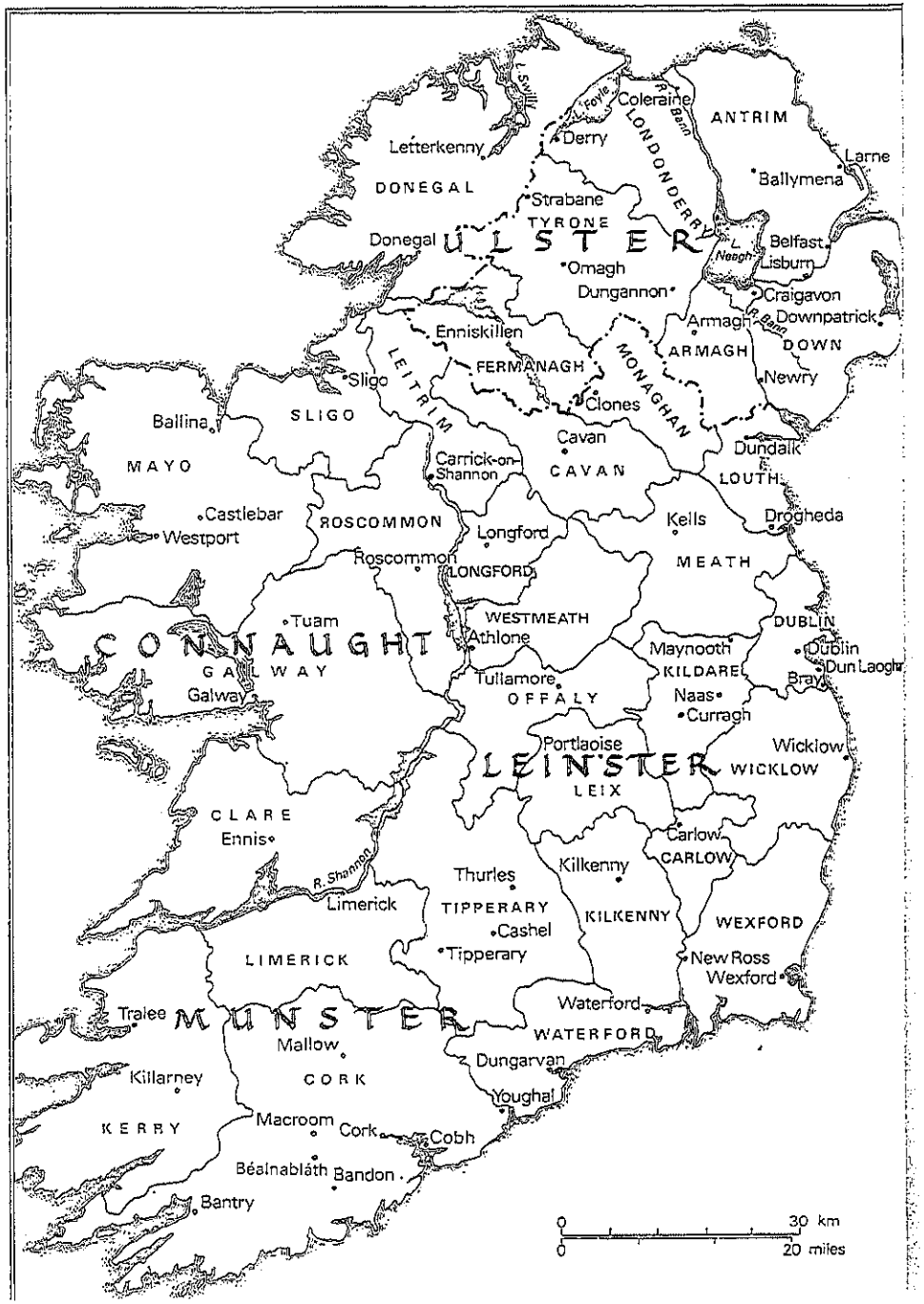

Joe Lee, Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society (Cambridge, 1995)

Chapter 1

REBELLION: 1912–1922

'ULSTER WILL FIGHT'

The Parliament Act of 1911 broke the power of the House of Lords to defy the popular will as represented in the House of Commons. By removing the last parliamentary bulwark against home rule legislation for Ireland, this major measure of constitutional reform in the United Kingdom outraged Irish unionists, whose infuriated reaction to the threat of home rule unleashed violence into twentieth-century Irish politics.

Irish unionists, overwhelmingly Protestant, were divided into two main groups. About 250 000 Anglo-Irish occupied a vulnerable position among a Catholic population of 2.55 million in the three southern provinces.[1] Although most of the Anglo-Irish could count socially as no more than respectable middle class, they were well leavened by landed gentry, the higher professions and the more affluent mercantile classes. However subtle their internal gradations of gentility, their culture, at least by relaxed Hibernian criteria, had a patrician veneer, tinged with condescension towards Catholics but pervaded with a faint sense of *noblesse oblige*. By 1911 their wealth and social status far exceeded their political power, sapped since the 1880s by extension of the franchise to the predominantly Catholic lower orders, and by land legislation which had translated the gentry into a largely rentier class.[2]

The 891 000 Protestants in the northern province of Ulster contemplated quite different prospects from the 250 000 southern Protestants.

1 *Census of Ireland, 1911*, HC 1912–13 (Cd. 6051), cxvi, pp. 38–9.

2 J.C. Beckett, *The Anglo-Irish tradition* (London, 1976), pp. 119–20; P. Buckland, *Irish unionism: the Anglo-Irish and the new Ireland, 1885–1922* (Dublin, 1972), pp. xiv, xx; I. d'Alton, 'Southern Irish unionism: a study of Cork unionists, 1884–1914', *TRHS*, 5th series, 23 (1973), pp. 71–88; I. d'Alton, 'A contrast in crises: southern Irish Protestantism, 1830–43 and 1885–1910', in A.C. Hepburn (ed.), *Minorities in history* (London, 1978), pp. 70–83; D. Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913–21* (Dublin, 1977), pp. 46–62; B. Inglis, *West Briton* (London, 1961), pp. 9–35; F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and anarchy in Ireland, 1880–1939* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 18–23, 57–84.

Table 1. *Distribution of population by religion in Ulster counties, 1911*

County	Protestants (%)	Catholics (%)
Antrim	79.5	20.5
Down	68.4	31.6
Armagh	54.7	45.3
Londonderry	54.2	45.8
Tyrone	44.6	55.4
Fermanagh	43.8	56.2
Monaghan	25.3	74.7
Donegal	21.1	78.9
Cavan	18.5	81.5

Source: Census of Ireland, 1911. HC 1912–13 Cd. 6051, cxvi, p. 38.

Fifty years earlier Protestants were a minority in the province. Now they outnumbered the 691 000 Catholics.[3] The denominational distribution by county, however, as recorded in Table 1, was very uneven.

Ulster Protestants, largely descended from seventeenth-century English and Scottish settlers, dominated the good land and the better occupations, but there was little aristocratic about their culture. They were mainly lower middle class and working class in the towns, and farmers in the countryside, with only a relatively light leavening of gentry, professional men or even affluent commercial people.[4] A high proportion, in contrast to the Anglo-Irish, would count socially as no better than the 'poor whites' of a planter community. They were correspondingly anxious to emphasise their social distance from Catholics.

There were religious, social and regional tensions within Ulster Protestantism, especially between the two main denominations, Presbyterians and Episcopalians.[5] Nevertheless, the Protestant sense of solidarity in the face of Catholic importunity easily prevailed over internal differences. Their own peculiar institution, the Orange Order, which included two-thirds of adult Protestant males,[6] fostered a sense of community among Protestants and institutionalised the instinct of racial superiority over the conquered Catholics. The Orange marching season in July and August, a ritualistic celebration of conquest in an annual exhibition of communal machismo, served as regular reminder of the supremacy of victor over vanquished. Race and religion were inextricably intertwined in Ulster

[3] *Census of Ireland, 1911*, HC 1912–13 (Cd. 6051), cxvi, pp. 38–9.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 13–21.
[5] Lyons, *Culture*, pp. 113–45; P. Gibbon, *The origins of Ulster unionism* (Manchester, 1975); H. Patterson, *Class conflict and sectarianism: the protestant working class and the Belfast labour movement 1868–1920* (Belfast, 1980).
[6] P. Buckland, *A history of Northern Ireland* (Dublin, 1981), p. 5.

unionist consciousness. Unionists could not rely on the criterion of colour, for the Catholics lacked the imagination to go off-white, nor on the criterion of language, for the Catholics had unsportingly abandoned their own. It was therefore imperative to sustain Protestantism as the symbol of racial superiority.[7]

The meaning of race in the political vernacular of the early twentieth century requires delicate probing. Only rarely did it carry the full range of subsequent sinister connotations. It was still often used as an innocent synonym for nation or people, though some racist instinct in Britain was already shifting from the robust to the vicious.[8] Even when used derogatorily, racialist references did not necessarily imply genocidal instincts. Not all effusions of contempt for Catholics among early-twentieth-century Ulster Protestants should be axiomatically attributed to racism, red in tooth and claw. But many of these utterances were embedded in a clearly hierarchical concept of race relations as a law of Ulster nature. Semantic purists might protest that racism should be confined to the description of beliefs arising from directly observable physical differences between peoples. But racism has occurred where there were no such observable differences. The dedication with which Ulster Protestants laboured to sustain a sense of racial superiority in these circumstances itself eloquently expressed the racist cast of their minds. The racial imperative proved so demanding that boundaries had to be constructed where none objectively existed. A high degree of physical segregation, reminiscent of the segregation levels in many colour bar communities, reflected and reinforced psychic segregation.[9] Both communities had long learned to cleave to their own ground.

Ulster Protestants fashioned an elaborate set of images to sustain their

[7] I follow here the general approach of Liam de Paor, *Divided Ulster* (Harmondsworth, 1970), p. 12. There is a large literature on this important and controversial subject. My thinking has been especially influenced by the following studies, even where my conclusions diverge from those of the authors: St John Ervine, *Craigavon: Ulsterman* (London, 1949); E.U. Essien-Udom, 'Tribalism and racism'. in L. Kuper (ed.), *Race, science and society* (London, 1975), esp. pp. 235–6; G. Fitzgerald, *Reconciliation in a divided community* (Pittsburgh, 1982), esp. pp. 5–6; D.W. Miller, *Queen's rebels: Ulster loyalism in historical perspective* (Dublin, 1980); S. Nelson, 'Protestant "ideology" considered: a case of "discrimination"', in I. Crewe (ed.), *British Political Sociology Yearbook*, 2 (London, 1975); C.C. O'Brien, 'Northern Ireland: its past and its future: the future', *Race*, 14, 1 (1972); C. Thorne, *Racial aspects of the Far Eastern War 1941–1945* (London, 1982); F. Wright, 'Protestant ideologies and politics in Ulster', *European Journal of Sociology*, 14, 1 (1973).
[8] P.M. Kennedy, 'The pre-war right in Britain and Germany', in P.M. Kennedy and W. Mock (eds.), *Nationalist and racialist movements in Britain and Germany before 1914* (London, 1981), pp. 1–20; M. Howard, 'Empire, race and war in pre-1914 Britain', in H. Lloyd-Jones, V. Pearl and B. Worden (eds.), *History and imagination: essays in honour of H.R. Trevor-Roper* (London, 1981), pp. 340–55.
[9] A.C. Hepburn, 'Catholics in the North of Ireland, 1850–1921: the urbanisation of a minority', in Hepburn (ed.), *Minorities*, pp. 84–101.

sense of identity. One portrait enumerated in a loving degree of arithmetical precision the characteristics of 'the Belfast man' as 'Determination 98, business capacity 94, courage 91, trustworthiness 90, self-esteem 84, mental vigour 78, hospitality 70, general culture 55, artistic tastes 48, social graces 44.'[10] In vivid contrast to this self-image of sturdy if dour manliness, Irish Catholics conformed in Protestant minds to the classic stereotype of the native which settler races find it psychologically necessary to nurture. They were lazy, dirty, improvident, irresolute, feckless, made menacing only by their numbers and by their doltish allegiance to a sinister and subversive religion.

Ulster Protestants cherished a satisfying sense of individual self-reliance, which they conveniently confused with individualism. Genuine individualism made little impact on the herd mentality within fortress Ulster. Nonconformity flourished more as a religious label than as an intellectual style. Ulster Protestants were prisoners of their condition as a '*Herrenvolk* democracy'. The extension of the franchise in 1884 increased the electoral power of the Ulster Protestant lower classes, while it undermined that of the Anglo-Irish upper classes. In Ulster, as in the American South, 'Where there was progress towards democracy or equality for whites, there was frequently a diminution or limitation of the rights and opportunities of non-whites. Often, the same men were behind both trends.'[11] It was the popular demagogic leaders, like T.H. Sloan with his Independent Orange Order in the early twentieth century,[12] or Ian Paisley more recently, who fulminated most rabidly against Catholicism.

