

# A Brief History of Orangeism in Ireland

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Orangeism, the ideology which promotes and protects Protestant domination over Catholics in Ireland, reaches back many centuries, and for most of the history of Modern Ireland, has been the basis of official state policy. What is rarely acknowledged among its adherents is that Orangeism is not at its heart a Protestant cultural response to Catholicism, but a deliberate sectarian tactic engineered and promoted by the British throughout the centuries to keep the people of Ireland divided and easier to rule.

As author David Boulton explains,

The primary political problem for the ruling class throughout the nineteenth century was how to hold on to power in face of the threat posed by the rise of democracy and the extension of the franchise. In England, the first industrial society, the threat of revolution was met by giving the working class a controlled share of the loot pouring in from exploitation of the Empire. In Ireland, it was met by maintaining sectarian divisions (Boulton, 15).

A narrow view will claim that sectarianism, of the Orange Order and of 'loyalists' in general, is the root of the Irish conflict, in other words, the problem is the battle between Orange and Green, Protestant and Catholic. Consider instead that sectarianism is not the source of the problems but merely a symptom of the most crucial issue facing Ireland - the incessant British imperial presence. Nationalists have been oppressed with laws designed to discriminate, censor and restrict, but unionists - those who have maintained their loyalty to the Crown - likewise have been oppressed, the British manipulating them into perpetuating societal divisions which keep them and their neighbors apart.

Over time, the ideology and identity that is 'Orangeism' found adherents among many different elements of Protestant society, including members of the gentry, business owners, religious figures, politicians, industrial and agricultural workers. In order to maintain a monolithic front, religious sectarianism - protection of the union by Protestants against the 'disloyal' Catholics -

became the glue that kept all the different interests together throughout the centuries. Fiery sermons, triumphant marches, and murals reaching back 300 years to a Protestant savior king who saved a city besieged by a Catholic king, all point to a culture that without sectarianism would have very few symbols that it could share with all of its members.

Such sectarianism convinces Irish people, largely those within the working class who have nearly every routine aspect of their life in common, including their poverty and joblessness, that there is something still distinct about them, something that is so undeniably different that they must fight to protect such distinctions instead of embracing common interests. The British have successfully employed a divide and conquer strategy in Ireland, giving a few extra crumbs to their loyal subjects, and yet the loyalists do not realize that their loyalty and the rewards they reap from it are yet a different face of the same oppression which has been the scourge of their compatriots for centuries.

## **Seeds of Discontent**

The history of 'Orangeism' in Ireland reaches back to the time of the first Protestant settlements in Ireland. Ironically, Protestants first came to Ireland as part of a Catholic queen's wish to subdue the Irish people and bring the island under her rule. Mary Tudor of England (queen 1553-58) devised a plan in which English colonists would form settlements, or 'plantations' in Ireland, clearing land of the native people. Under her 'Leinster Experiment' colonists would promise to bring sufficient English workers with them to Ireland so that they would not need to hire any native Irish laborers to work their land. Unfortunately for the English, the Irish were not easily subdued and fought against the settlers. Furthermore, the queen was unable to persuade sufficient numbers of colonists to travel to what was perceived as a dangerous and barbaric wilderness. In 1583 a second plantation was attempted in Munster, and hundreds of thousands of acres were forcibly confiscated for use by men such as Sir Walter Raleigh. Again, this plantation was mostly unsuccessful, for there still were not sufficient inducements for English settlement.

In 1603 King James I launched a new campaign to colonize Ireland. Englishmen confiscated land in the northeast counties of Ulster, and soon settlers were enticed to Ireland from James' native land of Scotland. Due to the proximity of Ulster to Scotland and the similarities of language and culture, this plantation became more firmly established. This particular plantation differed from the previous ones in that the majority of the colonists were not Anglican but Presbyterian, the 'Dissenters' who refused to join the Church of England.

In 1641, taking advantage of the English Civil War, the Irish attempted a concerted effort to fight back against their English colonists. The Catholic clergy helped to organize a rebellion which

occurred in several areas on 23 October, and for some time afterwards the native Irish attacked settlers, burning towns and killing individuals. Although the English tried to subdue the Irish, they were unable to commit their full energies to the cause because of discontent at home. The defensive actions on the part of the Irish tended to inflame anti-Catholic sentiment among Protestants in Ireland and back in England, and many tended to believe wildly exaggerated reports of atrocities against the settlers (Hachey et al, 22). In 1649 King Charles I was overthrown, and Oliver Cromwell and his Parliament took power. Cromwell did not wait for the Irish problem to resolve itself; instead with a heavy hand he crushed the rebellions and secured a 'Protestant Ascendancy' for Ireland. Several thousand people were massacred outright, and thousands more were left to the fate of starvation and disease. Contemporaries estimate that out of a population of 1,448,000 people, 616,00 died from Cromwell's intervention; about 40,000 left to join armies in Europe; and 100,000 Irish were sold into slavery and sent to the Americas (Ellis, 43-44). Under the Act of Settlement of 1652, the Catholic population was forced to the less fertile land west of the River Shannon or face execution.

