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BRITISH DILEMMA

What rankles most with Unionists is their loss of sovereignty within their own statelet. On the peace and order front the British Army has all but replaced the traditional Unionist repressive forces, the R.U.C. and the disbanded B Specials. At the moment the British Army currently deploys twelve major units totalling 7,500 men, outnumbering the R.U.C. by a ratio of 2:1. Those reserve forces which might be so easily so manipulable by the Unionists are in even poorer shape. The R.U.C. Reserve force has not yet reached its projected strength of 1,500. Indeed John Taylor has to admit in Parliament that on 1st April it had only 701 members, or 47% of its requirements. The U.D.R. is crippled by resignations (of 4,790 men recruited no fewer than 652, or about one man in seven, have resigned) and has now only 4,064 on its strength.

In fact it is deliberate British government policy to match these three armed forces that can be so readily identified with or adapted to Unionism, man for man, and to outnumber the R.U.C. by two to one. Even in the official underworld the British outweigh the Unionists. Scotland Yard detectives operating from the top floor of Churchill House, Victoria Square, Belfast and the Conway Hotel, Dunmurray, have done a quiet cuckoo-type ousting of the Ross Laird Special Branch mob whose authority has been eroded as disastrously as some of their premises have recently been. And, of course, the Special Air Service is kept with safety-catches off.

There may be political reasons for this massive British presence in the light of impending constitutional changes here, but there are other reasons as well. Briefly the British government is in a dilemma between two conflicting commitments.

(CON. INSIDE)



Strolling through the park

The first person to greet us at Ulster 71 was an English parking attendant (by no means the only Englishman imported to staff this Ulster Expo). Another 'present from Britain' was the British Army who had set up a watchpost on a school adjacent. Perhaps, my friend suggested, they were playing the Festival Game - spot the Special Branch man - if so every observer would have totted up a good score. The 'black caped defenders of Ulster's heritage' were also very much in evidence, even though they tried to mingle and merge with the crowd and look interested only in the exhibits. An Army chopper did a slow reconnaissance sweep overhead and the Beatles, from a nearby loudspeaker, told me "everything's alright now". The handout tells us the 'exhibition' covers 37 acres, but if one subtracts the area of Botanic Gardens, the Museum, etc. what is left would perhaps have made a reasonable NI stand at Expo '70, Tokyo. The domes range in size from the tiny Information Dome, where a bored looking couple lounge against a desk, the last resting place of 2 pamphlets on 71, through Festival Dome (not open till 4 pm), Disco 71 Dome (closed till late evening) to the 'larger' Amusement Dome and LEDU Dome where paper flowers cost 60p. The largest and most crowded dome is the Bar & Restaurant where keg Harp is widely advertised but impossible to obtain and the colour scheme is - yes of course - predominantly ORANGE. The Main Exhibition opens with a history lesson which gives us the impression that Pope Adrian IV's gift of Ireland to the English brought civilisation to this wild land and that the Plantation was a Sunday School outing that stayed. We go through darkened dome where 'pretty pictures' of Ulster are flashed on the ceiling to the display on Ulster Technology - Skyvan (which the Government report on the Aircraft Industry says should be built in ENGLAND) Martin Baker Ejector Seats (employing no one here) and Dye Lasers (to employ 12). Then we come to the two faced, or should I say double sided, display on Education, Housing and Industry. A picture of a pre 1920's school shows Ulster's past (though lots of these schools exist in similar conditions today). The slogan to Housing is Ulster Really Cares and to industry, Ulster Means Business (to each one could ask the question - For whom?). On the Medicine stand we are taught about Kidney and Heart Machines though they neglect to mention that Derry's Mobile Coronary Care Unit was bought from money donated from it's working class, who at present are collecting once more - this time for a Kidney Machine. Opposite is an exhibit entitled 'Fibres'. I was tickled to see a sub-heading - Examples of Yarn Spinning (Ulster 71 perhaps?) Next we are shown a mock-up (for want of a better word) of the State Opening of Parliament using stuffed dummies to represent the stuffed dummies of that 'establishment', going on to a review of famous and infamous Ulster men and women. One cannot help but notice that almost all of these people were forced to immigrate to foreign lands before they 'made good'. Leisure Ulster is a layout in green cloth and moss peat - courtesy of Bord na Mona - to represent the land, together with plastic trees and recorded birdsong. One can only wonder, in the middle of the Botanic Gardens - why? Displayed for our adoration is a model of Derry Sports Complex without mention that the Government now only intend to build half of it. We now go through a simulated back street alley on the walls of which are painted Government 'good slogans'. Examples are End Hypocrisy, A Fair Deal For All, Houses For Everyone, and the good old Unionist - Preserve Our Heritage. No comment is needed. Ulster Tomorrow has us in the dark again, this time to see a screened party political programme introduced by Adrienne Corrie (of Romper Room fame, and still telling fairy stories as if to children) and David Dunseath (a television interviewer who in the past has tripped politicians on these very issues) As we tear ourselves away from this beautiful dream of Ulster's future and go towards the exit we see (behind strengthened glass) an example of a bright modern kitchen adjoined by a beautiful lounge and made up of Ulster products - we can tell this simply as the predominant colour is once again orange. One wonders though, how many working class Ulster families would ever be able to afford such a lounge or kitchen. We finally stagger out into the fresh polluted air and one look around the Belfast skyline is enough to bring back reality - the police, the troops, the old dilapidated houses, the jobless the poor, the exploited -

THIS IS ULSTER 71.