It was this sense of inalienable superiority that made Ulster unionists impervious to the logic of numbers. The Ulster unionist mind saw no incongruity in denying any nationalist right to rule the nine counties of 'Protestant' Ulster on the basis of a 3:1 nationalist majority in Ireland as a whole, while simultaneously insisting on a unionist right to rule Ulster with a 55 per cent Protestant majority. The nine-county province of Ulster was neither an administrative nor a political unit. In so far as there were local administrative or political units at all, they were the counties, the poor law unions, and the electoral districts. By any of these criteria, more than half the area of the geographical province of Ulster had a Catholic majority. From an Ulster unionist perspective, however, tedious territorial considerations of this type all missed the point. Why should a *Herrenvolk* deign to notice numbers? Why should one Protestant be equated with one Catholic? That would be to undermine the whole *raison d'être* of the divine dispensation. Why should mere majorities be taken seriously when,

[10] Miller, *Queen's rebels*, pp. 114–15.
[11] Kenneth P. Vickery, '"Herrenvolk" democracy and egalitarianism in South Africa and in the US South', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 16 (1974), p. 310.
[12] J.W. Boyle, 'The Belfast Protestant Association and the Independent Orange Order', *IHS*, 13 (1962), pp. 117–52.

as Thomas Sinclair, 'the most universally respected of Belfast's businessmen',[13] put it, 'inherent and ineradicable endowments, of character and aims'[14] distinguished Protestants from Catholics, blessing them with qualities against which mere numbers should not prevail.

'Ulster', like the German 'East', was less a place than a state of mind, however insistently this mentality expressed itself in the idiom of the territorial imperative. 'Ulsterman' was an abstract Protestant ideal untainted by the contamination of a Catholic presence. To the Protestant mind 'Ulsterman' and 'Catholic' were mutually exclusive identities. In contrast to the Proclamation of the Republic in 1916, which at least acknowledged, however grudgingly, the existence of a unionist minority in Ireland, the Proclamation of the Ulster Provisional Government in 1913 adopted a concept of 'Ulsterman' that defined Catholics out of existence. When Randall McNeill described Ulster as characterised above all by 'the will of the people to live together'[15] he was for practical purposes excluding Catholics from membership of 'the people'. Even for McNeill, by no means a rabid racist, Catholics could easily slip into the category of non-people.

Ulster Protestant workers saw little advantage in adopting the class politics becoming gradually more fashionable among British workers. Their reluctance was economically and psychologically rational, at least in the short term. They did better out of race than out of class. Skilled jobs, as well as the better unskilled ones, were disproportionately Protestant jobs.[16] Protestant workers could see little likelihood that class solidarity with poorer Catholic workers would improve their own economic position. And solidarity with Catholics might imply equality with Catholics, depriving Protestants not only of their relatively privileged economic position, but also of the psychic pleasure of their racial birth right. Class solidarity would threaten status and identity alike.

Ulster unionist MPs therefore represented a united Protestant community in their hostility to self-government for the mere Irish when they elected Sir Edward Carson as their leader in February 1910, in anticipation of the imminent parliamentary struggle over home rule. 'Sombre, melancholy, a man of notable courage and great forensic ability, he brought to the Orange cause a considerable capacity for organisation, a moral fervour almost fanatical in its intensity and an instinctive feel for high, political drama.'[17] Anglo-Irish rather than Ulster Scot, a Dubliner,

[13] R. MacNeill, *Ulster's stand for union* (London, 1922), p. 38.
[14] T. Sinclair, 'The position of Ulster', in S. Rosenbaum (ed.), *Against Home Rule* (London, 1912; Kennikat edn, 1970), p. 173.
[15] MacNeill, *Ulster's stand*, p. 2.
[16] *Census of Ireland, 1911*, pp. 13–21; S.E. Baker, 'Orange and green', in H.J. Dyos and M. Wolff (eds.), *The Victorian city: image and reality* (London, 1973), 2, p. 802.
[17] N. Mansergh, *The Irish question 1840–1921* (London, 1965), p. 200.

confident of his own abilities – he had achieved eminence at the Irish and English bars – Carson did not fear Catholic competition. He succumbed to neither the siege mentality nor the rabid anti-Catholicism of his Ulster followers. His was essentially a Junker temperament. There was something of Parnell, his only peer among the Anglo-Irish of his generation, in his personality and style. He held that home rule would be disastrous for Ireland and, sharing the widespread illusion that Southern Ireland could not survive as a viable economic entity without the support of industrial Belfast, he seized on the Ulster question more to prevent self-government for Ireland than to achieve it for Ulster.[18] He received formidable support from Captain James Craig, MP for County Down, nominally his lieutenant but effectively his partner. Craig, wealthy son of a distiller, had proved his physical courage in the Boer War. Closer to the east Ulster ground than Carson, Craig was in many respects the real organiser of victory.

Ulster unionists had organised mass movements in 1886 and 1893 to resist the first and second Home Rule Bills. In 1892 nearly 12 000 delegates affirmed their hostility to home rule at an impressive convention.[19] Under the leadership of Carson and Craig, the Ulster Unionist Council, founded in 1905 as the central controlling organisation of resistance to home rule, revived in 1911 the unionist club movement which had languished since the House of Lords defeated the second Home Rule Bill in 1893. Carson elaborated on unionist tactics at a monster meeting at Craigavon in September 1911, warning his listeners that 'we must be prepared the morning Home Rule passes, ourselves to become responsible for the government of the Protestant Province of Ulster'.[20] The UUC appointed at this stage, eight months before the introduction of the third Home Rule Bill, a committee to draft a constitution for a provisional government of Ireland,[21] which was to be duly approved in September 1913.[22] After the Liberals introduced the Home Rule Bill in April 1912, the vast majority of Ulster Protestant adult males pledged themselves in September 1912 in the Solemn League and Covenant, inspired by a sixteenth-century Scottish covenant,[23] to repudiate the authority of any parliament forced upon them. Unionist women signed a Declaration to the same effect. Ulster unionists thus threatened to defy

[18] J.C. Beckett, 'Carson – unionist and rebel', in F.X. Martin (ed.), *Leaders and men of the Easter Rising: Dublin 1916* (London, 1967), pp. 86–7; F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1971), pp. 198–9.

[19] P. Buckland, *Ulster unionism and the origins of Northern Ireland, 1886–1922* (Dublin, 1973), pp. 52–3; Gibbon, *Origins*, pp. 130–6; Miller, *Queen's rebels*, p. 92.

[20] A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Ulster crisis* (London, 1969), p. 48.

[21] Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 300.

[22] A.T.Q. Stewart, *Sir Edward Carson* (Dublin, 1981), p. 79. The Provisional Government was now confined to Ulster only, and no longer intended for Ireland, as was apparently originally the case.

[23] Stewart, *Ulster crisis*, p. 61.

public opinion in Ireland and parliamentary opinion in the United Kingdom.

The Home Rule Bill that provoked so indignant a response did not propose anything so extreme as an Irish republic. Responsibility for relations with the crown, defence and foreign policy, custom and excise, and land purchase, was reserved for Westminster. So was control of the police for a six-year period. Much ingenuity was expended on devising safeguards against religious discrimination. A home rule parliament clearly could not exert much immediate authority on Irish, let alone Ulster, affairs. 'Little more, indeed, than glorified local government,'[24] the measure was so limited that it required all the persuasive powers of the Home Rule leader, John Redmond, to allay the chagrin of his followers.

Unionists could nevertheless harbour the legitimate fear that this might be the first step towards complete independence. It was less from this consideration, however, in so far as the historian can wager generalisations about popular mentalities, than from a sense of violated machismo, that the unionist rank and file, outraged by the very notion of a right to self-government for the baser breed, revolted against the bill. Nothing had changed since the *Belfast Newsletter* declared in 1886 that an Irish parliament 'would be the laughing stock of the civilized world'.[25] When as cerebral a commentator as Thomas MacKnight, the Liberal Unionist editor of the *Northern Whig*, did not spurn the description of home rule as 'a slave revolt' in the wake of the second Home Rule Bill[26] the instincts of the less restrained members of the Protestant populace may be imagined.

The Solemn League and Covenant prophesied that 'Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster as well as to the whole of Ireland.' Ulster flourished relative to the rest of the country during the nineteenth century. Unionists attributed this good fortune as axiomatically to the Act of Union as nationalists attributed the relative decline of the Southern economy to the same omnipotent act. Ulster was in fact far from an economic success story by western European standards. The population of the province had fallen since 1841. It was Belfast, not Ulster, that was the success story. But the rest of Protestant Ulster basked in the reflected glow of Belfast's growth. Ulster unionists might point to the threat of the economic policy of the new Sinn Féin (Ourselves) Party, founded in 1905 by the Dublin journalist Arthur Griffith, who drew on Frederick List's infant industry argument to advocate a protectionist policy. This would have involved the imposition of tariffs in order to protect initially uncompetitive southern Irish industry. These might have

[24] F.S.L. Lyons, 'The meaning of Independnece', in B. Farrell (ed.), *The Irish parliamentary tradition* (Dublin, 1973), p. 227.

[25] *Belfast News Letter*, 20 February 1886.

[26] T. MacKnight, *Ulster as it is* (London, 1896), 2, p. 393.

damaged Belfast industries by raising the cost of imported raw materials, and by provoking retaliation, perhaps pricing Belfast's finished products out of their indispensable export markets. Ulster unionists might have pointed to this threat. But they generally did not at this stage. The evidence of their leading economic spokesman, J. Milne Barbour, president of the Belfast Chamber of Commerce, later first Minister for Commerce in Northern Ireland, himself a big linen manufacturer, before the Primrose Commission on the financial situation, is particularly revealing for its vagueness. Barbour did indeed express fears about the possible introduction of protectionism in a home rule state,[27] but was at least as concerned that 'the rural interest might outweigh the manufacturing interest to too great an extent'.[28] His most serious economic objection was that home rule 'might disturb the feeling of confidence that at present exists as far as credits are concerned'.[29] In the light of his relative vagueness on the economic implications of home rule, he had no difficulty conceding that he felt Ulster unionist opposition to be 'very largely religious'.[30]

Few had heard of Sinn Féin, still a mere fringe nationalist faction, in 1912. Unionists made few references to this movement, soon to rival the Pope himself for pride of place in their demonology. Though some spokesmen referred more strongly to tariffs as a threat than had Barbour,[31] unionists did not usually attribute the economic disaster they predicted under home rule to any specific policy, but rather implied it to the sheer incompetence inseparable from the government of an inferior breed. The argument had not fundamentally changed since 1886 when Belfast businessmen resisted home rule on the grounds that 'under an Irish parliament and government there would be no security for life nor property, no fair play to the Loyalists in the north of Ireland, and that utter want of commercial confidence without which Belfast could not continue to prosper'.[32]

The economic argument carried conviction with all sectors of unionist opinion. But it was nor basic to unionist rejection of Irish nationalism. 'Home Rule is Rome Rule' was the slogan that touched a really responsive chord in Protestant hearts. Home rule, the covenanters reassured themselves, would be 'subversive of our civil and religious freedom, destructive of our citizenship and perilous to the unity of the empire'. Revd Samuel Prenter, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, captured the essence of these fears:[33]

> The contention of the Irish protestants is that neither their civil nor their religious liberties would be safe in the custody of Rome. In an Irish Parliament civil allegiance to the Holy See would be the test of membership, and would make every Roman catholic member a civil servant of the Vatican. That Parliament would be compelled to carry out the behests of the Church. The Church is hostile to the liberty of the Press, the liberty of public speech, to modernism in science, in literature, in philosophy; is bound to exact obedience from her members and to extirpate heresy and heretics; claims to be above Civil Law, and the right to enforce Canon Law whenever she is able. There are simply no limits even of life or property to the range of her intolerance. This is not an indictment; it is the boast of Rome.

Revd Dr Patterson, preacher at the Ulster Hall service attended by Carson on Ulster Day in 1913, was therefore invoking a familiar theme when he reassured his receptive audience that 'under home rule the Pope would be Ireland's ruler and king, for his word was law'. Persecution would inevitably follow, 'and he ventured to say that in 2013 there would not be a Protestant in the British empire who would presume to affirm that Ulster made a mistake in the stand she was now taking against the aggressions of Romanism'. Patterson detected a 'parallel between the people of Israel in those olden days and the people of Ulster at the present time'. He invoked the robust Ulster Protestant self-image of indispensability, of their cherished role as the chosen people, and of their rentier right to eternal English dividends, for 'England owes more to Ulster than to any patt of the empire, and she can never pay the debt.'[34] No wonder the covenanters felt that, by definition, opposition to the chosen people must be 'conspiracy', and felt justified in employing 'any means which may be found necessary' to frustrate the nefarious designs of their papist enemies.

Patterson's fears would have appeared overwrought to Southern nationalists, had they taken the trouble to familiarise themselves with the Ulster Protestant psyche. Nationalist ideology was relatively free from the racism that dominated unionist images of nationalists. There were inevitably racist threads woven into the fabric of nationalist thought, which could not remain wholly insulated from imperialist influences. This is not to suggest that the racist tendencies in Irish nationalism, relatively muted though they were, do not deserve closer scrutiny than they have

[27] *Minutes of evidence taken by the Committee on Irish Finance, with appendices*, HC 1913 (Cd. 6799), xxx, q. 4568.