The English monarchy was restored in 1660. When King James II, a Catholic, succeeded his brother Charles II to the throne, and showed signs of raising his son and heir to be Catholic as well, members of Parliament feared England's complete return to Catholicism. In 1688 these members took it upon themselves to invite James' Protestant daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange to take the English throne. Although this 'Glorious Revolution' was largely peaceful within England, battles were fought in Ireland between the Catholics, loyal to James, and the Protestants, loyal to William and Mary. A decisive battle was fought at the Boyne River near Dublin in 1690, and as a result, James fled to France. To the Protestants in Ireland at the time, and their descendants, the most significant event was the siege of Derry, also in 1690. For 105 days James II's forces laid siege to the walled city of Derry, where 30,000 Protestants, refusing to surrender to a Catholic force, faced starvation and disease inside. The siege only ended on 28 July when William's fleet arrived and forced James' forces to retreat.

After James' defeat the English enacted a series of Penal Laws as punitive measures directed at Catholics who had remained loyal to James. These laws made it illegal for Catholics to practice law, hold elected offices, own anything more than small plots of land (or purchase additional land), or lease their lands for more than 31 years. Catholic education and public worship was outlawed. Catholics could no longer vote or be elected to Parliament.

Contemporary Edmund Burke described the Penal Laws as "a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance as well-fitted for the oppression, impoverishment and degradation of a people, and

the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man" (quoted in Coogan, 6).

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries Irish land continued to be confiscated by English and Scottish colonists. Landlords were becoming stronger, possessing larger and larger tracts of land. The peasantry - both Catholic and Protestant - found themselves frequently in competition with each other for the little land that was available, and this struggle led the peasantry to form secret agrarian societies on both sides. These groups fought against both the landlords and each other, using sabotage and other guerilla tactics. In 1784 a largely Anglican peasant organization, calling themselves the 'Peep o' Day Boys', began attacking Catholic homes, ostensibly to enforce a law prohibiting Catholics from owning firearms. Intimidation included placing notices placed on Catholic doors, including one which read: "To Hell or Connaught immediately, or we, Captain Rakeall and Captain Firebrand, will come and destroy you and send your souls to hell and damnation" (Ellis, 68). Catholics, however, retaliated with their own group known as the 'Defenders'. For several years these groups, and others like them, attacked landlords, churches, and each other.

## **The Rise of the Orange Order**

In 1795 the Battle of the Diamond in Loughall, Co. Armagh, raised the stakes for sectarian conflict. On 21 September a group of Peep O' Day Boys engaged the Defenders in a fierce battle and afterwards, victorious over the Catholics, the Peep O' Day boys formed the 'Orange Society', named after their hero William of Orange. According to official Orange Order history, after the battle "the Protestants formed a circle, joined hands and declared their brotherhood in Loyalty to the Crown, the Country and the Reformed Religion." They celebrated their first Orange parade the following year on 12 July 1796, in honor of the Battle of the Boyne (Grand Lodge of Ireland website, 1997).

At the initial forming of the Orange Society, Presbyterians were not allowed to join. Although the Penal Laws and other oppressive measures were directed at Catholics, Presbyterians, as Dissenters, faced milder versions of many of these laws, fueling their own discontent with English rule. They were not yet perceived to be 'loyal' to the crown, for at this time social position, not religion, was the mark of loyalty. So it was not unlikely that it would be certain Protestants, particularly urban merchants and lawyers who were climbing an antiquated social and economic ladder, who became the first modern Irish nationalists. As E.P. Thompson states in *The Making of the English Working Class*, "In the years before and after '98, the Dissenters of Ulster, the most industrialized province, were not the most loyal but the most 'Jacobinical' [supporting the line of James II] of the Irish..." (Thompson, 470).

Encouraged by the American Revolution, Protestants Henry Flood and Henry Grattan led the call for an independent Irish Parliament. The 'Volunteers' sprang up as a military response to the constitutional nationalism of Grattan and Flood, and support was heavy among Irish Protestants. But this movement largely ignored the injustices of the Penal Laws and the discrimination accorded to Catholics. As the French followed the American example and created a republic, others in Ireland saw a need for more extreme measures: democracy, religious freedom and complete independence from England. These Protestants, under the leadership of men like Wolfe Tone, united with Catholics and planned to fight together to overthrow English control in Ireland. In 1798 Tone led these 'United Irishmen' against England in the first significant rebellion of the Irish since 1641, and in what would be the first republican struggle for Irish independence. But in the end both the constitutional nationalist and radical republican movements failed, due to bad luck and poor weather as much as British military and legal power.

