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Beleaguered resonance: Loyalist entrenchment and division in the early troubles, 1963–1985

Bradley J. Watkins

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Beleaguered Resonance: Loyalist Entrenchment and Division in the Early Troubles, 1963–1985

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Bradley Watkins

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Jesse Kauffman, Ph.D., Chair

Robert Hendershot, Ph.D.

John Knight, Ph.D.

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Abstract

Taking as a starting point the framework that the Northern Ireland Troubles were largely fought on confessional sectarian, ethno-national grounds, this essay will analyze the internal and external forces that incited Ulster Protestant political responses from the premiership of Terence O'Neill, beginning in 1963, to the 1985 signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Through an extrapolation of socioeconomic class dynamics, and geographical imperatives informed by such source material as population demographics, election results, distribution of political violence, as well as numerous Protestant organizational publications, it is clear that throughout the early Troubles Protestant Northern Ireland increasingly undertook strategies of various modes of political extremism in order maintain their provincial autonomy. Under the constant pressures of drastically reoriented institutional circumstances disputes between elite Protestant politicians, their constituent bodies, and grassroots working class paramilitary bodies emerged as the single largest ideological cleavage that defined the trajectory of Ulster Protestant political action.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In mid-August 1969 a nearly thirty year period dominated by political and civil upheaval known as the Troubles was officially triggered in Northern Ireland. At the time rioting had spread to many areas of the province, though the worst street violence occurred in the province's largest cities—Londonderry and the capital city of Belfast. From August 12 to 15, a microcosm of the violent extremes experienced in the early days of the Troubles occurred in West Belfast between the predominately Catholic West Falls and the Protestant Shankill Road, where sectarian rioting resulted in a massive damage to property. Particularly affected was Bombay Street, the northern most street of the West Falls that borders the Shankill. In all, some forty-four houses were burned out by Protestant mobs, but many more houses on both sides of the sectarian divide were destroyed, and thousands of people displaced.[1] A thick concrete and high fenced wall known as a "peace line" now separates the two communities, but in August 1969 this line existed as a symbolic front line between the shifting political balance of the traditionally opposed Catholic and Protestant communities of Northern Ireland.

Throughout the premiership of Captain Terence O'Neill, beginning in 1963, Protestant constituents increasingly questioned the direction of traditional Unionism—the guiding force of Northern Ireland's Protestant political ideology. Why did Unionism so drastically fragment throughout the 1960's, and how did Protestants, lacking a unified political direction, attempt to reconstruct their ideological places within Northern Ireland's political conflict? The key to answering these questions lay in the identification and analysis of the internal and external forces influencing the various segments of the Protestant population within specific historical contexts. Much of the existing scholarship endeavors to unravel the complex notions that inform the

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[1] Jennifer Curtis, "'Community' and the Re-Making of the 1970's Belfast," *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 73, no. 3 (Sept., 2008): 409-10.

character of Northern Protestants by seeking to categorize Protestant beliefs and practices in such a way that identifies broad spectrums of characteristics that simultaneously engender and exclude certain segments of the Protestant population. Most prominently, commentators have tended to build interpretations that are focused on the concepts of ethno-national identity and socioeconomic class and how those two forces interact to form the basis of political action in a society that is largely defined in sectarian terms.

Jennifer Todd's 1987 article, "Two Traditions in Unionist Political Culture," is a foundational work in the analysis of the major ideological strains in Protestant Northern Ireland. Her two categories are the Ulster loyalist and Ulster British. The "more numerous," and indeed the ideological identifier most equitable with Protestant politics throughout this study is that of the Ulster loyalist, whom if perceiving any challenge to their local hegemony by either the Catholic *other* or a mainland United Kingdom government, to whom they professed a "conditional loyalty," would not begrudge themselves the right to an non-negotiable, extreme, often times violent response.[2] Somewhat oppositely, the Ulster British have tended to be muted throughout the early Troubles (a term that will be used throughout this work in reference to the period from 1963–1985). According to Colin Coulter, the lack of political will and general "contentedness" on behalf of the largely middle class Ulster British was derived from their integration within the institutions of the United Kingdom, primarily through educational and economic opportunities, which after the introduction of Direct Rule in 1972 provided them with unprecedented levels of material affluence.[3] Todd's descriptive categories and Coulter's economic underpinning of such ideological categories have however been disputed.

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[2] Jennifer Todd, "Two Traditions in Ulster Political Culture," *Irish Political Studies* 2 (1987): 3, 5-7, 10.

[3] Colin Coulter, "The Culture of Contentment: The Political Beliefs and Practice of the Unionist Middle Classes," in *Who Are 'The People*,' eds. Mark McGovern and Peter Shirlow (London: Pluto Press, 1997), 118-20.

James Loughlin's *Ulster Unionism and British National Identity Since 1885* explicitly challenges Todd's categorizations, claiming that even the more extreme, or loyalist, elements of Ulster society have as their primary national identifier the British mainland. Loughlin claims that in the 1980s, "the distinction described by Jennifer Todd… can be difficult to maintain in a political context," further claiming "British compromise/Ulster fundamentalism—is an underlying homogeneity based on a deeply embedded Protestant faith and fear of the Catholic Church."[4] Though a merited observation, Loughlin is essentially pointing out a flaw in Todd's theory that she points to at the outset of her work. She states, "Northern Protestants… have a foot in each camp and share aspects of each ideology."[5] This simple defense aside, what is important about Loughlin's analysis is that he is only concerned with abstract notions of national identity that are disconnected from material responses. Class is also largely ignored throughout his study, but as Todd and Coulter have pointed out, class distinctions cannot be ignored within the context of Ulster Protestant ideology.

Carrying on Todd's schemata, Steve Bruce's *The Edge of the Union* presents two opposing forces within loyalism that at times share an odd, yet strained symbiosis and unity of goals. The categories, in his words, are the "gunmen" and the "evangelicals." In Bruce's interpretation, the gunmen are urban working-class Protestants who are often affiliated to some degree with paramilitaries. On the other end of the spectrum are the evangelical Christians, primarily rural working or middle class Protestants. Bruce also states early on that although his work represents the extremes of Protestant political ideology, moderate Unionists too have adopted elements of Protestant loyalism, especially when feelings of alienation toward their

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[4] James Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism and British National Identity Since 1885* (New York: Pinter Publisher, 1995), 216.
[5] Todd, "Two Traditions," 2.

British allegiances became more acute. [6] These two categories found material expression through paramilitary organizations and political parties, such as the Ulster Defence Association and Ulster Volunteer Force, and the Democratic Unionist Party. One question that is consistently raised by many commentators is how did such public figures and organizations construct viable alternatives to traditional forms of Unionist politics considering their extreme nature?

The voice of Steve Bruce is again echoed in discussions on Ian Paisley. His 1986 work, *God Save Ulster!*, was fully committed to understanding the influence and impact of Ian Paisley, the founder of the DUP and also the Free Presbyterian Church, which broke from the larger Presbyterian church in 1951. In more abstract terms, Bruce concludes that Paisley was not a charismatic leader in the Weberian sense. Oppositely in fact, Paisley was very traditional; he tapped into a belief system that was already prevalent in Northern Ireland and became one of its main public purveyors and organizers. Bruce further claims that if Paisley stepped outside the bounds of the value system he gave voice to his constituents may abandon him.[7] In other words, Paisley was able to weave a sphere of influence that identified with existing political attitudes, and therefore, his expressions could be ideologically incorporated into many segments of the loyalist community. James McAuley's micro-study of East Belfast, *The Politics of Identity*, further exhibits the appeal of Paisley's DUP, asserting that its success was largely due to their visible willingness to politically interact with working class communities. This was seen in opposition to the Official Unionists who would focus their campaigning on the "more suburban outer wards."[8]

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[6] Steve Bruce, *The Edge of the Union: The Ulster Loyalist Political Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 1-2.

[7] Steve Bruce, *God Save Ulster: The Religion and Politics of Paisleyism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 213.

[8] James McAuley, *The Politics of Identity: a Loyalist Community in Belfast* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1994), 143.

Historian Graham Walker's *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party* posits an understanding of Paisley that differs from Bruce and McAuley because his study adopts a view that the Official or Ulster Unionists could have been the saving force of Protestant politics if only cooler heads prevailed throughout the Troubles. This becomes especially clear in his discussion on 1985s Anglo-Irish Agreement: a piece of legislation that galvanized Protestant action, causing "the calming influence" of Official Unionist leader James Molyneaux to join forces with "political gunslinger" Ian Paisley to combat the implementation of the Agreement, which put forward that the Republic of Ireland would have a say in specific matters pertaining to the governance of Northern Ireland. Though all segments of Protestant Unionism indeed unified in protest against the Agreement, from the above language it becomes clear that Walker favors traditional Unionist politics over what he conceives as the more chaotic grassroots efforts of the Paisley and the DUP.[9] Likewise, other works concerned with tracing the divisions within Protestant politics have tended to place Ulster and Official Unionists in the role of the protagonists in Protestant Northern Ireland politics. Moreover, the works of historians like Walker[10] have a common shortcoming. Though dealing most thoroughly with the general question of Protestant political division and claiming to represent analyses that are inclusive of populist and grassroots political assertions, such works offer little critical consideration outside of the official channels of parliamentary politics.

In outlining some strategies of loyalist paramilitary politics, the topic almost entirely ignored by Walker and company, it has been concluded that due to its largely urban, working class character paramilitary politics lacked widespread support outside of proximate paramilitary

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[9] Graham Walker, *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party: Protest, Pragmatism, and Pessimism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 248.

[10] Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson. *Northern Ireland, 1921-1996: Political Forces and Social Classes* (London: Serif, 1996); Eric Kaufmann and Henry Patterson, *Unionism and Orangeism in Northern Ireland Since 1945: the Decline of the Loyal Family* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

circles.[11] More optimistically however, Sarah Nelson credits the growing class-consciousness experienced in Protestant areas of Belfast throughout the Troubles, as well as the paramilitaries' will to organize community support groups to varying but nonetheless successful degrees.[12] Loyalist assertions relating to political place within Northern Ireland weigh heavily on the effects of working class political developments.

The concept of political assertiveness and nation has led many commentators to adopt the idea that the Troubles, despite being framed as a sort of religious war, was an ethnic conflict. Religion, however, extends the conflict by supplying participants with a vocabulary in which to view the social differences between themselves and the perceived *other*. However, the social realities of the differences between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland have spread beyond the historical bounds of purely confessional identifiers to become embedded in nearly all aspects of Northern Ireland social and cultural life, including education, economics, and political goals and limits. In short, "it is an ethnic conflict with a religious dimension."[13] Furthermore, political goals became directly linked with the aspirations of Catholic republicans and nationalists as well as Protestant loyalists and unionists throughout the Troubles, namely through the formation of separate and competing concepts of nation. In this way Alan Finlayson's argument is especially relevant. He posits that loyalism is fundamentally a nationalistic ideological construction that focuses its significant place within the geographic state of Northern Ireland. Furthermore, that state is the embodiment of a specified Ulster Protestant people that are

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[11] Bruce, *The Red Hand: Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 123-124, 267.

[12] Sarah Nelson, *Ulster's Uncertain Defenders: Protestant Political, Paramilitary, and Community Groups, and the Northern Ireland Conflict* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press 1984).

[13] Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Expropriations*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2008), 120, 124.

separate from both their southern Irish and mainland UK counterparts.[14] Their nationalism is

compounded by a sense of constant, anxious embattlement due to their geographic and historical

place within the British Isles; they rely on a distant and seemingly indifferent UK benefactor to

guarantee a geographical place of power on the island of Ireland—where they are a clear

minority—since their Ascendancy following the Glorious Revolution in the seventeenth century

(two historical moments that have become mythic in present day Protestant culture through such

institutions as the Orange Order and the Apprentice Boys of Derry annual commemorations[15]).

In short, Ulster loyalist discourse resembles a simultaneous claim to an uneasy yet historically

legitimated hegemony in Northern Ireland and a pervasive fear of being overrun and victimized

by its southern neighbor.[16] Thus, the primary goal of Protestant politics, as an ethnic identity

informed by religious as well as nationalist concepts is further illuminated when Paul Bew, et al.

write, "The autonomy of the local state" was the paramount goal of Protestant politics

throughout the Troubles, as it "was designed to preclude a united Ireland and reduce dependence

on an unreliable ally."[17] Considering these concluding remarks of the above presented

historiographical debate, it will be my general contention throughout this essay that that the early

Troubles fostered a near total acceptance of loyalist ideology among the Ulster Protestant ethnic

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[14] Alan Finlayson, "Nationalism as Ideological Interpellation: the Case of Ulster Loyalism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19, no. 1 (Jan., 1996): 92, 108.

[15] Of the most widely practiced commemorations are those organized by the Orange Order that take place primarily on July 11 and 12 in celebration of King William of Orange's historic victory over the Catholic King James at the Battle of the Boyne in 1698; a battle that is viewed as essentially ensuring the Protestant Ascendancy in Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom. Likewise, Twelfth celebrations have always been sectarian flashpoints as well as a time when Protestants can assert their identities through triumphal marches, often times through Catholic neighborhoods, though it has claimed that given the current peace process many attempts have been made by the Orange Order and its affiliated participants to try and incorporate activities, such as battle reenactments, that will invite possible Catholic attendance: Lee A. Smithey, *Unionists, Loyalists, and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11, 23. For a more skeptical view of contemporary Orange commemorations see Neil Jarman, *Material Conflicts: Parades and Visual Displays in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Berg, 1997).

[16] F.C. McGrath, "Settler Nationalism: Ulster Unionism and Postcolonial Theory," *Irish Studies Review* 20, no. 4 (2012): 463, 475-6.

[17] Bew, Gibbon and Patterson, *Northern Ireland*, 184.

bloc: an ideology primarily characterized by the acceptance of political extremism in defense of the symbolic and legitimate authority of the Northern Ireland state, which was further shaped by specific regional and social considerations.

Extremism, as briefly mentioned, was an important characteristic of Protestant loyalist ideology. However, it was far from a singular method for political articulation and action. In fact, extremism had many degrees of community support and modes of expression, ranging from sectarian murder to much more peaceful forms of political protest, such as marching, or the mere act of voting for loyalist candidates. Likewise, such strategies were subjected to varying degrees of acceptance throughout the early period of the Troubles. Violence is an immeasurably important issue when trying to understand the nature of Protestant politics throughout the Troubles. One's personal experience with violence was crucial when considering the development of a protectionist ideology such as loyalism.

At its most immediate, the widespread violence of the Troubles caused many Protestants, and Catholics alike, to fear for their most materially proximate need, their bodily safety. On a macro level, the widespread violence of the Irish Republican Army and later Protestant paramilitaries threatened to bring the state of Northern Ireland to an end. Violence was thus a force that was deeply intertwined with the commonly expressed features of Ulster loyalist ideology—the legitimacy of the state and its direct impact on local autonomy. The ramifications of the anxieties brought about by the threat to one's life and institutional conventions were wide-ranging and incredibly dynamic. Support for the British Army, who arrived in 1969, waxed and waned throughout the Troubles. Questioning the efficacy of the British ground forces and traditionally Protestant security forces, such as the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Ulster Defense Regiment, caused many within the Protestant community to wrestle with the legitimacy of illegal

paramilitaries, particularly the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Freedom Fighters—the *nom de guerre* of the legal Ulster Defence Association who used the UFF title as a cover when carrying out its violent campaign against the IRA and the Catholic population at large. Though violence was one of the single largest indicators of Protestant Northern Ireland's compromise of physical and ideological space, other more official political occurrences, such as elections, provide another gauge for understanding how Protestant politics were constantly being reshaped throughout the early Troubles. This is mainly because the period witnessed numerous reorganizations of Northern Ireland's *formal*, electoral political landscape. Likewise, discussion about the form and effect of parliamentary change will play a large role in the analysis of Protestant political ideological development.

Up to this point what has been discussed was concerned with a general outline of the theoretical framework that will be employed throughout this work. The form of the study, methodology, and a brief description of the primary documentation to be examined will now be discussed in order to elaborate on how Protestant politics existed under specific historical circumstances. The body of this work will be organized into three chapters that are divided into periods marked by major events that shaped the Northern Ireland Troubles.

Chapter one will cover from 1963 to 1972. The start date is significant because it marks the beginning of Terence O'Neill's premiership, a date many scholars have identified as a starting point for Unionist disruption. As the notorious year of 1969 approached Marc Mulholland observes "politics was now an affair of the streets."[18] Mulholland's fitting description culminated with the 1972 suspension of Stormont, which returned Northern Ireland's rule to the Parliament at Westminster. The institutional realities of Northern Ireland were nearly

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[18] Marc Mulholland, *Northern Ireland at the Crossroads: Ulster Unionism in the O'Neill Years, 1960-1969* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 198.

unrecognizable. Protestants were forced to reckon with a state whose very foundations were showing signs of faltering for the first time in fifty years. Coinciding with, and in part responsible for, Stormont's proroguing was the drastic escalation of violence that characterized 1972. That year witnessed the highest number of Troubles related deaths.

Continuing through the chaotic descent, chapter two will detail the period from 1972 to 1979. By late 1973 the Sunningdale Agreement had been agreed upon. A new power-sharing executive would be elected and returned to Stormont by the beginning of 1974. Any government that readily conceded political power to the Catholic minority was bound to meet an extreme Protestant backlash. As such, by May of 1974, a loyalist coalition consisting of the major paramilitary forces, the UDA and UVF, politicians such as Paisley and William Craig, and the Ulster Workers Council—a political association consisting of Protestant workers—organized and staged a fourteen day general strike that brought Northern Ireland and its new government to a halt, again returning the governance of the province to Westminster. The strike was the cresting of loyalist cooperation. Protestant politics would re-fragment into competing interests, and by the late 1970s, Protestant and Catholic paramilitaries were beginning to formulate strategies within the realm of formal politics, believing that mainstream politicians no longer represented their interests.

In 1980 non-violent paramilitary politics could no longer be ignored. In October the IRA embarked on its first hunger strike to protest the stripping of political status from their serving prisoners. By 1981 a second hunger strike resulted in one of its participants, Bobby Sands, being elected to Parliament, though he died soon after while still on strike. The public backlash would help launch Sinn Féin, the IRA's political wing, into electoral success, and though Protestant paramilitaries and the working class communities they were associated with were slower to

accept the notion of paramilitary politics, a growing need to articulate their political needs was realized. Furthermore, like the IRA, many of the culture of protest, as well as the social and political issues that most deeply affected Protestant working class paramilitary communities were exacerbated within the prison system of Northern Ireland.

The divergence between working class paramilitary communities and more mainstream Protestant politicians would provide yet another contention within the population, making unity that much harder to achieve. The era beginning in the late 1970s and lasting through 1985 will be the focus of the final chapter. It marks another period of deep fissures within the Protestant community for many of the reasons discussed above. Also at this time, the British government began to generate new ways to manage the situation in Northern Ireland with the hope of bringing peace to the province. The outcome was the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, which proposed a strong cross border cooperation between the British government, any future devolved Northern Ireland government, and the Republic of Ireland. Responses to the Agreement were reminiscent of the Sunningdale era of the mid-1970s, only this time even more moderate Unionist politicians, such as Harold McCusker, would join in protest with such extreme figures as Paisley.[19]

The Troubles were not technically ended until 1998, after the signing of the Good Friday, or Belfast Peace Agreement. This study, however, will end in the era of the Anglo-Irish Agreement because at that time the political possibilities of Northern Ireland were incontrovertibly altered to a degree previously not witnessed in the short history of the province. Not only were paramilitary organizations gaining political momentum outside the realm of violence since the early 1980s, but the British government showed that it would, if necessary,

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[19] Bruce, *The Edge of the Union*, 67.

completely circumvent its Ulster Protestant constituents in order to find a resolution to the Troubles. Protestant Northern Ireland all but rejected its fealty to the UK government outside of its minimal need to maintain its state's continued existence.