[28] *Ibid.*, q. 4551. [29] *Ibid.*, q. 4396. [30] *Ibid.*, q. 4565.

[31] The issue loomed more prominently later. The question whether an Irish parliament should have the right to impose customs duties proved a major stumbling block to agreement between unionists and nationalists at the Irish Convention in 1918 (H. Plunkett to D. Lloyd George, 8 April 1918, in *Report of the proceedings of the Irish Convention*, HC 1918 (Cd. 9019), x, p. 5).

[32] MacKnight, *Ulster*, 2, p. 380. For a graphic illustration of unionist images of the economic consequences of home rule, see the cartoons in R. Broad, *et al.*, *The Troubles* (London, 1980), p. 67.

[33] S. Prenter, 'The religious difficulty under home rule: the non-conformist view', in Rosenbaum (ed.), *Against home rule*, pp. 218–19. This volume contains an able collective presentation of the Ulster Protestant case. It is a careful work, eminently respectable, designed to appeal to the commonsense and intelligence of England. There are several superior contributions, including Carson's.

[34] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 29 September 1913.

normally received in nationalist historiography. Nor is it to imply that Irish nationalism was inherently innocent, through some immaculate ideological conception, of the more virulent forms of popular racism. If historically subordinate peoples have only relatively rarely felt as visceral a need to adopt racist ideologies as intense as those of dominant groups,[35] this reflects more the logic of circumstances than the triumph of character. For whatever reason, however, racism was far less central to the ideology of Irish nationalism than to that of Ulster unionism. But Ulster Protestants assumed, indeed were obliged by their own premises to assume, that Irish Catholics would behave as mirror images of themselves once they smashed Protestant supremacy. In the unionist scenario, home rule would place Protestants 'under the feet of Catholics . . . to be governed as a conquered race'.[36]

It was precisely because the bulk of nationalists were not mirror images of unionists in this respect that they failed to fully grasp these Protestant fears. Whereas to most Ulster Protestants, the Catholic Irish were not only different but inferior, to most Irish Catholics, Ulster Protestants were merely different, not inferior.[37] Most Catholics were sufficiently distant from Ulster geographically and psychologically to be more nationalist than racist. To Ulster Protestants the two were indistinguishable, and in strictly *Ulster* terms unionist fears were far from incomprehensible. Sectarian impulses remained pronounced in popular Ulster Catholicism. Ulster Catholics, precisely because of their relative deprivation, remained more heavily dependent than southern Catholics on clerical leadership. Even in Belfast, which had some educated Catholic laity, a clerical party flourished. The prelate in possession, Dr Henry, entertained an exalted sense of his own political dignity. His Catholic Association dominated nationalist politics in Belfast between 1897 and 1907, before lay forces in the Home Rule Party loosened the clericalist grip.[38] And many Ulster Catholics, influenced by local sectarian movements like the Ancient Order of Hibernians, a partial Catholic counterpart to the Orange Order, did think of home rule as establishing their own ascendancy, simply reversing roles with Protestants.[39] Ulster Catholics could hardly escape the contagion of the racist virus, nor help but feel something of

> This bitterness
> I inherit from my father, the
> Swarm of blood
> To the brain, the vomit surge
> Of race hatred.[40]

[35] L. Kuper, *Race, class and power* (London, 1974), p. 21.
[36] MacKnight, *Ulster*, 2, pp. 381, 401.
[37] Hepburn, 'Catholics', in Hepburn, *Minorities*, p. 85.
[38] I. Budge and C. O'Leary, *Belfast: approach to crisis* (London, 1973), pp. 120–3.
[39] Miller, *Queen's rebels*, pp. 90, 101.

The McCann case in 1910 graphically reminded Protestants of the implications of Catholic power. Mr McCann, a Belfast Catholic, abandoned his Protestant wife, taking his children with him. His initiative followed enforcement by the Catholic hierarchy of the *Ne Temere* decree after 1908, which declared null and void mixed marriages (i.e. between Catholic and Protestant) not solemnised by the Catholic Church. This case, skilfully exploited by unionist propagandists, proved to the Protestant in the street how the papal viper could wriggle its way into the nuptial bed. The Protestant Bishop of Down, Dr D'Arcy, insisted that *Ne Temere* 'is at this moment a burning question. Under home rule it would create a conflagration.'[41] There were in fact rather few potential opportunities of this sort in Ulster, where little mixed marriage occurred. Those who waxed most indignantly at the insolence of Roman claims also refrained most carefully from producing figures to buttress their fears. Nevertheless, however remote the dangers in practice, the implication of the papal claim was something that no Protestant solicitous for the welfare of his family could calmly contemplate. When Catholics prated about the sanctity of the family they apparently meant only the Catholic family. Other families were ripe for the priestly plucking. As Dr D'Arcy did not hesitate to point out, toleration according to Roman teaching was a matter of mere expediency, not a right in itself. The lurking tyrant would pounce once opportunity offered.[42]

Protestant spokesmen also seized on another decree, *Motu Proprio*. As Thomas Sinclair depicted the situation:[43]

> The bringing by a Roman Catholic layman of a clergyman of his Church into any civil or criminal procedure in a Court of Law, whether as defendant or witness, without the sanction previously obtained of his bishop, involves to that layman the extreme penalty of excommunication. The same penalty appears to be incurred *ipso facto* by any Roman Catholic Member of Parliament who takes part in passing, and by every executive officer of the government who takes part in promulgating, a law or decree which has helped to invade the liberty or rights of the Church of Rome. This is a matter of supreme importance in our civil life. It was one of the questions which, in the Reformation times, led to the breach between Henry VIII and the Pope. In a Dublin Parliament no power could resist the provisions of this decree from becoming law. As a matter of fact, the liberty of speech and voting attaching to every member of the Roman Catholic majority in a Dublin Parliament would be under the absolute control of their hierarchy.

[41] C.F. D'Arcy, 'The religious difficulty under home rule: the church view', in Rosenbaum, *Home rule*, p. 207. Note in the same volume the references by Carson (p. 27) and Sinclair (pp. 175–6); A.C. Hepburn (ed.), *The conflict of nationality in modern Ireland* (London, 1980), p. 74; MacNeill, *Ulster's stand*, p. 11.
[42] D'Arcy, 'Religious difficulty', pp. 209–10. See also R.M. Lee, 'Intermarriage, conflict and social control in Ireland: the Decree "Ne temere"', *ESR*, 17, 1 (October, 1985), pp. 26–7.
[43] Sinclair, 'The position of Ulster', pp. 175–6

It was not that Protestants wanted the clergy taken out of politics. Far from it. That would have deprived them of much of their own leadership.[44] The Ulster Loyalist Anti-Repeal Union founded in 1886 hastened to make 'all Protestant clergymen of the province honorary members'.[45] No fewer than eighty-three Irish protestant clergymen acted as election speakers for the Unionist Association of Ireland in the second general election of 1910 in Britain.[46] The Covenant was submitted for approval to Protestant clergy. The Protestant churches gave their blessing to Covenant Day. If the clergyman in politics proved a less derisive bogey than the priest in politics, it was because the Protestant imagined himself immune from clerical influence. His clergy merely represented him, whereas Catholic clergymen dominated their flocks. Protestant images of the contrasting roles of Catholic and Protestant clergy merely provided a variation on the theme of the superiority of Protestant stock.

Ulster Unionists found enthusiastic champions at this juncture in the Conservative Party, led since November 1911 by Andrew Bonar Law, a Canadian Scot, son of a Presbyterian minister with Ulster connections. Bonar Law supplied the cutting edge to Conservative commitment to the union. The electoral situation reinforced Tory convictions. The Conservatives had been out of office for seven years by 1912, the longest consecutive period in half a century that their leaders had been deprived of the privilege of displaying their devotion to the national interest at the highest level.

They sniffed a winning issue in 'the empire in danger', with home rule being 'as much the occasion as the cause' of their 'new style' of violent opposition to the Liberal government.[47] Since the 1910 elections the Westminster scales were nicely balanced between Liberals and Conservatives. However, Labour and Home Rule support gave the Liberal government a clear majority in the House of Commans. Bonar Law was not the man to be daunted by a little local difficulty of this sort. He claimed that home rule had not been a specific election issue in 1910.[48] Therefore, the Liberals had no mandate to implement it. Asquith, the Liberal leader, had indeed preferred to emphasise the House of Lords rather than home rule as the prime election issue.[49] Yet the British electorate would have had to be singularly simple minded not to have appreciated that home rule was implicit in their vote on the future of the Lords. If Asquith had been coy

[44] On the political role of the Protestant clergy see A.J. Megahey, 'The Irish Protestant Churches and social and political issues 1870–1914' (PhD thesis, Queen's University, Belfast, 1969).

[45] Buckland, *Ulster unionism*, p. 9. [46] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[47] R. Fanning, '"Rats" versus "ditchers": the die-hard revolt and the Parliament Bill of 1911', in A. Cosgrove and J.I. McGuire (eds.), *Parliament and community* (Historical Studies 14) (Belfast, 1983), p. 191.

[48] R. Kee, *The green flag* (London, 1972), p. 472.

[49] Buckland, *Ulster unionism*, p. 73.

about home rule in the 1910 elections, the Conservatives had not. The Unionist Association of Ireland not only dispatched 324 general election workers to Britain for the January election in 1910, and 381 for the December election, but distributed over 6 000 000 leaflets in Britain warning of the dangers.[50]

Bonar Law retaliated against the election results by denouncing the Liberal–Home Rule alliance as a 'corrupt parliamentary bargain'.[51] The emotional alchemy by which an alliance between the majority of British members and the majority of Irish members was translated into a 'corrupt bargain', while an alliance between a minority of British members and a minority of Irish members was an honourable understanding, may smack, to the simple mind, of special pleading. It was no such thing. That would be to imply identical rules of debate for both sides. The Tory feeling of moral outrage was not assuaged by having the cup dashed, as they persuaded themselves, from their parched lips. They had sensed themselves on the brink of office in 1910 when it appeared that negotiations between Asquith and Redmond might break down. That the Liberal and Home Rule leaders failed to satisfy Tory expectations further confirmed the corruption of their natures.

Bonar Law's demand for a general election on the home rule issue was brilliantly opportunistic. When he told his Ulster Protestant audience of a 100 000 in April 1912 at Balmoral that 'the government by their Parliament Act has erected a boom against you, a boom to shut you off from the help of the British people',[52] he seemed to be equating, in a delightful flight of fancy, the House of Lords with the people. But what if the Liberals were to win the next general election? What if 'the British people' resisted the importunities of their moral creditors? Carson gave his answer in his reply to Asquith's proposal in March 1914 that any Ulster county could vote itself out of Home Rule for six years. Carson countered that 'Ulster wants this question settled now and forever. We do not want sentence of death with a stay of execution for six years.'[53] This reply exposed a certain inconsistency in the unionist case. Asquith selected a six-year period because this should permit at least two general elections in the interval.[54] Six years should suffice to allow even the most mentally relaxed voter to grasp the issue. But the Unionist leaders would not trust the electorate. They were alarmed that the government might raise the 'boom'.

Bonar Law left himself with an escape route from inconvenient electoral

[50] Hepburn, *Conflict*, p. 75.

[51] R. Fanning, 'The Irish policy of Asquith's government and the cabinet crisis of 1910', in A. Cosgrove and D. McCartney (eds.), *Studies in Irish history presented to R. Dudley Edwards* (Dublin, 1979), pp. 279–305.

[52] Stewart, *Ulster crisis*, p. 55. [53] *Ibid.*, p. 141.

[54] D. Gwynn, *The life of John Redmond* (London, 1932; Freeport, New York, 1971), p. 208.

verdicts. He spattered his demands for a fresh appeal to the electorate with the Bismarckian reassurance that 'there are things stronger than parliamentary majorities'.[55] Lord Esher argued in 1913 that 'it has always been obvious that the Ulster people would not and ought not to yield, even if a general election were to go in favour of the government'.[56] The Ulster Unionist Council denied the right of any people, including the British, to impose home rule on Ulster.[57]

Although some Unionists posited the existence of 'Two Nations' in Ireland,[58] David Miller has powerfully argued that Ulster unionists ideally imagined themselves as a community that enjoyed a contractual relationship with the British crown rather than as a 'nation' in the conventional, if elusive, contemporary sense.[59] They would be loyal to the crown as long as the crown protected their interests. And they, not the crown, would define those interests. This stance – a congenial one for settler peoples – left them with the best of all tactical worlds. They would no more put themselves at the mercy of mere British than of mere Irish opinion. Their sacred egoism enabled them to follow whatever path secured the Protestant ascendancy in Ulster, and to do so moreover with an exquisite sense of their own righteousness. Their self-image glorified their axiomatic honesty and loyalty, in contrast to the equally axiomatic dishonesty and disloyalty of the inferior breed of Irish and, if necessary, of British, especially English. 'Loyalists', a title cherished by Ulster Protestants, meant, in the last ironical resort, loyalty to themselves alone. Unionism was merely a tactical, if highly congenial, variant of loyalism. They owed no primordial allegiance to British interests, nor admitted any ultimate obligation to abide by inconvenient British verdicts. If so stark a choice had ever to be made, their motto might have been 'Live Protestant Ulster, perish the empire.' It was the task of their more sober leaders to ensure that they never found themselves confronted by such a choice.

