Irish birth certificates; and even more self-destructive to treat the rest of the British Isles as alien.'¹³ But it would be incorrect to judge the entire cultural life in the Republic in terms of the ideal of cultural nationalism; and it would be equally wrong to assume that Northern Ireland has represented a beacon of light in this world of cultural darkness. That is the sort of provocation which would strike nationalists as a variant of the 'blue skies of Ulster' school declaiming the 'misty Celtic twilight'. That is (partly) why it is done, of course. It is also an attempt to draw clear lines between ideologies where, in practical life,

the connections are much messier. Just as one might be no less of a nationalist because one can appreciate the genius of Shakespeare one can be no less of a unionist because one can appreciate the genius of Joyce. They are not alternatives.

Professor Edna Longley has possibly approached closest to the truth of the matter in her view that Northern Ireland or, for that matter, the island of Ireland, is a 'cultural corridor'. Unionists, she has argued, 'want to block the corridor at one end, Republicans at the other'. However, culture 'like common sense, insists it can't be done'.¹⁴ That may be true. Yet once again, the complexity of intellectual and cultural experience is not the political issue. Nor does it depend on a fully accurate representation of cultural life in the Republic. To dismiss Green's arguments as a *jeu d'esprit* would be to miss the point again. The point he is making is that for unionists the *story* of political and cultural nationalism is not authoritative and its legitimacy not compelling. Since unionists do not understand themselves to be part of that story to which the Republic needs to cling they still suspect that nationalists are intent on writing them and their culture out of existence.

The story of the nation, the story of colonialism, the story of post-colonialism, the story of cultural independence, even the story of a post-national Ireland in Europe, these are all inventive tales the authority of which few Protestants and no unionist can accept. They are tales which signify little for them except the moral that nationalists are the goodies and that unionists are the baddies or the dupes of time. Unionist stories are, therefore, designed to reverse these roles and to secure for themselves a different ending. No one has come up with a convincing story which appeals adequately to the sentiments of both — yet. The social republican tale of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter united in the common name of Irishman or the liberal nationalist tale of the New Ireland Forum — neither of these strikes a positive enough chord with Northern unionists to encourage them to change their own story. Similarly, the unionist tale of civil and religious liberty within a pluralist Union does not convince enough nationalists that they should give up hoping that their story will have a happy ending.

Unionist and nationalist stories have encouraged two opposing dogmas of denial within Northern Ireland. They are: no first step *unless* it is a step towards Irish unity. No first step *because* it is a step towards Irish unity. The predictability of political discourse lies in the grammar

of those two dogmas. And each side comes to understand 'peace and reconciliation' within the codes of their respective languages. The unionist conviction that the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation is another chapter in the nationalist story and that its plot is a plot against them is plain in their response to it. Indeed, the more members of the Forum tried to encourage their representatives to attend the more convinced unionists became of its irrelevance. That might seem unfair to the Forum but it is true, nevertheless. The authority of these conflicting stories of identity, their origin and their emotive force, will be considered again under Symbols (p. 33).

CHURCH AND STATE

Possibly the key unionist slogan which comprised their deepest fear of an Irish State was 'Home Rule is Rome Rule'. The history of the Irish Free State and then of the Republic tended to confirm rather than repudiate that slogan. The visible empire of the Catholic Church's influence in Southern politics — which was vast enough — combined with a Northern Protestant sense that its invisible empire of control was all-pervasive. The reason for having a separate Irish State, unionists believed, was in order that it would be a Catholic State. As Stanley Gebler Davies once explained to an English readership, 'Éire is not a foreign country, but it is a Catholic country.' That is what many middle class unionists still feel about the South: it is not foreign but Catholic. For many working class unionists it is both foreign and Catholic. The reason for having an administration in Northern Ireland, unionists were determined, was that it would *not* be a Catholic State. The historical logic of this attitude we noted under Zones of Majoritarianism (p. 8). This view of the Republic as confessional and theocratic remains an article of faith for many unionists, even those who recognize that 'things are changing'.

For instance, despite the removal of the Catholic Church's special constitutional position in 1973, many non-Catholics remain convinced that this merely confirmed the fact that the 'invisible' power of the Church no longer needed 'visible' acknowledgement. Unshakeable convictions like that exasperate liberal politicians in the Republic. They may make them think that nothing that they do to reform the Irish State

will make their society attractive to unionists. That is a fact which indicates the gap between how Southern society often perceives itself today — pluralist, open and tolerant — and how it is perceived by unionists — if not dominated by the power of the Catholic Church then deferential towards it. Those who wish to find historical evidence to confirm their view of this power do not have to look far.

An insightful, if often provocative, study of the relationship between the Church and the Irish Constitution is to be found in Angela Clifford's *The Constitutional History of Éire/Ireland*, a study which states intellectually what many unionists feel viscerally. In that study it is proposed that 'there was general consent to the arrangement whereby the Church supervised the State, but along with this went a general insistence that supervision of the State by the Church must not be described.' The compulsory manner of living which the Church demanded was, in other words, the Irish 'philosophy of life', a philosophy which distinguished Ireland from Britain and which gave substance to national separatism.

The Church has been the guiding influence on the politics of the nation since the fall of Parnell. It determined the inner life of the nation, and later it determined the inner life of the State. All parties and all Governments have functioned within its ambience. When the Church was a sphere of eternal certainty, the nation and the State had a sense of purpose. And when the Church internationally went into crisis, nationalist Ireland became confused.¹⁵

What seems to be suggested here, first, is that the Republic was an example of the working out of Pope Gelasius I's distinction in the fifth century between the *autoritas* of the Church and the *potestas* of the State, a distinction which placed the authority of the Church *above* the power of the State. Second, that the crisis and the confusion inspired by the Second Vatican Council have represented interruptions to the normal business inspired by the distinction. It has always seemed clear to unionists from the statements of the Catholic clergy what they assumed (and perhaps still assume) normal business to be.

For instance, Professor John Whyte observed that in their submission to the New Ireland Forum the Catholic bishops argued that 'Catholic influence in a country like Ireland was natural.' He went on to note that if that were indeed the case then Northern Protestants:

... might agree with the bishops that it is natural that a majority ethos should prevail. But they might conclude that, in that case, they would prefer to remain in their own State with its Protestant majority than join a State which would have a Catholic majority.¹⁶

There is no 'might' about it. It is a certainty. Robert McCartney responded at the time by stating that the hierarchy was 'telling the politicians of the Forum in no uncertain manner that it was not prepared to underwrite any offer that would obstruct or prevent a Catholic majority from imposing the dictates of its conscience or theology upon a unionist minority' in a 'new Ireland'.¹⁷ That was that, straight and simple. And why should unionists think otherwise if Garret FitzGerald was saying much the same thing about the reality of life in the Republic? This returns us to the point made under *Alternative Ideas of Political Society* (p. 15) about the authoritative source of public morality. The manner of living prescribed for citizens in the Irish State — in the Constitution and in its laws — was a compulsory manner of living appropriate only for those who subscribed to the authority of the Catholic Church. The historical presumption of Irish nationalism in its irredentist form was that the whole of Ireland would ultimately conform to this manner of living, a presumption which, for all its other faults, is not to be found in Ulster unionism. The overwhelming 'majority ethos' in the twenty six counties would be extended into a sufficiently dominant 'majority ethos' in the thirty two counties. As Professor William Magennis put it in 1925, for example: 'You cannot be a good Catholic if you allow divorce even between Protestants.'¹⁸ In the twenty six counties that was still the case seventy years later. The history of Rome rule in nationalist Ireland remains a live issue even for moderate unionists, despite the belief of many in the Republic that things have changed irrevocably. How did unionists view that history?