BRITISH DILEMMA

(CON. FROM FRONT PAGE)

On the one hand they desperately need a quiescent Northern Ireland as a prerequisite for smooth entry to the Common Market, and because they must maintain effective forces on the Rhine as part of their N.A.T.O. obligations. But on the other hand there is the conviction among all major political parties at Westminster that no native Northern Ireland force could possibly be trusted with the maintenance of community calm. Protestant extremists would want to use such an armed force as a latter-day Riot Squad against uppity Fenians, Catholic extremists would launch Bogside-style open war on it overnight. The "moderates" would wring their hands with warnings about emulating Bill Craig's blunders of 1968 and Socialists would oppose such a force as a sectarian gambit to perpetuate the Orange-Green split within working class ranks.

The ultra-Conservative "Daily Telegraph" made the point strongly through its military correspondent Brigadier W.F.K. Thompson last week. He pointed out that Britain was one of the few countries not to have a "third force" of riot police alongside civil police and army. He continued, "It is tempting to see a solution to the security problem in Northern Ireland in the creation of such a force of riot police. But in the circumstances of Northern Ireland I doubt its practicability. If recruited locally it would be unlikely to stand the strain on discipline and deal out even-handed justice in the face of serious communal riots. While if such a force were recruited in Britain it would be seen as a new version of the Black and Tans".

For the present the British government has no solution to the problems of community hate and mutual suspicion beyond the stamping out of disagreement and dissent by a mighty application of the jackboot. It has not yet suggested universally acceptable political solutions. It has proof of Unionism's inability to govern effectively - never mind justly. It appears to be adopting a policy of *laissez-faire* in the hope that, as Brigadier Thompson despairingly remarks, "maybe the entry of the United Kingdom and Eire into the Common Market will provide a catalyst".

In the meantime Britain pours in its soldiers to carefully outnumber the armed spearhead of a possible Unionist backlash against either direct rule or Common Market assimilation. And hopes to God its defence forces, emasculated by the disease which is Northern Ireland, will not be required elsewhere in earnest until the arrogance of Unionism is purged.

R.W.GRIMSHAW.

PD Lecture

The P.D. symposium on internment brought home to the audience in a very personal manner just how cruel and evil this weapon of the Unionists is. Paddy Joe Maclean, of the Mid-Ulster Socialists (interned 1956-60), indicated just how they used it to try to break not only a movement but also people's spirit. There was an Appeals Tribunal, supposedly independent, whose basic function was to assess how much your spirit had been crushed, to obtain information useful to the state and, ultimately, to encourage emigration. The question of signing various pledges of "good behaviour" in order to be let out was a difficult one, Mr. Maclean said, since if you signed them you didn't necessarily get out. As the internees were so many it was inevitable that a large proportion of activists would be captured. Tactically he admitted it might be better to forego honour and sign, though when lifted in August he changed his mind. The audience was left with the feeling that such a decision is personal, though, increasingly, political decisions must be taken into account. He suggested a way to best illuminate the fifty years of Unionism would be a parade of persons bearing the names and dates of all those interned

at that time. Arthur Kearney, a sentenced prisoner, spoke of the double burden of such political prisoners, especially the young prisoners - outside the camaraderie of the internment wing and up against it with the hardened non-political prisoners. The system, however, creates the criminal elements in society, an extra reason for fighting it, to improve the lot of mankind. Frank McGlade, who spent the war in various Northern jails, including a prison ship in Strangford Lough, said "Just stay in the house a week and you'll know what prison is like". He spoke without bitterness of harsh times in Derry Jail when the internees had to go down a line of B Men and warders as punishment. He also mentioned the behaviour of the Free Staters whom he said were more personally vicious and who constantly tried to break into the internees' privacy. Another concentration camp victim spoke of Brendan Behan and the various socialist sections that sprang up in the camp. To indicate that the Unionists do not discriminate against women, an ex-internee of Armagh reminded the audience of the time women were hosed down when the B Men panicked. She exhorted all who might be picked up in the future to "know the rules" and be an insatiable *Oliver Twist* - always ask for more.

Community Schools

The Catholic Church is currently engaged in a successful takeover bid for control of vocational (or technical) schools in 31 areas of the South with the full connivance of the Fianna Fail Minister for Education. And the teachers in the schools, gagged and shackled by the system, can do nothing about it.

The negotiations started several months ago, when the idea of "Community Schools" - a merger of secondary schools (nominally at least non-denominational) - was mooted by the Minister, Padraig Faulkner. The hierarchy initially raised its voice in protest against the proposal, and immediate steps were taken to pacify and reassure it. It has now emerged triumphant from its consultations with Mr. Faulkner, since it has not only retained control of the secondary schools but has gained control of the vocational schools as well.

The method by which control of the proposed "Community Schools" will be exercised is through the medium of "four and two committees", four of whose members will be nominated by the secondary school authorities - or in other words religious bodies - and two by the Vocational Education Committee. The three trustees of the school site and buildings will be nominated by the local Catholic Bishop, who will select one of the trustees from a list drawn up by the Committee.

The proposals were published without agreement with the V.E.C., and to say that the Vocational teachers are concerned about them is putting it mildly. One executive officer described them as "a witch's brew of autocracy and ultra-sectarianism". But the hierarchy, not surprisingly, is now pretty happy with the prospect of "Community Schools" despite its initial kick-up about them.

Asked on television if the schools under such a system would truly be "Community Schools", Cardinal Conway, who performed the negotiations for the hierarchy on the merger-which-ended-up-as-a takeover, said that all the trustees would be members of the community. They were important because there might be future moves to "de-Catholicise" the schools. He said he knew of no other viable way of running the schools, and the idea of giving voting rights to secular bodies, like athletic associations, would be unthinkable.

The Vocational teachers - the third party involved - will doubtless continue to publicly question how a Church-State deal could become a printed reality without their knowledge or consent. But with the Cardinal at the helm and the faithful of Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the Irish Labour Party cheering him on, it's pretty obvious that they will be wasting their breath.

J.S.