Outside the strictly linear view presented above a comparative methodology will also be employed throughout this study. By combining census materials and the geographic breakdown of political violence throughout the Troubles it can be understood that Protestant political motivations are largely informed by proximity to both violence and the neighboring Catholic community. Considering this context along with other variables, like class, it can be deduced that people's experience of the Troubles varied widely depending on location. This study will delineate between a number of those locations to again elucidate on the importance of place when considering the complex diversity within the Protestant population. Regional comparisons will be most fully elaborated in chapter one in order to illustrate the nature of existing sectarian relationships that underpinned and found expression throughout the O'Neill era. There are three primary locations that will be discussed: first, Belfast, the epicenter of the Troubles; second, County Armagh, a precarious place for Protestants due to high levels of violence—most comparable to Belfast—as well as its proximity with a Catholic majority and the border with the Republic of Ireland;[20] and finally, Co. Antrim, a county that has an extreme Protestant majority, who were largely insulated from the extremes of political violence throughout the Troubles, but who nonetheless maintained a high degree of ideological certainty.

To examine these locations, and their wider contexts they help reveal, one of the main sources of documentation to be used throughout this study will be local newspapers, including Armagh's *Ulster Gazette* and Antrim's *Ballymena Chronicle* and *Observer*, though the *Belfast*

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[20] Kaufmann and Patterson, *Unionism and Orangeism*, 44.

News Letter will also have a main roll in this analysis. Considered together and against one another, these newspapers are simultaneous representations of provincial as well as specifically regional perspectives—two greatly connected areas of Protestant political discourse. To build and support the analysis, specialized presses such as those of the Orange Order and the two primary paramilitary organizations, the UVF and UDA, as well as numerous types of political ephemera including speeches and party manifestos will be utilized as primary sources. These sources will be further elaborated on by comparing their discursive tendencies to the statistical sources previously mentioned, as well as local council and provincial election results. The use of election results must be qualified: council elections, though based on local economic and social issues specific to a small location, will be justifiably used in concert with the Stormont and Westminster provincial elections because both forms of elections featured candidates who focused their campaigns on the constitutional issue of the legitimacy of the Northern Ireland state. Moreover, the validity of such a correlative body of evidence serves to further the connection between Protestant notions of local autonomy and state legitimacy stressed throughout this introduction. Taken together then, the primary documentation and the supplemental statistical sources reveal the recalcitrant forces that informed developments within Protestant Northern Ireland throughout the early Troubles.

Chapter One: Quaking Foundations, 1963-1972

When Captain Terence O'Neill became Prime Minister of Northern Ireland in March 1963, the Unionist political machine was functioning at characteristically ossified levels. His quick rise through the ranks of Stormont after his election in 1946, and his stellar record as the Minister of Finance assured that the Unionist Parliamentary Party would fully support his appointment after the retirement of the current Premier, Lord Brookeborough.[1] The vast majority of the Protestant community was also content with the belief that O'Neill would maintain the locally based power structure that derived its authority from the Ulster Unionist Council; the institution, dating back to 1905, was made up of 996 local Unionist organizations including party branches and Orange lodges. The involvement of the Orange Order in the UUC is noteworthy. Though never explicitly connected to the wider political goals of Protestant Northern Ireland, the Order functioned as a central social institution that linked its rank-and-file Protestant membership's economic interests, devotional commitments, and cultural attitudes to the political mechanisms of Unionism. The Council's primary activity was approving candidates for local and provincial offices, as well as identifying potential party leaders, but because the Council only met *en masse* annually, regional branches, along with local Orange lodges, were the epicenters of local government power.[2]

Regional support for O'Neill was reflexively shown. Giving a nod to both O'Neill, and the new first lady of Northern Ireland, the mayor of a County Antrim borough stated, "He is practically a townsman and is well known to all of us here. Mrs. O'Neill has taken a keen interest

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[1] "A Man of Talents," *Belfast News Letter*, March 26, 1963.

[2] Eric Kaufmann and Henry Patterson, *Unionism and Orangeism in Northern Ireland Since 1945: The Decline of the Loyal Family* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 4, 6; David A. Roberts, "The Orange Order in Ireland: a Religious Institution?," *The British Journal of Sociology* 22, no. 3 (Sept., 1971): 271.

in the affairs of the Borough."[3] These sincere praises would turn to outright denunciations over the course of O'Neill's tenure due to his centralizing political strategies, persistent issues rejuvenating the North's stagnate economy, and his move toward a wider inclusion of the Catholic minority in the political affairs of Northern Ireland. At the same time, the growing demands of the Catholic civil rights movement throughout the late 1960s exacerbated the growing anxieties of Protestant Northern Ireland. Protestant unity dissolved as their local autonomy was being literally and symbolically eroded by the internal efforts of O'Neill. Northern Ireland's increasing sectarian animosity manifested into a rigorous series of demonstrations and counter protests, which almost uniformly pitted Catholic against Protestant. The sectarian campaigns of the IRA and emerging Protestant defense organizations serves as another grim example of the eruption of ethnic tensions that initiated the onset of the Troubles. Within this escalating chaos, Protestants became eager to accept the extreme measures of the paramilitaries to ensure security; some still held out that traditional methods of legitimate state force would subsist in returning peace to Northern Ireland, but by 1972 the province was on the verge of collapse as Stormont was suspended and IRA violence reached heights never before witnessed. In all, this period shattered Protestant notions of local autonomy as their relationship to the Catholic community, and their place within the institutional structures of Northern Ireland became reoriented, forcing many to completely abandon the Unionist Party. Though the 1960s and early 1970s triggered the diffusion of Protestant political divergence—increasingly characterized by ambivalence toward traditional Unionist authority—many of the economic and social issues that predominated the O'Neill Premiership were already festering under the surface of Unionist politics.

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[3] "Borough's Best Wishes For Captain O'Neill," *Ballymena Observer*, April 4, 1963.

Existing Economic Matters

Economically Northern Ireland had been declining since the end of World War II. By the 1950s half of all manufacturing jobs were held in two of Northern Ireland's traditional sectors: linen and shipbuilding. Moreover, Protestant workers traditionally dominated these industries, but in 1964 the numbers employed by the linen and shipbuilding sectors alike fell by nearly forty percent. One outcome of this was a shift in Belfast's working class politics away from traditional Unionism toward the Northern Ireland Labor Party. O'Neill had seemingly quelled Protestant working class discontent in the mid-1960s by directly addressing their need for economic security.[4] However, working class angst toward the established politics of both Stormont and Westminster authorities would play a major role throughout the early Troubles and were indeed finding expression throughout O'Neill's time in office.

The social and economic needs of the working class, their relationship with the wider power structures of the United Kingdom, and how Unionist representatives addressed working class needs were given expression during a nearly month long seaman strike beginning in mid-May 1966, which halted the shipment of food, mail, and fuel, causing massive infrastructural stress in Northern Ireland. One underlying theme that emerged during the strike was the uneasy dynamic between the governments of Stormont and Westminster. Graham Walker suggests that in the mid-twentieth-century Unionism simultaneously expressed "the materialist benefits of Britishness" and "suspiciousness" toward "English metropolitan condescension," but at the time of the strike, the ruling Unionist elites muted such suspicions in order to assure Northern Ireland's economic stability, even if it meant submitting to UK authority. Unionists fully supported any action taken on part of the UK government, including the proposal to use the

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[4] Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson, *Northern Ireland, 1921-1996: Political Forces and Social Classes* (London: Serif, 1996), 115-117, 128, 139.

Royal Navy to break the strike. An unnamed Unionist representative said, "The possibility has been discussed… but it is not our decision."[5]

In terms of inter-Protestant class dynamics, the seaman strike oppositely emphasizes both the changing nature of Ulster's working class within the wider context of Unionism, as well as (though not all of the strikers were residents of Northern Ireland) the latent dissent that could be mustered among segments of the Protestant working class in defiance of government authority. As Peter Gibbon posits, the Protestant working class existed as a "labor aristocracy," especially Belfast's skilled ship builders, who had become the primary center of relative economic prosperity and local power in the city as early as 1887.[6] Furthermore, their predominant placement and subsequent material advantage within the labor market of Northern Ireland made them "willing" participants in the ethnically biased structures of existing Unionist Politics. But considering the downtrodden state of Northern Ireland's economy in the mid-1960s such arguments omit the contours within the Protestant working class itself, and ignores possible variations in their political responses, which was represented by both the progressive initiatives developed by the Ulster Volunteer Force and Ulster Defence Association throughout the 1970s, as well as their willingness to disregard official authority and engage in extreme violence.[7] Restated, the seaman strike was an early example of the separatist power that the Protestant working class would come to realize throughout the early Troubles because the strikers, though

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[5] Graham Walker, *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party: Protest, Pragmatism, and Pessimism*. Manchester (Manchester University Press, 2004): 109; "Ulster Isolated," *Belfast News Letter*, May 16, 1966; "Wilson Pledge to Ulster," *Belfast News Letter*, May 24, 1966.

[6] Peter Gibbon, *The Origins of Ulster Unionism: The Formation of Popular Protestant Politics and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), 72.

[7] James W. McAuley and P.J. McCormack, "The Protestant Working Class and the State in Northern Ireland: A Problematic Relationship," in *Ireland's Histories*, eds. Hutton S. and Peter Shirlow (London: Routledge, 1991), 116-117.

acting purely on behalf of economic interest, caused political shock to both the Stormont and Westminster regimes.

Centralized Authority Under O'Neill

Local sources of elite Protestant political power were also experiencing growing discontent with the O'Neill led Stormont government. The Lockwood Report of February 1965 proposed the construction of a new university in the city of Coleraine, as well as the possible closing of Londonderry's Magee University College. The O'Neill government quickly adopted the first proposition of the report while foregoing the implementation of the second point.[8] The government's actions directly opposed the popular sentiments of both Unionist and Nationalist MPs throughout the province, who believed that Londonderry would have made a better location for the university. The immediate fallout from the government's adoption of the Lockwood Report resulted in the organization of a massive "Siege of Stormont" by over a thousand protesters calling themselves the University for Derry Action Committee, who made their way from Londonderry to Belfast on February 18—mere weeks after the publication of the Lockwood report. The protest was not successful. There was cooperation between the protesters and the police despite the high probability of disorder and violence.[9] Seeing no serious threat to his decision following the failure of the Action Committee O'Neill proceeded to implement his original plan. Unionist fears over O'Neill's lack of consideration for issues on a local level in favor of a provincially geared "dictatorial government" were greatly engendered by his handling of the Lockwood Report.[10] Moreover, prominent historian Marc Mulholland succinctly

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[8] "University Goes to Coleraine," *Ulster Gazette*, February 11, 1965.

[9] "P.M.'s Toughest Test: Derry v. Coleraine," *Belfast News Letter*, February 12, 1965; "'Siege' of Belfast," *Belfast News Letter*, February 17, 1965.

[10] Kaufmann and Patterson, *Unionism and Orangeism*, 67.

summates the issue of university planning when he asserts that O'Neill chose to deal with Unionist interests who were decidedly engaging in "narrow-minded bigotry" against Derry's majority Catholic population, despite greater Unionist support for the new university to be located in the city.[11] Though O'Neill's actions can be seen as a boon to the maintenance of Protestant hegemony, the point remains that O'Neill was acting outside of popular Unionist demand, a notion antithetical to Unionist political organization up to that point. O'Neill's dismissal of the Londonderry university program also greatly contributed to his complex relationship with the Catholic minority, and how his attempts to bridge the sectarian gap were perceived by Protestant and Catholic alike.

The State of Sectarianism

O'Neill's sincerity when dealing with the Catholic minority and Northern Ireland's sectarian divide more generally has been thoroughly questioned and, in some instances, outright dismissed by many commentators. Walker skeptically refers to O'Neill's visits to Catholic schools and his condolences for the death of Pope John XXIII in 1963 as "gesture politics"[12] because they seemed harmless yet difficult to interpret, especially for more moderate Protestants. A curious example of Protestant confusion over O'Neill's responses to the death of the Pope appears in Armagh's *Ulster Gazette* on June 6, 1963. The article compliments Pope John's endorsement of "Christian Unity" and praises O'Neill's humble message praising the Pope's "kindness and humanity," while also including the march to Belfast City Hall led by Ian Paisley in protest of the hanging of the Union flag at half-mast in honor of the deceased Pontiff. The article ends with a listing of Mass arrangements and details the tributes paid by Armagh's

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[11] Marc Mulholland, *Northern Ireland at the Crossroads: Ulster Unionism in the O'Neill Years, 1960-9* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 54-57.

[12] Walker, *Ulster Unionist Party*, 151.

Catholic authorities. On the next page there appears a rather puzzling article, considering the occasion. The article, "Religious Viewpoint," triumphantly details the life and philosophy of John Calvin, who, as the article implicitly relates, questioned the very foundations of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, of which the Pope is head: the visible Church "contains those whose professions of faith is hypocritical," and furthermore, the "sovereignty of God" is absolute, while the "priesthood of all believers" can allot salvation to all who have been granted God's Grace.[13] Though not engaging in direct anti-Catholicism this article, and the date on which it was printed, points to a consistent undercurrent of sectarian division between Ulster's Catholic and Protestant populations that was an influential factor in forming both moderate and extreme brands political action.

The Protestant community did not universally adhere to the ambivalent sectarianism of the early 1960s, as reflected in the pages of the *Ulster Gazette*. A confessional Protestant backlash against O'Neill and the larger ecumenical movement was heard primarily in the bellowing voice of the Rev. Ian Paisley. In his thorough analysis, Steve Bruce sums up the driving force behind Paisley, his tactics, and his followers when he states that "Evangelical Protestantism" is concerned with the religious but also the "social and the political." As such, the evangelical tradition in Ulster has been fervently and publicly against Roman Catholicism, but also any institution, religious or otherwise, that positively invites ecumenism or cooperation with the Roman Church, including the government of Northern Ireland. As briefly mentioned above, Paisley's reaction to the O'Neill's letter of condolence to the Vatican upon the death of Pope John in 1963, though harsh, was typical in its anti-Catholic fervor. Paisley renounced the "lying eulogies now being paid to the Roman antichrist." And though such statements have explicitly

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[13] "Death of 'John the Good,'" *Ulster Gazette*, June 6, 1963; Rev. R.G. Crawford, "Religious Viewpoint: John Calvin," *Ulster Gazette*, June 6, 1963.

religious overtones, for followers of Paisley's message Northern Ireland's constitutional politics and confessional denomination are one in the same.[14] By 1966 Paisley's views continued to be guided by the rhetoric of the "treachery of O'Neill's policies," with "his ecumenical and Papist supporters" never far from condemnation. Further defining Paisley's dogmatic message was the undercurrent of apocalyptic prophesying that predominated it. The rise of ecumenism paired with the perception that O'Neill was prompting greater Catholic, and thus Church involvement in the state functions of Northern Ireland, was for many followers of Paisley's fundamentalist teachings a trigger for the biblical end times forecast by the book of Revelations. Proactive action infused with at least the threat of violence was viewed as the legitimate response to this ultimate battle between the forces of Protestant purity and Catholic deceit.[15] Paisley's emerging presence as the constant voice of combative opposition to the perceived "Unionist oligarchs," such as O'Neill, as well as the swell of Catholic resistance to state institutions, propelled him toward political success beginning in the 1970s,[16] when his purely confessional preaching would expand to attract more secular audiences.

Even those who would support Paisley behind closed doors were still moderate in their public political responses to O'Neill's policies, as exemplified by reports appearing in an early strong hold of Paisleyite Protestantism, Co. Antrim. Appearing in the *Ballymena Observer* following an ad for an anti-ecumenical rally being held by Paisley, was an article that presented local religious figure, Rev. Dr. Fulton's views, which "repudiated the fears that the World Council of Churches" would eventually lead to a "move towards Rome," a mirrored challenge of

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[14] Steve Bruce, *God Save Ulster: The Religion and Politics of Paisleyism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 38, 73.

[15] Crawford Gribben, "Protestant Millenialism, Political Violence and the Ulster Conflict," *Irish Studies Review* 15, no. 1 (2007): 52; "O'Neill Must Go," *Protestant Telegraph*, July 2 1966.

[16] Tom Gallagher "Religion, Reaction, and Revolt in Northern Ireland: The Impact of Paisleyism in Ulster," *Journal of Church and State* 23, issue 3 (1981): 438.

typical Paisleyite complaints.[17] Much like the *Gazette* article's presentation of the Pope's death,

Fulton's views, and the *Observer's* presentation of them, points to a tension within Protestantism

between moderate, benign sectarianism, and its belligerently active counterpart.

 A contributing factor to Protestant sectarianism was based on geographic location and

population demographics. The population of Co. Armagh, and its immediate surrounding

districts, contains approximately 191 thousand people, of whom seventy-eight thousand are

Catholic versus only fifty-five thousand Protestants according to census data from 1981 (the

remaining population was unreported). Comparatively, Co. Antrim has a nearly four to one ratio

between Protestants and Catholics and more than double the area of Armagh.[18] Therefore,

Armagh Protestants were in greater contact with the neighboring Catholic population, and thus

their politics developed in direct response to the other—unlike Antrim Protestants, who were

more insulated from the effects of Catholic motivations, and likewise developed their political

and religious practices outside of the contexts possible Catholic accommodation. The

demographic differences between the political and sectarian formulations of Antrim and Armagh

Protestants encapsulates how various forms of deeply engrained sectarian attitudes contributed to

converging ideological developments of the 1960s. To draw a further comparison, Belfast's

population demographics and disbursement are useful. Throughout 1970s and 1980s Protestants

made up around seventy percent of Belfast's urban population; however, over the same period,

segregation is calculated to have increased by over ten percent. Likewise, Protestants

consistently lived in areas of over eighty percent ethnic uniformity. Violent conflict spurred by

political upheaval, and continuing ethno-sectarian claims hardened the communal division of

Belfast's largely working class neighborhoods. The case was much the same throughout Armagh

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[17] "Hear Rev. Ian Paisley in Caddy Orange Hall on Thursday, May 28," *Ballymena Observer*, May 21, 1964.

[18] Department of Health and Social Services Registrar General Northern Ireland, *The Northern Ireland Census, 1981* (Belfast: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1981), 3, 50.

and Antrim, where geographic and ideologically divided communities would give way to assertively sectarian behavior throughout the 1960s.[19] O'Neill's campaign for modernization would continue to shock the sectarian balance that was maintained in many areas of Northern Ireland when he invited cross border interaction with the provinces southern neighbor.

On January 14, 1965 Terence O'Neill met with the Republic of Ireland's Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, to consider the possibility for future cooperation between the two states. The Stormont meeting was innocently symbolic: champagne was enjoyed, pleasantries exchanged, and "common interests" suggested, with constitutional issues specifically left out of the conversation. The *Belfast News Letter* reported support for the meeting as "unanimous." Many street respondents shared positive views, though one man did bring up the hollowness of such a meeting "as long as the IRA are allowed to continue functioning in the South." And of course, Paisley led a march on Stormont to protest the meeting.[20] By the end of February, the two executives met again in Belfast and the outcome was much the same; Paisley protested, but most still supported the meeting. In fact, the staunchly Protestant Orange Order publically agreed that the meeting was positive and, in fact, helped bolster Northern Ireland's constitutional position because merely agreeing to meet with Lemass was seen as a legitimating Northern Ireland's

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[19] Paul Doherty and Michael A. Poole, "Ethnic Residential Segregation in Belfast," *Geographical Review* 87, no. 4 (Oct., 1997): 524-6. Along with Doherty and Poole, James Anderson and Ian Shuttleworth document the issues with the "Highly deficient 1981 Census," however, as Anderson and Shuttleworth hesitantly admit: "There clearly has been an increase in residential segregation," James Anderson and Ian Shuttleworth, "Sectarian Demography, Territoriality, and Political Development in Northern Ireland," *Political Geography* 17, no. 2 (Feb., 1998): 191-3. Whether or not the reasons for such demographic shifts can be explicitly attributed to sectarian action, the point remains that such patterns exacerbate sectarian perceptions.
[20] "How it Pleases Unionist M.P.s and National Unity," *Belfast News Letter*, January 15, 1965; "Mr. Paisley's Protest," *Belfast News Letter,* January 16, 1965.

statehood.[21] As 1965 came to a close, the positive responses to the O'Neill, Lemass meetings quickly faded as the old specter of republicanism reemerged.