As the Conservative leader Bonar Law once confided to the Liberal Prime Minister Asquith in 1913, Southern unionists would be 'thrown to the wolves' in any conceivable Irish settlement. The settlement which emerged in the 1920s *did* throw the Southern unionists to the (metaphorical) wolves. The old Anglo-Irish ascendancy was left to fend for itself within the new Catholic democracy of the twenty six county Free State. And abandoned by Northern unionists, one of the ironies of history, as Dennis Kennedy has shown in his excellent study of partition,

The Widening Gulf, is that the sufferings of Southern Protestants as recounted in Northern Ireland's newspapers — their intimidation, their murder, their flight, their falling numbers — enabled the Ulster Unionist Party to consolidate its own regime in the difficult years before the second world war.¹⁹ The memory of the decline in Protestant numbers and the knowledge of their cultural subordination is still a powerful one in unionist Ulster. To many — and not just the extremists — the prospect of Irish unity still suggests a form of 'race death'. Any 'dynamic' form of cooperation with the Republic would represent cooperation in your own undoing. This is a powerful folk memory which the Irish Government needs to be aware of constantly, however irrational it may seem to them.

That even such a gentle and tolerant man as Victor Griffin should voice his concern for the survival of Southern Protestantism and feel shame about the treatment of Hubert Butler by arrogant Catholicism in 1952 indicates the depth of apprehension which Protestants still have about the Republic. Butler was accused of having insulted the Papal Nuncio during a lecture in which he had mentioned the forced conversion of 240,000 Orthodox Serbs to Catholicism in Croatia during the second world war. As a result, Butler experienced petty and narrow-minded persecution. As Griffin notes:

There was no upsurge of Protestant support for Hubert Butler. Protestants were scared. Which tells us something about Protestants but also something about the Roman Catholic community at that time. Had Protestants good reason to be scared? Looking at what happened to Hubert Butler, perhaps they had. I can hear my mother's warning: 'For goodness sake, keep quiet, Victor, or you'll get us all burnt out'.²⁰

For Griffin, intolerance in Ireland, North and South, comes from religion masquerading as Christianity. To those who follow the Reverend Ian Paisley (and to many more besides) intolerance *only* comes from Catholicism masquerading as Christianity. To Southerners this might appear to be intolerable self-righteousness. They would be correct. But then self-righteousness about wrongs inflicted by others, real or imagined, characterizes much of Irish political debate, North and South. And in its manifold forms, this self-righteousness is not confined to Ulster unionists. It is generally the case, therefore, that Ulster unionists tend to take an uncomplicated view of the role of the Catholic

Church in Irish society. In short, they tend to believe that the interests of the Catholic Church are inseparable from the political project of Irish nationalism which is ultimately inseparable from the designs of militant republicanism. All of them have designs on Protestant Ulster.

Once Protestants in the Irish State were forced to accept the new dispensation after 1921 there was no possible resistance to Catholicism transforming itself from the *de facto* Irish nation into the *de jure* Irish nation. Irish solutions to Irish problems, as Charles Haughey once famously put it, became and remain Catholic solutions to Catholic problems. The confessional homogeneity of the Irish State allowed that State to entrench its legitimacy. And the confessional assumptions about social and political practice became so woven into the fabric of the State that they became almost invisible (except, of course, to Ulster unionists). The Catholic Church became an institutional pillar of the State. It also remained a buffer between its flock and the ambitions of politicians, for good and ill.

An intelligent unionist, for instance, could recognize that if being a good Catholic was tantamount to being a good son or daughter of Ireland then it allowed the Church to provide some challenge and qualification to the claims of radical republican politics. While the grand narrative of Irish national destiny was retailed by the Christian Brothers at school, the effective policy of the hierarchy was concerned with consolidating its own position, using the political opportunities available to entrench the Catholic manner of living. This represented the Catholic Church's own interpretation of Matthew, 22: 21: 'render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.' And it worked well. Social republicanism — the form of nationalism which unionists wrongly believe to be its essence (just as nationalists wrongly assume that Paisleyism is the essence of unionism) — was a potential enemy of that ecclesiastical project.

The rivalry between the Church and social republicanism has been a rivalry for the soul of the Irish nation. That nation is not the inhabitants of the island but the Catholic inhabitants of the island. Ulster unionists know that. Unionists also know that they are ultimately peripheral to this struggle. On the one hand, social republicans frequently make the mistake of assuming that their hostility to the conservatism of the Catholic Church and its power in Ireland, North and South, will find a positive response amongst unionists. It won't. Unionists will take their

criticisms of the Church as insider confirmation of the horrible fate which would befall civil and religious liberty in an Irish State. At the same time unionists will be no more persuaded of the republican cause because that cause is understood to be the exclusive cause of the Catholic people in another guise. On the other hand, the Church is more realistic about Ulster Protestant opinion but has been often cynical in using that realism for its own purposes.

On the linkage between unification and the legalization of contraception, for instance, Cardinal Conway argued in 1973 that 'I think it would be utterly unrealistic to think that the attitudes of the average Unionist towards a united Ireland would be changed in the slightest degree if the law in the Republic were changed.'²¹ Conway would have been correct in that precise assumption. Over twenty years later, as if by way of belated confirmation, the Reverend Martin Smyth stated that supporters of the Abortion Information Bill, who suggested that its failure would send a negative message to the unionist community about society in the Republic, were wrong. He went on:

Let me state clearly and unequivocally that the greater number of people, of all traditions, in Northern Ireland are totally opposed to abortion and would view with dismay any further promotion of the deadly abortion culture.²²

Those unionists who would be opposed to abortion, like Smyth, as well as those who would be in favour of legalized abortion would not understand it as an issue which implicated them in a statement for or against better relations with the Republic. Once again, the question would not be the authority of the moral case but the *source* of that authority in the practice of the government and of the courts.

Nevertheless, it was not true and it is not true to assume that the attitude exhibited by Conway has had or does have no effect at all. For the Church to show such cavalier indifference to Protestant opinion *in the Republic* is bad for Protestant-Catholic relations *in Northern Ireland*. It is equally bad for relations *between* Northern Ireland and the Republic. For it convinces Ulster unionists in their view that confessional nationalism is not interested in reconciliation but only in domination (see McCartney). To think the worst is always best, be it republicans about Northern Ireland or unionists about the Republic. Those who are sincerely seeking reconciliation need to be aware of such insensitivity

regardless of its impact on 'average unionist attitudes towards a united Ireland'. It is not average unionist attitudes towards a united Ireland which matter. It is average unionist attitudes towards peace and reconciliation which really matter. If it is held to be a fault of unionist thinking that it cannot see the difference between these two things then those in positions of authority in the Republic ought not to commit the same error.

There has been a traditional clerical assumption in Ireland that the activity of the State should be formally influenced by the Catholic Church. That is another way of saying that the Church has a firmer understanding of a law which is higher than 'mere' positive law and on points of difference legislators ought to defer to the judgement of Church authority. If legislators themselves accept that understanding then the likelihood of conflict is immeasurably reduced. That higher law is the natural law. For Ulster unionists those rare conflicts between the Church and the Irish State have been exceptions which prove the rules of the political game. The Mother and Child case of 1951 illustrated this clearly for them (and the Dáil debates were published by the unionist government to show to the world the nature of the Southern regime). The Irish Government of the day, when it abandoned Noel Browne's proposed legislation argued that it conflicted with Catholic 'social teaching'. And it was stressed in the Dáil that no government ought to challenge the authority of Catholic 'moral teaching' either.