NATIONALIST REACTIONS

For nationalists, the Ulster question was a very simple one, but they managed to make it very complex. Their confusion did more credit to their hearts than to their heads. They consistently evaded the logical implications of their own position. Ulster unionists rejected the right of

[55] Kee, *Green flag*, p. 469. [56] Mansergh, *Irish question*, p. 202.
[57] Miller, *Queen's rebels*, p. 102.
[58] MacKnight, *Ulster*, 2, p. 380; Sinclair, 'Ulster', in Rosenbaum, *Home rule*, p. 173; A. Bonar Law, 'Preface', in Rosenbaum, *Home rule*, p. 13.
[59] This is the central theme of *Queen's rebels*. For a critique see D. Mason, 'Nationalism and the process of group mobilisation: the case of "loyalism" in Northern Ireland reconsidered', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 8 (1985), pp. 408–25. See also the discussion in B. Girvin, 'National identity and conflict in Northern Ireland', in B. Girvin and R. Sturm (eds), *Politics and society in contemporary Ireland* (Aldershot, 1986), pp. 110–12.

Irish nationalists to rule them. Nationalists therefore had two logical alternatives. They could concede the Ulster unionist claim or they could reject it. Practical implications naturally followed. If they rejected the claim, how could they impose their own claim? If they conceded the claim, where was the border of 'Ulster' to be drawn?

John Redmond rejected not only unionist claims to imperial control over Ireland as a whole, but unionist claims to self-determination. He denounced the 'two nations' theory as 'an abomination and a blasphemy'.[60] This rhetoric sufficed as denunciation, but scarcely as refutation. Redmond simply insisted that Ulster unionists were part of the Irish nation, and therefore belonged in a home rule parliament, irrespective of their own wishes. He declared himself prepared to make concessions, however, even to the extent of contemplating some version of 'home rule within home rule'.[61] 'There is no demand, however extravagant and unreasonable it may appear to us, that we are not ready carefully to consider, so long as it is consistent with the principle . . . of a settlement based on the national self-government of Ireland.'[62] The Bishop of Raphoe, Dr O'Donnell, Redmond's staunchest episcopal supporter, assured him that 'there is no length to which any of us would refuse to go to satisfy the Orangemen at the starting of our new government provided Ireland did not suffer grievously, and provided also the nationalist minority in the north east did not suffer badly'.[63] But these general expressions of good will do not appear to have been translated into hard proposals. Redmond responded unenthusiastically, for instance, when William O'Brien, the maverick Home Ruler, suggested that 'Ulster' should have a veto in an Irish parliament.[64]

Redmond, like his party in general, devoted little thought to the nature of home rule society and the role of the church within it. Personally tolerant, he could not apparently detect any objective basis for Orange fears, which he therefore tended to dismiss as purely tactical ploys. Catholic incomprehension of the Protestant position was reflected in the fact that little of the debate on the relationship between the claims of Catholic doctrine and the duties of civil legislators, however hypocritical, cynical or grudging at times, that would characterise responses in the Irish Republic when the Ulster question erupted once more after 1968, occurred between 1910 and 1914.[65]

Redmond refused to take the Protestant threat of violence seriously. He assured Asquith in 1913 that 'nobody denies that a riot may be attempted in Belfast and one or two other towns, but nobody in Ulster, outside a

[60] Gwynn, *Redmond*, p. 232. [61] *Ibid.* [62] *Ibid.*, p. 233.
[63] *Ibid.*, p. 231.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 238.
[65] As reflected, for instance, in the New Ireland Forum process. See below, pp. 675–9.

certain number of fanatics and leaders, believes in any organised rebellion, active or passive'.[66] Little was therefore done to satisfy objective unionist fears.

Even had Redmond elaborated on the practical implications of 'home rule within home rule', he would have faced a major obstacle. Ulster unionists simply did not want it. Their spiritual leaders dismissed in advance any possible concessions on the grounds, as Dr D'Arcy put it, that 'professions and promises made by individual Roman Catholics and by political leaders, statements which to English ears seem a happy augury of a good time coming, are of no value whatever'.[67] The Protestants, according to D'Arcy,

> do not deny that such promises and guarantees express a great deal of good intention, but they know that above the individual, whether he be layman or ecclesiastic, there is a system which moves on, as soon as such movement becomes possible, in utter disregard of his statements . . . The guarantees of individual Roman Catholics, no matter now positively or how confidently stated, are of no account as against the steady age long policy of the Roman church.[68]

This contention of the Bishop of Down was reinforced by his Non-conformist colleague, Dr Prenter. 'It is a strange hallucination to find that there are politicians today who think that Rome will change her principles at the bidding of Mr Redmond, or to please hard-driven politicians, or to make Rome attractive to a Protestant empire.'[69] There was, therefore, no safeguard that Redmond could propose that would carry the slightest conviction in the eyes of Ulster unionists. All Catholics were ciphers.

Even if Rome could never change her ways, might it not be just conceivable that nationalist politicians would resist Roman pretensions? However improbable this appeared to the ecclesiastics, Carson, perhaps remembering nationalist indifference to Roman exhortations during the Land League days, moved to guard against this danger with a masterly exhibition of mental gymnastics:[70]

> It is not inconsistent to urge, as many of us have urged, that home rule would mean alike a danger to the protestant faith and a menace to catholic power. The immediate result of successful papal interference with civil liberties in every land has been a sweeping movement among the people which has been, not protestant, but anti-christian in its nature. If we fear the tyranny which the Roman Catholic Church has established under British rule in Malta and in Quebec, may we not fear also the reaction from such tyranny which has already taken place in France and Portugal?

There was only one fate worse than papal control of Ireland—successful Catholic resistance to papal control! Ulster Protestants succeeded in constructing and fortifying mental ramparts which did indeed lower the

[66] Gwynn, *Redmond*, p. 236.
[67] D'Arcy, 'Religious difficulty', p. 206.
[68] *Ibid.*
[69] Prenter, 'The religious difficulty', p. 219.
[70] E. Carson, 'Introduction', p. 27.

boom between themselves and the Irish, or even British, threat. If circumstances so required, they could renege on their 'contract' with the British crown, firm in the conviction that it was the crown who had reneged on them. They would remain 'loyalist' to the end, paragons of fidelity in a faithless world. Come all the world against her, 'Ulster' yet would stand alone.

Redmond achieved a measure of understanding with London. He failed, like all his successors as nationalist leaders, to make an impression on Belfast. The summer of 1914 clarified the issues. The House of Lords proposed an amendment to the Home Rule Bill in June to exclude the nine Ulster counties. This amounted to a unionist concession of home rule for the three other provinces. Redmond had now established that 'Ulster' could not sabotage home rule for the rest of Ireland. He next pushed the unionist claim further back, when Carson compromised at the Buckingham Palace inter-party conference in July by restricting the effective demand to six counties. No later nationalist managed to improve on Redmond's performance.

If unionist territorial claims were flexible, few nationalists had the moral courage or the intellectual integrity to apply their proclaimed principles of self-determination to unionist Ulster. One of the few was Fr Michael O'Flanagan, an erratic Sinn Féin priest who did not, on occasion, shirk the implications of self-determination principles. After showing that they applied, by conventional nationalist criteria, to north east Ulster, he concluded that 'England has begun to despair of compelling us to love her by force, and so we are anxious to start where England left off, and we are going to compel Antrim and Down to love us by force'.[71] O'Flanagan did not, of course, say Fermanagh and Tyrone. He demanded consistency, not casuistry, from unionists as well as nationalists. Even the fantasy world of Irish nationalism can sometimes seem to tremble on the verge of logic compared with that of Ulster unionism.

But there was one logic unionists grasped from the outset, the iron logic of violence. When Carson and Craig established the Ulster Volunteer Force in January 1913, partly to keep the physical force unionist elements under political control, the balance of military power in Ireland began to shift significantly. The UVF, under the command of General Sir George Richardson, who had long experience of teaching the natives lessons,[72] soon enrolled about 100 000 men. John Redmond did not grasp the function of force. He was too much a romantic Commonwealth man, too much a genuine Westminster parliamentarian, to conceive that Ulster

[71] D.W. Miller, *Church, state and nation in Ireland, 1898–1921* (Pittsburgh, 1973), p. 350. See also J. Bowman, 'De Valera on Ulster, 1919–1920: what he told America', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 1 (1979), p. 7.
[72] De Paor, *Divided Ulster*, p. 8.

unionists, much less English Tories, so vehement in their protestations of loyalty, could really contemplate rebellion against the king in the king's name. Once Ulster unionists invoked their physical force tradition stretching sonorously back to Derry, Enniskillen, Aughrim and the Boyne, Redmond had either to raise an army of his own, or persuade the British army to impose Dublin rule on the Protestant areas of Ulster. Whether the British army would have obliged if given firm orders to crush resistance to home rule must remain a matter for conjecture, since no such orders were given. The 1911 census recorded only 6400 Catholics among the 26 251 soldiers and NCO's stationed in Ireland, and only 304 Catholics among the 2208 army officers. Nevertheless, it is the considered conclusion of a careful recent analysis of Asquith's Irish policy that 'troops would almost certainly have obeyed direct orders to march to Ulster, so long as they were presented with no alternatives' before the Curragh 'mutiny' of 20 March 1914.[73] But, in an episode characterised by confusion and irresolution on the government's part, astute opportunism on the part of the unionist Brigadier Gough at the Curragh, and high but lethal farce on the part of Sir Arthur Paget, Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, the cabinet appeared to allow the army to dictate the terms – the distinctly unionist terms – on which it would be prepared to become involved in Ulster. Whatever about the prospects before the Curragh 'mutiny', it was now clear that the British army would not, and Redmond could not, coerce Ulster Protestants, least of all after 24–5 April 1914, when the UVF landed 24 600 rifles and 3 000 000 rounds of ammunition from Germany.[74]

If Redmond scoffed at the unionist appeal to force as 'playing at rebellion', some other home rulers reacted differently. As Patrick Pearse, a rising young intellectual, tersely observed in November 1913, 'I think the Orangeman with a rifle a much less ridiculous figure than the nationalist without a rifle.'[75] That same month the Irish Volunteers were founded in response to an article, 'The North Began', by Professor Eoin MacNeill, a prominent cultural nationalist, co-founder of the Gaelic League in 1893, urging nationalist imitation of the Ulster Volunteers.[76]

'The North Began' contains in full measure MacNeill's customary combination of insight and illusion. He insisted that the Volunteers were not intended to coerce Ulster unionists. They were simply to bring pressure to bear on England. Pressure to do what? To coerce Ulster unionists. The object of 'The North Began' was to frustrate what the North began. The Irish Volunteers, however genuine MacNeill's protestations to the contrary, had ultimately the logical objective of coercing Ulster unionists.

[73] P. Jalland, *The Liberals and Ireland: the Ulster question in British politics to 1914* (Brighton, 1980), p. 240.

[74] Stewart, *Ulster crisis*, p. 246.

[75] P. Pearse, 'From a hermitage', in *Political writings and speeches* (Dublin, 1966), p. 185.

The illusion implicit in this approach would continue to bedevil Irish nationalism for generations. The essential assumption was that Ulster Protestant attitudes were basically the consequence of British duplicity. The unionist mentality was attributed to the divide and conquer policies pursued by Britain. Once the British notified the unionists that their interests would be satisfactorily guarded in a home rule state, the scales would drop from their eyes and they too would enter the promised land. Ulster unionists, on this assumption, were the creatures of Westminster, utterly incapable of objectively assessing their own situation, puppets dangling from British strings.