In 1800 England passed the Act of Union, making Ireland part of Great Britain and removing the last shreds of independence. The Act of Union was an extreme attempt on the part of English politicians to make sure that Ireland toed the line, and it was unpopular in many circles. Ironically, after the Act of Union the Orange Order's members were so opposed to the Union that they had to pass a rule not to discuss the Union at their meetings. This changed quickly, however, for in 1805 Presbyterian clergy willing to demonstrate their loyalty to England and the Union were granted a bonus of 75 pounds sterling (Ellis, 96).

Along with the Act of Union, the British redoubled their efforts to ensure that the events of 1798, particularly unity between Protestants and Catholics, would not be repeated. The British were terrified that a growing union between these groups would spell doom for English imperial interests in Ireland. E. P. Thompson explained that "...it was only after the rebellion that the antagonism between the 'Orangemen' and 'Papists' was deliberately fostered by the Castle [the government in Ireland] as a means of maintaining power" (Thompson, 470-1). One of the main protagonists in severing Protestant-Catholic bonds was the Orange Order, whose members were willing to accept the 1798 uprising had been a religious war fostered by the Catholics, despite the fact that its leaders were almost exclusively Protestant.

The coming of Daniel O'Connell and the campaign for Catholic Emancipation and the repeal of the Penal Laws gave the Orange Order new fuel for their sectarian fire. In 1834, Presbyterian minister Henry Cooke campaigned to get the Presbyterians to join with Anglicans and Tories, and within the year the once exclusively Anglican Orange Order for the first time allowed all non-Catholics to join (Probert, 42). As a result Presbyterians flooded into the organization. An additional bonus to Presbyterians came in 1869 when the British disestablished the Anglican

Church in Ireland, meaning that Presbyterians no longer had to pay tithes. All measures were designed to boost the loyalty of the Presbyterian working classes for the Union and towards their religious compatriots. Henceforth, the Order worked to cement bonds between Protestants of any hue. As David Boulton explains, "If he [an average member of the Orange Order] shared nothing else with the gentry in the big houses, the common rhetoric of the lodges gave him an illusion of equality. Their victory, their responsibility to uphold Protestant law and Protestant order was his responsibility" (Boulton, 13-14). Membership gave "the rural and industrial proletariat an outward and visible assurance of its part in the ruling ascendancy" (Probert, 125) meaning, of course, that although a farmer could not affect government policies, by membership in the Order he would still feel like he was a part of things, privileged in a way that was unlike his Catholic counterpart.

An array of myths helped to cement the Orangeman's feelings of superiority. Historian Liam de Paor described some of the myths already firmly in place by the 1830s:

...the plantation, the wilderness settled with bible and sword, the massacres of 1641 and the martyrdom of the settlers by the treacherous and barbarous uprising of the natives; the threat to 'freedom, religion and laws' caused by the accession of the popish James II, the glorious revolution which overthrew him, the sufferings, endurance, valour and triumph of the cause and Derry, Enniskillen, Aughrim and the Boyne (De Paor, 44-45).

Dating from the time of the 1641 and 1688 battles against Catholics, the Orange Order perceived of themselves as Protestants being under attack from the 'natives' and Catholicism simultaneously, and this century-old siege mentality had become a hallmark of their belief system. Annual Orange marches helped to maintain the symbols of their role as defending their faith against a hostile Catholic population; they also reinforced the Orange Order's favored social and political position in the country. The Party Processions Act banned such marches, and in 1839 the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland warned people against participating in them. But even in the mid-19th century the Orange Order would not be deterred from expressing what they believed to be their cultural heritage. Serious riots broke out in 1857 and 1864, as well as a particularly violent one in 1849, when attempts to reroute a march led to a violent response on Dolly's Brae near Castlewellan in County Down, leaving eight people dead, with many more injured and many houses set on fire. During the summer of 1857, British-appointed commissioners determined that such marches led to "violence, outrage religious animosities, hatred between classes and, too often, loss of life." Finally the British caved into the Order's demands that they be allowed to march, and in 1872 Parliament repealed the Party Processions

Act (Andrew Boyd, "An expression of culture of political aggression?", *The Irish News*, 5 July 1997).