Nineteen sixty-six marked a drastic increase in the intensity and volume of overtly sectarian Protestant political expressions. Much of the anxiety exuded by Protestant extremists at the time was related to the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising and its celebratory commemorations, which in the minds of many Protestants would certainly be accompanied by a renewed clamor for republican action. In the early morning of Sunday, June 26, eighteen-year-old Catholic, Peter Ward, was killed outside of the Malvern Arms in West Belfast. Two of his friends were also wounded when a flurry of shots was wildly directed toward them. Both survived the attack.[22] The three gunmen were arrested and found guilty of murder. A month earlier, another Catholic, John Scullion, was murdered while walking the streets of the Falls area of West Belfast, though the supposed target was republican, Leo Martin. In the same period a Catholic owned bar was the target of an arson attack. An elderly Protestant woman would die weeks later of burns sustained in the fire. These violent actions were claimed by a group fashioning itself the Ulster Volunteer Force, so named after the group formed in 1912 to combat Irish Home Rule. Prime Minister O'Neill immediately proscribed the UVF. The men responsible all came from the Shankill area of West Belfast, a center for Protestant sectarianism throughout the Troubles. Likewise, many early members of the UVF were connected with other organizations including the Ulster Protestant Action and the Ulster Protestant Volunteers, all of

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[21] "Grand Orange Lodge Backs the Premier," *Ballymena Observer*, March 4, 1965; "Premier Hits Out at 'Flag Burning Fools,'" *Ballymena Observer*, February 25, 1965; "Paisley Marchers Miss Prime Premier," *Belfast News Letter*, February 26, 1965; Stanley Aicken, "Vital Orange Vote," *Belfast News Letter*, February 25, 1965.
[22] Mervyn Pauley, "Five Men Charged with Murder," *Belfast News Letter*, June 28, 1966; Pauley, "Murder in Malvern St." *Belfast News Letter*, June 27, 1966.

whom claimed to defending Protestant Northern Ireland from Catholic, republican activism.[23]

Some commentators, such as documentarian David Boulton, would claim that dual membership was more reflective of a Protestant conspiracy led by Paisley, who simultaneously publicly renounced extra-legal violence while actively organizing and planning the activities of such groups as the UVF in private.[24] However, due to the illegal nature of the paramilitaries and the closely linked communities they were active in, informal communication links and dual membership between groups were inevitable. Likewise, Paisley's role as a paramilitary champion, as will be discussed later, was to become a major point of contention for those activists who engaged in what they considered to be the 'dirty work' of community defense, while Paisley stayed atop his soapbox espousing the need for action against republican threat.

The fear of republican violence was certainly not unfounded. Multiple reports from July 1966 reveal that the IRA was indeed actively training on Northern Ireland's border. Despite the pleads from voices such as Minister of Agriculture, Harry West, who called for "sound judgment" in this "most dangerous situation," the heckling voices of Paisleyite supporters and the speeches given at many Orange Twelfth events showed a growing willingness toward extremism, though the violence associated with the UVF was roundly criticized. [25] In typically dichotomous form, the *Ulster Gazette* described Armagh's local Twelfth speeches, highlighting both the support for the O'Neill government's "successful endeavors for the material prosperity of Northern Ireland," while warning that the "determination in maintaining our constitutional

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[23] Steve Bruce, *The Red Hand: Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 14-15; David McKittrick, Brian Feeney, Seamus Kelters, Chris Thornton and David McVea. *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children Who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (London: Mainstream Publishing, 2007), 25, 28; Sarah Nelson, *Ulster's Uncertain Defenders: Protestant Political, Paramilitary, and Community Groups, and the Northern Ireland Conflict* (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1984), 61.

[24] David Boulton, *The UVF: An Anatomy of Loyalist Rebellion, 1966-73* (Dublin: Torc Books, 1973), 41.

[25] "All is Not Well Says Mr. West," *Belfast News Letter*, July 13, 1966; "Detectives Uncover I.R.A. Hideouts," *Belfast News Letter*, July 12, 1966.

integrity" was possibly under threat. Also, within a rhetoric of Protestant triumphalism and denunciations of ecumenism, there was a hypocritical emphasis on "tolerance and self discipline shown by the Orangemen and Loyalists," yet such qualities were "not to be mistaken for weakness."[26]

In similar speeches in Antrim, a local chaplain renounced the UVF killing of Peter Ward as "nonsense and insanity," and called for a reassertion of "Protestant principles." Antrim however, was far from united in its rejection of extremism. Weeks later the paper published a letter to the editor that proposed the growing popularity of Paisley's *Protestant Telegraph* at the recent Orange Twelfth festivities,[27] and though Paisley distanced himself from violence, his blood and thunder anti-Catholicism certainly stirred many toward such responses. As the 1960s wore on, the political pressure Protestants were experiencing was still largely symbolic in nature. The Lemass meetings, the Easter Rising commemorations, and the overestimation of IRA border activity became linked with the erosion of the legitimacy of Northern Ireland, encouraging growing numbers to adopt a grassroots extremism embodied by Paisleyism and the growing organization of paramilitary groups, such as the UVF. The late 1960s saw another jilt to the security of Protestant power in the form of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association and their campaign to combat discrimination against Catholics.

Protestant Perceptions of the Civil Rights Movement

The issues raised by the NICRA, following John Whyte's skeptical, yet astute study, fall under six main categories: electoral practices, particularly the extension of the local franchise and the gerrymandering of districts to ensure a Unionist majority on local councils—

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[26] "Heckling at Demonstration Gathering," *Ulster Gazette*, July 14, 1966.

[27] John McAuley, letter to the editor, *Ballymena Observer*, July 21, 1966; "Recent Events in Belfast were 'Nonsense and Insanity,'" *Ballymena Observer*, July 7, 1966.

Londonderry being the most notable point of contention due to the fact that it had Unionist dominated council despite an overall Catholic majority population—public and private employment opportunities, the allotment of public housing, and government allocated regional development. Finally, the NICRA demanded reform of two state policing practices. First, the NICRA wanted to see the notoriously sectarian make-up of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, who as of 1969 was ninety percent Protestant, reduced, thus limiting its perception and practice as a sectarian body. The second item the NICRA took issue with was the Special Powers Act, first passed in 1922, which allowed for the government to ban "subversive," meaning Catholic or republican, meetings and publications. Internment without trial was another major part of the Special Powers Act that had been and would continue to be used throughout the Troubles, mainly against the Catholic community.[28] The scope of this study does not allow for an in depth discussion into the extent of discrimination though there was certainly credibility to many of the claims made by the NICRA. What is important for the purposes of this research is how did Protestants perceive the civil rights movement? Many denied the claims of discrimination outright, while others justified them in various underhanded ways, positing, for instance, that Catholics actually denied themselves government participation, both as voters and officials; actions that were seen as active ways to undermine the state. Working class Protestant views on the civil rights movement are much more striking because they in fact shared the same grievances the NICRA claimed against the ruling Unionist classes; however, most Protestants, regardless of class, believed that the NICRA was little more than a front for the IRA.[29] These

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[28] John Whyte, "How Much Discrimination was there under the Stormont Regime, 1921-68?," in *Contemporary Irish Studies*, eds. Tom Gallagher and James O'Connell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 6, 24-25, 30.

[29] Sarah Nelson, "Protestant 'Ideology' Considered: The Case of 'Discrimination,'" *British Political Sociology Yearbook*, ed. Ivor Crewe (London: Croom Helm, 1975), 160, 165, 176.

views proliferated as the NICRA began its public marches; sectarianism became a rampant force in Northern Ireland.

In October 1967 the NICRA announced their intention to stage a peaceful march in Londonderry, but the Minister of Home Affairs and staunch loyalist William Craig banned it.[30] Public protest however would be implemented with drastic effect in the year to come by both the NICRA and a militant offshoot calling itself the People's Democracy. The response of Protestant Northern Ireland was intense and rapid because in its ideological immediacy "Marches… mean the assertion of territorial sectarian claims."[31] On January 4, 1968 these sectarian claims erupted into to a violent clash when cudgel wielding, stone throwing, Protestant loyalists ambushed PD marchers at Burntollet Bridge, outside of Londonderry. Furthermore, it is widely accepted that the RUC did not protect the marchers against loyalist attacks and in some instances "encouraged the attacks."[32]

Marches and counter riots became the norm as 1968 continued. Protestant Northern Ireland was certain that civil rights and Catholic public disorder was connected to violent republicanism. A civil rights march in Londonderry on October 5 paired with the revelation that the IRA was most definitely involved served to exacerbate Protestant sectarian assumptions. The *Belfast News Letter*, the ever-loyal organ of Protestant opinion, related that not only were the marchers quick to turn toward violence against the RUC, but that they immediately cried foul play and claimed that the RUC were the aggressors. The *News Letter* quickly turned from its report on the unruly marchers to a story claiming that William Craig stated in a press conference that he received photographic evidence that Cathal Goulding, a leading IRA figure, participated

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[30] Kaufmann and Patterson, *Unionism and Orangeism*, 79; Walker, *Ulster Unionist Party*, 162.

[31] Bew, Gibbon and Patterson, *Northern Ireland*, 155.

[32] Bruce, *The Red Hand*, 29-30.

in the Londonderry march.[33] Likewise, reports appeared in Armagh that prominent Unionist and future Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner, declared that the civil rights movement was "a very convenient banner for a Republican faction to hoist aloft," though denying that many in the Catholic community would support such intentions.[34] Unsurprisingly, Paisleyite opinion claimed "Civil Rights is Rome's camouflage, aimed at bringing Ulster into the fold of the Irish Republic." Support was also given to rising loyalist personality William Craig, who had recently been ousted from the Unionist Parliamentary Party after consistent brush-ups with Terence O'Neill.[35] Protestant opinion was inundated by public expressions connecting the civil rights movement to republican activism. Under such pressure, in hopes of placating the Catholic community, O'Neill introduced a Five-Point Reform package that promised to overhaul the local voting system by 1971, revise the Special Powers Act, and offer specific reforms for Londonderry, including the appointment of an ombudsman for housing grievances and a redrawing of the Londonderry Urban Corporation in order to allot Catholics greater representation in the city's local government. Craig was among the most vocal critics of O'Neill's reform deal, especially referring to the proposed changes to the Special Powers Act,[36] as it had been originally concocted to bolster Protestant security against republicanism since the states formation in 1921.

With a Stormont general election set for the end of February 1969, the Unionist Party was drastically split over O'Neill's reforms. Likewise, many Protestant political parties, such as Paisley's Protestant Unionist Party, had completely split from Unionism and would campaign in

[33] "Steel Helmeted Police in New Derry Clashes," *Belfast News Letter*, October 7, 1968.

[34] "Civil Rights Exploited," *Ulster Gazette*, October 10, 1968.

[35] "Civil Rights," *Protestant Telegraph*, December 28, 1968; "O'Neill Sell-Out Halted," *Protestant Telegraph*, November 30, 1968.

[36] "Action Committee's Qualified Welcome," *Belfast News Letter*, November 25, 1968; "Five-Point Reform is 'A Triumph for O'Neill,'" *Belfast News Letter*, November 23.

the upcoming election. Though considered a positive sign of support for the Prime Minister, whose supporting candidates received over forty percent of the vote,[37] constitutional politics had declined in importance as street politics gained influence. O'Neill would eventually resign in April. As Mulholland reflects, "Violence had at last reached a powder keg… A cycle of sectarian escalation was virtually unstoppable."[38] Organized republicanism had indeed resurfaced in the riots of August, killing Protestant Herbert Roy during widespread rioting in Belfast on the fourteenth. The UVF was also active in Belfast, killing RUC officer Victor Arbuckle during Protestant rioting in October in response to the Hunt Report. The report found that the RUC was indeed guilty of many of the sectarian assertions that they were traditionally accused. In light of its findings, the report proposed a drive to recruit more Catholics into the ranks of the force, stripping the RUC of its automatic weapons, vehicles, and any military role it had.[39] Finally, and most devastating for the Protestant community was that the Report called for the disbandment of the Ulster Special Constabulary, or B-Specials, an organization that since its formation in 1920 had operated largely on the premises of a community maintained, publicly funded, Protestant vigilante force that could be quickly called upon to quell civil unrest. It should be no surprise that the Specials, with its entirely Protestant membership, was often a source sectarian violence throughout its existence.[40]

In a concise summation of the provinces rampant sectarianism, the *Ulster Gazette* printed the headline, "North Hell-bent on Own Destruction." The paper mentioned that extremists on both sides helped plunge not only the centers of Belfast and Londonderry into chaos but the

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[37] Sydney Elliot and W.D Flackes, *Conflict in Northern Ireland: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1999), 523-4.

[38] Mulholland, *Northern Ireland at the Crossroads*, 198.

[39] Martin Wallace, *British Government in Northern Ireland: From Devolution to Direct Rule* (Vermont: David and Charles Inc., 1982), 38.

[40] Chris Ryder, *The UDR: An Instrument of Peace?* (London: Methuen, 1991), 7-8, 29-30.

towns of Starbane, Dungannon, and Coalisland. Limited activity was also reported in Armagh, including the petrol bombing of a Protestant shop in the predominately Catholic town of Crossmaglen and what could have possibly been a retaliatory bombing of a "disused Roman Catholic Boys' Club".[41] In a surprisingly moderate speech outside of Ballymena in May, Paisley, the campaigning politician, called for support of the new prime minister, Major Chichester-Clark, and that all issues of law and order should be left to the police. Appealing to the Protestant heartland of Antrim, Paisley continued, "Only one power can save Ulster today and that is the power of God." Even during the height of the August riots, the *Ballymena Observer* printed a letter critical of a previously printed loyalist correspondence. "Antrim John" called into question loyalist rhetoric that apparently called for stronger border security due to the Irish Republic's organization of field hospitals along the border. The level headed "John" stated that the field hospitals should be allowed to operate primarily for those innocent Catholics who wished to avoid visiting Northern hospitals to lessen the likelihood of being arrested under the Special Powers Act.[42] Paisley's keen politicking and his call for rational understanding among Antrim citizens would be a persistent theme despite their devout Protestantism that often times resulted in sectarian expressions in other parts of Northern Ireland, especially Belfast. Antrim's tendency toward moderation was in part due to their general isolation from civil upheaval and violence of the late 1960s and early 1970s. But as the 1960s came to a close the Unionist Party was in shambles, and Protestants more generally were facing increasing pressure to further compromise an ever-shrinking political control with a Catholic neighbor they were now violently opposed to in many areas.

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[41] "Isolated Incidents in District," *Ulster Gazette*, August 21, 1969; "North Hell-Bent on Own Destruction," *Ulster Gazette*, August 14, 1969.

[42] "Antrim John," letter to the editor, *Ballymena Observer,* August 28, 1969; "Back the P.M., Leave C.R. to the Police," *Ballymena Observer*, May 15, 1969.

Divergent Political Establishments

　　1970 signifies a year of drastic political polarization for the Protestant community as two

fundamentally opposite groups entered the arena of constitutional politics. In a 1970 Stormont

By-Election, Rev. Paisley won the Bannside district, receiving nearly forty-five percent of the

vote. Furthermore, one of his Protestant Unionist associates, Rev. William Beattie, won a close

election in South Antrim.[43] Co. Antrim was alight with Paisley-mania, and he would soon be

elected to the Parliament at Westminster that coming June. Paisley appealed to the Antrim

constituents' sense of symbolic loyalism in an early campaign speech, while being careful to

avoid his violent outbursts. He rallied against "Romanists" and "Harold Wilson's Socialists" (the

term "Socialist" here being a derogatory reflection of the persistent historical opinion of Ulster

Protestants' toward the UK's Labour party, who it was perceived was always likely to sell-out

Northern Ireland. Compared to the supportive nature of Labour's conservative counterpart).[44] At

the same time, he was critical of the Stormont government and instilled the idea that despite

Antrim being sheltered from much IRA activity the whole province was vulnerable because "the

U.S.C was the only force the Republicans feared," and "you cannot have economic prosperity

until law and order are restored to every street in the Province."[45] As has been established,

though not a violently extreme region of Protestant Northern Ireland, Antrim was willing to

accept men like Paisley because he articulated their symbolic values: the security of the

province, an innate, yet often times benign sectarianism, and a general distrust of government

institutions—the more distant the less trustworthy. Such political characteristics coalesced into

"a narrow interpretation of the Protestant 'Ascendancy." But by early 1971, Paisley would seek

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[43] Elliot and Flackes, *Conflict in Northern Ireland*, 529.

[44] Steve Bruce, *At the Edge of the Union: The Loyalist Political Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 69.

[45] "Traditional Start to Paisley Bannside Campaign," *Ballymena Observer*, April 9, 1970.

to reach beyond such "rural evangelicals" and form the Democratic Unionist Party, which broadened his constituency to include "urban 'secular' Protestants," epitomized by early DUP politician Johnny McQuade, a working class Protestant dock worker and ex-soldier.[46]

Establishing the opposite end of the newly emerging Protestant political spectrum was the Alliance Party, formed in mid-1970, who has been aptly described as "a party of graduate professionals containing a substantial number of above-average earners."[47] Considering this, it is not difficult to see that the Alliance Party ostracized more voters than it attracted. One of the party's first manifestos reveals the depths of their lofty but grandiose political vision: "For fifty years too many of us have accepted the narrow strictures of the 1920's…The ruling Unionist Party stands convicted of sectarianism… with its divisive and undemocratic links to the Orange Order… The Union is in the best economic and social interests of the citizens," and that the "Equality of social, economic and educational opportunities" should be extended to all.[48] Focusing on the documents relevance to Protestant voters, it begins by refuting the validity of the Unionist Party, as well as a fundamentally Protestant institution, the Orange Order. Even though the Unionist Party and the Orange Order were certainly declining in popularity, the abstract sense of symbolism evoked by such institutions was dear to many Protestant's—especially working class Protestants, who made up the bulk of the Order's membership— was now being fundamentally called into question by the Alliance Party's mandate. Finally, in a period riven by sectarianism, simply calling for its mending was bound to fail because, regardless of its violent potential, sectarian attitudes were foundational to understanding one's place within the political landscape of Northern Ireland. Alliance's failure to recruit the Protestant population was again

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[46] Bruce, *God Save Ulster*, 66, 102.

[47] Jocelyn Evans and Jonathan Tonge, "Northern Ireland's Third Tradition(s): The Alliance Party Surveyed," *British Elections and Parties Review* 11, no. 1 (2001):106.

[48] Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, "Declaration of Intent- A New Political Charter" (April 21, 1970), Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

exemplified concurrently by Antrim's acceptance of Paisley's Protestant Unionist Party. Such

Ambivalent sectarianism also appears in Armagh, where addressing a Junior Orange Association

meeting, local religious leader Rev. Taylor stated "the Roman Catholic religion is corrupt, evil

and wrong," but Protestants must "show love to their Roman Catholic neighbors."[49] Despite the

growing influence of loyalists such as Paisley, sectarian violence stayed at manageably contained

levels throughout 1970, but 1971 would see a drastic expansion of the IRA's campaign. A rise in

Protestant militancy would follow.