This simplistic image of Ulster unionism may appear surprising in view of the fact that several of the early Irish Volunteer leaders, including Eoin MacNeill himself, Bulmer Hobson, and Tom Clarke, were Ulstermen. But in the segregated Ulster society, nationalists had little contact with unionists. MacNeill dismissed unionist aspirations with the capacious claim that 'history shows that this present sentiment of theirs is a calculated outcome of persistent and unscrupulous policy of English statesmen pursued purely in "the English interest" . . . The rest of the Ulster difficulty consists of fears and prophecies.'[77] MacNeill, an historian, might have pondered that much history revolves around fears and prophecies. Instead he dismissed the unionist fear that under an Irish government 'the religion and industry of Ulster Protestants will be suppressed' with the triumphant affirmation that 'there is no body of people in the world more free from intolerance in matters of religion than the Catholics of Ireland'.[78]

MacNeill, Hobson and Clarke knew as little of the Shankhill, or of the Falls, as of the Dublin slums. Their image of Ulster was one-dimensional. It was as socially conservative as that of the unionist leaders themselves. It differed in this respect from an alternative image of unionism held by an articulate if tiny minority in the Dublin labour movement. The lockout of September 1913, after members of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, led by Jim Larkin and James Connolly, had gone on strike to demand recognition of the union from William Martin Murphy, Dublin's most domineering businessman, threw 20 000 men on the streets.[79] It brought even deeper misery into the hideous Dublin slums, and provoked the creation of the Irish Citizen Army in November to help raise the morale of the unemployed. The training of the 1000 strong

[77] E. MacNeill, *The Ulster difficulty* (Dublin, 1917), p. 24.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

[79] E. Larkin, *James Larkin: Irish Labour leader 1876–1947* (London, 1968 edn), pp. 101–43; D.F. Keogh, 'William Martin Murphy and the origins of the 1913 lockout',

'army' – ambitiously christened, for the only 'citizen' army in the country at the time was the UVF – was confined to manoeuvres with dummy weapons. It did not extend to more demanding manoeuvres with theory, dummy or otherwise. But the doughtiest Citizen Army leader, James Connolly, had developed a Marxist interpretation of Irish history. He paid more attention to the Ulster unionist bourgeoisie than did MacNeill. To Connolly, the unionist middle class was no dupe of Westminster. On the contrary, it was the sinister business partner of Westminster in duping the Ulster unionist working class. It was only the workers, or rather the Protestant workers, who were the victims of false consciousness, too deluded to comprehend their real interests or their historical destiny. To Connolly's intense irritation Protestant workers were failing to conform to their prescribed role as cannon fodder for his version of Marxist theory. Connolly himself failed to seriously breach the racial barrier during his trade union work in Belfast between 1910 and 1912. His socialist faith triumphed over this reverse. He proved more susceptible to the evidence provided by the outbreak of the First World War, when the working classes of Europe, unimpressed by the inconvenience their behaviour was causing socialist theorists, flocked to slaughter each other for God, king and country. This finally compelled Connolly to reconsider the theory that socialism would bury nationalism. He concluded that if socialism were to come to Ireland at all, it could only come through nationalism, or rather through republicanism.

But republicanism was still a fringe ideology in 1913. The bulk of the Irish Volunteers were simply home rulers. Some, like MacNeill himself, were more firmly committed than Redmond to cultural nationalism. Some, like Patrick Pearse, editor of *An Claidheamh Solais*, the Gaelic League newspaper, envisaged an opposition role for themsleves in a home rule parliament.[80] The Irish Volunteers were come to fulfil home rule, not to destroy it. The more separatist Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) did exert some influence behind the scenes. Bulmer Hobson, Denis McCullough, Sean McDermott, Tom Clarke and, after he joined the IRB in December 1913, Patrick Pearse, conspired discreetly to stiffen Volunteer resolve. The threat of partition and the Curragh 'mutiny' stimulated mass enrolment,but the 150 000 members who joined by June 1914 remained largely innocent of the influence of the IRB. So did MacNeill.

Redmond became so alarmed at the rapid growth of the Volunteers that he felt obliged to impose his own nominees to constitute a majority of the Provisional Committee of the Volunteers in June 1914. The IRB members reluctantly acquiesced, convinced that they could not resist Redmond successfully a mere month after the Home Rule Bill had finally completed its trek through the House of Commons. The more republican elements

[80] Pearse, 'From a hermitage', p. 155.

did not even split from the Volunteers when Redmond expressed support for Britain in the House of Commons on the outbreak of the European war. It was not until Redmond actually urged his followers at Wooden Bridge, Co. Wicklow, on 20 September, to volunteer for the British army, that the more extreme nationalists-felt compelled to repudiate him.

Whatever Redmond's motives, and however far he may have been swayed by a genuine if imaginative conviction that Britain was fighting 'in defence of right, of freedom and of religion',[81] there were strong tactical arguments in favour of his attitude, even from a separatist viewpoint.[82] Any other policy would have played straight into the hands of Ulster unionists. The Home Rule Bill finally went on the Statute Book in September 1914, with the qualification that its operation should be suspended during the war, and that parliament might then make special provision for Ulster. The war, however, was widely expected to last only a few months. An Ireland that had stood by England in her hour of peril could surely then reckon to have laid the bogey of British fears. British public opinion could hardly be expected to lend credence in a postwar general election, anticipated for 1915, to the argument that a home rule Ireland would still pose a threat to British security. Scant sympathy might, however, be expected from a British electorate for a nationalist Ireland that had remained sullenly neutral while Ulster unionists flocked to the flag. Bonar Law would have enjoyed rich electoral pickings in those circumstances. Even Ulster unionists might be reconciled to a home rule Ireland that had proved its steadfast support for the empire, at least if their incantations of loyalty to that empire were genuine.

The objective odds were, no doubt, heavily against Redmond's gamble on unity. Nothing could have induced Ulster unionists into a home rule state. Why should a *Herrenvolk* inflict on itself the psychic shock of surrendering its privileges? Why should Irish support for the war make any difference to the threat from Rome in the eyes of Ulster unionists – or indeed in reality? Home rule remained Rome rule. Pro-British Catholics remained Catholics. Indeed, their support for the war could be presented as merely the clever ploy of those devilishly cunning conspirators against the people of God. Nevertheless, no one genuinely committed to Irish unity could have acted differently from Redmond in the autumn of 1914. The suggestion that a threat of neutrality from nationalist Ireland would have forced the immediate implementation of home rule might just conceivably have some validity for a twenty-six county home rule state, but none at all for a united Ireland. No British government could have imposed home rule on an armed unionist Ulster supporting Britain, at the dictate of an unarmed nationalist Ireland threatening neutrality. The alternative to Redmond's policy would have been to clinch the unionist

[81] Gwynn, *Redmond*, p. 392. [82] Miller, *Church, state and nation*, pp. 308–10.

case that home rule Ireland would inevitably stab England in the back in her hour of danger. The neutrality mentality was a partitionist mentality.

Redmond's mistake was not his decision to support the war. It was his failure to secure arms once the formation of the UVF in 1913 made paramilitary power crucial. Redmond played his hand well in the light of the balance of probabilities in August 1914. But his hand was an exceptionally weak one, simply because it was the only one with no gun in it. Participation in the war might in fact strengthen his hand in this respect.[83] As the Volunteers were not effectively armed in August 1914, Redmond could not expect his histrionic promise – or threat – to hold Ireland against invasion to be taken seriously. But many Irish Volunteers would presumably return home after the war – probably in 1915 – with some military training and equipment. It was the potential threat lurking in this possibility that made English recruiting officers reluctant to countenance the formation of specifically Irish nationalist divisions as distinct from Ulster unionist ones. The war offered Redmond his only hope of securing a credible paramilitary base, and thus providing himself with some bargaining power *vis-à-vis* both Carson and Asquith.

Redmond's gamble, however astute the calculations on which it may have been based, seemed spontaneous. But it provoked MacNeill to repudiate Redmond's recruiting drive and to split from him. Perhaps only 13 000 of the 188 000 Volunteers joined MacNeill's 'Irish' Volunteers, however, Redmond's majority now becoming known as the 'National' Volunteers.[84]

MacNeill's reasoning was, not for the only time, honourable and muddled. He offered no realistic political alternative to home rule. He simply argued that neutrality would achieve it more quickly by some unspecified route. His split from Redmond was an empty gesture. The Volunteers, Irish or National, had no *raison d'être* unless they could get guns. The Howth gun running in July 1914, a miniature imitation of the UVF exploit, exacerbated tension in Dublin when the British army killed four civilians in a taunting crowd on the way back,[85] but secured only a modest haul of 900 guns and 25 000 rounds of ammunition. Another small landing at Kilcoole went only a short distance towards restoring the balance with the Larne and Donaghadee landings. With Home Rule on the Statute Book in September, the existence of MacNeill's Volunteers, unless they achieved real military strength, seemed to serve little purpose.

The IRB men who joined MacNeill's splinter movement did have the policy he lacked, even if their response to Redmond's gamble was more

[83] Kee, *Green flag*, pp. 524–5.

[84] The figures cited by the various authorities on the subject often differ in detail, but the orders of magnitude are similar.

[85] G. Dangerfield, *The damnable question* (London, 1977), p. 121. Three died on the spot,

visceral than cerebral. The IRB appointed a military committee in September 1914 to secure effective control over MacNeill's organisation in order to launch a military rising. This committee would still have been at the preliminary planning phase at the end of the war had hostilities ended as quickly as generally anticipated. Much hinged on the length of the war. Its continuation deprived Redmond of his anticipated postwar home rule army, as well as giving the IRB time to actually do something. The stalemate in Flanders salvaged the reputation of the IRB and doomed the remaining hopes of Redmond.

The war led to the formation of a coalition cabinet in May 1915. Carson joined the government as Attorney General. Redmond refused an offer of office. This was consistent with party principles, but inconsistent with his own tactics since August 1914. The logical conclusion of supporting the war in the hope of forging a union of hearts between nationalists and unionists in Ireland was that Redmond should accept office to confirm his stature as a responsible statesman and to increase further the fund of putative postwar goodwill on which he hoped to draw. There was little logical justification for supporting the war but refusing office, even if the acceptance of office would have offered his critics some ammunition. Redmond got the worst of both worlds. By the summer of 1915, after the initial enthusiasm of the previous autumn, associated with the passing of the Home Rule Bill, Redmond was already losing his grip on nationalist Ireland as the war turned into carnage, as home rule receded into an uncertain future, and as Ulster Unionists were widely felt to have out-manoeuvred Home Rulers at Westminster.[86]

The recruitment figures provide a useful, if partial, clue to public opinion. The Irish returns reveal a relatively weak sense of identity with the war effort. It has been calculated that 26.9 per cent of the relevant age group in Scotland served in the army during the war, 24.2 per cent in England and Wales, but only 10.7 per cent in Ireland.[87] The low Irish figure reflects the steep decline in Irish recruiting as the war progressed. But this decline began quite early in the war. Between August and December 1914, 43 000 men enlisted in Ireland and a further 37 000 between January and August 1915. In the next eight months – before the Easter Rising – there were only 12 000 recruits. The number of volunteers in the first year of the war exceeded the total in the remaining three years.[88] Even in the first year, a disproportionate number, about half,

[86] F.S.L. Lyons, 'Dillon, Redmond and the Irish Home Rulers', in Martin (ed.), *Leaders and men*, p. 41.

[87] J.M. Winter, 'Britain's "lost generation" of the First World War', *Population Studies*, 31, 3 (1976), 451.

[88] *Report on recruiting in Ireland, 1914–16* (Cd. 8168), xxxix, 525; Kee, *Green flag*, pp. 525, 552, 623; Fitzpatrick, *Politics*, p. 315, n. 38. Recruitment figures cited in the literature are often compiled in a casual manner. They sometimes fail to distinguish

came from Ulster.[89] Leinster supplied more than a quarter, with Munster and Connacht providing relatively few. If one allows for unionist recruits from Ulster and Leinster, and attributes some of the Dublin working-class recruitment to sheer economic necessity, it would seem that enthusiasm for the war was never as widespread in nationalist Ireland as the media, dominated by pro-war elements, suggested. It waned to virtual vanishing point from the autumn of 1915. The evidence goes some way to confirm the claim of Maurice Headlam, a jaundiced but presumably informed Dublin Castle official, that 'we in Ireland knew . . . that . . . the bulk of the population . . . seized any pretext . . . to avoid fighting in France'.[90]

THE EASTER RISING

The surprising feature of the Rising of April 1916, at least in the light of the hallowed republican dictum that 'England's danger is Ireland's opportunity', was not that it took place, but that it took place so late. It was not until May 1915, when the war had generally been expected to be over, that the IRB 'Military Committee' (later called Military Council) actually began to plan an insurrection.[91] Tom Clarke and Sean MacDermott, the two conscious manipulators on the Supreme Council of the IRB, recruited Patrick Pearse, then Director of Operations in the Irish Volunteers, whom they saw as a suitable front man, to this committee, which also ultimately included Éamon Ceannt, Joseph Mary Plunkett, Thomas MacDonagh, and James Connolly. Had the war finished as quickly as expected, the ineffectuality of the IRB would have been even more ignominiously exposed than during the Boer War. The Military Committee grasped this, and hoped initially for a September 1915 rising, but failed to finalise plans. James Connolly also sensed the urgency of the situation. He urged rebellion in the summer of 1915. The IRB had to curb his impetuosity in January 1916 by assuring him of its determination to rise at Easter, and by co-opting him to the Military Council.

The Easter Rising went off at half-cock. Twenty thousand German guns expected to arrive in time were lost when the British intercepted the supply ship, the *Aud*, on the eve of the insurrection. This mishap was compounded when Eoin MacNeill, hearing of the plans at the last moment,

between recruits during the war itself and the total number of Irish enlisted in the army, which included pre-war recruits. Henry Harris, 'The other half million', in O.D. Edwards and F. Pyle (eds.), *1916: The Easter Rising* (London, 1968), pp. 101–15, includes the descendants of Irish emigrants in Britain and the Dominions to reach his total of a half million 'Irish' recruits. See also Fitzpatrick, *Politics*, pp. 109–11.

89 Ervine, *Craigavon*, p. xi.

90 M. Headlam, *Irish reminiscences* (London, 1947), p. 149. Headlam was Treasury Remembrancer and Deputy Paymaster for Ireland at the time.