In the 1850s, after the end of the potato blight, Ireland's rural population was decimated, desperate and hungry, and in this decade many poor Catholic farmers moved to Belfast in search of industrial jobs in the linen mills. Already many of these jobs were held by Protestants, and the sudden influx of Catholics led to sectarian riots. These conflicts for urban housing and jobs helped recruitment for the Orange Order, which experienced a surge in membership among urban and professional Presbyterians (especially in Belfast). By that time it had come to represent all Protestants as a united front against nationalism and Catholicism. Such sectarianism combined with opposition to the Home Rule Movement, to swell the ranks of the Orange Order throughout Ireland but particularly in the industrial areas of Ulster. Initially with the influx of workers, class antagonism threatened to destroy the Order, but by 1905, with the founding of the Ulster Unionist Party (by design, an all-Protestant party), the Orange Order managed to unify its members on a sectarian, anti-Home Rule basis (Probert, 43-44). Opposition to the Home Rule bill in Parliament in 1912 was led by Conservative Party leader Bonar Law and the Unionists' leader Edward Carson. In 1912 Law proclaimed the "wedding of Protestant Ulster with the Conservative and Unionist Party" in front of 100,000 spectators in Belfast (Coogan, 14). In September 1912, a Solemn League and Covenant was signed by 470,000 Protestants in Ulster, some signing their name in their own blood. The text of the Covenant is as follows:

"Being convinced in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the whole material well-being of Ulster as well as the whole of Ireland, subversive of our civil and religious freedom, destructive of our citizenship, and perilous to the unity of the Empire, all, whose names are underwritten, men of Ulster, loyal subjects of His Majesty King George V, humbly relying on the God whom our forefathers in days of stress and trial confidently trusted, do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn covenant throughout this time of threatened calamity to stand by one another in defending for ourselves and our children our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom and in using all means that may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule parliament in Ireland. And in the event of such a parliament being forced upon us we further solemnly and mutually pledge ourselves to refuse to recognize its authority. In sure confidence that God will defend the right, we hereto subscribe our names. And further, we individually declare that we have not already signed the covenant. God save the King." (quoted in King, 13).

Although the numbers of signatories indicates impressive support for the Covenant, it is important to place the number of signatories into perspective. Although almost a half million people pledged themselves to the Union, Daniel O'Connell in his call for Catholic Emancipation

just a few decades before had addressed several monster meetings of over 100,000, including one estimated at 750,000. And in 1860 the O'Donoghue collected 423,026 signatures on a petition calling for Irish self-determination (Coogan, 18).

At the same time as the Covenant, 100,000 joined the newly-formed Ulster Volunteer Force, to defend against Home Rule and to protect the Union. The UVF drew heavily on the Orange Lodges for recruits and financial support, and soon had a membership of 90,000 men. A fund was even established to compensate UVF members' families for deaths and injuries sustained by those who went to war, and by 1914 this fund had already topped 1 million pounds sterling (Probert, 44). Many in the British House of Lords supported the UVF, and the Tory Party had become the Unionist Party even in England. As a result of their partisanship, the British Army did not stop the arms shipments to the UVF that began arriving in 1914 (Boulton, 18-19). When the 36th (Ulster) Division formed to fight against Germany, Carson encouraged the UVF to enlist in that division and fight for England. In the subsequent Battle of the Somme, 21,000 British troops were killed, including 2,000 from the 36th Division. Henceforth this tragic battle would be used as another symbol of Protestant loyalty to the Union (Bruce, 11).

In September 1914 Home Rule was passed in Parliament but Prime Minister Asquith suspended it, preventing Home Rule from being enacted until after the end of World War I. Meanwhile, Bonar Law had proposed partition as a solution to the Unionists' opposition to Home Rule, making the suggestion that six Irish counties be excluded from Home Rule. Yet at this point Unionist leader Edward Carson opposed partition, not wishing to abandon the unionists in the south, or indeed, the idea of maintaining a British Ireland (Coogan 17). In the end, however, most unionists had to accept that in order to retain Ulster, they would have to abandon their opposition to Home Rule for part of Ireland.

## **The Orange State**

After World War I ended, in 1919 Irish republicans engaged the British in the Irish War of Independence, which after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921 gained the Irish a 26-county Free State but also confirmed the birth of a partitioned 6-county statelet, carved out of the nine counties of Ulster. This new statelet, known as Northern Ireland, remained under British control. Even as opposing forces fought over the Treaty in a Civil War within the Free State, in the newly-created Northern Ireland, violence flared between Catholics and Protestants.

The British responded to the violence in the north by creating the Ulster Special Constabulary, a force made up of thousands of decommissioned soldiers. The Constabulary was broken down into three categories, A, B, and C. In 1922 the British also passed the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act that suspended civil liberties in the North. The Royal Ulster Constabulary was

formed April 4, 1922, made up of A Specials and a handful of the paramilitary Royal Irish Constabulary, a largely Catholic and anti-republican force. In theory the RUC was representative of the proportions of Protestants and Catholics in the population, but in reality it was very difficult to recruit sufficient Catholics into the police force.