Protestant Paramilitary Organization

In a year in which IRA violence claimed 107 lives, compared to twenty-one in 1970, it

appeared that by the end of 1971 Protestant Northern Ireland was turning toward violent

reaction.[50] In December the Grand Orange Lodge released the following statement: "Loyalists

throughout Ulster should take all necessary steps to defend themselves, their homes, and their

property against murderous attacks by the IRA." It warned, "Should the democratic process be

ignored or avoided the loyalist population should prepare for a programme of disobedience."

Days before the Orange Order's statement action against the IRA was already being executed.

On December 4, a bomb exploded inside McGurk's Bar on North Queen Street in Belfast.

Fifteen Catholics were killed in the blast. The bomb was planted by the UVF.[51] In a statement

published weeks later in the *WDA* (Woodvale Defence Association) *News* sources claimed,

"while sympathy is extended to the families of those killed, it should be noted that these people

[Catholic victims] have never condemned the IRA." The bombing of McGurk's Bar, as well as

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[49] "R.C. Religion is Corrupt, Evil, and Wrong," *Ulster Gazette*, April 30, 1970.

[50] McKittrick, *et al.*, *Lost Lives*, 47, 61.

[51] "Defence Call to Loyalists," *Belfast News Letter*, December 9, 1971; "Massacre Bomb Was Left Inside the Bar," *Belfast News Letter*, December 6, 1971.

the subsequent justifications for the explosion, point to a common refrain amongst paramilitary

participants: despite their self-image asserting that the IRA "were the aggressors; loyalists were

defenders"[52] many came to the "determination that maybe the best means of defence is attack,"

while completely ignoring the sectarian motivations that inspired such actions.[53]

Ending with the spectacular horror at McGurk's Bar, demonstratively announcing the

reemergence of the UVF, 1971 was an important year for the development of the Protestant

paramilitary action more generally. Throughout Belfast numerous neighborhood vigilante groups

formed to protect their communities from IRA attack. They held regionally specific names such

as the Woodvale Defence Association, the Oldpark Defence Association, and Shankill Defence

Association. After months of perpetual street violence, many members began to believe that a

closer communication between the many regional teams was needed. In a meeting chaired by

dockworker and Shankill native, Ingram Beckitt, the Ulster Defence Association was born, and

by the third meeting, almost three thousand people were in attendance—a drastic increase form

the eighteen who attended the first.[54]

With increased communication, a growing expression of political need emerged,

revealing a strong working class directive. Belfast's emerging "Paramilitants and community

activists became far more prepared to carry out political or military action independently,"

regardless of recent mainstream success by loyalist politicians such as Paisley and Craig.[55]

Underlying much working class Protestant political thought was "a critique of the Unionist

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[52] Bruce, *The Red Hand*, 53.

[53] David Ervine quoted in Ed Moloney's *Voices From the Grave: Two Men's War in Ireland* (New York: Public Affairs, 2010), 307.

[54] Bruce, *The Red Hand*, 50; Ian S. Wood, *Crimes of Loyalty: A History of the UDA* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), 3.

[55] Nelson, *Uncertain Defenders*, 101.

ascendancy"[56]—the elitist Unionist power structure that could boldly adopt a rhetoric that

damned the IRA and its goals, while never having to take the brunt of their violence—the vast

majority of which was meted out to the working classes on both sides of the sectarian divide. In a

denunciation of a Fermanagh Unionist MP, who apparently stated "he could not blame the

Terrorists for the new wave of shootings… but put the blame on Unionist Misrule," a *WDA News*

writer, calling himself only "TRUE LOYALIST," stated that in fact "Unionist Misrule" is to

blame, but

> Surely even you [Fermanagh MP] should know that the rules were not made by any of
> the victims of these savage bombings but by the Unionist Government and therefore you
> cannot do anything but agree that these madmen are attacking the wrong people. But
> wisely they have chosen for if one hair of anyone of these so-called MP's was put out of
> place then and only then would the terrorist be finished.[57]

The divide between working class constituents and elite politicians that is so demonstratively

expressed in the above excerpt would be a constant in Protestant politics throughout the early

Troubles, even within loyalism itself.

Conclusion

As the nine-year anniversary of the beginning of Terence O'Neill's Premiership

approached Unionist unity was non-existent and many of the bulwarks of Protestant political

ideology and material control had vanished. The RUC had a fleeting power over security, the

symbolic arm of physical Protestant security, the USC, was disbanded, and IRA efforts seemed

to be achieving its aims at a horrific cost in spite of the introduction of internment in August

1971. Finally, in March 1972 the symbol of Northern Ireland self-determination, Stormont, was

prorogued and the governance of Ulster was returned to Westminster for the first time since the

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[56] Johnston Price, "Political Change and the Protestant Working Class," *Race and Class* 37, no. 1 (1995): 61.

[57] "True Loyalist," "Unionist Misrule," *WDA News*, May 21, 1971.

1920s. Responding to this devastating blow, MP W.J. Long, in an address to a no doubt battle-weary Shankill audience, hopelessly promised, "I shall do all that I can do to assist the minister's charged with the impossible task of compensating for the loss of regional government."[58] Even the confidently assertive voices of loyalism were at odds as to what should be done next. Catching the scent of possible sensationalism, the UK's *Daily Mail* briefly outlined Craig's push for a Unilateral Declaration of Independence while Paisley pursued full integration as a means for securing a parliamentary place for Protestant issues to be heard. What is clear, as the *Daily Mail* cleverly revealed, was that Protestant Ulster had no *one* voice. [59] Protestant politics existed as a cacophony of anxious expressions desperately echoing the primary goal of preserving the state of Northern Ireland, a concept once justified by institutional integrity, but whose future existence was no longer guaranteed. As 1972 continued, an already bewildered population would have to face the viciousness of an unstoppably rampant IRA campaign, which was to be met with the outbreak of frenzied Protestant paramilitary violence.

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[58] W.J. Long, "Speech to Shankill Unionist Association" (delivered April 11, 1972), Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

[59] Edward Scallan, "Can Paisley Be Ulster's Voice?," *Daily Mail*, March 30, 1972.

Chapter Two: Abysmal Dejection, 1972-1979

On July 21, 1972, Belfast's City Centre was devastated when the IRA set off twenty

bombs over the course of just over an hour, killing nine people and injuring a further 130 in an

attack that soon became known as Bloody Friday. Among the victims was eighteen-year-old

William Irvine, a Protestant from East Belfast.[1] David Irvine explains the impact of Bloody

Friday and William Irvine's death: "The moment of 'Bloody Friday' when there was a lad killed

with the same name as me. He lived close by and people thought it was me, and it could have

been me. At this point I went over the edge."[2] In Irvine's case *the edge* referred to joining the

Ulster Volunteer Force. Though Irvine's rise to political prominence in the post ceasefire era of

the Troubles is notable, the push over the edge he experienced was not exceptional. Peter

McGuire, a UDA member from Londonderry, recalls the moments when he began to turn toward

militant Protestant action: "It was whilst going to and from school [in the early 1970's] that I

witnessed two scenes that have had a major impact on my life." The scenes McGuire relates

were in fact two IRA murders on local acquaintances of his. McGuire continues: "No-one has

ever been charged with these murders, and even then I knew that RUC was incapable of ever

catching anyone."[3]

The examples of Irvine and McGuire are instructive when considering the early post-

Stormont era because they help identify the shifting acceptances that many Ulster Protestants

were experiencing, regarding the legitimacy and possible effectiveness of violence within the

contexts of defense against both the increasing IRA onslaught and the ever more fragile

constitutional position of the Protestant community within the state of Northern Ireland. Mid-

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[1] David McKittrick, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney, Chris Thornton and David McVea, *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children Who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (London: Mainstream Publishing, 2007), 229, 232.

[2] David Irvine quoted in Ed Moloney's, *Voices From the Grave* (New York: Public Affairs. 2010), 306.

[3] Peter McGuire quoted in Adrian Kerr's, ed., *Perceptions: Cultures in Conflict* (Derry: Guildhall Press, 1996), 121.

Ulster Unionist candidate Verdun Wright stated in a June 1973 speech that "Terrorism will only be destroyed when the position is made unmistakably clear… that the constitutional position of Northern Ireland is not an issue that can be affected through these means."[4] Of course the terrorism Wright referred to was that of the IRA, but what will become clear over the course of this chapter is that throughout the 1970s Protestant Northern Ireland had an incredibly complex relationship with how and to what degree violence could be implemented as they strove to redefine and maintain their place within the shifting dynamics of Northern Ireland's political scene. Violent loyalism found its moment of greatest support in the mid-1970s, but by the late 1970s, the Protestant community largely rejected its value as a legitimate means of political expression, following nearly a decade of intense violence. Outside the realm of violent reaction however, loyalism's non-compromise toward the Catholic community and the governments of Westminster and Dublin was firmly entrenched in the social and political landscape of many Protestant communities by the late 1970s.

Welcoming the Paramilitaries

By the beginning of 1972, 200 Troubles related deaths had already been recorded, nearly doubling the total from the previous years of conflict. For many Protestants this period of intense violence brought feelings of helplessness, causing many to turn toward extreme elements within their own community. On the evening of June 28, the inner council of the UDA announced that the organization was to begin construction of Protestant "no-go" areas in Belfast and Londonderry despite the urging of Westminster appointed Secretary of State, William Whitelaw. The Protestant "no-go" areas were meant to strongly resemble and, in fact, be a direct response

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[4] Verdun Wright, "Speech at Omagh" (delivered June 19, 1973) Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

to those constructed in predominately Catholic areas, such as the "Free Derry" zone in the Boggside of Londonderry. The barricades, as well as the "UDA police" who were to occupy the zones, were symbolic gestures to the British Army and Whitelaw, who, it was believed, could no longer protect Protestant Northern Ireland from the IRA, who were at the time engaged in a fruitless cease-fire.[5]

Outside of the traditional focal points of political violence, Belfast and Londonderry, other Protestant inhabited regions of Northern Ireland began to welcome UDA action into their communities. At Ulster Vanguard's first public rally, disgruntled Unionist and former O'Neill cabinet member William Craig's political initiative was accompanied by four battalions of masked UDA men who were cheered by on-looking supporters as they marched toward the local Orange hall. [6] Parliamentary political forces were beginning to go hand in hand with vigilante action.

Moreover, the ever-tense Orange Order marching season of mid-July saw UDA "no-go" barricades constructed in Cullybackey—a town northeast of Ballymena, County Antrim—to protect marchers from possible attack.[7] In chapter one Antrim was discussed in terms of its insulation from much Troubles related violence. To illustrate this point, one need look little farther than an article printed at the end of 1971 in the *Ballymena Observer* sub-titled "Terrorism on the whole by-passes prosperous and neighborly area,"[8] but by 1972 IRA violence was becoming more prevalent, which, when paired with a growing sense of disenchantment with legal security operations, greatly explains why the UDA was increasingly perceived as a

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[5] "UDA Barricades to Go Up at Week-End," *Belfast News Letter*, June 29, 1972; "Whitelaw Warns on UDA Barricades," *Belfast News Letter*, June 30, 1972.

[6] "Vanguard Rally-No Incidents: Speaker Calls for General Election," *Ulster Gazette*, July 6, 1972.

[7] "Mid-Antrim UDA at the Ready if Comrades Call for Help," *Ballymena Observer*, July 12, 1972.

[8] "Potted Review of '71: Terrorism on the Whole By-Passes Prosperous and Neighborly Area," *Ballymena Observer*, December 30, 1971.

legitimate force for local protection. It also must be made clear that 1972 saw an extreme

upsurge in the amount of Protestant paramilitary violence. Loyalist activity claimed 121 lives

throughout the year compared to twenty-nine in the years stretching back to 1966.[9] Though

violence pervaded everyday life forcing many to define their relationship to such actions, a

return to democratic participation was to become another gauge of Protestant political thought.

Electoral Politics in the Sunningdale Era

      The first elections since the proroguing of Stormont were set to take place in 1973 under

the dual pressures of a reorganized electoral system and a further constitutional proposal

negotiated between Northern Ireland politicians and Whitelaw. In the lead up to the May 1973

local district elections, Protestant politics "presented a jumble of disaffected groups and

competing visions" encompassed by the Unionist acceptance of a Westminster White Paper that

proposed the organization of a power-sharing government at Stormont and the construction of a

North-South Irish Council. The all-Ireland Council and a mandatory power-sharing government

forged a rejectionist loyalist coalition, including the Vanguard Unionist Progressive Party, the

Paisley lead DUP, Unionist Party members, such as James Molyneaux and Rev. Martin Smyth,

leader of the Orange Order, and the paramilitary representatives from the UDA and Loyalist

Association of Workers. Former prime minister, Brian Faulkner, represented a shrinking faction

of Unionists who supported the White Paper against an increasingly unified loyalist front.[10] The

results of such division were evident in the local government results. In total seventy-four of the

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[9] McKittrick, *et al.*, *Lost Lives*, 1554.

[10] Graham Walker, *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party: Protest, Pragmatism, and Pessimism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 215-6.

307 Protestant candidates elected were not members of the Official Unionist Party (formerly the

Ulster Unionist Party).[11]

The split in the Unionist Party led anti-Faulkner supporters, including Harry West and

Molyneaux, to be disallowed participation in the December conference in Sunningdale, England,

which included members of the nationalist SDLP, the Alliance Party, pro-Faulkner Unionists,

and representatives from both the Republican of Ireland and UK governments—the group tasked

with negotiating and implementing the basic principles of the White Paper. The Unionist

dissenters quickly severed their links with the party and joined the VUPP and DUP in forming

the United Ulster Unionist Council, the emerging bastion for Protestant political representation.[12]

Certain that the southern Republic was going to gain control over Northern politics, and thus

perceiving that republican violence had succeeded, the majority of Protestant Northern Ireland

was now all but fully accepting loyalist political views on the eve of the new executive taking

office in January 1974. The call to arms was made clear in the UDA's publication, *Loyalist

News*: "ALL COLLABORATORS" who support Faulkner and the Sunningdale Communiqué

"should be made to feel the wrath of our People."[13] The power of "our People" was to be

thoroughly exercised in the upcoming months, culminating with the organization and execution

of the Ulster Workers' Council Strike.

Upon the release of the Communiqué, moderate Protestant voices were even reluctant to

praise the outcomes of the Sunningdale Conference. East Belfast Unionist MP Stanley

McMaster, in a clearly resigned tone, said that the outcomes of the negotiations at Sunningdale

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[11] Sydney Elliot and W.D Flackes, *Conflict in Northern Ireland: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1999), 532.

[12] Walker, *Ulster Unionist Party*, 218-9.

[13] "No Half Measures," *Loyalist News*, December 8, 1973.

were "the only sensible means available to us."[14] However, when the Communiqué was finally made public, it appeared that "The fishbone in the gullet for Unionists, even many Faulkner Unionists, was the idea of a Council of Ireland" and its proposed control over security.[15] Points thirteen and fifteen of the Communiqué were especially distressing for many Protestants: "the two parts of Ireland… are inter-dependent in the whole field of law and order, and those security issues would be jointly handled by the Council of Ireland."[16] With popular antipathy widespread throughout Protestant Northern Ireland, less than two months after the new executive took office, a general election was held that effectively showed that the Sunningdale proposal did not carry popular Protestant support; the Sunningdale Agreement's "sprit was effectively dead in December *before* the Executive ever took office."[17] The staunchly anti-Sunningdale UUUC won over fifty-percent of the vote, whereas the pro-Agreement, or Faulkner Unionists, came away with a mere thirteen-percent, providing Faulkner with what amounted to a national indictment of the Sunningdale policies.[18]

Uneasy Loyalist Coalescence and the UWC Strike

The collapse of the Sunningdale Communiqué, and thus the new executive seemed inevitable. It was not, however, passively or peacefully dismantled behind the closed doors of Stormont. In February 1974, the Ulster Workers' Council was formed with the goal of

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[14] Stanley McMaster, Ulster Unionist Party News Release (December 6, 1973), Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

[15] Don Anderson, *Fourteen May Days: The Inside Story of the Loyalist Strike of 1974* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 1994), 7.

[16] Great Britain, Ireland, Northern Ireland (designate), *Tripartite Agreement on Council of Ireland* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Information Service, December 1973), Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

[17] Gordon Gillespie, "The Sunningdale Agreement: Lost Opportunity or an Agreement too far," *Irish Political Studies* 13, no. 1 (1998): 110, 112.

[18] Elliot and Flackes, *Conflict in Northern Ireland*, 537.

articulating the political and economic needs of the Protestant working class. In joint

communication with the Ulster Army Council—a centralized command of the major Protestant

paramilitaries—the UWC was considering a general strike as a means of exacting its political

demands. Later that month, the UUUC power trio of Paisley, Craig, and West were accepted to

the Council, and UDA political activist Glen Barr was named UWC chairman. After two months

of discussion between the reluctant politicians, who were more apt to accept less violent means

such as "the unreal and outdated campaign of boycotting Irish goods," their paramilitary

counterparts finally persuaded the politicians that a province wide general strike was the best

form of protest against the Sunningdale executive.

Though the strike got off to a slow start, on Wednesday, May 15, 1974, with youthful

Tartan street gangs and other, more organized paramilitary forces *encouraging* men and women

to leave work, by the afternoon of the first day large scale work dismissals were becoming

common place throughout the province, including eight thousand Harland and Wolff employees

and ten thousand industrial workers from Co. Antrim. Within days even moderate, middle class

elements of Unionism began to support the strike organizers, being unwilling to support a

government it now believed to be lacking any real power over the province. There is some

disagreement over how much localized intimidation was taking place throughout the strike[19], but

one thing is certain: the asset that was able to secure a material victory for the strikers was their

control over and subsequent diminishing of Northern Ireland's electricity supply, especially the

power station of Ballylumford, a region, and an occupation almost completely populated by

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[19] Violence was uncharacteristically low during the strike. The IRA's campaign claimed no lives, but they continued bombing "economic targets" including a hotel in Co. Down. Members of the security forces in Londonderry, Belfast, and Armagh were also attacked (Anderson, Fourteen May Day, 52). Loyalist activity was primarily limited to strike related intimidation. However, on the fourth day of the strike Dublin and Monaghan became the targets of what would turn out to be one of the single largest attacks of the Troubles when the UVF exploded three car bombs killing twenty-eight civilians, Steve Bruce, *The Red Hand*: *Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 94. There is a great lack of analysis on the political effects of these bombings; Surprisingly, the Dublin and Monaghan bombs had no direct impact on the political legitimacy of the strike.

Protestants.[20] By May 28, Faulkner resigned and the executive fell. In his final statement he came to the realization that a government "which will command public confidence" should be constructed in the place of the discredited executive at Stormont.[21]

Ideologically the strike was successful because it engendered the mainstays of Protestant fears over the possibility of constitutional loss of status for Northern Ireland as well as the other hallmark of Ulster loyalist politics, British betrayal. Throughout the strike the UWC issued a number of bulletins that emphasized these points. The first bulletin bluntly and articulately spells out the ideas that the strikers wished to represent: "The real purpose of the Council is to provide a fig-leaf for the Dublin government which enables them to represent Sunningdale as an anti-Partitionist victory, and a step toward a united Ireland." This is not to mention that the new government was being executed under the watch of British representatives Merlyn Rees and Stanley Orm of the Northern Ireland Office (the central institution maintaining communication between Northern Ireland and Westminster), who were perceived to be acting as "arrogant, pompous, and badly informed colonial administrators."[22] This rhetoric was repeated in bulletin after bulletin, and though the "British as colonizers" theme seemed subtle at first, Prime Minister Harold Wilson himself would help bolster the image of the mainland British government as overseers of colonial Ulster when on May 25 he stated the strikers, and thus the Protestant population supporting them, were "people who spend their lives sponging on Westminster and British democracy."[23] Having sacrificed their creature comforts, including visits to local drinking

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[20] Anderson, *Fourteen May Day*, 18, 33, 86; Robert Fisk, *The Point of No Return: The Strike which Broke the British in Ulster* (London: Times Books, 1975), 43-5, 48, 55, 59, 63, 166-7.