91 L. Ó Broin, *Revolutionary underground* (Dublin, 1976), pp. 167–9.

cancelled the mobilisation orders issued for Easter Sunday. The hastily rearranged Rising that began on Easter Monday was not, therefore, the intended insurrection. The Military Council had permitted itself the luxury of hoping that the country in general, outside unionist Ulster, with which it had no contact, would rebel. But the Council's plans for a national rising were distinctly vague.[92] The interception of the German arms, and MacNeill's countermanding order, added to the confusion.[93] In the event, the Rising was mainly confined to Dublin. It proved a militarily gallant but hopeless enterprise in the face of superior force, though it was to leave over 400 dead and about 3000 wounded.

In the manifesto he composed shortly before he surrendered to save useless bloodshed, Pearse, who assumed the role of leader as his natural right, no longer content to play the figurehead role designed for him by MacDermott and Clarke, claimed the rebels would have won but for the loss of the German weapons. In the event, the Rising had turned into a blood sacrifice. But it had not been planned that way from the outset. Had the Rising been intended solely or even mainly as a blood sacrifice, it could have been mounted earlier in the war. It was planned to occur when the rebels felt they had the maximum chance of success, however limited this may have appeared in absolute terms. The IRB doctrine that 'England's danger is Ireland's opportunity' was, in objective terms, sheer illusion. The IRB envisaged a military victory, following full-scale war, not the sapping guerrilla campaign that was finally to induce British politicians to the negotiating table in 1921 through its influence on English public opinion. Whatever about England conceding independence when she felt herself completely secure, no great power could afford any risk where not merely her prestige, but her own security, was at stake. It was therefore only in peacetime, not in wartime, that England could contemplate major concessions to Irish claims. Nevertheless, however illusory the IRB doctrine, it was not blood sacrifice doctrine.[94] And however profusely blood sacrifice sentiments spatter the later writings of Pearse and MacDonagh, and however retrospectively relevant they appeared to be in the circumstances, it seems unhistorical to interpret these sentiments as the basis of the actual planning of the Rising.

In view of the hopeless prospects of the Rising that actually occurred, it became psychologically and morally incumbent on the leaders to justify it in terms of saving Ireland's honour. It was therefore obligatory on them to couch their last testaments in terms of blood sacrifice. It seems reasonable to assume that the actual course of the Rising left its mark on the type of

92 C. Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 297–8.

93 Kee, *Green flag*, p. 571.

94 R.W. Dudley Edwards, 'Resurrection of the spirit of independence', *Irish Press*, 16 April 1979.

interpretation that it was felt would carry most historical conviction. Emphasis on calculation of the balance of military probabilities would have seemed ludicrous in the circumstances, and would appear to vindicate the charges of lunacy hurled at the rebels by vociferous critics. On Easter Monday morning many of the leaders must have felt, like James Connolly, that they were going out to be slaughtered. But this does not justify the presentation of the Rising in purely blood sacrifice terms. Connolly himself had hoped for victory almost to the final moment of decision.[95] Many of the rank and file, like Seán MacEntee, had probably not closely calculated the chances of success.[96] Even the vague suggestion during the Rising, that a German prince should become king of Ireland, intimates a clutching at straws rather than unwavering devotion to blood sacrifice doctrine.[97] As fat as the forward planning of the Rising was concerned, a balanced appraisal suggests that it was intended that if it should fail, then it should fail not only with honour, but with effect.[98]

Pearse grudgingly accepted the Home Rule Bill in 1912. He became gradually convinced, however, that the UVF appeal to force made the peaceful achievement of home rule impossible. Much of Pearse's glorification of war in 1915 and 1916 was tactical. Indeed, the extent to which Pearse thought tactically tends to be overlooked in the fascination with the more exotic aspects of his character. Nevertheless, his intense nature did rebel against exclusively tactical argument. He therefore exalted force as potentially noble in itself. There are passages in Pearse glorifying bloodshed, at least in theory, passionately though he denounced Redmond for sacrificing Irish blood 'to England as a peace holocaust' in the First World War.[99] Fashionable as belligerent sentiments were at this time, and restrained though Pearse's rhetoric may sound compared with that of the young Sean O'Casey,[100] he undoubtedly subscribed to the Churchillian dictum that 'there are things worse than bloodshed, even on an extended scale'. As he himself put it, 'There are many things more horrible than bloodshed, and slavery is one of them',[101] a view he shared fully with Carson, Craig and Bonar Law, as well as with a broad stratum

[95] Ruth Dudley Edwards, *James Connolly* (Dublin, 1981), pp. 133, 145. The most thorough study of MacDonagh rejects the 'blood sacrifice' interpretation of his thinking. See Johann A. Norstedt, *Thomas MacDonagh* (Charlottesville, 1980), pp. 141–2.

[96] Radio interview with Seán MacEntee on RTE, 25 January 1977.

[97] *Memoirs of Desmond FitzGerald, 1913–1916* (Dublin, 1968), pp. 139–41.

[98] F. O'Donoghue, 'Ceannt, Devoy, O'Rahilly and the military plan', in Martin, *Leaders and men*, p. 191.

[99] Pearse, 'Ghosts', in *Political writings*, p. 232.

[100] Robert Hogan (ed.), *Feathers from the green crow: Sean O'Casey, 1905–1925* (Columbia, Mo., 1962), pp. 15–17.

[101] Pearse, 'The coming revolution', in *Political writings*, p. 88.

of British and European intellectuals of his generation.[102] He even shared the robust view of Dr D'Arcy, the articulate Bishop of Down, that 'there are things worse than civil war'.[103] In practice, Pearse, a gentle man, was revolted by the sight of blood. He refused to distribute the explosive bullets landed in the Howth gun running because they were against the rules of civilised war.[104] That he may have exaggerated the lethal qualities of the bullets does not detract from his concern.[105] And if he felt it necessary to claim over the grave of O'Donovan Rossa, the old Fenian, in 1915, that 'splendid and holy causes are served by men who are themselves splendid and holy', he was sufficient of a realist to recognise in 1916 the danger that his idealised republican tradition might be prostituted by some of the Volunteers and to include in the Proclamation of the Republic a plea against rebel 'inhumanity'.

Pearse resisted the conclusion of Eoin MacNeill that a rising was morally unjustifiable unless conscription or other unacceptable measures were imposed. MacNeill felt that only if 'the vital principle of nationality' was at stake could a rising be morally justified.[106] Discerning scholars have found MacNeill's reasoning logically compelling. It is possible to take a less benign view. Neither in terms of military tactics nor of democratic ideology were MacNeill's arguments necessarily superior to those of Pearse. MacNeill held that 'unacceptable measures' might be justly resisted, including above all any attempt by British forces to deprive the Volunteers of their handful of weapons.[107] 'Unacceptable measures'—but unacceptable to whom? MacNeill's Volunteers were a private army. MacNeill's view had no more popular mandate than had the actual Rising itself. Nor had MacNeill's contemplated resistance any more objective chance of success than the actual Rising—and it might have claimed many more innocent casualties. MacNeill's insistence on waiting for the enemy to choose his time made little logical or moral sense in the circumstances. The differences between MacNeill and Pearse were less those of moral principle than of tactical opinion.[108]

[102] R.N. Stromberg, 'The intellectuals and the coming of war in 1914', *Journal of European Studies*, 3 (1973), pp. 109–22; D. Kiberd, 'Inventing Ireland', *Crane Bag*, 8, 1 (1984), p. 17.

[103] Megahey, 'Irish Protestant churches', pp. 83–5, discusses the cult of violence among Protestant clergy opposing Home Rule after 1885.

[104] Dangerfield, *Damnable question*, p. 121.

[105] M. Tierney, *Eoin MacNeill* (Oxford, 1980), p. 144.

[106] Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 347. [107] *Ibid.*, p. 348.

[108] J. Lee, 'A Jabobin (sic) after his time', *Irish Press*, 21 April 1977; J. Lee, *The modernisation of Irish society, 1849–1918* (Dublin, 1973), p. 154. MacNeill's *Memorandum* was published by F.X. Martin, 'Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising', *IHS*, 12 (March, 1961), pp. 226–7. MacNeill's arguments have generally been favourably received by historians. There are sympathetic expositions of his viewpoint in Lyons, *Ireland*, pp. 347–9, in Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse: the triumph of failure* (London, 1977), pp. 248–50, and in Townshend, *Political violence*, pp. 39 ff.

It is tempting to speculate on the possible results of resistance *à la* MacNeill. Conor Cruise O'Brien has ventured to reconstruct the possible results of an insurrection in the face of the conscription threat of April 1918. O'Brien postulates that a rising at that stage would have enjoyed massive popular support, that Britain would therefore have had to withdraw troops from the western front to crush it, that mutinies would then have broken out among the Irish troops on the western front, infecting the war weary British and French, perhaps indeed even the Germans, 'though this is more doubtful'. The European proletariat would then have seized the opportunity to overthrow the capitalist order – hardly the scenario Eoin MacNeill envisaged, however it might have gladdened James Connolly's socialist heart.[109] An equally plausible scenario might assume that a rising in response to the conscription threat, with however massive popular support, would have been crushed far more ruthlessly than that of 1916, unless the rebels were incomparably better armed. As at least half the Irish troops on the western front must have been unionists, it is far from certain that any putative Irish mutiny would have spread like wild fire. Even if it had spread among the western allies, it would be much more reasonable to assume, as Dr O'Brien concedes, that the Germans would not have mutinied. In that case, Germany might either have won the war, or at least driven Britain from the continent – and then have turned on Russia with a vengeance to exact a tribute that would have made Brest-Litovsk appear magnanimous. Lenin might then have had second thoughts as to whether the Easter Rising had occurred 'prematurely'!

We may safely surmise that John Redmond had little time to contemplate such cosmic scenarios as the news from Dublin reached him in London. The Rising placed Redmond in a dilemma. It was a stab in the back for his policy of winning home rule through conciliation. The episode of the *Aud* confirmed the claim of German support contained in the Proclamation of the Republic. The insurrection appeared to vindicate traditional unionist assumptions about the congenital 'treachery' of nationalist Ireland. Nevertheless, if Redmond called for the execution of the rebels he might provoke a nationalist backlash. He denounced the Rising on 27 April, temporised over the first executions, then denounced executions from 6 May.[110]

Public opinion in Ireland was reported hostile to the Rising. But the situation was very unclear. It has remained so to this day. The consensus among historians is that an initially hostile public opinion was transformed by the executions into retrospective support for, and romanticisation of, the rebels.[111] This assumption appeals to both supporters and critics of the Rising. Supporters, anxious to dramatise the blood sacrifice theme, or to invoke the authority of a heroic elite against mere public opinion, naturally stress the lack of initial popular support. Critics are also tempted to develop this theme in order to denounce the entire enterprise as anti-democratic. The historical consensus is not based, however, on scholarly review of the evidence. Indeed, in view of the importance of the issues involved, it comes as a surprise to find that only one systematic attempt has been made to follow the reporting in some of the main newspapers.[112] The failure by historians to sift the evidence can best be explained by the pervasive assumption that we know the answer already. Even a cursory examination of the conveniently available evidence, however, reveals some of the complexities of an apparently simple issue. The real historical challenge is to reconstruct reactions *in the light of the information actually available to the public at the time*. This is not as simple as it sounds. It is in fact extraordinarily difficult to reconstruct the public response. This is mainly because little concrete objective information became available to the public during Easter week itself. It is therefore difficult to know what precisely the public felt it was in fact responding to.

The Rising began on 24 April and ended on 29 April. No detailed newspaper reports appeared until early May. The unionist *Irish Times* did continue publication during the Rising, but local difficulties combined with the censorship to restrict reporting. The paper frankly confessed it carried little news of the Rising, and solicitously enquired on the Wednesday of Easter week 'how many citizens of Dublin have any real knowledge of the works of Shakespeare? Could any better occasion . . . be afforded than the coincidence of enforced domesticity with the poet's tercentenary?'[113] The unionist *Daily Express* reappeared on 3 May, a day earlier than the two main home rule papers, the *Irish Independent* and the *Freeman's Journal*. We therefore have no strictly contemporary newspaper reporting from the actual scene. Dubliners themselves were

[109] C.C. O'Brien, 'The embers of Easter, 1916–1966', in Edwards and Pyle, *Easter Rising*, pp. 225–7.

[110] Edwards and Pyle, *Easter Rising*, have a chronology on the Rising and related events, pp. 30–5. Gwynn, *Redmond*, p. 483.

[111] Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 373; Lee, *Modernisation*, pp. 155–6. Hints of a more discriminating approach can be detected in Fitzpatrick, *Politics*, p. 121.

[112] O.D. Edwards, '*The Irish Times* on the Easter Rising' and 'Press reaction to the Rising in general', in Edwards and Pyle, *Easter Rising*, pp. 241–50, 251–71. Mr Edwards deals in these appendices with the *Freeman's Journal*, *Irish Independent*, *Daily Express* (Dublin), *Cork Free Press*, and *Cork Examiner*, as well as with some foreign and Belfast papers. This important pioneering survey has not received due recognition, perhaps because it is tucked away in appendices.