From the turbulent 1920s through the early 1960s, Unionists solidified their control over Northern Ireland. Frequent class conflicts were skillfully turned into sectarian ones; Protestant privilege became an institutionalized reality. Employers were encouraged to give hiring preference to Protestants. Sir Basil Brooke, at this time the Minister of Agriculture, said to the Derry Unionist Association, "I recommended those people who are Loyalists not to employ Roman Catholics, 99% of whom are disloyal.... If you don't act properly now, before we know where we are we shall find ourselves in the minority rather than the majority. I want you to realize that, having done your bit, you have your Prime Minister behind you." Craigavon responded to calls for him to repudiate Brooke's comments by declaring, "There is not one of my colleagues who does not entirely agree with him [Brooke] and I would not ask him to withdraw one word he said" (Farrell, 91-92).

Carson and other leaders blamed all labor agitation on 'Sinn Feiners', shorthand for all Catholics, and this gave factory owners the incentive to fire Catholic employees. In just two years following the creation of the Northern Ireland state, 10,000 workers were driven from their jobs. The *Londonderry Sentinel* of December 16, 1920, tried to push the blame from the employers:

... the men were excluded from employment were only asked to declare that they were not rebels in order to right themselves. Their refusal to make the simple declaration was probably due to the very terrorism in which the Republicans find their greatest power (quoted in Clayton, 59).

In fact, what the *Londonderry Sentinel* article demonstrates is that unionists at the time automatically assumed that all Catholics were disloyal unless proven otherwise.

Additionally, radical members of the Protestant working class were brought under control by appealing to the workers' 'loyalism' and support of the Union, and such techniques were successful in quelling labor disputes such as the 1919 general strike and labor unrest in the 1930s involving groups such as railroad workers (Probert, 44-53).

Throughout this period sectarian violence remained a frequent occurrence. The Stormont Parliament (the local seat of power) was exclusively Protestant, and members were expected to join the Orange Order. In 1934 and 1935 enough violence was directed towards Catholics, including attacks on their homes, that in June 1935 the Minister of Home Affairs banned all

parades, including the large march on July 12th. The Orange Lodge's Grand Master replied, "You may be perfectly certain that on the 12 July the Orangemen will be marching throughout Northern Ireland.... I do not acknowledge the right of any government, Northern or Imperial, to impose conditions as to the celebration" (quoted in Farrell, 138). As in many parades before and since, the government withdrew its ban and the parade went ahead. Three weeks of rioting followed the march, and in the end nine people were killed and hundreds of Catholic families were burnt out of their homes (Probert, 73). But this was hardly surprising since sectarianism was official policy. In April 1934 Lord Craigavon, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, said: "I have always said that I am an Orangeman first and a politician and member of this Parliament afterwards.... All I boast is that we have a Protestant parliament and a Protestant state" (Farrell, 92). The combination of Orange political and police power enabled officials to pass and then strictly enforce laws favoring unionist positions.

Orange parades continued to be a flashpoint. But under an increasingly rigid Orange State, laws were passed ensuring the right of loyalists over the rest of the community in terms of all political displays. In 1951 the Public Order Act required groups to give 48-hour notification for all non-Orange parades, and the government of Northern Ireland could ban or reroute such parades at will. Furthermore, the Flags and Emblems Act made it illegal to interfere with the display of the Union Jack but all other flags, such as the Tricolor, could be removed. Loyalty to Britain was key: as Ulster Minister for Education Harry Midgley said in February 1957, "All the minority are traitors and have always been traitors to the government of Northern Ireland" (Farrell, 221). Such comments and the creation of these laws sent the unmistakable message to the nationalists that Unionists considered their own forms of cultural and political expression superior, and they would go to any length to prove it.

To protect the Unionist domination in Stormont, Northern Ireland was gerrymandered, so that even heavily Catholic regions returned Unionist politicians. Furthermore, proportional representation was abolished, which had the effect of polarizing the communities further and turning political campaigns into political battles between unionists and nationalists. The Orange Order made electoral politics one of its main thrusts, and this 'Orange Machine' kept track of unionist voters and their sympathies. Orange Lodges also played a significant role in registering voters and selecting which of its members to run for office (since at the time all elected officials were members of the Order). As an example of how successful the political manipulations worked, in 1961 the population of Derry was 53,744, with 36,049 identifying themselves as Catholic and 17,694 as Protestant. But the city was divided into gerrymandered districts so two

of the three wards were set up to have a Protestant majority, and the city was ultimately run by Unionists and members of the Orange Order.

Terence O'Neill became Prime Minister in 1963. As expected of a government official, he was a member of the Orange Order, but he had joined late in life as a consequence of being in politics. He promoted certain reforms within the government, claiming in 1969 that he wanted "to show every citizen of Ulster, every section of Ulster the benefits of the British connection are all to share" (quoted by Hennessey in English and Walker, 120), but ultimately was unable to accomplish many of his goals. His job was made more difficult by opposition from other unionists who saw his reforms as pandering to the 'papists'. Many unionists developed distrust for O'Neill after he visited a Catholic school and especially when it was learned that he had met secretly with Irish Prime Minister Sean Lemass in January 1965. In fact, although some unionists had suggested that Catholics might be allowed into the Unionist Party and maybe even run for seats in Parliament, Sir George Clark, the Grand Master of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, said "under no circumstances would such a suggestion be countenanced by our institution" (quoted in Coogan, 36).