Yet the simple unionist view that nothing has changed in the South nor will it ever change is insensitive to the modifications in the life of the Irish State, especially since the Second Vatican Council. As Duncan Morrow has argued:

Although inter-communion remained impossible, Protestant Churches were declared to be 'separated brethren' and Church unity to be a desirable goal. The resultant increase in ecumenical contact with Protestant Churches and Church-people in Ireland caused serious difficulties for Protestants, who remain split about the nature of the Catholic Church between those who regard it as fundamentally evil and unchristian and those who seek meeting and ongoing interchange.²³

The abortion referendum of 1983 and especially the divorce referendum of 1986 shocked liberal Protestant opinion in Northern Ireland by revealing not only the extent of clerical influence but also the

lengths to which that clerical influence seemed willing to go to attain its ends. But these dramatic interventions of the 1980s may ultimately be seen by historians as pyrrhic victories. The extremism of some advocates of the clerical line in both referendums appears to have encouraged a more assertive secular pluralism. Even if Rome today has less sympathy for the agenda of the Second Vatican Council, secular changes are forcing the pace in social matters much more so than clerical reformulations of traditional attitudes.

The recent Supreme Court judgement on the Abortion Information Bill presents an interesting question about the law and popular opinion. Does a legal judgement represent an acknowledgement of reality or does it represent the beginning of a new trend? Thus the Supreme Court in the Abortion Information case restated a judicial argument against the claims of natural law. This judgement could be taken to mean either: that the Supreme Court has acknowledged what is already a fact of life; or that the Supreme Court has opened up a new era of politics in the Republic. It either confirmed a new legal and political culture reflecting the changed society of the Republic or it intimated the emergence of such a changing society. The answer to that question is uncertain for the judgement was an old one. (As old, perhaps, as the judgement of David Hume who wrote that no word was more 'ambiguous and equivocal than 'nature'.)

The following argument, developed by Mr Justice Walsh in 1974, was stressed twice by Mr Justice Hamilton in the Abortion Information case:

In a pluralist society such as ours, the Courts cannot as a matter of constitutional law be asked to choose between the differing views, where they exist, of experts on the interpretation by the different religious denominations of either the nature or the extent of these natural rights as they are to be found in natural law.

His conclusion was that:

The Courts, as they were and are bound to, recognised the Constitution as the fundamental law of the State to which the organs of the State were subject and at no stage recognised the provisions of the natural law as superior to the Constitution.

The chief political correspondent of *The Irish Times* reflected the ambiguity of opinion about the state of Southern society when he

commented that the closure of the constitutional door on the natural law 'with its inherent threat of Catholic control and of a paternalistic/theocratic society, represents the most important step forward' towards a truly pluralist society in the Republic.²⁴ In other words, according to the Supreme Court the claims of natural law are inappropriate because the Republic *is* a pluralist society and, according to *The Irish Times*, the rejection of an appeal to natural law represents a step *towards* a pluralist society. The Republic both is and isn't a pluralist society.

Perhaps the difficulty lies in the definition of pluralism. For, depending on how one uses the term, it *can* be argued that the Republic both is and isn't a pluralist society. For liberals seeking secular changes in Irish society, the Republic is not pluralist enough. For conservatives seeking to defend the honour of Irish society, the Republic is more than pluralist enough. Pluralism is a codeword for a continuing debate about the character of the Irish State and about the relationship between Church and State. In sum, there are two major alternative possibilities. First, pluralism as understood by contemporary liberals means that the State should be 'neutral' in relation to competing visions of what is the good life. Second, pluralism as understood by conservatives and by the Catholic Church means that, while the State may acknowledge difference, it still has a duty to recognize and to uphold the ethical life of the majority.

Often these alternatives are misunderstood by commentators and leader writers who confuse the realities of life in the Republic with the theories of North American multiculturalism. The Republic is not multicultural in the way in which North America is. It is absurd to pretend that it is. The substance of the pluralist debate in the Irish State is really only intelligible in terms of the second alternative. It best describes the practical limits — an overwhelming Catholic majority and a conservative political system — within which reform would take place. These attributes of Catholicism and conservatism are nothing for which the Irish State needs to apologize. Both have contributed to its social and political stability. Of course, there *would* have to be a radical shift towards the first alternative if Irish unity were ever to be a possibility. A united Ireland would still not be multicultural in the North American sense. But everything that is solid in the Republic would have to melt into air and a new, more ethically neutral order be

established. There could be no apology then for the State behaving in a conservative and a Catholic manner. To describe Irish unity in this way reveals the unlikelihood of its attainment. The achievement of unity and its consequences would most likely introduce a general instability into one of the most stable regions of the European Union.

One can say with reasonable certainty what constitutes the change in the relationship between the Church and the Irish State since the 1960s. One can say that the Church's role has changed from that of ecclesiastical magisterium to that of ecclesiastical persuasion. The Church cannot rely any longer on the authoritative majesty of its pronouncements. It must increasingly compete with other opinions in the marketplace of democratic politics. That was probably the real lesson of 1983 and 1986. The Catholic Church was successful on both those occasions. It may not be so successful in the future. Indeed, one can predict with reasonable certainty that it will not be so successful in the future. Given its assumption of natural authority, this has clear dangers for the Church. Competition to persuade the people displaces that authority and opens up the Church to perpetual challenge and criticism. And it is challenge and criticism according to the conventions of social science and not according to the conventions of religious disputation. The exchange of statistics recently over the effects of divorce on society is a case in point. In the long run, that change may significantly alter the character of life in the Republic.

Yet as the Reverend Martin Smyth's comment should make abundantly clear, such alternatives are not always received with great joy in certain unionist or Protestant circles. Most unionists would welcome such steps for their own sake but such steps in themselves would not tend to encourage the thought that the Irish State was becoming better disposed towards *them*. That thought would be encouraged by the deletion of Articles 2 and 3. Indeed, the alien character of the Irish Constitution for unionists is not affected by particular modifications to it. Quoting from the same judgement by Walsh, Mr Justice Hamilton reaffirmed that the people gave themselves the Constitution to 'promote the common good with due observance of prudence, justice and charity'. The substitution of the 'common good' for 'natural law' may be important theoretically and politically. For unionists the common good so defined still lacks relevance. It has no authority for them. It is not their common good for they do not accept the legitimacy

of the idea of the people to which it applies (see Symbols, p. 33). This is a point of fundamental importance. Ignoring its importance may lead to false conclusions about the character of unionism and the attitude of unionists towards the South.

For instance, in his essay 'Reviewing the Constitution', Gerard Hogan is correct on both counts for nationalists but equally wrong on both counts for Ulster unionists when he argues that:

... even if certain clauses do reflect Catholic social teaching, this should neither surprise us nor persuade us to reject it on that ground alone. It is the content of the Constitution which matters, not its inspirational source.²⁵

That passage sums up the imaginative distance between the intelligentsia of the Republic and unionist thinking. The source of Catholic social teaching is sufficient grounds for unionists to reject the Constitution; and the content of the Constitution does *not* matter (except for Articles 2 and 3) because the common good it seeks may be admirable in itself but it is estranged from unionists. These may appear to be harsh judgements but they are closer to the truth *today* than the expectations assumed by either social republicanism or liberal constitutionalism that reform of society in the South will alter unionist views about political unity. It must remain an act of faith on the part of politicians in the Republic that changes in the relationship between Church and State will *in the longer term* have a positive impact on unionist attitudes. But the only sound democratic reasons upon which such change should be entered into by the Irish State are the reasons, first, of responsibility to the Southern electorate and, second, of responsiveness to its demands. Concern for that constituency should be paramount for politicians in the Republic.