[21] Mervyn Pauley, "A New Deal for Ulster: Last Hours of Executive," *Belfast News Letter*, May 29, 1974.

[22] The Workers' Association for a Democratic Solution to the National Conflict in Northern Ireland, "Strike Bulletin Number 1" (Belfast, May 19, 1974), Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

[23] The Workers' Association, "Strike Bulletin Number 7" (Belfast, May 26, 1974), Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

establishments—which were forcefully ordered to cease operation on May 16[24]—Wilson's

statements only served to strengthen the resolve of an already disgruntled and entrenched

Protestant population.

The day after the strike ended Paisley issued a fiery statement that demanded the fight

"for a restoration of democratic rule in Ulster" was not over despite the victory achieved during

the stoppage.[25] Fist pounding loyalist epithets like this were hardly surprising coming from

Paisley. What is interesting about this statement is when it was made and what that says about

the relationship between the politicians and the paramilitaries throughout the strike. Paisley was

conspicuously absent for the first days of the strike because he flew to Canada to attend a

funeral, and though he played a more vocal role when he returned, he always preferred talking to

acting. Steve Bruce brilliantly describes the divide between the politicians and the paramilitary

organizers of the strike: "The paramilitaries felt… that the politicians would use them when it

suited them and then reject them once the threat of anarchy had achieved the desired end of

bringing down" the executive. In fact, less than a year later Paisley would accuse his former

paramilitary comrades "of committing crimes 'just as heinous and hellish as those of the

IRA.'"[26] The early 1970s showed an uneasy but at times almost inseparably necessary

connection between the official political voices and the violent elements of paramilitary

activism, which helped fuel a general acceptance of such forces among the Protestant community

at large.

Dissenting views, however, became apparent almost as soon as the forces of Protestant

loyalism organized under a common banner. Among the largest results of the strike, and thus the

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[24] Anderson, *Fourteen May Days*, 42.

[25] "Ulster Fight Not Over," *Belfast News Letter*, May 29, 1974.

[26] Steve Bruce, *God Save Ulster: The Religion and Politics of Paisleyism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 109.

political trajectory of the *unified* loyalist bloc, was that it showed that working class constituents

could successfully articulate their own political goals outside the traditional strictures of elite

political representation, in this case being those political *leaders* in the UUUC such as Craig,

West, and Paisley.[27] Workers' Association spokesman Boyd Black expressed such sentiments in

an article written less than a month after the strike ended. He began by triumphantly stating,

"The organized working class gently flexed its muscles and discovered it could run the country";

continuing down a subtly Marxist trajectory he calls for workers in such economic institutions as

the Harland and Wolff Shipyard to take control of the affairs of their work place. The second

main point of Black's piece was intended to solidify the fact that

> The established middle class politicians like Craig, Paisley and West gave their support to
> the strike. The strike leadership, however, kept its political independence and it is
> important for the future that this independent thinking be maintained and developed.[28]

The latent resentment in Boyd's statement extended to the UDA. In their second anniversary of

the UWC Strike edition of *Loyalist News* the solidified divisions between working class

paramilitaries and their former political representation was illustrated: "Ian R.K. Paisley… has

repeatedly attacked the paramilitaries for their claim to have a voice in the political life of

Northern Ireland." Furthermore, the ranting indictments of Paisley's politicking points out one of

the single largest issues confronting paramilitaries and their associated communities: prisoners'

rights and how to alleviate the hardships of those families effected by imprisonment.[29]

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[27] Sarah Nelson, *Ulster's Uncertain Defenders: Protestant Political, Paramilitary, and Community Groups, and the Northern Ireland Conflict* (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1984), 156.

[28] Boyd Black, "From General Strike to Workers' Politics," *Sunday News*, June 23, 1974.

[29] "Second Anniversary of the Fall of the Selected Executive, May 28, 1974: The Turn of the Wheel," *Loyalist News*, May 29, 1976.

The Emergence of Paramilitary Politics

When the Troubles began, the average prison population in Northern Ireland was six hundred; by 1979 the population had expanded to three thousand, many of whom were arrested and prosecuted via juryless Diplock courts for offences related to paramilitary activity. Furthermore, after the introduction of special category, or political status in 1972, the bulk of those affiliated with a politically motivated paramilitary organization were housed at the high-security Maze Prison, also known as Long Kesh. Before the Westminster government took away special category status and introduced its criminalization policy in 1976 (to be discussed in more depth in the final chapter) paramilitary prisoners occupied military style Nissan huts, where they autonomously engaged in the responsibilities of everyday life and were freely allowed to maintain their own brands of discipline and ideological practices as well as communicate with other prisoners. Contact with their families was also readily allotted. It was in those compounds in the early 1970s that major inter-factional discussions began to take shape between the UVF and the Official IRA, who were at the time violently feuding with the Provisional IRA (the latter being the main branch of the IRA that was active in violence throughout the Troubles) over the future political direction of republicanism.[30] The interactions between the Officials and the UVF would have a great impact in shaping the working class political initiatives of the UVF's new political party, the Volunteer Political Party. The VPP went public in 1974, releasing a party manifesto that identified its two main platforms of working class deprivation and internment. In 1974, after having its membership request rejected by the UUUC, the VPP began to organize an independent campaign for its candidate in the upcoming Westminster election in October. Former UVF internee, Ken Gibson, running in the hotly contested West Belfast constituency

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[30] Colin Crawford, *Defenders or Criminals: Loyalist Prisoners and Criminalisation* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1999), 12, 15, 36; Kieran McEvoy, *Paramilitary Imprisonment In Northern Ireland: Resistance, Management, and Release* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 16.

against SDLP leader Gerry Fitt, and popular DUP candidate Johnny McQuade, finished fourth in the overall vote, gaining just over 2,600 votes, or less than fifteen-percent of the total Protestant vote. Though numerous commentators debate the reasons for the VPP's failure, what is apparent is that by the mid-1970s "the desire for a working-class alternative to unionist parties was quite sincerely felt."[31] Urged on by the success of the UWC strike, working class organizations, both external and internal to paramilitary influences, split from the "corporate ideology of Orangeism" and blind Unionist unity to forge its own political articulations.[32]

In the early 1970s Protestant working class consciousness was developing more rapidly than it ever had. Many of the organizations were primarily concerned with specific community issues, such as housing and welfare. Protestant Sandy Row in South Belfast had six such institutions by 1972. [33] The UDA had been involved in such activities, primarily through their involvement in the Ulster Community Action Group, an umbrella organization for smaller groups in North and East Belfast, but the most prominent victory for the UDA and the UVF as well as the local citizenry was the successful 1974 Save the Shankill campaign, which was aimed at a proposal to *rejuvenate* the area.[34] It was essentially feared that the area would lose its Protestant character and possibly its population through a government proposals aimed at commercialization: "the Shankill will become a main road… The local shops will be forced out of business to be replaced by supermarkets." Also, the proposed motorway construction "means fewer houses… the Upper Shankill will continue to decline."[35]

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[31] Nelson, *Uncertain Defenders*, 171, 182, 187; Bruce, *The Red Hand*, 122-3.

[32] James W. McAuley, "Cuchullain and an RPG-7: The Ideology and Politics of the Ulster Defence Association," in *Culture and Politics in Northern Ireland*, ed. E. Hughes (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), 51-2.

[33] Nelson, *Uncertain Defenders*, 140.

[34] Ian S. Wood, *Crimes of Loyalty: A History of the UDA* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 61.

[35] "Bye-Bye Shankill," *Combat* Vol. 1, no. 15.

Considering side by side the outcome of the VPP campaign and the organization of localized political action on behalf of Belfast's working class Protestants, the nuances and potential of emerging paramilitary politics can be identified. As pointed out earlier, the first half of the 1970s saw a general acceptance of street level paramilitary activism in the Protestant communities generally and working class neighborhoods especially, though their more grotesque acts of violence never gained widespread support. It was for primarily this reason that grassroots paramilitary intervention on behalf of working class communities saw the greater levels of support and success it did. Whereas there was always only a slim chance for the paramilitaries to enter the sphere of parliamentary politics in Northern Ireland because "Ulster Protestants had an implicit sense of a division of labour. Politicians did politics and paramilitaries did muscle and there was little or no enthusiasm for a blurring of the boundaries."[36]

The Issue of UUUC Unity

After the strike the driving power of Protestant parliamentary politics was the UUUC, which for many supporters must have seemed like a new era of Unionist unity. This is evidenced by the UUUC's performance in both the October 1974 Westminster General Election and the May 1975 convention election, where, embracing all OUP, DUP, VUPP candidates, the new council took over fifty-percent of the total poll. However, it is clear from the UUUC's election materials and independently produced political statements that unity was still only a fleeting aspiration. The split in the party is most easily seen over the main issue of Northern Ireland's future constitutional position and whether or not power-sharing should be included in any

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[36] Bruce, *The Red Hand*, 133.

devolved manifestation of government.[37] In an April 1975 election pamphlet for South Belfast,

UUUC candidate Raymond Jordan, though supporting "the restoration of Democratic local

government," blatantly stated that power-sharing on any religious grounds was not acceptable.[38]

A statement of support for Raymond's position appeared in the *Belfast News Letter* months after

the election. The political advertisement clearly states "We do not offer positions in Cabinet to

Republicans; no power-sharing."[39] However, other prominent UUUC politicians, most notably

William Craig, were advocating for the very power-sharing that so deeply riled majority

Protestant emotion throughout this period. In September 1975, Craig resigned from the Vanguard

Party declaring, "The UUUC have devalued the convention." Continuing, Craig blatantly

questions Paisley's policies which "excludes the SDLP" and such "endeavors… have made more

difficult, if not impossible, the establishment of a meaningful Parliament and Government."[40] It

was after this episode that Craig faded into the background of Protestant politics. The one time

leader of loyalism had become yet another betrayer of the Ulster Protestant people.

Pursuing Peace

       The elite political dealings envisioned in the wake of the UWC strike fizzled under the

pressures of extreme violence and the ending of an IRA ceasefire in 1975. The resumption of

violence after the ending of the IRA's ceasefire exacerbated suspicions between the two primary

parties set to negotiate in the upcoming convention, the UUUC and SDLP, especially in the

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[37] Elliot and Flackes, *Conflict in Northern Ireland*, 539-541.

[38] D.W McAllister, "South Belfast Election Special" (Belfast: April 30, 1975), Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

[39] "Statement from the United Ulster Unionists," *Belfast News Letter*, October 10, 1975.

[40] John Wallace, "Craig Quits in Row with UUUC," *Belfast Telegraph*, September 9, 1975.

minds of the former group.[41] Parliamentary politics were deadlocked. From the end of UWC strike to 1977 there were 782 Troubles related deaths, with paramilitaries on both sides of the sectarian divide being responsible for the vast majority of them.[42] The lofty issues of constitutional politics took a back seat to the goal ending of violence, and thus reassuring local security. This phenomenon can be further understood by Co. Armagh's, Official Unionist, R.H. Mercer's observation that there was substantial apathy among loyalist voters.[43] Mercer's claims are well founded considering the consistent drop in voter turnout in all elections since 1973, especially the 1975 Convention election, which dropped approximately eight-percent from its previous 1973 Assembly election. Even traditionally important local council elections had a ten-percent lower turnout compared to those held in 1973.[44] Perceiving a waning value in democratic processes, Protestant's undertook a wide spectrum of political action in order to secure an ending to the violence.

In mid-August 1976, groups of women were increasingly on the march throughout Northern Ireland demanding an end to violence after two small children were killed in the culmination of a car chase between the IRA and the British Army.[45] These marches culminated in the formation of the Peace People, led by Mrs. Betty Williams and Miss Mairead Corrigan, and the launching of a massive rally in Belfast on the 22, attended by nearly twenty-five thousand men, but predominately women, from all over Northern Ireland. At first the movement seemed to have massive support by most segments of the Ulster population, Catholic and Protestant alike. In fact, the extreme loyalist Shankill area of West Belfast spearheaded the

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[41] Eric Kauffman and Henry Patterson. *Unionism and Orangeism in Northern Ireland Since 1945: the Decline of the Loyal Family* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 178.

[42] Data collected from McKittrick, *et al.*, *Lost Lives*.

[43] "Unionist 'Failed due to Position of Name,'" *Ulster Gazette*, June 2, 1977.

[44] Elliot and Flackes, *Conflict in Northern Ireland*, 541, 545.

[45] McKittrick, *et al.*, *Lost Lives*, 669-670.

organization of a local peace movement. Leader Mrs. Anne Brown exuded her hopes for the new

movement, saying that it was "the most important development in the Province over the past

seven years. The time has come… to tell the gangsters and thugs to leave us alone."[46] Ironically,

even the UDA supported the "women of peace," yet they were quick to point out that the

movement must be weary of "allowing politicians to get on their bandwagon."[47] Even more

extreme were the accusations that "among their ranks are those backing the Provos" (a short

hand often given to the Provisional IRA).[48] In the end such suspicions seemed to become

widespread in many segments of the Protestant community as aspects of the Peace People's

ideology detracted from its purely peaceful message and became connected with the political

legitimacy and legal protection of paramilitary activists, allowing old sectarian assumptions and

inter-class disputes within Protestantism to distract from any unified acceptance of the Peace

People.[49]

      The organization's publication, *Peace by Peace*, greatly exhibits the reasons why they

could be viewed as being soft on paramilitaries, and thus disagreeable to the Protestant

community. One article states, "Should we talk to them [the paramilitaries]? Yes… Come and

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[46] "Huge Crowd to Rally for Peace," *Belfast News Letter*, August 21, 1976; "Peace Push Gains Strength," *Belfast News Letter*, August 23, 1976; "Peace Vow on Shankill," *Belfast News Letter*, August 24, 1976.

[47] "What is Happening," *Loyalist News*, August 28, 1976.

[48] "Peace, Peace… When?," *Protestant Telegraph*, August 21-September 3, 1976.

[49] The impotence of the Peace People's message in Northern Ireland may also point to the general issues that faced the organization of a non-sectarian women's movement in Northern Ireland beginning in the early 1970s. A lack of research pervades this topic, but two works: C. Roulston, "Women on the Margin The Women's Movement in Northern Ireland, 1973-1988," *Science and Society* 53 (1989): 219-36, and Margaret Ward, "The Women's Movement in the North of Ireland," in *Ireland's Histories*, eds. Hutton S. and Peter Shirlow (London: Routledge, 1991), come to similarly dismal conclusions. Likewise, Monica McWilliams succinctly sums up the women's movement when she states, "The macro political question of nationalism was raised and became a source of contention among feminists," and their related communities; deeply rooted ethnic politics could not be overlooked. Furthermore, it was more difficult for Protestant women to become fully engaged in the women's movement because their larger, male oriented communities viewed many causes with suspicion. 1971's Mothers' of Belfast protest against the recent government abolition of free milk for children during school is a good example, as it was seen in the Protestant community as "Catholic anti-state protest." Monica McWilliams, "Struggling for Peace and Justice: Reflections on Women's Activism in Northern Ireland," *Journal of Women's History* 7, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 22, 32-33.

join us. We need your energy and commitment." A further perceivably subversive attempt to

support paramilitary activity was shown in a pamphlet called "Know Your Rights," which details

a person's legal rights if they are questioned, searched, or arrested by security forces.[50] Though

explicitly non-sectarian, the Peace People's brand of populist outreach and their perceived

connection with republican activism would greatly limit their appeal to the Protestant community

outside of working class paramilitary neighborhoods, who faced the same difficulties as their

Catholic counterparts. But even the support of those like Brown's Shankill branch would not

prove numerous enough to make the Peace People a viable force in the province. By the late

1970's the provincial influence of the Peace People was already showing signs of splinter when

one of the first regional branches of the organization in Armagh officially broke away to form its

own regionalized movement, though the reasons pointed out were not explicitly sectarian in

nature.[51]

The outcry to stop violence was still deeply felt despite the shortcomings of the Peace

People. Representing an opposite approach to the marches of the Peace People was the United

Unionist Action Council strike of 1977, led by Paisley, Official Unionist from Co. Fermanagh,

Earnest Baird, and representatives of the UDA. The basic demands of the UUAC strike were the

implementation of "an effective offensive against the IRA and [a] promise to reinstate full-

blooded Unionist rule."[52] It seems, however, that its outspoken objections to direct rule were

certainly less important than the security issue. The May 1977 strike lasted less than two weeks

and was never supported by the majority of the Protestant population, including those rank-and-

file groups who were the primary boons to the successful 1974 UWC strike, such as the Harland

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[50] "Know Your Rights," *Peace by Peace*, January 27, 1978; Peter McLachlan, "Peace and Paramilitaries," *Peace by Peace*, June 17, 1977.
[51] "Armagh Breaks with Peace People," *Ulster Gazette*, May 3, 1979.
[52] "Unionist Gunmen on Warpath," *Morning Star*, April 27, 1977.

and Wolff employees, the UVF, and perhaps most importantly, the Ballylumford power station operators.[53] Also, unlike the 1974 strike, intimidation was the only tool at the strikers' disposal, and the irony of a violent strike called to protest violence was not lost on Protestant Northern Ireland; yet the strike leaders never seemed to publicly admit such an odd miss step. Up to the last moments of the strike they held firm in their cause: "the strike is about the preservation of life."[54]

Nonetheless, the strike was a failure. Even though the security situation and the continuation of violence was at the forefront of Protestant political priorities, the current climate did not provide fertile grounds for such action compared to 1974, because at the time there was no real threat to the constitutional position of Protestant's within the Northern Ireland state. However drastic the failure of the strike may have seemed, there were no real repercussions for its primary public leader, Ian Paisley, who was to maintain a massive following in coming years.[55] What the lack of spontaneous support for the UUAC strike also illustrates was that militant outbursts of political assertiveness were no longer effective in rallying the support of large sections of the Protestant population. The late 1970s were certainly a far cry from the beginning of the decade when the UDA was welcomed to march the streets of Protestant Northern Ireland and be heralded as its righteous protectors. It also shows that though rejecting violent loyalism, the political goals of protecting the Protestant constitution of Northern Ireland from Republican attack, their Southern Irish enemies, and the untrustworthy politicians at Westminster still held the greatest sway in Ulster Protestant political ideology.

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[53] David McKittrick, "Unionist Strike was a Mistake, Baird Admits," *Irish Times*, June 30, 1977.
[54] Anne McHardy, "Confused Loyalists Call Off Strike," *The Guardian*, May 14, 1977.
[55] Kauffman and Patterson, *Unionism and Orangeism*, 191.

The Image of Violence

The final years of the 1970s showed a drastic shift in how Protestant Northern Ireland expressed its loyalist views. No longer did the population at large acquiesce in paramilitary intervention. In fact, from 1977 to 1979 showed a large drop in violence. Since 1972 at least two hundred people were killed per year. By the late 1970s this was no longer the case; the total for the final three-year period of the 1970s recorded 329 Troubles related deaths. Furthermore, Protestant paramilitaries were operating at a much-reduced level; killing no more than thirty people in each year from 1977 to1979. Their campaigns were also drastically limited in geographical reach, recording only a small number of victims outside of Belfast, most notably in Cos. Armagh and Antrim, areas outside of Belfast heavily targeted by the IRA;[56] Protestant retaliation in these areas was to be expected. However, the popular notion that there was "little or no central control over the [Protestant] murder campaign" paired with the sensational gruesomeness of some of their acts indicated that the Protestant population was turning against their former paramilitary protectors.[57]

Nothing exemplifies the public image of Protestant paramilitarism during this era better than the actions and convictions of the Shankill Butchers, a group of UVF men lead by Lenny Murphy, who terrorized the Catholic, Cliftonville area of North Belfast through a series of kidnappings and tortures that eventually led to the gruesome deaths of nineteen people from November 1975 to May 1977. In February 1979, numerous members of the Butchers gang were given a total of forty-two life sentences for what the judge described as "so cruel and so ruthless as to be beyond the comprehension of any normal person."[58] The Protestant community was

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[56] Data collected from McKittrick, *et al.*, *Lost Lives*.