Also in the 1960s the Reverend Ian Paisley became a prominent figure in both religious and political affairs. Paisley was a Presbyterian, and an Orangeman since the age of 21, but his own church, the Free Presbyterian Church (established in 1951) was a break from orthodox Presbyterian beliefs, which he considered to be too liberal theologically. Among other things Paisley's church encouraged followers to accept that they alone are the chosen people and that this was used to justify any act against the 'misguided' Catholics. About Catholicism Paisley has stated, "Through Popery the Devil has shut up the way to our inheritance. Priestcraft, superstition, and papalism with all their attendant voices of murder, theft, immortality, lust and incest blocked the way to the land of gospel liberty" (quoted in Coogan, 49). Loyalists needed something within their lives to justify their hard-line stance against Catholics and democratic reforms, and they found it in Paisley's church, which equated fundamentalism with traditional Unionism. Ultimately Paisley appealed to many loyalists, but found particular strength among the working classes and less-affluent members of the Protestant society.

In the 1960s Paisley, with the assistance of UVF member and right-hand man Noel Doherty, formed the Ulster Protestant Volunteers, a Unionist defence organization. Although Paisley went to great pains to disassociate himself with paramilitary groups or the use of violence, his connection with this organization is clear. Not only was Doherty one of Paisley's most trusted supporters, but the UPV were directly affiliated with the Ulster Constitution Defence Committee of which Paisley was the chairman (Boulton, 36-41). Additionally, due to the influence and

encouragement of Paisley, many other Protestant support and paramilitary groups started springing up, including Ulster Protestant Action, which was formed "to keep protestant [sic] and loyal workers in employment in times of depression in preference to their catholic [sic] fellow workers" (quoted in Boulton, 29).

The Ulster Volunteer Force had declined substantially in the decades after partition, but led by Gusty Spence, it resurfaced in 1966, thanks in large part to Paisley's preachings and the unionist opposition to the moderate politics of O'Neill. The UVF found ample recruits in the workplace, particularly shipyards, and in Orange Lodges. In their announcement of 21 May 1966, the UVF declared war on the IRA, and made note of the fact that they were "heavily armed Protestants dedicated to this cause" (quoted in Nelson, 61). True to their word, they immediately launched into sectarian violence, killing their first Catholics in the same year, "when the IRA was moribund; and the first explosions of the current conflict were set in 1969 by the Ulster Protestant Volunteers and UVF men who intended that the IRA should be blamed. This has been explained as 'getting your retaliation in first' " (Clayton, 152). This point cannot be overstated. Despite the rhetoric, there was no IRA threat in 1966. The Irish Republican Army, at this point nearly extinct with just a handful of members or weapons, reorganized and surfaced only at the end of 1969, initially serving solely as a defence force to fight on behalf of the nationalists who could not turn to the RUC for protection. Clearly, the Unionists began to increase their organization on a political, religious and paramilitary level not in response to the IRA, but as a response to a few reforms hesitatingly proposed by the Prime Minister.

Encouraged by O'Neill's attempts at reforms, but frustrated that they did not go farther than they did, a couple of new groups emerged in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s. Out of Queen's University Belfast came the socialist People's Democracy, with Michael Farrell and Bernadette Devlin among its leaders, and it promoted a non-sectarian approach to the discrimination of the north. Additionally, inspired by the American civil rights movement, nationalists throughout the North joined the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association. Modeled closely after Dr. Martin Luther King's leadership and ideals, this organization promoted non-violence as a means to bring further reform to the Orange state. Unionists, however, understood that reforms threatened their way of life, and therefore were willing to believe that both of these organizations were nothing more than fronts for republicanism. Because of their distrust of the anti-sectarian messages within socialism, unionists had little affection for the left-wing character of the People's Democracy in particular.

On October 5, 1968, NICRA and People's Democracy held a civil rights march in Derry. The Royal Ulster Constabulary blocked the marchers, batoned them and used a water cannon to

disperse them. On January 1, 1969, during a march between Belfast and Derry, civil rights marchers met resistance, and they were savagely attacked along the march route and particularly at Burntollet Bridge. The Unionist RUC and B Specials who supervised the march did nothing to stop the Loyalist attacks, however, and in some instances they were documented as actually participating in the abuse.