The two poles of debate about Church and State are secular fundamentalism and religious fundamentalism. In its own way, secular fundamentalism is as dogmatic as religious fundamentalism. In so far as there is little popular pressure to remove clerical influence in education and health, for instance, then Joe Lee's prescription — 'if it ain't broke don't fix it' — does remain 'one of the wiser management injunctions'. It seems sensible to heed his concern that the stability which the Republic has come to take so much for granted this century, with 'an impressive degree of coherence' in social and political life, could be

damaged by a form of secular political correctness which assumes a consensus which has not yet emerged to replace the old.²⁶ It is difficult to imagine the Catholic Church being without great influence in the Irish State since that influence remains a popular one. Very simply, what we have today are intimations that that influence is becoming a strong one within a more pluralist social order rather than an unquestioned one within a confessional State. (The present scandals affecting the Church may help to push this process forward.) That ought to be seen as a sign of self-confidence in democratic politics rather than as a sign of religious decline (see discussion on pluralism, above). The possibility exists to balance arrangements anew formally and legally in Southern society. First, there is the need to balance Catholic morality with the claims of rights of citizenship. Second, there is the need to balance the rights of the majority with its duties to minorities.

The first balance would help to avoid in the future cases like that of Eileen Flynn. She was dismissed from her post in a school in New Ross because she was unmarried and pregnant and lost her appeal in the High Court in March 1985. As Fintan O'Toole reported in *The Irish Times*:

The Eileen Flynn case made explicit and official what had long been an implicit assumption — that anyone who worked in a Catholic institution had better measure up to official Catholic standards in their private lives, or else.²⁷

Such a threat, he argued, still hung over every teacher in a Catholic school and every nurse in a Catholic hospital. *Every* teacher and nurse, not just every *Catholic* teacher and nurse. That sort of moral standard is simply incompatible with the idea of a truly pluralist society which has regard for the secular rights of citizenship. It fails to recognize that such moral standards depend upon their authority being acknowledged by individuals. The tyranny of the (moral) majority can take many forms. The most intolerable form is the practice of making windows into the souls of men and women. That this is publicly recognized to be a problem today is a step forward for citizens in the Republic and an encouraging sign of change.

The second balance would address the concern of Southern Protestants in particular and other minorities in general about the dominant 'ethos' in the provision of health and education. The recent White Paper on Education seems to have gone some way towards

addressing Protestant concerns about schooling, though it certainly does not go far enough to address the concerns of those who do think that denominational education is not at all 'constitutionally sound'. There can be little doubt that the proposals reveal a concern to introduce greater flexibility and adaptability into the educational system.

In health provision, concern about the future of the Adelaide Hospital, for example, is a concern about the seriousness of the Irish State when it speaks of 'equality, partnership and pluralism' (the very words of the White Paper on Education). It does seem rather strange that at a time when the issue of 'parity of esteem' is held to be an indispensable part of any settlement in Northern Ireland, there should have been any question mark at all over continuing to accord parity of esteem to the distinctive 'ethos' of the Adelaide in the reorganization of hospital services in the Republic. Thus, in an address to the Culture in Ireland conference Regions: Identity and Power in November 1992, the chairman of the Adelaide, David McConnell posed the crucial question:

... will the Adelaide struggle on because it cannot or will not be destroyed, or will it prosper through a wholehearted belief by society that it must be sustained and enhanced precisely because it is an honourable exception?²⁸

In other words, would it be possible for an independent Protestant institution to survive in an overwhelmingly Catholic State? Would it be possible to imagine and to sustain medical ethics which do not depend on Catholic teaching? These are real 'pluralist' questions. In 1992 McConnell concluded that, apart 'from the fact that we still exist', the Adelaide had 'quite frankly got nowhere' with the Department of Health. Indeed, he went so far as to suggest that some members of the Catholic hierarchy were less than keen to see the ethos of the Adelaide survive at all. To their immense credit the supporters of the Adelaide have not attempted to make this into a sectarian issue and have successfully isolated it from the passions of Northern Ireland politics, despite one intervention by John Taylor MP. This is certainly an issue of rights for the politicians of the Republic to address in their own terms and according to the appropriate 'plural' needs of the Republic's health service.

Recent evidence by the Board of the Adelaide Hospital, which was submitted to the Forum in October 1995, suggests that an arrangement acceptable to all has now emerged and which only awaits approval in

the Oireachtas. The draft charter for the new hospital at Tallaght specifies that it will have a 'multidenominational and pluralist character' and that the new hospital will be 'a focus for Protestant participation in the health services'. The conclusion by the Adelaide Board in their submission to the Forum was:

The principles enshrined in the Charter and the details agreed by the three Hospitals (Adelaide, Meath and National Children's) who are integrating have happily received cross party support and have been endorsed by successive Governments. This represents a significant commitment to pluralism by our political parties.²⁹

Action, the Board argues, must not be delayed.

The importance of such issues in the delivery of services, especially in the field of health care, has to do with matters which go beyond mere consideration of unionist attitudes to peace and reconciliation. They have also to do with more practical matters, for instance the prospect of functional cooperation between government departments in Northern Ireland and government departments in the Republic. If cross-border cooperation of even a limited kind in this or analogous fields is to be a balanced exercise, then some consideration must be given, for example, to the character of medical provision. This does not imply that health care is necessarily better in Northern Ireland. But if there are to be procedures which would involve some patients 'going South' for certain treatments then the 'ethos' of medical provision and the image of the service would need to be looked at.

SYMBOLS

The consideration of symbols and national symbolism played a large part in the discussions of the session of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation on 24 February 1995. Some interesting contributions were made though the origin of the particular division over symbols in Ireland, North and South, was not properly identified. For it is from that identification that a clearer understanding of the problem will emerge. It is the proposition of this paper that the contemporary division over symbols derives from the distinction between *nationality* and *nationalism*. From that distinction flows the following interpretation.

A sense of Irish nationality based on geographical location was commonly and tenaciously held by Protestants throughout the nineteenth century and for most of this century. Before the second decade of this century, indeed, unionism was Irish unionism. Its leaders argued with some intensity that it was vital for the well-being of the whole island that politicians should make the distinction between nationality and nationalism. In short, unionism asserted that it was possible to be Irish by nationality and yet British by citizenship. As Ronald MacNeill put it clearly and forcefully in the House of Commons on 10 June 1913 during a debate on Home Rule:

I am sincerely and passionately attached to Ireland as the honourable member for Galway or any of his friends. I share their love for Ireland's soil, for her scenery, her people, her history, her poetry, her romance...but this is a matter of citizenship.³⁰

This particular mix of Irish patriotism and political unionism has been severely diminished by events. After partition, it was diminished by the practices of the Irish State. It was diminished by nationalist propagandists who attempted, rather successfully, to appropriate exclusively to themselves the name of Ireland and all that that signifies. The reason why unionists like to call the Republic 'Éire' is not just because it identifies it as a foreign state but because it reserves for themselves the dignity of using the name 'Ireland'. Ireland, their Ireland, is not Ireland, our Ireland. However, the greatest diminishing factor has been the campaign of terror conducted in the name of Ireland by militant republicans and their sympathizers. This has been only one of the historic achievements of IRA violence in the last twenty five years.