[113] *Irish Times*, 27 April 1916. No doubt every hand in the 20 000 families whom O'Casey described as 'wriggling together like worms in a putrid mass in horror-filled one room tenements' eagerly stretched for the *Collected works* on reading this reminder in their daily *Times*!

deprived of newspaper information during the Rising. Most had little knowledge of events. Even diarists in the city centre, like James Stephens, or residents like Redmond's chief lieutenant, John Dillon, had only limited knowledge of the general situation. Their accounts vividly convey the atmosphere of uncertainty, close though they were to the action.[114] Rumour expanded to fill the void.

The most prevalent rumour in Dublin was that the Rising was part of, or the immediate prelude to, a German invasion.[115] This was not only the official version, but found widespread credence among the populace. The Dublin papers, on their reappearance, clung to the German plot scenario, liberally laced with doses of a 'socialist revolt' theory.[116] The interpretation advanced in the home rule papers did not significantly differ from that in unionist papers. Only their assessment of the consequences, and their recommendations on future policy, revealed their different ideological affiliations. The *Freeman's Journal*, the main Redmondite paper, naturally followed Redmond's line in the House of Commons on 27 April, in presenting the insurrection as a dastardly German plot. The *Irish Independent*, the biggest mass circulation daily, was sympathetic to home rule, but hostile to Redmond on factional grounds. Its proprietor, William Martin Murphy, the militant Catholic capitalist, still seethed for revenge against James Connolly, who had refused to bow the knee during the 1913 lockout. The *Independent* therefore naturally depicted in lurid terms the 'insane and criminal'[117] Rising, which it eagerly presented as simultaneously a German and a socialist plot. It invoked the authority of the Proclamation of the Republic, with its reference to 'gallant allies in Europe' to sustain its 'German support for rebels' interpretation.[118] It made it clear that it did not oppose violence in principle. It called on young Ireland to 'atone for the crime' of the Rising by flocking to Flanders to 'show the world that Ireland is still sound at heart'.[119] Lest its lower-middle class and farmer constituency should be tempted to forget the threat to social stability posed by the Rising, however, the *Independent* reiterated that 'the backbone of the insurrection was really "Larkinism" and "the citizen army" '.[120] It did print on 8 May the demands for an end to executions from leading English papers and from the *Irish News* in Belfast, but with Connolly still alive it continued to demand the execution of the 'worst' of the remaining leaders. When it could finally record on 13 May that Connolly and MacDermott

[114] James Stephens, *The Insurrection in Dublin* (Dublin, 1965); F.S.L. Lyons, *John Dillon* (London, 1968), pp. 369–72.
[115] Stephens, *Insurrection*, p. 28.
[116] The *Express* laboured hard to keep this interpretation alive into mid-May. See the accounts 9–12 May, and the cartoon on 10 May.
[117] *Irish Independent*, 4 May 1916. [118] *Ibid.*, 5 May 1916. [119] *Ibid.*

were safely dead it found it expedient to call for a halt to further executions.

Unionists of all shades, whose articulate indignation made them disproportionately visible as 'public opinion' immediately following the Rising, naturally repudiated the rebellion. So, at least as long as the German plot version retained credibility, did many families with relatives serving in France, whose womenfolk drew separation money. These two groups probably accounted for at least one-third of the population, and much more than half the articulate opinion, of Dublin. But it is clear that there was also much sympathy for the rebels, at least while there appeared to be some hope of success. James Stephens reports few of those feelings of 'detestation and horror' which Redmond attributed to Irish public opinion in his House of Commons statement on 27 April. Redmond was at that stage in no position to know what Irish public opinion was. Instead, Stephens records a mood of reticence, even of muted hope, rather than of hostility, at least until the Friday, when it was clear that the insurrection had failed.[121] Another diarist records hostility to the prisoners after the Rising from 'the gents and ladies especially of Francis Steet' [sic], and from soldiers' wives. Among the crowds waiting for passes at Dublin Castle on Friday he found 'some' welcoming news of the surrender, 'but many are murmuring what a pity'.[122] An unwilling witness provides evidence that hostility to the rebels was by no means universal. Sir John Maxwell, the British Commander, accounted for some atrocities by British troops by explaining that 'We tried hard to get the women and children to leave North King Street area. They would not go. Their sympathies were with the rebels . . . '[123]

Many unionists were as anxious as Redmond, if for different motives, to stress the lack of public support for the Rising. The diary kept by Revd Gordon Clements, a Protestant clergyman, concluded that 'the citizens of all classes welcomed the coming of troops from England . . . '. But Clements had recorded on Easter Tuesday that the men in the street were 'not indignant' at the rebels, feeling that 'they were hardy boys, even if they are fools'. By Thursday he began to detect a change in mood, but hardly on ideological grounds. 'The populace is non-committal or angry at the disturbance to their normal mode of life. Moreover, rumour has it that the rest of the country is quiet, especially Cork,' and already

[121] Stephens, *Insurrection*, pp. 37–8. Stephens confined this view to the men. The women he found hostile to the Rising.
[122] R. Kain, 'A diary of Easter Week: one Dubliner's experience', *Irish University Review*, 10, 2 (Autumn, 1980), pp. 206–7.
[123] *Irish Independent*, 19 May 1916. Maxwell may have been searching for an excuse. But presumably he sought a plausible explanation.

the people 'sensed the sure defeat, and probably bloody end, of the Insurrectionists'.[124]

John Dillon wrote on 30 April that '*so far* the feeling of the population in Dublin is *against* the Sinn Féiners. But a reaction might very easily be created . . . '. Correct though this comment may have been, it requires sifting in its own right. Firstly, Dillon himself was in no position to know, as his biographer's account makes clear, what opinion in Dublin during the week had been.[125] Dillon simply did not have a sufficiently wide range of day-to-day contact to enable him to generalise abour feeling in Dublin throughout the week. It was not merely that Dillon did not know, but that he could not know. He may have been right about feeling on 29 and 30 April, after the Rising had patently failed. But if he thought it would be so easy to create a reaction, even in the then still confused state of information about the participants and their motives, he must have sensed that sentiment was very volatile indeed. The summing-up a month after the Rising by A.M. Bonaparte-Wyse, a hardline unionist, is noteworthy in so far as it reflects less a change of mood compared with that recorded by Stephens and Clements during the early days of the Rising, than a crystallisation of that mood.[126]

> The city is quiet now, but there is a very menacing tone among the lower classes who openly praise the Sinn Féiners for their courage and bravery, and there is a lot of abuse of the soldiers. At the same time the latter seem to be popular, at least with the female population. The sympathies of the ordinary Irish are with Sinn Féin. They want independence and their only criticism of the rebellion is that it was *foolish* (not criminal or otherwise wrong), but just foolish because it had no chance of success.

When reactions in Dublin are so difficult to document, it would be rash to hazard generalisations about public opinion in the rest of the country. Nevertheless, a few points can be made. Provincial newspapers appeared as usual during the Rising. 'As usual,' however, normally meant Saturday, 29 April, when the Rising was already virtually over. Even the few papers that appeared during the week were in no position to vouch for the accuracy of their information. Having to rely, in an atmosphere of censorship, on official statements, English newspapers and House of Commons reports for their news, they candidly conceded the difficulty of sifting fact from fiction.[127] Scarcely a paper failed to draw attention to the

[124] *Daily Express*, 6 May 1916. [125] Lyons, *Dillon*, pp. 369–73 (quotation p. 373).
[126] A.M. Bonaparte-Wyse to his brother, 28 May 1916, as published in *Irish Times*, 24 April 1965. Bonaparte-Wyse was Junior Secretary to the Board of Commissioners of National Education at the time. He later became a prominent civil servant in Northern Ireland.
[127] My text seeks to build on the foundations laid by Mr Edwards by studying the eleven following provincial newspapers: *Clare Champion*, *Connacht Tribune*, *Cork Examiner*, *Kerryman*, *Kilkenny People*, *Leinster Leader*, *Limerick Leader*, *Nenagh Guardian*, *Roscommon Herald*, *Tipperary Star*, *Wicklow People*. These were published in ten

uncertain state of information, when editors were once more as dependent on 'despatch man and runner' as during 'the stirring days of Emmet and Lord Edward, and the men of '67 . . . as if we were not living in the days of motor, telephone and telegraph'.[128] Rumour naturally filled the knowledge vacuum in the provinces as in Dublin. The midlands luxuriated in 'the general crop of rumours' and 'all kinds of alarming reports'.[129] In Limerick 'all sorts of rumours, all of a sensational character are afloar . . . ',[130] while across the Shannon, Clare was bewildered by 'the maze of rumours'.[131]

The most popular interpretations sweeping the provinces were, as in Dublin, the 'German invasion' and the 'socialist subversion' theses. The *Cork Examiner* immediately branded the Rising 'a communistic disturbance rather than a revolutionary movement' which was 'made in Germany'.[132] The shopocracy of Galway condemned the rebels as stooges equally of Prussia and of Larkin.[133] Tipperary readers, learning of German support for a Rising by 'Sinn Féiners and the followers of Jim Larkin'[134] were warned that 'the Rising on this occasion was socialistic as well as political . . . '.[135] Having recovered from the shock of hearing that Germans had landed at Galway,[136] they were privileged to share with their Kerry cousins the insight of the Bishop of Kerry that the Rising was manipulated by 'evil-minded men affected by Socialistic and Revolutionary doctrines'.[137] The *Roscommon Herald*, edited by Jasper Tully, who had long before earned his literary spurs as a vitriolic anti-Parnellite in 1891,[138] seized every opportunity to denounce Larkin, stressed that the Proclamation of the Republic purported to establish 'a socialistic republic', compared the Rising with the Paris Commune, and reminded its eager readers of the case of Portugal, where priests and nuns were massacred by 'the Portuguese Sinn Féiners'.[139] As late as mid-May, Tully invoked the Commune analogy again, denounced 'the red week' in Dublin, relying no doubt on his readers' capacious recollection of recent events in Barcelona, and dismissed the Proclamation yet again, having now discovered that 'it is drafted on Suffragette lines, and gives votes

different counties, and their readership ranged over most of the south and west of the country. Only the *Kerryman* and the *Kilkenny People* could be considered sympathetic to republicanism. On the *Kerryman*, see Seamus McConville, 'The Kerryman' in *Kerrymen 1881–1981* (New York, n.d.), pp. 59–62.
[128] *Connacht Tribune*, 29 April 1916. [129] *Leinster Leader*, 6 May 1916.
[130] *Limerick Leader*, 26 April 1916.
[131] *Clare Champion*, 29 April 1916.
[132] *Cork Examiner*, 27, 28, 29 April 1916. See also the issues dated 1 May and 4 May.
[133] *Connacht Tribune*, 29 April 1916. [134] *Nenagh Guardian*, 29 April 1916.
[135] *Tipperary Star*, 6 May 1916.
[136] *Ibid.* [137] *Ibid.*, 13 May 1916.
[138] Lee, *Modernisation*, p. 137. Age did not mellow Tully. He was to lose a libel case seventeen years later (*Irish Press*, 11 February 1933).
[139] *Roscommon Herald*, 29 April, 6 May, 13 May 1916.

equally to men and women, and it also has a lot of other "crank" notions'.[140]

The *Wicklow People* not only immediately denounced German support for the Rising,[141] but felt able to assert as late as mid-May that[142]

> The Dublin outbreak was almost entirely the work of *Larkin's* Citizen Army, with Sinn Féin volunteers and Larkin's sympathisers and supporters. Wrecking of property and destruction of every kind is an outstanding phase of *syndicalism*. With the Larkin Citizen Army, the spirit of syndicalism was abroad, hence Dublin suffered so severely by the destruction of our public and commercial buildings and the looting of shops . . . .

The provincial public therefore found itself confronted with at least as wide a range of information and pseudo-information during the Rising itself and the following weeks as the Dublin public. The public was in no position to begin piecing together a coherent picture, of the rebels and their motives, of the origins, or the course, of the Rising, until the first week in May at the earliest. By that stage, with censorship and martial law in operation, with the Rising crushed, the response had to be inevitably to a failed Rising rather than to a potentially successful one. We will probably never be in a position to know the reaction to news of the real Rising as it finally filtered through to individuals across the country. The only generalisation the historian can confidently hazard in these circumstances is that we should be wary of generalisation!

The press, and many local representative bodies closely associated with the Home Rule Party, automatically accustomed to taking their cue from Redmond, initially sought to stress the isolation of the rebels, in order to impress on English home rule supporters how unrepresentative the separatists were in Ireland. This partly explains the reaction to the Rising as 'even more of an attempt to hit us than to hit England'. Condemnation of the Rising, interpreted as a German plot, as Larkinite, and/or as anti-Redmondite, was accordingly widespread. Condemnation of the Rising as a national anti-English revolt also occurred, but far more on tactical than on ideological grounds. The *Connacht Tribune*, in a long and thoughtful leading article, distinguished three groups of Irish people: impractical separatists, deluded Germanophiles, and realistic home rulers. It admitted that it did not know the motives of the rebels and therefore would not condemn them, and above all it urged no revenge: 'Let us not embitter the good by evil or ill-concealed thoughts about these children, who, though errant and rebellious, yet claim out paternal love and affection.'[143] The *Cork Examiner*, scarcely sympathetic to the Rising, advocated amnesty as early as 1 May, two days before the first executions.