Increasing political pressure from both unionists and nationalists led to O'Neill's resignation on 28 April 1969, and he was replaced with Chichester-Clark. But this change of leadership did nothing to quell the discontent on either side. On August 12, 1969, the Apprentice Boys marched in Derry. This march occurred every year to proclaim Loyalist dominance over the Catholics of Derry, filled with reminders of the Siege of Derry, the Battle of the Diamond and King William of Orange. As part of the tradition, the Apprentice Boys traditionally throw pennies from the city walls down to the nationalist Bogside neighborhood below. In 1969 however the march inflamed tensions and led to serious clashes between local residents, loyalists and the police forces in what became known as 'the Battle of the Bogside.' Troops were called out when the RUC was unable to control the violence or demolish the barricades that were constructed by the nationalists to keep the police out.

As a mark of the increased hostilities on both sides, on 12 July 1970 the annual Battle of the Boyne commemorative Orange parades had what was then the largest police and army escort in their history. Because of the contentious nature of the marches, afterwards the government banned all further parades for six months - a ban immediately defied by members the Orange Order. Jim McQuade, MP, and Rev. William McCrea were fined 20 pounds for participating in a march on August 1st. Others were fined or jailed for organizing parades (Boulton, 133).

Everything came to a head in the late summer of 1971, when the introduction of internment, the formation of the UDA and the creation of the DUP all exacerbated an already tense situation. In August 1971 the Stormont government instituted internment, and in the first sweeps the RUC arrested hundreds of nationalists and republicans, but not a single unionist. Although this was an attempt to crush the IRA, internment arrests apprehended no IRA leaders, and most of the arrests were of civil rights activists or older people who had perhaps been active in the struggle decades previously but were not involved any longer. Nationalists quickly interpreted internment as another way the unionists could assert their power over the nationalist community, and these beliefs were heightened when the news came out that many of the internees had been tortured, a fact later admitted by British investigators.

In September 1971 a new Protestant paramilitary group known as the Ulster Defence Association first appeared, as a response to the 'post-internment violence' as well as perceived

leftist leanings of the UVF. A precursor to their formation was a leaflet which appeared 12 August 1971 in loyalist neighborhoods in Belfast calling for men to come together in 'platoons' to defend their neighborhoods. "We are Loyalists, we are Queen's men! Our enemies are the forces of Romanism and Communism which must be destroyed!" (quoted in Boulton, 144). Groups sprang up all over the city, and Charles Harding Smith, a founding member of the Woodvale Defence Association, had the idea to bring them together in a unified group which became the UDA. Membership increased rapidly as a reaction to nationalist opposition to internment and the reappearance of the IRA. Sarah Nelson estimates that in 1972 they already had 25,000 dues paying members (Boulton 144, Nelson, 104-5).

In that same turbulent year, Ian Paisley created the Democratic Unionist Party on 29 September in opposition to the new Prime Minister Brian Faulkner and his policies, including internment (which Paisley predicted could be turned on his own people as well as republicans). His supporters, estimated in one opinion poll at 200,000, came largely from the more politically conservative rural areas, but he attracted many supporters as well from cities such as in Belfast, where many of his followers were skilled workers and small business owners (Nelson, 56-58).

In 1972, as a direct result of the unrest, the British prorogued Stormont, ending fifty years of local government, and implemented Direct Rule. Just prior to Direct Rule, former Minister for Home Affairs William Craig announced his new Vanguard movement, and immediately afterwards the Vanguard focused on a return of Stormont, "...an essential expression of Ulster Protestant identity, as well as a bulwark against a republican threat" as well as a concerted attack on communism (Nelson, 109, 129). As Craig said at the first major Vanguard rally, "We are determined, ladies and gentlemen, to preserve our British traditions and way of life. And God help those who get in our way" (quoted in Probert, 119). Those in the Vanguard Movement also called for a "Unilateral Declaration of Independence" as a way to break links with Britain, who some Unionists believed would sell them out to the Catholics. Paradoxically, these unionists believed that the Ulster of the 1920s was far superior to what existed now, with the disbanding of the B Specials and other reforms, and Craig worked to mobilize Unionist opposition to future reforms. In the end, they believed the best way to preserve their power in Northern Ireland was to control the government themselves, and if England insisted on taking direct control, then perhaps they would be better off without British interference.

But even with the introduction of two right wing political movements, there were some within the loyalist ranks who saw working-class issues as worthwhile. In June 1973 Gusty Spence, the leader of the UVF, said in a TV interview,

One has only to look at the Shankill Road, the heart of the empire that lies torn and bleeding. We have known squalor. I was born and reared in it. No one knows better than we do the meaning of slums, the meaning of deprivation, the meaning of suffering for what one believes in, whatever the ideology. In so far as people speak of fifty years of misrule, I wouldn't disagree with that. What I would say is this, that we have suffered every bit as much as the people of the Falls Road, or any other underprivileged quarter - in many cases, more so (Probert, 117).