For instance, when he conducted his survey of opinion on the eve of the troubles for his ground-breaking study *Governing Without Consensus*, Richard Rose discovered that over 25 per cent of Ulster Protestants still volunteered the answer 'Irish' to a question about their national identity. Today the figure is less than 5 per cent. Since the late sixties, the democratic base of Ulster unionism has increasingly come to make a clear distinction between being Irish and being British. Again, the IRA campaign has helped to turn this tendency into a self-defining unionist dogma, where Britishness has become a spiritual substance as deadly in its destructive potential when taken up by gunmen as the

metaphysics of Irish nationalism. This development has been noted with some regret by the Fermanagh unionist councillor, Raymond Ferguson:

The terrorist campaign of the last twenty years and the political instability which has accompanied it have caused unionists yet again to seek security as a first priority. The effect has been to drive Protestant people in the North into a position where they fear to identify themselves in any way with things Irish.³¹

The present Ulster Unionist Party deputy leader, John Taylor, was not being mischievous but entirely serious when he flatly rejected the notion that he was in any way 'Irish'. And his rejection of an Irish identity would be in tune with the deepest sentiments of most of his electorate. The change this century in the use of Irish and Irishness was experienced not only by Northern unionists but also by Southern Protestants. As Stephen Gwynn noted: 'I was brought up to think of myself Irish without question or qualification but the new nationalism prefers to describe me and the like of me as Anglo Irish.'³² If it means suffering the fate of the Anglo-Irish, unionists would prefer not to think of themselves as Irish at all.

The transformation of the symbols of nationality into the symbols of nationalism has possibly been — if one were to exclude the Provisional IRA campaign — one of the most corrupting enterprises of modern Irish history. As the separatist ideologue Fr Gaynor put it: 'The sacred word Nation had been "corrupted" because British hirelings had profaned our symbols — the shamrock, the harp and the green flag — to destroy their old time significance.'³³ Once this sort of attitude had taken hold it was extremely difficult to retain any sense of commonality about symbols and symbolism. As Mary Douglas has argued, in such circumstances symbols become significant by virtue of their lack of meaning for others; or, in the Irish case, by their hostile meaning for others.³⁴

What is remarkable in the relationship between nationalist and unionist in Ireland, then, is not the hostility shown by unionists to the symbols of Irishness. What is rather remarkable is the fact that unionists have remained comfortable with so much Irish iconography for so long. That would indicate a tolerance and open-mindedness rarely associated with Ulster Protestants. One of the reasons for this may be the fact that many of the institutions of which unionists are members, sporting,

cultural and religious, are island-wide. From the Church of Ireland to the Irish Association, from the Baptist Union to the Irish Rugby Football Union, political division can exist along with civic and religious communion across the island, a communion not just with those 'of one's own kind'.

The harp and the shamrock and the green are symbols which have been frequently retained in Northern Ireland in State and non-State bodies. The harp — with its crown — remains a symbolic representation of the claim that one could be Irish by nationality (harp) and yet be British by citizenship (crown). The Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Royal Irish Regiment both wear that most expressive of symbols. Their members can also happily wear the shamrock on St Patrick's Day and the poppy on Remembrance Day. The Northern Ireland football team wears green and its strip is probably more symbolically Irish than that of the Republic. The Northern Ireland shirts carry a badge with the representation of a Celtic cross. It has been frequently noted, and it is periodically repeated in the letter columns of *The Irish Times* for reasons best known to the correspondents, that the Unionist Convention of 1895 had the motto 'Erin Go Bragh' emblazoned above the platform. Irish unionism originally presented itself in the symbols of shamrocks, harps and the Irish language. This began to transform itself into the present red, white and blue form of Ulster unionism in the first decades of the twentieth century as Irish unionism transformed itself into Ulster unionism. Nevertheless, these symbols of an Irish nationality were not lost to Ulster Protestants, especially those middle class Ulster Protestants who tend to be rugby supporters. And, reproduced on a mass scale as trinkets and ornaments like round towers, leprechauns or thatched cabins, these symbols can still exert a kitsch attraction amongst all classes. That is because they have been sentimentalized and depoliticized. It is the politicization of national sentiment in the Irish situation which is ultimately corrupting.

Nationalism, as Gaynor's position makes clear, is about drawing those symbolic distinctions which say because this is mine it can't be yours and because that is yours it can't be mine. What is then elevated into national significance takes on a certain magical quality for insiders. It then may take on an evil quality for outsiders. Consider John Wilson

Foster's experience. Foster thinks of himself as Irish because he was born and reared on the island and has an affection for it which reads very much like that of Ronald MacNeill's at the beginning of this century. However, Foster is repelled by what has become the (voodoo) symbolism of political Irishness:

It is therefore an occasion for genuine regret, even pain, that I do not wish to be a citizen of an Ireland resembling the present Republic. When I lived there, I found it wanting in essentials of ethos, civil liberties, and the consensual pantheon of heroes, in its story of itself. One of the most sacred spots in the South of Ireland is the Easter Rising room in the National Museum: I stand in it and feel utterly estranged, as I do if I stand in a Roman Catholic church: both are mighty formidable spaces, but they exclude me and moreover wish to exclude me.³⁵

The symbolism of the Easter Rising room is the symbolism of nationality become nationalism. For Foster, at any rate, it is the symbolism of an Irishness become divisive.

Take another instance of the same sort of transformation, the fate of the Irish language. Gerry Adams in his book *Free Ireland: Towards a Lasting Peace* makes much of the fact that Protestants in Belfast were in the vanguard of the revival of Irish and that An Cuideach Gaedhilge Uladh was founded in 1830 by two Protestants, Robert MacAdam and Lord Devonshire.³⁶ For some reason (unspecified by Adams, of course) this Protestant 'liberal ethos' of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries declines into sectarianism by the end of the nineteenth century. The present leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, David Trimble, provided an explanation of why this should have happened. Speaking at the Varieties of Irishness conference sponsored by the Cultural Traditions Group, Trimble argued that in early nineteenth century Belfast:

... there were no antagonistic policies and the hostility displayed in some quarters towards Gaelic today stems from the time when the Gaelic movement was largely taken over by people with a particular set of policies. It will be a very hopeful thing if that ceases to be the case.³⁷

In other words, there is all the difference in the world between Irish as a symbol of nationality and Irish as an instrument of nationalist separatism. Protestants who could feel relatively comfortable with the first could not feel comfortable with the second.

There is indeed evidence in the South (if not in the North) that this particular form of politicizing the language might be changing. Because of the obvious failure which resulted from using the language as an instrument of nationalist policy (which, it should be stressed, is a rationalistic enterprise completely at odds with the cultural significance of language) the emphasis has now changed. Irish is currently being promoted as a functional educational tool. The new prospectus proposes: 'Become bilingual (English-Irish) because bilingualism has been shown to improve educational attainment.' This utilitarian philosophy of self-improvement sounds like sweet revenge on Daniel O'Connell. However, utility is always a fairweather friend to cultural enthusiasts. For real utilitarians can justifiably respond: why not become bilingual (English-German) not only to improve your emigration prospects in the new Europe but to make the most of your investment in satellite television?

As Trimble suggests, there ought to be nothing which would prevent Protestants confronting the language issue in a positive way. No cultured person in Ireland, North or South, should be ignorant of the linguistic influences — in place-names, in figures of speech for instance — of their own land. This will mean some familiarity with the Irish language, not as a badge of separatism, not as a denial of their British citizenship, but as a means to cultural enrichment. There is no reason why Protestants should deprive themselves of that cultural resource. There is nothing in their political commitment to the Union which ought to deny it.

Flags are the most public symbolic statements of identity. Hayes-McCoy has tried to show that the fate of the Irish tricolour was the fate of a hypothetically inclusive nationality falling victim to an actually exclusive nationalism. After the Easter Rebellion, the tricolour emerged 'not as the flag of an Irish Union in the vision of Meagher [and others] but as the flag of an Irish republic, the flag of an actual revolt'.³⁸ Maybe so. But then no separatist flag would have been acceptable to unionists since it would have denied their British citizenship. The idea that the 'Orange' in the tricolour symbolically represents Ulster Protestants has never been accepted by those symbolically represented by it. It should be remembered that the majority of Ulster Protestants are *not* 'Orange' and may find the symbol an insult. And anyway, the 'Orange' is seen as (papal) 'Gold'. If the inclusion of the Orange is a symbol of Irish

nationalist aspiration (Articles 2 and 3 made cloth) then the Ulster unionist ignoring of it is equally symbolic of their position.