[57] Bruce, *The Red Hand*, 54.

[58] "Judge Writes a Final Chapter to Orgy of Violence," *Belfast News Letter*, February 21, 1979.

becoming more and more fed up with actions such as those carried out by the Shankill Butchers. However, this was not a period that showed a decline in the political duress of Protestant Northern Ireland. There was still a strong sense among many Protestants that there lot in Ulster was slowly being syphoned by republican interests while Westminster turned a blind eye, making the political scene of this period one of extremes.

Parliamentary Loyalism

Traditional loyalist fears still pervaded, but considering the decline in support for Protestant paramilitaries and the lack luster turnout of the UUAC strike of 1977, street level political action was losing traction. Loyalist views were becoming firmly a part of the sphere of parliamentary politics. Therefore, elections and elite political developments are a good way of estimating the general thrust of Protestant political motivation in the late 1970s. It should be remembered, however, that voter turnout was persistently low throughout this period. Many in the Protestant community shared a sense of hopelessness after nearly ten years of chaos in Northern Ireland.

The 1977 district council elections encapsulate a major shift that was beginning to occur in Protestant politics, the rise of major DUP influence. Though they only had a majority on the Ballymena council, holding eleven of the twenty-one seats, they had a large presence on many of Northern Ireland's twenty-six local districts. For instance, they won seven seats on the Belfast council compared to fifteen for the OUP, which was a drastic change from the last council elections in 1973, where the DUP only won two seats to the OUP's twenty-five. Put more simply, the DUP increased its number of district council seats from twenty-one to seventy-four,

where the OUP/UUP dropped from 233 to 178.[59] The primary reasons for these changes are that

"Protestant politics were being simplified."[60] The UUUC had dissolved and the Vanguard

movement was on the verge of collapse. By the 1979, Westminster election former loyalist

bulwark William Craig—merely a symbolic remnant of Vanguard, who rejoined the OUP years

earlier—lost his long time seat to DUP general Peter Robinson, causing Craig to leave politics

and retire.[61] The options for Protestant voters were increasingly between the "hardline unionism"

of the DUP and the more moderate OUP. Moreover, the appeal of the DUP can be explained

because they were able to blend their uncompromising constitutional positions with populist

economic and social positions, gaining them ground among those who followed traditional

Ulster Protestant views on the nature of the state and their favored place within it. Working class

Protestants, whose politics, though motivated by abstract constitutional issues, would have also

had material economic interests in the more left hinting economic policies of the DUP.[62]

  However, the divide between the OUP and the DUP was far from drastic in many ways.

This can be glimpsed from the views both parties presented on European Economic Community

membership. OUP leader, James Molyneaux, stated in 1978 "it is bad enough to be peripheral to

the British economy. It is much worse to be peripheral to a British economy which is itself a

peripheral region of the European economy."[63] Whereas Paisley, justifying his thoughts with a

similar logic to Molyneaux's, bluntly said "our Europe policies are clear—we want out."[64] It is

here that it becomes clear that even though the OUP and the DUP were competing for similar

political support, Protestant politics in general clearly favored the return of at least some degree

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[59] Elliot and Flackes, *Conflict in Northern Ireland*, 532, 545.

[60] Bruce, *God Save Ulster*, 115.

[61] Graham Walker, *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party: Protest, Pragmatism, and Pessimism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 226.

[62] Bruce, *God Save Ulster*, 102, 116, 137.

[63] "Unionist Opposition to EEC is Underlined by S. Antrim Member," *The Orange Standard*, February 1978.

[64] "Ulster and the EEC," *Protestant Telegraph*, February 1979.

of local autonomy. Under threat from outside forces, Europe in this case, both of the main

Protestant political representative bodies were clamoring to maintain a secure, isolated Ulster.

The culmination of such anti-European involvement culminated in the 1979 European

Parliament elections that were certainly fought within Northern Ireland on traditional sectarian

extremes. In the end, three were elected, including Paisley, who took nearly thirty-percent of the

total vote, SDLP leader, John Hume, won twenty-five percent of the pole, and the OUP's John

Taylor found himself in with a further eleven percent of the vote. Longtime Alliance Party leader

Oliver Napier finished fifth in the poll with a mere seven percent of the vote.[65] The election was

promoted within Protestant circles as a fight "against the forces of reaction, republicanism, and

revolution."[66] Outside of the normal fear mongering characteristically associating the moderate

nationalist SDLP with violent republicanism, what is informative about the above statement was

that Molyneaux made it. During a time when Protestant politics seemed more clearly divided

than ever he made a statement that could've riled both DUP and OUP constituencies.

Molyneaux's political prominence at this time is further evidence of the institutionalized

uncompromising radicalism that was pervasive in Protestant politics since the beginning of the

Troubles, though without the violent undertones of enlisting paramilitary action.

Often noted for his droll "pedestrian style and lack of charisma" compared to his main

political opponent, Paisley, Molyneaux won over the moderate Protestant vote for a number of

reasons, including his notable support for a new, albeit gradual devolution scheme which would

provide the framework for Northern Ireland to gain "back control of major local government

services."[67] By the time he officially became the head of the OUP in 1979, he already gained the

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[65] Elliot and Flackes, *Conflict in Northern Ireland*, 549.
[66] "Party Chiefs Warn of 'Disinterested' Approach to EEC," *Belfast News Letter*, June 6, 1979.
[67] Walker, *A History of the UUP,* 228-9.

reputation for defying the will of Westminster and invoking the voice and will of his constituents by forcing "useful concessions to Ulster."[68] In summation, the growing dualism within Protestant parliamentary politics can be viewed as a contrast between the gradual, understated approaches of Molyneaux and the OUP, whose constituents had resigned themselves to "direct rule as a basic framework of governance," whereas the "bombastic excesses" of the DUP and its supporters were always quick to be on the attack in its negative assertions against the British government. Constitutionally, however, the goals of these two branches had similar aims.[69] By the end of the 1970s a malaise had settled over Protestant Northern Ireland. Political responses had shifted away from violence, though the core tenants of reactionary ethnic loyalism and a hopeless distrust of their political master's in Westminster were deeply entrenched in the Protestant political mind after nearly a decade of complete upheaval.

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[68] "Molyneaux Man for the Hour," *The Orange Standard*, October 1979.

[69] Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson, *Northern Ireland, 1921-1996: Political Forces and Social Classes* (London: Serif, 1996), 201.

Chapter Three: Political Hinterland, 1980-1985

"I was nineteen when I went in. They gave me the uniform and I said I'd rather go naked. I was duly assaulted… They put me on solitary for thirty-five days and beat me black and blue… I developed an obsessive hatred for screws [prison guards]." These statements made by a loyalist paramilitary prisoner are shockingly similar to those made by other former prisoners who were housed in the H-Block compounds during the period known as "criminalisation." In brief, criminalization lasted from 1976 to1981 and refers to a set of prison policies that sought to remove political credibility from those convicted of paramilitary related activity in an attempt to represent their actions as a "criminal conspiracy."[1] Though guards used physical violence against loyalist and republican prisoners as a way of demeaning the individuals' value within the prison, stripping paramilitaries of their special category status and all the privileges encompassed by that status was the other primary aim of criminalisation. The elimination of special category status materially affected prisoners in the following ways: desegregating the various paramilitary factions, moving them from their compound style Nissan huts to individual cells on mixed blocks—inter-factional violence would become an increasingly common occurrence—forcing paramilitary prisoners to wear prison uniforms instead of their civilian clothing, participating in prison work became mandatory, and greatly limiting outside correspondence and visitation, if not completely taking it away.

Criminalisation and the removal of special category status lead to a wave of protest by paramilitary prisoners on both sides of the sectarian divide, culminating with the 1981 IRA hunger strikes. Likewise, it is one of the main contentions of this chapter that the '81 hunger strikes specifically, but all forms of organized prisoner protest in general, fundamentally altered

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[1] Colin Crawford, *Defenders or Criminals: Loyalist Prisoners and Criminalisation* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1999), 16, 147-8.

the political scene of Northern Ireland throughout the 1980s. Not only did the hunger strikes launch the IRA's political wing, Sinn Féin, into the sphere parliamentary politics, but also loyalist paramilitaries, through their actions inside and outside of the prison system, became a more elaborated political entity, defining their political ideologies outside of the contexts of traditional Unionist and loyalist Protestant political bodies. Also, in the 1980s the political voices of the Ulster Unionist Party and the Democratic Unionist Party became enthralled by a near complete acceptance of loyalist ideology as the Thatcher lead UK government began to earnestly engage in diplomacy with the Republic of Ireland without the consent of Protestant Northern Ireland. But before explicating the contours of Protestant political developments in regards to Anglo-Irish relations, a detailed discussion of prison protest and the divisive political responses within the Protestant community will be undertaken.

Paramilitary Prisoner Protest

It was established in the previous chapter that the greatly expanded prison population was a major issue for many working class Protestant families. Whereas the focus in chapter two was on grassroots organizations on the outside, such as the Loyalist Prisoner Association, this chapter will concentrate on protest efforts from within the prisons and how they extended beyond the prison walls to inform the greater politics of Northern Ireland. Kieran McEvoy discusses the "collective resistance projects" of the specific loyalist and republican organizations in terms of their efforts to represent themselves as unified, politically motivated groups and not individual offenders, which the criminalisation policy sought to instill, thus undermining the legitimacy of paramilitary organizations. McEvoy highlights the complex history of paramilitary prisoner protest throughout the Troubles, but it is clear from his study that after nearly five years of

criminalisation both loyalist and republican paramilitaries undertook protest efforts with more

fervent determination. The most common forms of protest were the blanket protest and the dirty

protest: the former involved a refusal to wear prison issued uniforms and donning only blankets.

In efforts to further challenge the prison regime, the dirty protest included a refusal to bathe and

urinating and defecating in one's cell. Often times the two forms of protest went hand in hand,

however, loyalists did not undertake the dirty protest at first because there was a fear amongst

the leadership on the outside that "emulating the Republicans" could undermine loyalist

legitimacy.

From the blanket and dirty protests of the late 1970s and early 1980s developed a more

self-destructive but effective form of protest: the hunger strike; the first of which was started by

republicans in October of 1980, but in December six UDA men joined.[2] As the name suggests,

the hunger strike involved depriving oneself of all nutrition, often time with the exception of

water and possibly salt tablets to help keep the water ingested. By 1981 the effects of the 1980

strike were waning despite its drastic implications. And again, on March 1, Bobby Sands, Officer

Commanding of the IRA inside the H-Blocks, went on hunger strike, and on May 5, he would be

the first of ten men to die, but not before being elected to the Westminster parliament.[3] Because

of their looser organization and lack of ideological drive, loyalist prisoners are often times said to

be less effective at such forms of protest than their republican counterparts;[4] however true such

statements may be, loyalist paramilitary activists nonetheless saw the possible political capital

that such actions afforded republicans and loyalists alike.

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[2] Crawford, *Defenders or Criminals*, 63; Kieran McEvoy *Paramilitary Imprisonment In Northern Ireland: Resistance, Management, and Release* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 37, 40, 100-101.
[3] Crawford, *Defenders or Criminals*, 62.
[4] McEvoy, *Paramilitary Imprisonment*, 104.

UVF member turned political leader David Ervine stated, "Criminalization… set the cause of peace back many, many years. Whilst one was conscious that your enemy [the IRA] was starving themselves to death, the cause upon which that enemy travelled, if you like, was a just one."[5] Likewise, former UWC chairman and UDA member, Glen Barr, somewhat hesitantly admitted, "They had a cause and they fought for it, and I have always had a sneaking admiration for them because of what they were prepared to endure for what they believed in… I also think that it was probably the single most unifying fact for the Nationalist population."[6] Taken together these two statements illustrate a major issue for Protestant paramilitaries that would develop throughout the 1980s within the Protestant community; namely, a creeping need within the grassroots paramilitary ranks to develop a coherent political ideology. This need was engendered because elite Protestant politicians were increasingly viewed as being dismissive of the needs of the working class, paramilitary, communities they supposedly represented.

Loyalist Paramilitary Politics after the Hunger Strikes

Mainstream Protestant discourse exemplifies this class divide. An article published in the moderate loyalist, and always religiously zealous, *Orange Standard* read, "Christians and churches will have to come clean on their relationships to terrorists, revolutionaries, and hunger strikers."[7] The *Protestant Telegraph* takes up a similar discursive line when, after the fallout from the second hunger strike had begun to take hold, stated that those who support the cause of restoring political status "stand condemned before God and man. Ulster would be better off

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[5] David Ervine quoted in Ed Moloney, *Voices From the Grave* (New York: Public Affairs. 2010), 398.
[6] Glen Barr quoted in Adrian Kerr ed., *Perceptions: Cultures in Conflict* (Derry: Guildhall Press, 1996), 20.
[7] "'Come Clean on H-Blocks:' Call by Orange Head," *The Orange Standard*, September 1981.

without them."[8] These two statements are revealing in their vagueness, as neither of them directly mentioned loyalist paramilitary attitudes towards political status, who, as pointed out above, were in favor of the restoration of political status. In an article published following Sinn Féin's competent showing in the 1985 local council elections, where they received twelve-percent of the total vote and fifty-nine seats throughout the province,[9] the UVF's publication, *Combat*, exclaimed

> It is now painfully clear that the main parties such as the Official Unionist Party and the Democratic Unionist Party have made no progress over the past couple of years… How long will it be before we find them exploiting the fears of our people… The grass-roots loyalist must now say enough is enough.[10]

What did such deeply sincere statements amount to? Since the utter failure of the VPP, discussed in chapter two, the UVF organized another political party in 1977, called the Progressive Unionist Party, which ironically supported a non-sectarian, cross-class form of socialism that would not find traction in the loyalist community until after the 1994 ceasefires.[11] And despite founding member Hughie Smyth's large Shankill following, the political aims of the PUP did not travel well. The party saw only dismal support in the 1981 local council election.[12]

On the other hand, fairing only slightly better than the UVF, the UDA set out to not only develop a succinct political program throughout the 1980s, but they were also committed to developing a deeply informed ideology that, it was hoped, could be adopted by many loyalists, thus giving greater credence to the ethnic claims of their Protestant Ulster heritage. Prominent political scientist, Alan Finlayson, in a discussion on the nationalistic tendencies of Ulster

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[8] "D.U.P. Protest Maze Prison," *Protestant Telegraph*, May 2, 1981.

[9] Sydney Elliot and W.D Flackes, *Conflict in Northern Ireland: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1999), 561-2.

[10] "Black Knight," "Progressive Thinking," *Combat* 3, no. 4.

[11] Aaron Edwards, "Democratic Socialism and Sectarianism: The Northern Ireland Labour Party and Progressive Unionist Party Compared," *Politics* 27, no. 1 (2007): 25, 27.

[12] Steve Bruce, *The Red Hand: Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 239.

loyalism points to attempts by loyalists to build a historically based sense of the specificity of the

Ulster Protestant people, further serving to reinforce their claim to Northern Ireland and its

connection with the UK.[13] Likewise, many scholars have related this point to the ideological

endeavors of the UDA throughout the 1980s, specifically through their adoption of Dr. Ian

Adamson's "Cruithin" mythology. Adamson, himself a committed member of the OUP,

published two studies in the early 1980s that claimed Ulster was originally colonized by the

Cruithin people, descendants of Scottish Picts. Only when invaded by southern Irish Gaels were

they forced to retreat to modern day Argyll, in Scotland. During the seventeenth century

Plantation of Ireland, where Catholic lands, primarily in the North, were confiscated and

redistributed to British, mainly Scottish Presbyterian, planters did the descendants of the

Cruithin, and thus the rightful claimants of Ulster, regain their homeland. Though the credibility

of the Cruithin account has been debated and questioned, its importance was nonetheless valid

for the UDA, who were trying to connect a sense of historical legitimacy to their emerging

political goals outside of the traditional Protestant cultural strictures that were rooted in the

Glorious Revolution of the late seventeenth century as embodied by the Orange Order.

Moreover, by separating from the traditional justifications of Protestant loyalism, the UDA could

further distance itself from the political influences of politicians like Paisley.[14]

Delving into the ancient roots of Eire also allowed the UDA to construct an ideological

profile that was both antithetical and common to the Catholic and republican cultural

mythological constructions of Northern Ireland. The imagery and symbolism associated with

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[13] Alan Finlayson, "Nationalism as ideological interpellation: the Case of Ulster Loyalism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19, no. 1 (January, 1996): 108.

[14] Steve Bruce, *The Red Hand: Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 234-5; James W McAuley, "Cuchullain and an RPG-7: The Ideology and Politics of the Ulster Defence Association," *Culture and Politics in Northern Ireland, 1960-90*, ed. E. Hughes (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991): 55; Ian S. Wood, *Crimes of Loyalty: A History of the UDA* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 70.

Cúchullain—the hound of Ulster, who defended the Northern province against western Irish invaders as depicted in the eighth century's Táin Bó Cúailinge[15]— supported the UDA's claim to historical legitimacy, but it also provided Ulster Protestants with a connection to the Catholic community that was less overtly combative than the fundamental Protestantism of Paisley because it was rooted in a common tradition. However, the proposed ancient Ulster mythology of Adamson did not catch on with the majority of Protestant Northern Ireland, favoring as they did the Orange tradition of the seventeenth century. Similarly, the proposed parallelism with the Catholic community discouraged many rank-and-file Protestants from adopting such cultural symbols as the Cruithin, who, from the artwork presented in Adamson's work, appeared to be exceptionally Gaelic in appearance.[16] Nonetheless, the leadership of the UDA was deeply committed to developing a uniform cultural identity for Protestant Northern Ireland in hopes of legitimating their political initiatives.

In the wake of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the UDA formed of the Ulster Political Research Group, whose membership included notable UDA men like commander Andy Tyrie, Belfast political figure Tommy Little, and Ulster Freedom Fighters commander John McMichael. The group was intent on formulating an articulate and plausible political structure for a future Northern Ireland government. In January of 1987, the UPRG published the fruits of its labors, *Common Sense*. In brief, *Common Sense* proposed a devolved government— independent from the UK—whose parliament was to be elected by proportional representation, the production of a written constitution to be discussed and produced via a constitutional convention, a bill of rights, and a supreme court to "safeguard the rights of the individual." Within this framework, as the document claims, Protestant loyalists could resolve their

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[15] McAuley, "Cuchullain and an RPG-7," 55.
[16] Bruce, *The Red Hand*, 235.

suspicions about Ulster Catholics and their hopes of a united Ireland because by allowing Catholics to "play a full role" in the governance of Northern Ireland; Protestants would no longer "feel compelled to defend the frontier."[17] These last statements point to an important idea that undergirds *Common Sense* and were therefore extremely consequential of to the UPRG's chairman John McMichael and his existence outside of the political think-tank. As the leader of the UFF, the UDA's military wing, McMichael subtly weaves into *Common Sense* a loyalist logic that implies that if Catholics gave up their dream of a united Ireland, and thus abandoned their support of the IRA, than militant Protestants too could cease their violent actions. In essence, *Common Sense* blended notions of the specificity of the Ulster Protestant identity and loyalist defensiveness. However insightful and appealing *Common Sense* seemed, it failed to persuade any significant portion of the Protestant community, despite claiming initial praise by prominent politicians such as SDLP leader John Hume and prominent Unionist Frank Millar.[18] In summation, if the VPP represents a failed experiment in the mid-1970s, what the organization of the PUP and the publication of *Common Sense* show was that while still only negligible forces, paramilitaries were committed to formulating political programs completely outside the strictures of traditional Protestant politics. But their public association with gruesome violence and crime would hinder their success as parliamentary forces. Looking at the level and type of violence associated with the paramilitaries throughout the 1980s reveals the validity of public perceptions about Protestant paramilitary violence, and thus the problems faced by Protestant paramilitaries when trying to legitimate their political actions.