In 1972 and 1973 a handful of Protestant working class activists emerged, concerned that the existing structures for unionists did not address the concerns of the working class. Many were former Loyalist prisoners who came to the startling realization that the British state could be as oppressive for them as for the Catholics. As Nelson states,

They began to doubt some of the beliefs and myths that maintained rigid sectarian divisions. Experience forced them to ask: Suppose some of the things that Catholics say are true? And suppose we have some things in common, where does that leave our political ideology? (Nelson, 135).

In response to the tentative emergence of loyalist working class identity, and potential cross-sectarian alliances, the DUP and Vanguard alike worked to maintain sectarian divisions and to crush any signs of 'communism' or left-wing activism, because in order to maintain their favored position in society unionists could not afford for Protestants to see Catholics in a sympathetic light.

Yet labor activism could be used in the loyalists' favor as long as it was done in the name of the union and had no nationalist participation. In 1973 in the Sunningdale Conference, an attempt at a power-sharing agreement between Ireland and Britain, was brought down by a May 1974 general strike called by the Ulster Workers' Council, a Protestant union. Although the strike led to serious disruptions in utilities such as electrical and water service, the British Army was not used to break the strike, and the RUC, sympathetic to the strikers, refused to take action. In the end the strike forced government officials to rescind plans for a power-sharing executive.

Throughout the remainder of the 1970s, tensions between the nationalist and unionist communities continued to escalate. The British continued to favor the Unionists' power block, instituting in 1976 new policies designed to turn law enforcement powers back over to the local unionist government. 'Ulsterisation' and 'Normalisation' were the terms used for the 1976 plan to turn over the majority of policing responsibilities to local armed forces, such as the RUC and the Ulster Defence Regiment (locally recruited branch of the British Army), and to a certain extent, return policing and security decisions to the unionists as well.

During and after the republican hungerstrikes of 1980 and 1981 the unionists found themselves in a peculiar position. Even as the British seemed more and more willing to put their faith in

Unionist politicians, international attention brought the gerrymandered and sectarian Northern Ireland state into question. Although Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher promised not to give any concessions to the republican activists, she also took steps to deflate the power of the unionists. In 1985 the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed between Thatcher and the Irish government, allowing Dublin to have some input into the politics of Northern Ireland, and to make proposals on behalf of Catholics. The Agreement led to protests and riots by loyalists, and although the RUC acted to end the protests, loyalist opposition left the Agreement weak and toothless. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the Agreement, many Protestant professionals, whose disillusionment of the violence of the 1970s had led them to withdraw from politics, in 1985 returned to political life. They complained that they had not been consulted about the fate of Northern Ireland, and feared if they did not take action the British would sell their people out. To them the Agreement showed the dangers of 'Direct Rule', that if they were not vigilant the British would make decisions without consulting the unionist people (Coulter, in English and Walker, 178-179).

## **Orangeism Today**

Unionists today believe that they have lost many of their rights and privileges, and their 'siege mentality' remains strong. They keenly sense the loss of Stormont with its monolithic control over politics in the north, and many believe that in the past 25 years too many concessions have been made to Catholics. Lately there has been a trend to move out of areas where they are in the minority, leaving the western half of Northern Ireland predominantly Catholic as the Protestant population moves east. Many have left for Scotland or England, or send their children to be educated 'on the mainland'. Yet current estimates indicate there are probably around 80,000 members of the Orange Order still active in the North.

Instead of working to find a solution to the troubles that plague unionist and nationalist communities alike, the unionists refuse to meet with representatives from the other side of the fence. Most attempts by republican political parties and nationalist organizations to meet with unionists have failed, largely because Unionists refuse to talk to them. Attempts to bring Unionists and Republicans together in discussions hosted by Nelson Mandela in South Africa, or even to discuss parade routes along the Garvaghy Road, have failed because Unionists refuse to sit in the same room as their opponents. Although the 1997-98 "Peace Process" brought representatives to the same venue, frequently unionists still refused to sit at the same table as representatives of Sinn Fein, while others such as Paisley refused to participate at all because of republican involvement.

Many members of the Orange Order cling to the need to protect their 'Protestant Ulster', and hold without compromise to their slogans of "No Surrender". This is most evident during marching season every year. Between Easter and the end of August almost 3,000 parades take place, 90% of which are Orange marches. As part of their Orange heritage all Unionists turn out to march in these parades in all the towns and cities in Northern Ireland, regardless of the wishes of a small number of communities who do not wish for the marches to pass through their neighborhoods. Part of the reason to march is a celebration of the unionists' unique culture, but there is another reason: to flaunt the symbols of Orange domination. Many parade routes intentionally take marchers directly through nationalist neighborhoods, where the residents have openly complained that the marchers are not welcome. Inevitably then the marches turn violent as the loud drums, sashes and bowler hats enter unfriendly territory. The Orange Order says about the parades, "The way to improve community relations cannot be achieved through a repression of a legitimate expression of culture" (Grand Lodge of Ireland website, 1997).

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