This very brief consideration of the symbols leads to the following proposition. There would appear to be two distinct issues confronting the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation when it considers the significance of symbols. Unfortunately, these two distinct issues are rather confused by the terminology of the Downing Street Declaration. The first concerns the symbols of the *Irish State*. These are the symbols which the Declaration ought to describe as those aspects of Irish life 'which...reflect hopes and ideals which lie deep in the hearts of many Irish men and women'. They are the expressions of Irish nationalism and have a political value because they contribute to the stability of the Irish State. The second concerns the symbols of *Irish nationality*. These are the symbols which the Declaration sought to describe as 'those inherited values...that are largely shared throughout the island or that belong to the cultural and historical roots of the people of the island in all their diversity.' They are the expressions of a non-political sense of Irishness and have a value precisely because they are part of the affective identity of everyone who lives in the island of Ireland. These two distinct issues are confused in the Declaration. They are confused because Irish nationalism itself is confused. It has great difficulty in making the required distinction between nationalism and nationality because historically it has refused to acknowledge that there could possibly be a distinction. Such an acknowledgement might concede some ground to the claims of unionism and that would challenge Dick Spring's political 'nationalism in its integrity'. This intimation of an official mobilization of nationalist interests by the Irish State to seek advantage in future political talks may be at odds with the concern to foster reconciliation on the island of Ireland.

There is no simple conclusion which flows from this distinction between nationalism and nationality. On the one hand, the Irish State probably ought not to agonize so much about its symbols — from green letter boxes to the Angelus — which, one assumes, remain popular amongst its own citizens. There appears to be no constituency of opinion within the Republic which is readily mobilizable to promote such change. The reasonable approach, as suggested by Sean Farren of the SDLP at the Forum on 24 February 1995, might be to extend recognition to other symbolic events and occasions (though, again,

there was some unfortunate confusion by the Forum between political nationalism and nationality). This has been done already, for instance, in the belated acknowledgement of Remembrance Day.

On the other hand, there ought to be a greater sensitivity to the fact that things symbolic of a sense of Irish nationality ought not to be corrupted by their appropriation for narrow political ends. That would include those things 'that are largely shared throughout the island or that belong to the cultural and historical roots of the people of the island in all their diversity.' At least a start has been made in one regard by not playing 'The Soldier's Song' before rugby matches during the recent World Cup in South Africa. The Irish rugby team, though it must play its home games in Dublin, is not a side representative of the Republic. It is an all-Ireland side, the distinctiveness of which is discussed in the next section. Perhaps the playing of 'The Soldier's Song' is not appropriate recognition of that distinctive status. The Taoiseach, John Bruton, seems to have gone one step further by recommending a review of the Irish national anthem itself. If the anthem were to be changed it would not of itself change unionist attitudes towards Irish unity. But it would be an interesting symbolic statement about how the Republic seeks to represent itself today. It might contribute to a more positive 'mood music' which in turn might contribute to a more relaxed political atmosphere throughout the island.

Many of these points have been made eloquently and consistently by public figures like Sam McCaughey and Matt O'Dowd. The concern to make a proper distinction between statehood and nationality could be reflected in changing vocabularies of politics. The idea that you can foster a common sense of Irish nationality *in all its diversity* without changing the reality of different jurisdictions on the island could possibly be the idea which squares that famous circle identified by Dick Spring before the signing of the Downing Street Declaration.

SPORT

Sport in Ireland is yet another example of this encounter of nationality and nationalism. To say that is to say that the question of identity is both simplified and complicated by the role of sport in Ireland, North and South. The contemporary position of sport owes much to its origins.

Modern organized sports in Ireland were of British origin. These sports such as cricket, rugby union, boxing, athletics and golf remain popular. At international level, many of these sports, for instance rugby and cricket, retain their pre-partition character as sports of Irish nationality rather than as sports of Irish nationalism. The sports of Irish nationalism have traditionally been those organized by the Gaelic Athletic Association. These games were organized and played precisely in order to challenge the influence of things British (including sports) in Ireland. Sport was to be one means to make Ireland a nation once again. As Archbishop Croke responded to Michael Cusack's invitation to become a patron of the GAA:

We are daily importing from England...her games also, and her pastimes, to the utter discredit of our grand national sports, and to the sore humiliation I believe of every genuine son and daughter of the old land.³⁹

In Northern Ireland, on the other hand, association football has emerged during the troubles to become the symbol of Ulster loyalist identity (to the chagrin of many supporters). As Alan Bairner has written recently:

The impression created...is of a Protestant community seeking to maintain control over a sport in a manner which could be said to reflect Unionist political efforts to maintain the Union in the face of growing encroachment by Irish Nationalists. It should be stated, however, that this is not simply an example of Protestant intransigence. In the case of identification with the national team for example, it is no coincidence that Catholic support for Northern Ireland began to dwindle at precisely the time when the Republic of Ireland's national side started to enjoy international success for the first time ever, thereby providing an Irish alternative for football-loving Northern Catholics.⁴⁰

Football in Northern Ireland, therefore, has become a key signifier of identity. Support for the Republic's team has joined Gaelic sports as a way in which Catholics can assert their distinctiveness from Protestants. Indeed, support for the Republic may be a more appropriate way to show opposition to your communal opponents because it involves real sporting competition (an extension to the international stage of familiar encounters such as Linfield against Cliftonville, Rangers against Celtic). It may give intense pleasure to some Catholics to see Northern Ireland get beaten by 'their' national side. This darker aspect to support for the

Republic's football team is something of which fans in the South are mainly unaware. Equally, it gives intense pleasure to some Protestants to know that 'their' national side could, as in 1993 and in 1995, deny to the Republic qualification in a major sporting championship. This is something of which football fans in the South are all too aware. It confirms for them prejudices about the bigotry of all Northern Protestants. This is unfair. For the sake of their sense of Irish nationality (as defined above) some Protestants were prepared to give passive support to the Republic's footballers in the World Cup finals. They did this despite the sectarian overtones of some Northern Catholic behaviour. This point is made in order to remind a Southern readership of two things. First, that their image of the positive character of the Republic's football team is not universally accepted throughout the island. Second, that the focus of interest on sport and identity in the Republic is rather different from the focus in Northern Ireland.

Sport in the Republic has been identified by some academics as involving a struggle between modernity and traditionalism. In this struggle, the GAA has been accorded the role of the defender of a national identity rooted in the past and the Football Association of Ireland as the promoter of a national identity in tune with the new, modern (or postmodern) Irish society. For example, in an article in *Irish Studies Review*, which to some extent corresponds to the deliberations of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, Mike Cronin argued that:

The future of Irish sport, as with the future of Irishness and Irish nationalism, lies with those who can move away from history and accept the ever-changing definition of Irishness in a wider world. It does not lie with those who still believe in an insular 'one nation' vision, or those who believe that Irishness is under threat if pastimes are not drawn from the time of Cuchulainn.⁴¹

For 'the future' read football and for 'insular "one nation" vision' read the GAA. The only dispensation for the GAA which Cronin allows is its contribution to the 'nationalist struggle' in Northern Ireland. That is hardly an inviting conclusion for Ulster unionists and possibly a dangerous one for GAA members in the North.