[140] *Ibid.*, 13 May 1916.
[141] *Wicklow People*, 29 April 1916.
[142] *Ibid.*, 13 May 1916.

The *Kilkenny People* expressed horror, but even more sadness, at the futility of the Rising.[144] It lamented that 'the Dublin revolution has ended, as everybody not a sheer lunatic must have known it would, in unutterable disaster, defeat and ruin'.[145] The strongly Redmondite *Clare Champion*, though insisting that home rule was safe, suspended ultimate judgement on 6 May. History must judge the rebellion. It just wanted clemency.[146] The *Leinster Leader* regarded the war, or the coup, as terrible, but it didn't even formally condemn it, and pleaded instead for 'mutual good will'.[147] The *Tipperary Star*, under the heading 'Inexplicable imbecility', bewailed the stupidity of the Rising, but more in sorrow than in anger: 'How any body of men could embark on such a desperate enterprise passes commonsense comprehension . . . The old story – everything lost, nothing gained . . . It is a pity of pities that the leaders of the people did not take the young men of Ireland in hand with kind advice before it was too late.'[148]

Three papers that had otherwise little in common, and that crossed the Dublin/provincial divide, the *Daily Express*, the *Roscommon Herald*, and the *Wicklow People*, took a somewhat unusual line. They denounced the Rising for having, *inter alia*, the wrong leaders. The *Daily Express* ridiculed the rebellion because 'the men who organised it were men of no position, of no reputation for serious effort, of no stake in the country'.[149] The *Wicklow People* approved of the executions partly because 'it would take sensible, level headed experienced men to guide a great agitation; none such were associated with the Sinn Féin agitation. It was guided by feather heads and dreamers, hence only mischief and worse than mischief could attend it'.[150] Jasper Tully warmed to this theme, reminding his readers that the Rising was doomed from the outset because 'it was a Poet's Rebellion with too much literature' about it.[151] Tully had not yet exhausted the literary possibilities of this approach. After a fortnight's ripe reflection, he felt that 'the Crazy Rebellion was the work chiefly of a lot of Crazy Poets. This has surprised people as far away as Chicago' – Tully's contact with civilization apparently extended to America as well as Europe – 'who generally regard poets – crazy or uncrazy – with amused contempt!'[152]

A more representative response, as the weeks passed, was to contrast the treatment meted out to the leaders with the leniency shown to Carson and de Wet, the Boer leader. This theme then became intertwined with the

[144] *Kilkenny People*, 29 April 1916.
[145] *Ibid.*, 6 May 1916.
[146] *Clare Champion*, 6 May 1916.
[147] *Leinster Leader*, 6 May 1916.
[148] *Tipperary Star*, 6 May 1916.
[149] *Daily Express*, 3 May 1916.
[150] *Wicklow People*, 6 May 1916.
[151] *Roscommon Herald*, 27 May 1916.
[152] *Ibid.*, 10 June 1916.

argument that the rebels 'did not take human life wantonly',[153] that they had fought 'a clean and gallant fight'.[154] The executions undoubtedly roused resentment, not only from gut instinct, but because the honourable character of the executed men now began to be stressed. Where the Ennis District Council gave the weight of its authority on 3 May to the view that German gold lay behind the possibly socialist Rising, the Ennis Board of Guardians found itself a week later demanding no more executions of 'the misguided patriotic Irish men' involved in the Rising.[155] But the rebels the District Council condemned on 3 May were the stooges of the Kaiser and of Larkin. The Rising the Guardians contemplated on 10 May was simply a different rising. Even before the executions, newspaper comment, however critical of the Rising, was far less condemnatory than one might deduce from a perusal of the *Irish Independent* or the *Freeman's Journal* on their reappearance in Dublin.

Much probing local research is required to establish a more precise chronology and archaeology of popular sentiment. It is possible that public opinion, in so far as one can pronounce on it confidently at all, was not so much reversed as simply crystallised by a combination of the executions and better information. The first executions took place on 3 May. Hard news concerning the Rising began to filter through simultaneously with news of the executions. Most provincial readers, having been fed on a diet of the Kaiser and Larkin during the Rising itself, began to assimilate hard information concurrently with news of the executions. It may not have been reactions to 'the Rising' that changed so much as reactions to changing perceptions of the Rising, based on more accurate information. The uncertainty, bewilderment, hesitancy and ambiguity that characterised many reactions to the first fragmentary reports were quickly replaced, in the light of new information, by mingled feelings of despair at the folly of the rebels, pride in their gallantry, and contempt for the behaviour of their gaolors, feelings which John Dillon – 'the old John Dillon'[156] – well caught in his defiant House of Commons speech on 11 May.[157]

It would be unhistorical to leave 1916 without adverting to the calibre of the rebels. However many parasites may have battened on the reflected glory of the rebel band, the genuine rebels did include an exceptional number of remarkable people. Three future prime ministers, W.T. Cosgrave, Eamon de Valera and Seán Lemass, all men of stature in their very different styles, participated in the Rising. So did Michael Collins, soon to make his meteoric mark. So did others of future public distinction,

153 *Connacht Tribune*, 13 May 1916.
154 *Kilkenny People*, 20 May 1916, letter from Canon Murphy. See also *Cork Examiner*, 6 May 1916.
155 *Clare Champion*, 6, 13 May 1916.
156 *Kilkenny People*, 13 May 1916.
157 Lyons, *Dillon*, pp. 380ff.

including Desmond FitzGerald, Seán MacEntee, Richard Mulcahy, and Jim Ryan.

Among the signatories of the Proclamation of the Republic there were some intellectual nonentities. But there were also some thinkers of stature. Connolly was in a class of his own by the standards not only of Irish socialist but of Irish capitalist thought of his generation. Pearse, who has been mindlessly revered and mindlessly reviled, may have had the potential to develop into a considerable thinker. Victim of an emotionally stunted background, he nevertheless drew from his radical English artisan father unusual qualities of character and intellect. A prodigious worker, a generous instinct – however frequently masked towards the end by the self-flagellatory intensity of his martial prose – an open and receptive mind, he has strong claims to be considered a major educational thinker, certainly by the standards of educational thought in the Ireland of his time, perhaps even by contemporary European standards.[158] Indeed, it would have been interesting to see how long Pearse could have endured some of his companions – or they him – had fate spared them all. Thomas MacDonagh, a much slighter thinker, nevertheless ranks a clear cut above the average representative of, for instance, the Home Rule Party.[159]

The government interned nearly 2000 prisoners after the Rising. Asquith commissioned David Lloyd George, his most nubile negotiator, to make a renewed attempt to persuade nationalists and unionists to agree on an immediate home rule settlement. All the old problems re-emerged. Redmond now conceded the 'temporary' exclusion of six counties, but Ulster Unionists refused to budge on their demand for their permanent exclusion, though they were now reduced definitively to this territorial claim. The failure of the negotiations ripped aside the veil of illusion in which constitutional nationalists had garbed the 1914 Home Rule Act. Even the most gullible nationalists now grasped that a united home rule Ireland would not emerge at the end of the war. The convic-

158 Séamus Ó Buachalla has assembled Pearse's educational writings, hitherto much neglected because of the scattered and often anonymous nature of his prolific output. See Séamus Ó Buachalla, *A significant Irish educationalist* (Dublin and Cork, 1980). For a brief summary see S. Ó Buachalla, 'An Piarsach mar Oideachasóir', *Feasta*, 29, 5 (1976). Sean O'Casey, not the most ecumenical of witnesses, had a lively contempt for most of the 1916 crowd, but paid generous, if grudging, tribute to Pearse in *Drums under the window* (Pan edn, London, 1980), pp. 616–18, 662. Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Pearse*, remains the only historically satisfying biography.
159 Norstedt, *MacDonagh*, confirms that MacDonagh deserves a biography, which is more than can be claimed for many of his Home Rule contemporaries or for ornaments of later parties. For an interpretation of the Rising as a work of art, see W.I. Thompson, *The imagination of an Insurrection: Dublin, Easter 1916* (New York, 1967). F.X. Martin provides an extensive historiographical survey in '1916 – Myth, fact and mystery', *Studia Hibernica*, 7 (1967), pp. 7–126.

tion that Redmond had been out-manoeuvred by perfidious Albion further sapped his authority in Ireland.[160]

SINN FÉIN

If Redmond and Dillon were the main political victims, Arthur Griffith and Eamon de Valera were the main political beneficiaries of the Rising. Griffith did not participate in the insurrection. Nevertheless, the home rule press and the British succeeded in investing Griffith's moribund Sinn Féin with a degree of authority it had never managed to achieve on its own, by the simple device of branding all rebels Sinn Féiners. Little wonder that those more immediately involved resented Griffith's elevation to unprecedented prominence. Count Plunkett, father of the executed Joseph Mary Plunkett, won a Roscommon by-election in February 1917, and made an early bid for the leadership of the emerging separatist movement. But he was quickly eclipsed by the new star, Eamon de Valera, senior surviving commandant of the Rising, who had no intention of brooking any rivals for the leadership after his release from internment in 1917.

De Valera's spectacular victory as a Sinn Féin candidate in the Clare by-election in July 1917 enabled him to repulse the challenge for the leadership not only of Count Plunkett, but of Griffith himself, firmly relegated to the vice-presidency of his own party. De Valera was unanimously elected president of both Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers in October 1917, thus blurring the differences between the political and the paramilitary movements. The rejuvenated Sinn Féin was more akin to a popular front resistance movement than to a parliamentary party. To preserve the unity of the fragile coalition, the leadership shelved potentially disruptive issues. This inevitably meant endorsement of the social and economic status quo. That made political sense. The Proclamation of the Republic, in which Pearse and Connolly appeared, however vaguely, to commit the rebels to building a new society, promising equality of social and economic opportunity, would make little appeal to the established interests now shifting to the new Sinn Féin as the best guarantor of their inherited status.[161]

For unionist Ulster the threat appeared at least as perilous in 1918 as in 1912. Sinn Féin, superseding the Home Rule party, seemed poised to launch a two-pronged attack on the identity of the Protestant people, threatening them with subjection to Gaelic culture as well as to Rome rule. Both nationalist parties shared the same attitude, however much their

[160] Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 379; M. Laffan, *The partition of Ireland 1911–1925* (Dundalk, 1983), pp. 54–5.

policies might differ in emphasis, towards Ulster Protestants. Ulster unionists must come into a united Ireland and they would come in, if only the conniving British left. The Proclamation of the Republic clung to the orthodox home rule interpretation of Ulster unionism, portraying the unionists as puppets of the crafty British, who had 'carefully fostered' little local differences between minority and majority. Sinn Féin showed supreme insensitivity towards Protestant fears. The manner in which the Catholic hierarchy bestowed its blessing on nationalist resistance to conscription in 1918 supplied further evidence that home rule was Rome rule. So did the manner in which both Sinn Féin and Home Rulers appealed to none other than the Catholic primate, Cardinal Logue, to act as arbiter between them in the case of disputed nationalist seats in Ulster in the general election of December 1918.

Ill-conceived government policy encouraged the growing enthusiasm for Sinn Féin. 'By the sporadic exercise of ill-directed *force majeure*, by interference in public assemblies, arrests, trials and imprisonments, the Castle made heroes out of nobodies . . . '.[162] County Clare, congratulated by its premier newspaper in 1916 on 'its magnificent and unanimous loyalty to Mr Redmond'[163] had already swung into the Sinn Féin camp with de Valera's dramatic election triumph in July 1917.[164] In February 1918 it had to be proclaimed a 'special military area' under the Defence of the Realm Act.[165]

Redmond, his authority crumbling, died in March 1918, shortly before the collapse of a futile Irish Convention devised by Lloyd George in the alleged hope that the Irish could agree on a constitution for their country. Sinn Féin boycotted the convention, which therefore became a largely academic exercise. The Ulster Unionist representatives predictably rejected Redmond's proposals. In immediate political terms, the main contribution of the convention was to show that Southern unionists were now seeking to accommodate themselves to the likelihood of a Southern state and were thus becoming increasingly aware of the differences separating themselves from Ulster unionists. Despite its immediate irrelevance the convention has been unjustly neglected in nationalist historiography. It confronted, at a high level of civility and intelligence, most of the issues that would baffle later generations of Irishmen, not only in terms of unionist–nationalist relations, but in terms of the nature of a nationalist state. That it failed to reconcile conflicting loyalties and interests, within the constraints imposed by the imperial power, reflects

[162] *Ibid.*, p. 148. See also Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 386.

[163] *Clare Champion*, 6 May 1916.

[164] The *Clare Champion* duly swung with public opinion. But de Valera's majority of about 3000, compared with predictions of about 1000, clearly surprised the pundits, who normally expected to predict results to within a handful of votes (*Clare Champion*, 7, 14 July 1917).

[165] C. Townshend, *The British campaign in Ireland 1919–1921* (Oxford, 1978), p. 7.