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[17] Ulster Political Research Group, *Common Sense (Northern Ireland – an Agreed Process)* (Belfast: 1987), 1-2, Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

[18] Bruce, *The Red Hand*, 238-9; "The U.D.A. Blueprint for Peace," *The Shankill Bulletin*, January 23, 1987.

Changing Paramilitary Violence

It was previously established in chapter two that beginning in 1977 loyalist killings were becoming much less common. For instance, from 1972 to 1976 loyalists were responsible for 594 deaths, but from 1977 to 1987 they were responsible for 117, with the years immediately following the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, '86 and '87, showing a slight upsurge.[19] Though these statistics show a clear downward trend in loyalist violence, what accounts for such a trend? Again, a point from chapter two is relevant here: the extreme violence of the paramilitaries was no longer an acceptable force for political change for most in the Protestant community due to the fact that loyalist violence was increasingly associated with mindlessness and gangsterism. The statistics relating to the types of incidents in which loyalist paramilitaries were responsible for also illustrates this point to a large degree. The Catholic community was still the main target of Protestant paramilitary action, killing sixty-two Catholic civilians from 1980 to 1987. However, there was a proportionately higher number of non-sectarian killings. Killings associated with petty-revenge on other Protestants, criminal enterprises, or internecine feuding were becoming more common. Mark Rosborough was severely beaten and shot when a UVF gang accosted him on the evening of February 16, 1985, in revenge for an altercation that took place in 1979. Another Protestant victim of UVF violence was civilian Samuel Lawrence, who was attacked during a robbery on April 3, 1987. Finally, throughout the 1980s the UDA and the UVF were involved in murders of its own members or those of the other organization, and though violent feuding was nothing new to the Protestant paramilitaries, many of the attacks in the 1980s were driven by the fear of possible informers both within the organizations, and within

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[19] David McKittrick, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney, Chris Thornton and David McVea, *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children Who Died as a result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (London: Mainstream Publishing, 2007), 1554.

the communities at large.[20] Considering the previous discussion on paramilitary attempts at political articulation, what these statistics and instances show is that there was a clear divide between the political goals of Protestant paramilitarism and the rank-and-file member, that latter group greatly exacerbating general public fears about paramilitary violence. The outcome of such a relationship certainly contributed to the political failures of both the UVF and the UDA, but this was not an idea that was lost on each organizations command structures.

In the 1980s the UVF increasingly used the *nom de guerre* Protestant Action Force to claim some of its more overtly sectarian killings. From the 1974 to 1975 eight people were killed by the PAF, but from 1982 into the early1990s they claimed twenty victims.[21] The use of a pseudonym, as we have seen with the, as of 1992, legal UDA was a tactic that could afford or possibly hinder political credibility. This is especially true pertaining to the UVF's political wing, the PUP, which was becoming a larger but still un-tried public voice for the violent organization. The UDA itself, as has already been hinted at, was reconsidering the relationship between its political and military roles throughout the 1980s. *Common Sense* implicitly balanced the current need for militant action with the promise of constructive political discussion once IRA operations ceased, but the need to assert a strong military presence within a productive political plan was a constant theme in Protestant paramilitary rhetoric throughout the 1980s.[22] In an interview for the *Guardian* in 1981 Tyrie was reported to have demanded proscription for the UDA in order to bolster their political credibility. Furthermore, in 1983 there were rumors that the UDA was to form an elite military branch called the Ulster Defence Force. UDF founder, and *Common Sense* architect, McMichael stated that though a political solution was preferable,

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[20] Data collected from McKittrick, *et al.*, *Lost Lives*, 1009, 1070.
[21] McKittrick, *et al.*, *Lost Lives*, 1680.
[22] Wood, *Crimes of Loyalty*, 80.

> The policy of the UDA remains the same, we condemn people who get into sectarian killings. But we wouldn't condemn those who conduct a calculated, controlled campaign against republican terrorists who are themselves engaged in a war against the Protestant community.[23]

The UDF was finally established in 1985. It never became the elite unit it was initially envisioned as, however, the program did provide more sophisticated military style training to many of the UDA's more ruthless recruits, such as Johnny Adair, who would rise to prominence in the 1990s.[24] The balance between violence and politics sought after by both the UVF and UDA was a partial response to the parliamentary success of Sinn Féin after the 1981 hunger strikes because as they showed, violence alone would not cast the fate of the Troubles. Outside the realm of paramilitary activism, the IRA's "armalite and ballot box" strategy inspired great fear for many in the Protestant community.

Unionist Responses to Sinn Féin

The 1981 hunger strikes provided the IRA with massive political legitimation. Their political stock was further solidified when a Westminster By-Election was held in April over the contested seat of Fermanagh/South Tyrone created by the death of Unionist Frank Maguire. Hunger striker Bobby Sands, leading a campaign from his cell after over a month without nutrition, beat hardline Unionist Harry West by over fourteen hundred votes. Protestants exhibited various shades of dismal defeat. European MP John Taylor, showing initial satisfaction at the high percentage of Protestant voter turnout in favor of West, resigned himself to the reality that "The vote for Sands shows that 90 percent of the Roman Catholics in the constituency are sympathetic to the Provisional IRA." He continued, "The question Protestants throughout Ulster

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[23] David Beresford, "Dissension Within the Loyalist Ranks," *The Guardian*, February 1, 1981; Beresford, "Militant Wing Formed by UDA," *The Guardian*, December 15, 1983.

[24] Wood, *Crimes of Loyalty*, 123, 156.

are now asking is whether this result is representative of Roman Catholic opinion elsewhere throughout the Province." Exemplifying further Unionist distress, an unnamed Unionist from Enniskillin asked, "Just where were the moderate Roman Catholics who have issued statements of condemnation of the killing of Protestant members of the security forces."

The IRA's successful foray into parliamentary politics would continue after Sands' death in May, when Owen Carron, Anti-H Block representative, won the seat vacated by Sands, defeating his Official Unionist opponent by over twenty-two hundred votes.[25] Sinn Féin's initial electoral success in 1981 boosted the vote for the DUP and other loyalist groupings. The DUP, for the first time, took the majority of the popular vote by a very slim margin of 26.6 percent versus 26.5 percent for the Ulster Unionist Party, however, other loyalists achieved a further 6.6 percent of the vote, giving the self-proclaimed *hardliners* a clear majority. This majority, though close, was visible in many district councils, such as the Ballymena district where the DUP increased its majority over the OUP from eleven seats in 1977 to thirteen of the twenty-one available seats in 1981. Furthermore, the DUP took control of the Antrim council for the first time in eight years. It is also important to note that though the OUP lost ground to the DUP in the council elections, their overall showing was very strong, and the primary loser was the more moderate Alliance Party who lost 5.5 percent of their 1977 vote and a total of thirty-two council positions in 1981.

The electoral politics of Northern Ireland were extremely polarized. Protestants were increasingly turning toward candidates who they believed would unflinchingly devote themselves to the defense of the Northern Ireland state.[26] Steve Bruce suggests that the rise in the

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[25] Elliot and Flackes, *Conflict in Northern Ireland*, 552; "Unionist Gloom Over Sands Win," *Belfast News Letter*, April 11, 1981.
[26] "D.U.P. Increase Vote in Ballymena," *Ballymena Chronicle*, May 28, 1981; Elliot and Flackes, *Conflict in Northern Ireland*, 545, 551.

DUP vote over the OUP was a result of Sinn Féin's entrance into politics, in turn suggesting that

the DUP was the firm leader of Protestant loyalism. Although he later credits the unifying

causation of 1985's Anglo-Irish Agreement between the two main Protestant parties,[27] it is clear

that by the early 1980s segments within the OUP were taking up the mantle of the loyalist

defenders of Ulster Protestants. Shortly after the '81 council election Armagh MP Harold

McCusker met with thirty-nine councilors from the border areas of South Tyrone, Newry and

Mourne, Armagh, and South Down to draw support for the strongly loyalist "Frontier

Proclamation" that exclaimed

> We will never accept absorption into an All-Ireland Republic and neither the
> blandishments of Dublin or the economic and political pressure from London will coerce
> us out of our birthright. We are met together because we believe it is only the motivation,
> discipline and strength which our community gives us that will enable our Party to save
> our Province.[28]

Changing British Responses

Protestant loyalist entrenchment in the early 1980s was only partially due to anxieties

inspired by Sinn Féin's electoral success. Concurrently, British disengagement with Northern

Ireland became more widely perceived. After years of practice the new security policy, known as

"Ulsterization," began to show Ulster Protestants that their safety and political legitimacy was

becoming less important to mainland Britain. Briefly, the policy of "Ulsterization" called for a

decreased role for the British Army in favor of the expansion of the roles of the Royal Ulster

Constabulary and the Ulster Defense Regiment—a regiment of the British Army manned entirely

by Northern Ireland citizens. In effect the UDR was a symbolic and literal replacement for the

Ulster Special Constabulary and former B-Specials, though the actions of the UDR have never

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[27] Steve Bruce, *God Save Ulster: The Religion and Politics of Paisleyism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 118-9.

[28] "No Coercion Out of Birthright–Unionists," *Ulster Gazette*, May 28, 1981.

been associated with the high levels of sectarianism as their forerunners. By the 1980s the effects

of "Ulsterization" were clear: the RUC ranks were expanded from five thousand in 1976 to over

twelve thousand by 1982 in order to compensate for their new "high-risk profile"—the wording

used in "The Way Ahead", the report issued by the Northern Ireland Office that suggested

"Ulsterization." The UDR's ranks were likewise expanded to seven thousand, the largest the

force had been since the height of the Troubles in 1972. Furthermore, British forces in the

province had been nearly halved from just over twenty-two thousand in 1972 to approximately

ten thousand by the 1980s.[29]

  The cost of life aptly reflects this shift in security personnel. With the exception of 1979

and 1982, the number of RUC, RUC reserve officers, and UDR deaths greatly outnumbered

those of the British Army. Oppositely the only years previous to "Ulsterization" in which local

security forces were killed in larger numbers than the British Army were 1970—when two

security force fatalities occurred in the whole year—and 1975.[30] A partial explanation for these

statistics was the rise in prison officer assassinations carried out by republican groups following

the policy of "criminalisation."[31] However, the perception of the situation was clear for Northern

Protestants: the UK was becoming more willing to distance itself from Northern Ireland's

political situation.

  More ideologically ominous for the Protestant community was UK Prime Minister's,

Margaret Thatcher, growing diplomatic relations with the Republic of Ireland. In the spring of

1981, Thatcher met with the Republic of Ireland's Taoiseach, Charles Haughey. The interactions

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[29] Chris Ryder, *The UDR: An Instrument of Peace?* (London: Methuen, 1991), 84, 102; Chris Ryder, *The RUC, 1922-2000: A Force Under Fire* (London: Methuen, 2000), *140*-1, 273-4.

[30] McKittrick, *et al.*, *Lost Lives*, 1552.

[31] Loyalist assaults on the security forces have always been much lower than their republican counterparts, though they were not unheard of. Likewise, loyalists killed only one prison officer in the time of 'criminalization.' On December 30, 1980 the UVF shot and killed William Burns in East Belfast, McKittrick, *et al.*, *Lost Lives*, 844.

between the two leaders were not received well by the Protestant community due to the fact that the details of their talks were not made public. Distrust of the Republic was never in short supply, but after the Thatcher, Haughey talks even the pro-Union, Conservative PM was beginning to be viewed with suspicion in Northern Ireland. Armagh's Church of Ireland Rector, Cannon Mortimer, expressed general Protestant views: "Many will accept Mrs. Thatcher's assurances about the constitutional position of the Province–but why should she not spell out the details of the conversation and thus remove the suspicion and fears that are being manipulated." The manipulations Rector Mortimer spoke of were those of the DUP in trying to stir militancy within the Protestant community, not only in reaction to the inter-governmental talks, but also in reference to the hunger strikes and the election of Bobby Sands, all of which, "caused the polarisation in the community as acute as at any time since the troubles began."[32]

In a further attempt by Paisley and the DUP to build a controlled militant force of Protestant loyalists committed to the defense of Ulster, outside of the ranks of independently minded paramilitaries, he and Peter Robinson organized a series of clandestine meetings and marches that took place at night but certainly within ear shot of the surrounding communities they were held in. Robinson described the final of three physical "shows of strength" that took place in the opening days of April at Gortin Glen, Co. Tyrone, and Newry, Co. Armagh as being "a first step in phase Three of the campaign against the Dublin summit talks." Though astutely described as DUP "sabre-rattling," the implied threat was being made clear. In direct response to Thatcher's secrecy, loyalism would respond in order "to resist what is called the Dublin conspiracy;" resistance could mean violence, and necessary action would continue, "some of it in public, some not public." Though being contemporarily condemned by many Unionists,

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[32] "St. Mark's Rector Calls on Premier," *Ulster Gazette*, April 30, 1981.

including Armagh MP, Harold McCusker, DUP loyalism was responding, however hollowly, with the threat of militancy.[33]

By November 1981, renewed talks between the Republic and the UK were underway, and despite their innocently conceived motives,[34] the DUP organized a renewed loyalist response; this time under the guise of the oft threatened Third Force, a unionist sanctioned paramilitary force directly under the control of Protestant political leaders, harkening back to the original formation of the UVF in 1912 in response to a renewed Home Rule crisis. In a massive rally held at Newtownards, Co. Down, Paisley again levied the threat of violence, stating "This force will defend the defenceless with every weapon at its disposal. If they have legally-held guns they will use them". The threat was made all the more sinister by the presence of thousands of men fully clad in military fatigues and balaclavas, ceremoniously presenting their firearms' permits.[35] The importance of Paisley's threatened attempts at organizing a more *trustworthy* paramilitary group, as compared to the UDA and UVF, is that though they may have only amounted to gestures, an undercurrent of extra-parliamentary extremism was still a persistent ideological influence for Protestant Northern Ireland. Furthermore, outside such rhetorical showings, the DUP's political assertiveness, paired with those more loyalist OUP members, were perceivably correct in their characterization of the more moderate segments of the OUP who were increasingly seen as "even weaker and more faithless than they were in the sixties and seventies" when they were originally thought to have betrayed Ulster Protestants.[36] No doubt such comments were meant to recall the actions of O'Neill and pro-Sunningdale Unionists like Brian Faulkner. The proclamations of the McCusker lead border Unionists and the DUP's

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[33] Mervyn Pauley, "Robinson Defends DUP's Three Rallies," *Belfast News Letter*, April 3, 1981.

[34] Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson, *Northern Ireland, 1921-1996: Political Forces and Social Classes* (London: Serif, 1996), 210.

[35] "The Third Force on Parade," *Protestant Telegraph*, December 12, 1981.

[36] "Unionists Guilty of Desertion-DUP," *Ulster Gazette*, February 11, 1982.

shadowy attempts to organize militant segments of Protestant Northern Ireland represent a

precursor to Protestant responses to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. However,

considering the negative reactions within the Protestant community to the DUP's violent threats,

Protestant responses to the emergence of Anglo-Irish relations also point to one of the main

tensions within Protestant Northern Ireland that would surface after 1985 in regards to how, and

at what levels violence could be applied in protest of the Agreement.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement and the Spectrum of Protestant Reaction

After years of sporadic discussion between Thatcher, Fitzgerald, and various government

representatives, the two executives signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement on November 15, 1985

after Sinn Féin startled the executives into action after the 1983 Westminster General Election,

where former prisoner and IRA political strategist Gerry Adams won the West Belfast seat,

paired with their successful 1985 local council election campaign discussed above. The

Hillsborough Castle signing was symbolic and ironic because it was the site of English power in

Northern Ireland and thus the supposed supporters of the Protestant cause in the Province, but

much like Sunningdale, Protestant voices were overlooked throughout the negotiations of the

Agreement.[37] The first objective of the Agreement was to ensure the Protestant community by

forthrightly announcing the secure place of the Northern Ireland state as a part of the United

Kingdom, but from there Ulster Protestants found little else to feel encouraged about. Article two

set up the Intergovernmental Conference, which would be "concerned with Northern Ireland and

with relations between the two parts of' the island of Ireland, to deal, as set out in this

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[37] Bew, Gibbon, and Patterson, *The Northern Ireland State*, 212, 215; Eric Kauffmann and Henry Patterson, *Unionism and Orangeism in Northern Ireland Since 1945: the Decline of the Loyal Family* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 202; Graham Walker, *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party: Protest, Pragmatism, and Pessimism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 233

Agreement, on a regular basis with political matters; security and related matters; legal matters;

including the administration of justice; the promotion of cross-border co-operation." The

Conference would be consistently related in Protestant rhetoric as a form of "joint sovereignty."

The Protestant response was uncompromising in its rejection of the Agreement.[38] J.W.

McAuley's micro-study of a Protestant enclave in East Belfast neatly shows what he refers to as

the general "'hardening' of positions" following the signing of the Agreement. In a presentation

of survey data, McAuley concludes that among both Official and Democratic shades of

Protestant Unionism the "Justifiable actions to defend the British way of life in Northern Ireland"

(implying in this case the ending of the Agreement and its cross-border components) was

showing a willingness to adopt more extreme measures. Out of the more violent options,

including "Civil Disobedience, Protest Marches, Strikes, Rioting, Armed Conflict, and Civil

War," respondents from both parties showed a marked increase in all categories between 1985–

1986.[39] Protestants outside of the staunchly loyalist East Belfast also implemented a wide range

of extreme responses in protest of the Agreement.

Defying parliamentary and legal processes was among the most popular forms of protest

Protestant officials implemented. "We're talking about an Ulster that Britain could not govern"

through the proposed "resignation of all 18 unionist MP's from Westminster," as well as "the

withdrawal of assemblymen and councilors." The response was much the same on the local

level. District councils throughout the Province were brought to a standstill as both Official

Unionists and Democratic Unionists voted to end council hearings. Protestant politicians Tom

Black and Jim Speers lead such a protest in Armagh district council, justifying their actions in

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[38] *Agreement Between the Government of Ireland and the Government of the United Kingdom*, November 15, 1985 (Dublin: Stationary Office, 1985), Article 2, accessed online September 28, 20015 via: http://www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/aia/aiadoc.htm.

[39] James W. McAuley, *The Politics of Identity: a Loyalist Community in Belfast* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1994), 164-5.

terms of a perceived loss of equality and democratic processes for the people of Northern

Ireland. Other minor boards including Armagh's Southern Education and Library Board also saw

Protestant walkouts.[40]

Minor extra-legal activity was also used as a means to show anti-Agreement clamor. The

persistently level headed MP Harold McCusker, whose burgeoning loyalism has already been

discussed, found himself in jail over his failure to pay his automobile licensing tax. He

responded to his imprisonment as such: "Since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement I have

consistently rejected violence… not only because it invariably damages our own community, but

because I believed there was a more effective alternative. That alternative is to deny the

Stormont Castle regime moral authority," achieved through the "withholding of all revenue

within my control."[41] And though the joint unionist leadership of Official Unionist leader, James

Molyneaux, and Ian Paisley "could not rule out the possibility of violence" they both maintained

that such action was not sought.[42] The threat of violent chaos was to stay at the center of

Protestant debate over anti-Agreement action in the years to come. Nearly a year after the

signing of the Agreement, Unionist MP William Ross said "In the coming weeks the Unionist

people will have to make a simple stark choice between the course of civil disobedience or allow

the slow slide into violence."[43]

Organized civil disobedience, verging on widespread street violence was implemented to

a large degree. A week after the singing of the Agreement, Protestants throughout the province

participated in a mass protest in Belfast. Armagh Orangemen rallied their members to join the

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[40] "Unionists Stage Walkout of Schools' Board," *Ulster Gazette*, November 28, 1985.