This sort of ideological embrace of football is really the ideological embrace of *international* football. There are two aspects to this. First, it fits in with a disposition towards the celebration of that 'globalization'

which projects Ireland and the Irish onto a world market of imagery. The Republic's football team becomes the sporting equivalent of Johnny Logan in the Eurovision Song Contest. This is a world market in which everything is at one and the same time intensely different (Jack's army, the Italians, the Brazilians and so on) and yet intensely the same (the professionalism and the style). The emotions which are felt in the pubs and on the couches at home are very immediate and very real. The source of those emotions transmitted via satellite is distant and very abstract.

Second, the embrace of football is also international in another sense of being outside the League of Ireland. The interest in football has a habit of being focused on teams such as Celtic, Manchester United, Liverpool or Arsenal. These are vibrant British-Irish links. And now, with coverage of European leagues interest is being shown in teams like Juventus, Inter Milan or Barcelona. This ideological enthusiasm for the future has not yet translated into mass support for Cork City or Shamrock Rovers. Even Derry City, one of the best supported teams in the League of Ireland, is suffering from the effects of competition from football on satellite TV. There is a suspicion that it is partially ideological support for victory rather than for the thing itself. In conformity with the postmodern sensibilities of the Republic's intelligentsia there may be a touch of *fantasy football* about all of this recent sporting enthusiasm. On the other hand, there is evidence of young people voting with their feet in terms of the sort of football they wish to play. Those playing association football have doubled in recent years, a trend which is a source of worry for the GAA.

It could even be argued that there is something of the revenge of the emigrant, especially those exiles in England, in the elevation of football against Gaelic games. The reasoning might be this: the old Ireland did not want us and remained smug in its sporting identity; we have returned to reclaim our inheritance and to show that we are the real Irish. None of this has much of a resonance for unionists, however. As with the old struggle between the Catholic Church and social republicanism, they are peripheral to these arguments about identity. These arguments are really about what sort of nationalism is politically correct rather than about what sort of nationality is most inclusive. That the success of international football in the Republic broadens the sense of *Catholic nationalism* is ultimately irrelevant to most Ulster Protestants.

It might be a different form of nationalist expression — 'There's only one team in Ireland', they sang when Northern Ireland played at Lansdowne Road — but it is nationalism nonetheless. At least one commentator has suggested that it may be peripheral even to Northern Catholics despite how those Northern Catholics may feel about it.

In a recent thoughtful article, Michael Holmes has argued that the football team 'represents and mirrors a change to a more pluralist, heterogeneous and accommodatory society in the Republic and has consequent implications for a sense of national identity'. But this pluralism, heterogeneity and accommodation has a particular focus. It is a Southern national identity.

The Irish team is made up from a multi-cultural background, and most of the players live and work in a more liberal, pluralist society than Ireland's [i.e. the United Kingdom]. Thus, to some extent the success of the Irish football team mirrors the advance of pluralism and liberalism in Irish society in general. But it is also an expression of national identity that, at least potentially, excludes Northern nationalists and asserts a difference between the republic and Northern Ireland.⁴²

All of these observations may be contested. It may be doubted if the plain people of Ireland would be so happy to admit that the United Kingdom is the model for a liberal and pluralistic society. If it is, what was the point of Irish independence in the first place (see, for example, some of the arguments under Alternative Ideas of Political Society, p.15). That these views should be widely held in intellectual circles, however, reveals an interesting tendency in Southern attitudes which might at least give pause for thought to those who believe, as the Department of Foreign Affairs seems to do, in Irish nationalism *in its integrity*.

In these contemporary discussions about national identity, it is interesting to note how rugby, formally the jewel in the crown of those nationalists who wished to see the Irish people at ease with themselves, has lost its major significance. In Ireland, rugby has been extremely successful in retaining its character as a sport of nationality. The game has a large following worldwide. Ireland is reasonably good at it. The rugby team even beats the English (sometimes). The sport now has a powerful media presence and has gone professional. Yet it does not seem to satisfy the need for sporting nationalism in the way that football does. Why? It could be that it is a minority sport, though that ought not

to affect its symbolic importance. It could also be that it is too closely identified as a British or imperial sport. Football has lost that connotation and become truly globalized. Football is also a 'people's sport' in the way that rugby has never been. Nevertheless, other possibilities spring to mind. Could it be that there are too many Ulster players on the team and that they complicate the demand for a simple affective, nationalist identity? Could it be that thirty two counties no longer have the same power to excite the plain people of Ireland as twenty six counties — in the South, because they are 'ours' and amongst Catholics in the North, because they are 'not theirs'? If the answer to either of these questions is yes, then it tends to confirm the observations of Holmes. If so, then the Forum really has some hard and honest thinking still to do about the nature of reconciliation in Ireland.

It does seem rather premature of those who would wish to see the modernization of the Republic reflected in its sporting pastimes, to dismiss the GAA. Domestically at least, the flourishing of the GAA is there for all to see, especially for those who travel by train from Belfast to Dublin. The new stadium being built at Croke Park dominates the skyline and represents a £35 million vote of confidence in Gaelic games. A membership of 800,000 is a large vote of confidence in the pastimes drawn from the age of Cuchulain. It may be true that the GAA's strength lies in rural Ireland but it was Dublin which won the All-Ireland football final this year. Gaelic games are insulated from the vagaries of international fortune and it will be interesting to see what happens to the relative importance of football and Irish identity when the Republic's team begins to lose again — as it will. The great strength of the GAA, which even some Protestants can admire, is its local patriotism. If Edmund Burke's notion of the 'little platoons' being the basis of national affection has any meaning at all, then the GAA has had and continues to have a vital importance in the structure of Irish life. The GAA's organization can engage an intense county-based involvement which has no real sporting equivalent elsewhere. The major challenge to the integrity of Gaelic sports comes from professionalization as much as from the competition with football. Once sport in Ireland is universally understood in terms of making a living instead of a way of life then all sorts of career permutations and shifts of allegiance become possible. Money has a habit of bringing change, if not always for the better.

The GAA would still represent for Northern unionists a world from which they are excluded and a world from which they wish to exclude themselves — irrespective of the GAA's attitude to members of the British security forces. The GAA is a metaphor for the Irish State itself, an association given to rituals, practices, symbolism and allegiance, and with constitutional provisions, which are alien to unionist purpose. Like the GAA, the Irish State will be loathed by some unionists, ignored by most (if they can) and its intentions suspected by nearly all. It may not be very helpful of unionists to feel this way about the GAA or the Irish State or for that matter, the Republic's football team. But it is a fact of life. And a fact is simply something which is, for the moment, impossible to get around. It must be treated seriously by all those in the Republic who are seeking peace and reconciliation, even if it is the hope of those attending the Forum that it will be possible *one day* to get around it.

CONCLUSION

This brief paper has examined how certain aspects of life in the Republic are viewed by unionists in Northern Ireland. It has tried to provide an honest estimate of how unionists understand the character of Southern society and how they understand their own relationship to it. Many of the judgements delivered on the basis of that estimate may appear harsh to most members of the Forum. However, that probably indicates the gap between the aspiration to accommodation and the reality of present opinion. The key word here is *present*. The optimistic perspective of the Forum must be that it is possible to change that opinion by changing the atmosphere of public discussion. It must share with the English philosopher Michael Oakeshott the view that a tradition of behaviour is not a groove within which we are destined to grind out our helpless and unsatisfying lives. The Forum, for its own sense of political perspective, however, should keep in mind the pessimistic possibility that things in the world might not necessarily change for the better. If its sessions have meant nothing more than an exercise in nationalist psychotherapy, then the Forum would have only served a limited and transient function.