[41] Harold McCusker, "Statement following imprisonment," Ulster Unionist Party News Release (January 1987), Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

[42] Gareth Gordon, "Unionists Draw Up Battle Lines," *Belfast News Letter*, November 16, 1985.

[43] William Ross, "Speech at the Agivey and Ringsend Unionist branch" (delivered November 18, 1986), Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

protest; they even arranged public bus transportation to the capital city for those who wished to

participate.[44] In November 1986, there was a similar protest was organized. Approximately

300,000 men and women from around the province participated. In full regalia, Orangemen from

Armagh gathered at Orange Halls throughout the County in preparation to join in a march

through the streets of Belfast but not before burning effigies of Fitzgerald and Thatcher. Minor

street violence, the smashing of storefront windows, and looting occurred before departure.

Presumably unaware of such activity one person said "it was the most sight I have ever

witnessed in my life, even better than any Twelfth. The Armagh loyalists behaved like perfect

gentlemen and was happy to be one of their numbers."[45] Earlier that year, in March, a general

strike was called, though neither the goals nor the effects of the day long strike were anything

near the levels of the 1974 UWC strike. However, major cities throughout the province including

Cookstown, Co. Tyrone, Magherafelt, Londonderry, and Knockloughgrim, Co. Londonderry

were all but completely shut down by the strike. Reports of intimidation were rampant, but

violence was generally limited to rioting and small skirmishes between the police and loyalist

gangs.[46] Whether through localized political action, such as those of McCusker and innumerous

local councilors, or mass public protest, anti-Agreement action was universal not only in its

practice but also in its accepted implementation of extra-parliamentary practices.

    Protestant paramilitary action also increased in response to the Agreement's

implementation, claiming five victims in 1985 compared to thirty-seven in the two years

following,[47] but considering the previously discussed *Common Sense*, and its relation to the

political legitimacy of violent action, it appeared as though the paramilitaries were beginning to

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[44] Ivan Lambert, "Loyalists Mobilise to Fight Thatcher," *Ulster Gazette*, November 21, 1985.

[45] "On Parade in Belfast," *Ulster Gazette*, November 20, 1986.

[46] "Claims of Intimidation During Loyalist Strike," *Ballymena Chronicle*, March 6, 1986.

[47] Data collected from McKittrick, *et al.*, *Lost Lives*.

understand that a purely military victory could not be had; political initiative was needed. Considering the nature and effectiveness of Protestant anti-Agreement activity, Graham Walker's conclusions are relevant. He primarily emphasizes its "incoherence," both in terms of its understood goals and methods. The only clear aim of this era of protest was that Protestant Northern Ireland wanted to see the ending of the Anglo-Irish Agreement's implementation, a notion embodied by the common slogan "Ulster Says No."[48] Despite the inarticulateness of anti-Agreement action, Protestants' sense of their institutional place within Northern Ireland was greatly and perhaps inalterably altered after its implementation.

An Odd Legacy

Protestant protest in response to an institutionalized peace settlement, such as the Sunningdale Communiqué, is no surprise, but what made the Anglo-Irish Agreement so unpalatable was that it divided Protestant state authorities in a way previously unrealized. Outside of the general proposition of the Agreement that sought to implement a cooperative cross-border institution comparable to Sunningdale's Council of Ireland, issues of imposed legal changes and security realignment were viewed as particularly revolting to Ulster Protestant. Not only did the Agreement contend to "set in hand a programme of work to be undertaken by the Commissioner of the Garda Siochána [the Republic of Ireland's police force] and the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, but also, "the object in particular of making the security forces more readily accepted by the nationalist community" through "action to increase the proportion of members of the minority in the Royal Ulster Constabulary."[49] The RUC, whose relationship with the loyalist community had become very strained throughout the Troubles, was

[48] Walker, *Ulster Unionist Party*, 235, 239-40.
[49] *Agreement Between the Governments*, Articles 7-8.

now looked upon as yet another disloyal entity that would see and indeed contribute to the destruction of the Protestant Northern Ireland state.

Journalist Chris Ryder's work on the RUC holds at its core the argument that the force had always been more impartial and less sectarian than many sources have suggested, particularly after 1985. He points out that the especially riotous summer marching season of 1985 saw the RUC arrest and charge 468 loyalists versus only 427 republicans. Such a statistic contributes to the Protestant perception that after the implementation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement the RUC were viewed as "tools of Dublin," especially when considering the issue of parading and the forces commitment to reducing tensions between its historically negative perceptions in the Catholic community.[50] In 1986 relationships between Catholics, Protestants, and the RUC were perfectly exemplified in early July when the RUC announced that Twelfth marches would be rerouted if they tried marching down the nationalist Obins Street in Portadown, Co. Armagh. In response, Paisley stated, "For decades such parades passed off peacefully and without incident but if any government, especially one that is doing the bidding of our Dublin enemies, seeks to deny Ulsterman their inalienable rights then it is heaping trouble upon its own head."[51] In efforts to protect an alienated Catholic minority, the RUC was oppositely alienating the Protestant community, who believed that marching along traditional routes was not only a right but a historically derived assertion of the values of Orangeism. However, Protestants' place within the institutional and social structures of a post-Agreement Northern Ireland only represents a portion their complex and shifting relationship with the RUC.

It must be remembered that the vast majority of the RUC was, and had always been, crewed almost entirely by Protestant men and women. These individuals were surely influenced

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[50] Chris Ryder, *The RUC, 1922-2000: A Force Under Fire* (London: Methuen, 2000), 324-5.
[51] "Paisley Says Parades Must Go On," *Belfast News Letter*, July 3, 1986.

by the same ideological forces that influenced others in the Protestant community. Considering

that idea, sectarianism was surely an influence for some in the RUC, and collusion between the

RUC and Protestant paramilitaries must be considered. On November 11, 1982 the police shot

three republicans. Within a month four other Catholics, most likely republicans, were also shot,

three of whom died. In all of these instances no weapons or proof of illegal behavior were

discovered. It appeared as though the RUC was indiscriminately gunning down Catholics. The

controversy sparked by these events is commonly referred to in terms of the possibility of an

RUC "shoot to kill policy." After an independent investigation, it was decided that there was not

substantial evidence to support the existence of such a policy,[52] but what is important is that

sectarian influences could have certainly played a part in the actions of individual officers.

Continuing this line, at official levels, Protestant paramilitaries were undoubtedly pursued by law

enforcement and prosecuted similarly to their Catholic counterparts, but instances of varying

degrees of collusion were certain on local levels. Briefly, informal connections existed between

security-forces and paramilitary members. These connections ranged from the passing of

information or possibly weapons from individual RUC men to paramilitary activists. Such

behavior represents what Steve Bruce calls instances of "indifference" shared by some RUC

officers pertaining to singular acts of violence.[53] Furthermore, in a roughly construed statistical

proposition, it has been concluded that one out of one hundred Northern Ireland citizens have

participated in the planning and execution of at least one violent act—participation ranging from

committing an act a violent to passing information or materials to those who will participate in

the act.[54] The point here is not to hint at a possible conspiracy between law enforcement and

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[52] Ryder, *The RUC*, 344-7, 352.

[53] Bruce, *The Red Hand* , 212, 224.

[54] Steve Bruce, *At the Edge of the Union: The Loyalist Political Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 127. Protestant female paramilitary participation, though not widely researched, weighs on this conversation

Protestant paramilitaries; rather, it is to to identify the complex relationship that existed between an individual's official, public duty and their private political ideologies, which is relevant here because by the mid-1980s the majority of the Protestants had adopted loyalist attitudes, and thus individuals were more willing to engage in some form of violence, whether aimed at physical harm or otherwise.

Conclusion

The Anglo-Irish era, and the wake created by Sinn Féin's entrance into politics following the hunger strike of 1981 emphasized a number of themes relevant to Protestant political attitudes and reaction. The first, and most general, is that the division between paramilitary interests and elite politicians had drastically widened, and there were no major attempts to recreate the unity of the post Sunningdale period in 1974, even after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Secondly, there was a clear dispute and confusion over how to implement protest against the Agreement. Again, there was a stark difference between official, mainstream Protestant responses and those of the paramilitaries. The initial reaction of the Protestant political leadership was the unoriginal but tried and tested method of merely saying "no." The primary methods employed during the campaign of negative Protestant response were public street protests, localized acts of civil disobedience, and the threat of organized violence. After many years the loyalist battle of attrition, though ineffective in its immediacy, in the end had the effect

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because they represented a more unofficial, but certainly still ideologically motivated entity within the male dominated paramilitary world. Protestant women were a small percentage of the official membership of paramilitary organizations, and likewise their activity was often secondary regarding acts of political violence. Women commonly transported and stored materials, such as weapons, ammunition, and explosives, passed information, and cleaned locations after a murder was committed, Sandra McEvoy, "Loyalist Women Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland: Beginning a Feminist Conversation about Conflict Resolution," *Security Studies* 18, no. 2 (2009): 269-70.

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of causing both British and Irish politicians to realize that Protestant involvement in any future

Northern Ireland settlement was going to have to be a necessity, despite their current lack of

political creativity.[55] After the Agreement paramilitaries also seemed to respond typically, with

an increase in fatal violence. However, the period after the Anglo-Irish Agreement saw greater

innovation coming from the paramilitary camp, embodied by the publication of *Common Sense*.

But considering all levels of rhetoric and action on the part of both elite politicians and

grassroots paramilitary activists, what becomes clear is that throughout the 1980s, and certainly

after the 1985 singing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, Protestants felt completely stripped of all

legitimate institutional political participation and acknowledgment within the six county

Northern Ireland state, a conceptual and geographic entity held to be the Protestant birthright and

guarantor of Protestant autonomy on the island of Ireland.

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[55] Kauffmann and Patterson, *Unionism and* Orangeism, 221.

Conclusion

Referring to the period following the signing of the Good Friday, or Belfast Peace Agreement in 1998, Henry Patterson and Eric Kauffman claim, "Unionism's rebel alter-ego has moved into the driver's seat" of Protestant political life.[1] However, this essay proposes that the processes by which "rebel Unionism," or loyalism, became the more prominent ideological viewpoint for Protestant Northern Ireland arose in the late 1960s, when the population first became deeply dissatisfied by the unionism of figures like Terence O'Neill; a unionism which threatened the foundations of Protestant local autonomy. Further fueled by an intense IRA campaign, beginning in the early 1970s, many Protestants began to accept that violence may be their best recourse to protect both the safety of their communities, and the constitutional position of Northern Ireland. Likewise, politicians such as Ian Paisley and William Craig began to court paramilitary support in order to further their own political goals. This brief courtship ended after the UWC strike of 1974, leading to a rift between elite political loyalists and their grassroots paramilitary counterparts. However, it was clear that the pillars of loyalism—with its combative and distrusting attitudes towards the Catholic community and their political masters in Westminster—became naturalized into the social fabric of the Protestant community, and an institutionalized form of mainstream political discourse by the late 1970s. Such trends had lasting effects on the development of the Troubles during and indeed after the era of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, when the IRA had successfully embarked on a strategy that combined its campaign of violence with formalized political participation through its political wing, Sinn Féin.

Beginning with O'Neill's moderating policies and ending with the Anglo-Irish Agreement, over the near thirty year period covered by this study it has been made clear that the

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[1] Eric Kauffman and Henry Patterson, *Unionism and Orangeism in Northern Ireland Since 1945: the Decline of the Loyal Family* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 255.

story for Ulster Protestants was one of loss through forced compromise.[2] Many Protestants began

to see themselves as the oppressed minority in a political landscape shaped by an indifferent UK

government, a wanting Irish Republic, and a murderous IRA campaign. The response for many

Protestants was to become bitterly and violently entrenched within their traditional symbolic and

geographic bastions; namely their ideology of ethno-nationalistic Orangeism and its traditional

boon to the Northern Ireland state's pro-Protestant functioning, the legitimacy of which were

seen as constantly under threat. Within these rigid social and political practices, which were

further defined by economic circumstance, loyalism was pervasively adopted by the majority of

the Protestant community due to its attachment to the institutions of state and its cultural

manifestations. Loyalism was thus an ideology informed by various modes of sectarian

assertiveness, including the religiously fervent evangelicalism of County Antrim and Armagh's

weary border anxiety. Furthermore, the practice of loyalism was "treated as a sign of honesty"[3]

within the Ulster Protestant community. Perceived betrayers of that honesty pressed the many

cleavages and confusions within loyalism, and though Steve Bruce's bifurcation between the

"evangelical" and paramilitary "gunmen" strains of loyalism is certainly informative to address

these divisions, it is somewhat incomplete for this analysis because, apart from the purely

ideological, the early Troubles were characterized by rampant and unpredictable violence, a

material force that massively fractured an individual's social and political outlook.

     Outside of socioeconomic class and its geographic imperatives, the place of violence in

Northern Ireland's politics was the single largest determining factor regarding the growth of

loyalism as a form of political expression. Politicians and paramilitaries alike exercised violence

on literal and abstract levels in order to exert political *power*; power in this sense meaning an

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[2] Steve Bruce, *At the Edge of the Union: The Loyalist Political Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 53.

[3] Jennifer Todd, "Two Traditions in Ulster Political Culture," *Irish Political Studies* 2 (1987): 10.

extra-state form of coercion.[4] Paramilitary violence is more obviously construed; however,

politicians also engaged in coercive forms of violence through their formal relationships with

paramilitaries, but also through the threat of violent recourse if their goals weren't reached. Ian

Paisley's invoking of the Third Force or William Craig's accompaniment of unarmed, uniformed

UDA men in the early 1970s neatly exemplifies the implied violence exhibited by loyalist

political leaders. Nonetheless, as widespread violence and indeed the acceptance of it began to

wane in the late 1970s, the divide between Protestant politicians, paramilitary activists, and their

communities greatly widened. Also due to this division the historiography of Ulster Protestant

political division blurs. Many accounts, due to their extensive reliance on formal political

records, such as the UUP papers and other *official* documentation, [5] have tended to portray

grassroots populism as a segment of Protestant Northern Ireland who could be accurately

portrayed as an extension of their political representatives, and though there is some merit to this

sort of analysis, it is also misleading to any understanding of Protestant grassroots activism.

Paramilitary political goals, though still tied to the constitutional legitimacy of Northern Ireland,

shifted dynamically away from the reactionary refrain "Ulster Says No."

 The origins of what this study contends to be grassroots Protestant politics have been

discussed primarily in their relationship to paramilitary members' experiences in the prison

system of Northern Ireland and how those experiences affected their families' and associated

communities. That point deserves to be echoed, especially regarding the Troubles as they

unfolded throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s. In an extensive survey of loyalist

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[4] Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Expropriations*, Second Edition (London: Sage, 2008), 142-3.

[5] Graham Walker, *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party: Protest, Pragmatism, and Pessimism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Kaufmann and Patterson, *Unionism and Orangeism*; Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson. *Northern Ireland, 1921-1996: Political Forces and Social Classes* (London: Serif, 1996).

paramilitary prisoners, Colin Crawford reports that almost seventy-five percent of respondents reported becoming more *politicized* after their time spent in prison, meaning they were more willing to express their political goals through, at least to some degree, non-violent means. The UVF's Progressive Unionist Party and the formation of the UDA's Ulster Democratic Party helped, in concert with former and current Protestant paramilitaries, in the formation of the Combined Loyalist Military Command—a group whose discussions eventually led to the announcement of a loyalist ceasefire on October 13, 1994, two months after the IRA made a similar declaration. The ever-fragile paramilitary ceasefires was the crucible of the present peace process. It also must be stressed that violence by no means disappeared from the political landscape. The 1990s saw a huge increase in Protestant paramilitary action compared to the 1980s. In fact, 1993, 1994, and 1997, were the only years—preceding the signing of the Good Friday, Belfast Peace Agreement—in which Protestant paramilitaries claimed more victims than their Catholic counterparts.[6]

Outside of purely violent responses it is no accident that paramilitaries on both sides of the sectarian divide were responsible for some of the most innovative political activity of the Troubles. After all it was paramilitary activists and their working class communities that witnessed the brunt of Troubles related violence and material deprivation. It is also no coincidence that of the few *high-profile* political assassinations that republicanism claimed, a large proportion of them were prominent within paramilitary circles for not only their military roles, but also for their political action. In January 1982, Red Hand Commando (a small but very violent paramilitary force that was connected the UVF) founder and prominent Belfast politician,

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[6] Colin Crawford, *Defenders or Criminals: Loyalist Prisoners and Criminalisation* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1999), 159, 179; David McKittrick, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney, Chris Thornton and David McVea, *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children who died as a result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (London: Mainstream Publishing, 2007), 1344, 1554.

John McKeague, was shot dead by the Irish National Liberation Army inside his stationary shop in East Belfast. In his later years McKeague distanced himself from his paramilitary role and reached out to Catholic politicians and republicans in hopes of bridging the gap between the two communities, with no success. John McMichael, deputy leader of the UDA and architect of *Common Sense*, was killed when a booby-trap bomb exploded underneath his car on December 22, 1987. [7]

The reasons for the killing of McKeague and McMichael are surely debatable, but there are a few speculative points that should be made, especially when considered against the great absence of republican assassinations of mainstream political figures. The first point that can be made is a matter of material circumstance. Many politicians lived outside the reach of republican action and indeed enjoyed greater security measures, whereas both McKeague and McMichael lived in close proximity to working class areas of Belfast, the main area of operation for paramilitaries, Catholic and Protestant alike. In more ideological terms, through their attempts to construct inter-ethnic relations within the constitutional arrangements of Northern Ireland, the political actions of McKeague and McMichael served to severely undermine the primary republican goal of a united Ireland. On the other hand, figures like Paisley were ironically positive forces for republicans who wished to portray Protestant Northern Ireland as politically inarticulate reactionaries who would never compromise with a minority it had historically oppressed. In the end, however, for reasons already highlighted throughout this study, working class paramilitary politics never caught on because of their associated proximity to violence, despite a willingness to engage in constructive cross community, class-based politics. Suspicions within the Protestant working class itself surrounding any possible association with republicans

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[7] McKittrick, *et al.*, *Lost Lives*, 895-6, 1103.

was another major obstacle facing the legitimacy of Protestant paramilitary politics. [8] Such rigid political stances are still prevalent in Northern Ireland today, where the Protestant DUP and Catholic Sinn Féin are the two largest political parties representing their respective communities. A recent UDA press statement read, "Rest assured the UDA are still in existence and won't be leaving… whilst republicans of any faction still exist."[9] The implication is clear: violence will be met with violence. More pessimistically perhaps is the fact that this statement suggests that there is no foreseeable end to the conflict as long as historical, ethno-political goals are still so deeply disputed.

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[8] Andrew Sanders, "Problems of Class, Religion and Ethnicity: A Study of the Relationship between Irish Republicans and the Protestant Working Class during the Ulster 'Troubles,' 1969-1994," *Irish Political Studies* 24, no. 1 (2009): 99, 103.

[9] "McNarry 'Involved in Loyalist Paramilitary Disbandment Talks'," BBC, accessed October 8, 2015, http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-34479455.

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