The position we are in at the moment may be best described in the words of Richard Rorty. We are probably 'between an entrenched

vocabulary which has become a nuisance and a half-formed new vocabulary which vaguely promises great things.⁴³ The language of traditional Irish nationalism and the language of traditional Ulster unionism have both become a nuisance. Everyone today is struggling to express themselves in a half-formed vocabulary which vaguely promises great things. The Forum for Peace and Reconciliation — as its grandiose title suggests — is only one example of an attempt to transform the vaguely promising new vocabulary of the Downing Street Declaration into a viable political grammar. The problem for unionists is that the new vocabulary of Irish nationalism always sounds very much like the entrenched one to which they have become so used. This is not because they have tin ears but because they are acutely sensitive to meaning and not to sound. Unionist politicians believe that the Irish Government have been selling the same horse for twenty five years and it still has Articles 2 and 3 secure in its constitutional stable.

One problem for peace and reconciliation in Ireland has been the views of the South about itself, views which have implicated Northern unionists in their various understandings. As we have noted, Southern opinion has often swung between moods of self-loathing and moods of self-congratulation. This suggests a State which is not entirely at ease with itself, a State with a tendency to look elsewhere for the cause of its own dissatisfactions. The roles which Northern unionists have been allocated in these emotional mood swings have been equally contradictory. They are destined either to save the Republic from its (worst) self or they are destined to realize how wonderful life already is south of the border. These are political fantasies which make it difficult to get a sense of proportion about reconciliation in Ireland. They sometimes oscillate between ill-disguised hostility to all things unionist or Protestant and ill-informed praise for the supposed sterling qualities of the 'unionist people' in Northern Ireland. Both are dangerous perspectives because they deal in self-willed images and not realities. At its worst, as twenty five years of IRA violence have proved, these illusions can lead to a destructive fervour which can dispense death 'with no more significance than cleaving a head of cabbage or swallowing a draught of water'.⁴⁴

If peace and reconciliation really does mean that pushing for Irish unity irrespective of the active consent of unionists is now off the political agenda then the Forum might wish to consider in its final

report how the oneness of the island in many mutually beneficial ways can become a practical reality. A sense of common nationality, which we noted under Symbols (p. 33), might possibly reassert itself if the language *and* the practice are right. This would not entail a necessary move towards Irish political unity. It would mean, rather, a move towards an island at ease with its diversity, a diversity which would include, amongst other things, two separate jurisdictions on the island. This would enable people in Northern Ireland to live their lives — business, cultural, social — if they so wished, partly or even mainly in the context of the whole island without in any way weakening the position of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom, which is what really matters to unionists. Nationalists might find a nationality broader in its sympathies than residual anti-Britishness (the South) and prominent anti-Britishness (the North). As the European Union develops a common citizenship, residents of Northern Ireland could be in the happy position of being British, Irish, or European as the mood takes them while remaining, constitutionally, citizens of the United Kingdom.

Similarly, there could be recognition of the broader oneness of 'these islands' — of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland — where political division has neither impinged upon a shared cultural heritage nor on a vast network of economic, social and other ties. Only the lingering idea of absolute Irish separatism prevents these things happening while at the same time fostering unionist suspicion of mutually beneficial cooperation between the jurisdictions on the island. As the Cadogan Group argued in its pamphlet *Northern Limits*:

Progress in Northern Ireland surely requires a greater recognition that we share a common cultural heritage which, while it is largely Western and English speaking, from Shakespeare to Shaw to Coronation Street, has also a strong regional element that embraces not just Irish writers in English, but Irish language, art and folk music. This Irish cultural heritage is, and should be, shared by everyone in Northern Ireland regardless of politics.⁴⁵

Unfortunately, the stress of Irish nationalism, especially in its post-New Ireland Forum formulation, defines cultural life in strictly political terms, the 'Irish' one 'directly associated with the government in Dublin and therefore with the idea of unity with an Irish political entity'. This

is something which the Forum might wish to consider seriously (see also Sport). As the Cadogan Group went on:

In approaching a solution, all parties should appreciate the reality of Northern Ireland's position as part of the United Kingdom, and of the fact that the lives of many are lived entirely within that context. Unionists are not reluctant nationalists, waiting to be enticed or persuaded into a united Ireland by the generosity of Dublin.⁴⁶

If one thing should be acknowledged by the Forum in its discussions on the specific aspects of 'obstacles to peace and reconciliation in the South', that is certainly it. The contemporary possibilities of the Redmondite project, to which Professor Bew has referred and which we have cited (see Introduction, p. 3), must take account of the limits imposed on policy by that reality.

NOTES

- 1 S. Gwynn, *Ireland*, London, 1924, p. 12.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- 3 P. Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question*, Oxford, 1994, p. 158.
- 4 D. G. Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, (4th ed.) London, 1995, p. 43.
- 5 E. Gellner, *Encounters With Nationalism*, Oxford, 1994, p. 73.
- 6 T. P. Coogan, *Disillusioned Decades*, Dublin, 1987, p. 242.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 243.
- 8 G. Fitzgerald, *All in a Life*, London, 1992, p. 376.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 378.
- 10 C. C. O'Brien *Ancestral Voices*, p. 128.
- 11 R. L. McCartney *Liberty and Authority in Ireland*, Derry, 1985, p. 15.
- 12 A. Green 'The British Isles' in J. W. Foster (ed.), *The Idea of the Union*, Vancouver, 1995, p. 24.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 14 Cited in Cultural Traditions Group, *Giving Voices*, Belfast, 1995, p. 13.
- 15 A. Clifford, *The Constitutional History of Éire/Ireland*, Belfast, 1987, p. 310.
- 16 J. Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland*, Oxford, 1991, pp 157-58.
- 17 R. L. McCartney, 'Priests, Politics and Pluralism' in J. W. Foster (ed.) *op. cit.*, pp 90-91.
- 18 Cited in D. Keogh, *Twentieth Century Ireland*, Dublin, 1994, p. 30.
- 19 D. Kennedy, *The Widening Gulf*, Belfast, 1988.
- 20 V. Griffin, *Mark of Protest*, Dublin, 1993, p. 223.
- 21 Cited in Keogh, *op. cit.*, p. 338.
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- 25 *The Irish Times*, 19 April 1995.
- 26 *The Irish Times*, 20 April 1995.
- 27 *The Irish Times*, 29 September 1995.
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- 29 Board of the Adelaide Hospital, *The Adelaide Hospital: Symbol and Expression of a Pluralist Society*, a submission to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, October 1995, p. 4.
- 30 Cited in Bew, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
- 31 R. Ferguson, 'Locality and Political Tradition' in M. Crozier (ed.) *Varieties of Britishness*, Belfast, 1990, p. 44.
- 32 S. Gwynn, *Experiences of a Literary Man*, London, 1926, p. 1.
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- 34 M. Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, Harmondsworth, 1978, p. 58.
- 35 J. W. Foster, 'Why I am a Unionist' in J. W. Foster (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 61.
- 36 G. Adams, *Free Ireland: Towards a Lasting Peace* (revised edition) Dingle, 1995, p. 143.
- 37 D. Trimble in M. Crozier (ed.) *Varieties of Irishness*, Belfast, 1989, pp 45-46.
- 38 Bryson and McCartney, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

- 39 Cited in M. Cronin, 'Sport and a Sense of Irishness', *Irish Studies Review*, no 9, Winter 1994/95, p. 13.
- 40 A. Bairner, 'The Arts and Sport' in A. Aughey and D. Morrow (eds.) *Northern Ireland Politics* (forthcoming), London, p. 172.
- 41 Cronin, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
- 42 M. Holmes, 'Symbols of National Identity and Sport: The Case of the Irish Football Team', *Irish Political Studies*, vol 9, 1994, p. 97.
- 43 'The Contingency of Language' in R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 9.
- 44 G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (trans. Sir J. Baillie), London, 1966, p. 605.
- 45 Cadogan Group, *Northern Limits*, Belfast, 1992, p. 14.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 27.