

ENGLAND'S WHITE NIGGERS: BRITISH PARTY IMAGES OF  
IRELAND IN THE HOME RULE ERA

by

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The . . . English worker . . . cherishes religious, social and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude toward him is much the same as that of the "poor whites" to the "niggers" in the former slave states of the U.S.A.

--Karl Marx

[The English working classes looked upon] Irish labor as "black," and therefore stayed resolutely unsympathetic to catalogues of the wrongs of Ireland.

--A. P. Thornton

The Irish played a role in British history from 1800-1922 similar to that of the Negro in American history.

--Lawrence J. McCaffrey

In Northern Ireland Catholics are Blacks who happen to have white skins. . . .

--Liam de Paor

[The Ulster Protestant] despised his Catholic neighbours, they were no countrymen of his: they were a lower order of human being.

--George Dangerfield

## PREFACE

From 1870 until 1918 the Irish sought a degree of self-government in domestic, as distinct from foreign or imperial, matters. Their aim was to achieve a modest degree of autonomy within the United Kingdom, a move which would have organized the United Kingdom on a federal basis, leaving England's ultimate authority and sovereignty in Ireland untouched. Since the Nationalist Party had failed by 1918 to achieve these goals the Irish people turned overwhelmingly to a new party, Sinn Fein, which demanded the complete severance of all political ties with England and the establishment of a sovereign Irish republic. The refusal of British statesmen to accede to the wishes of the Nationalist Party drove Ireland into the arms of the republicans and led directly to the destruction of the political union between Ireland and England and to the division of Ireland into two separate states.

The purpose of this study is to describe the images that prevailed among England's two major political parties during the Home Rule struggle, to determine what factors influenced the composition of those images, and to discover how those images were affected by the nature and course of British policy toward Ireland. Since that policy, during this period, has been described in numerous works, this is

not simply another account of British policy. It is an attempt to discover what the fundamental underlying party images of the Irish were, and to explain how those images conditioned party policy and in part justified it. It is an effort to set forth in systematic form the party images of the Irish and to explain the relationship between these and the various social, political, and imperial objectives of the two parties.

It is not the purpose of this study to describe or cite in detail every act performed or statement made by leading English political figures during this half century in order to reveal the party images of Ireland. The method has been to cull from the many acts and many statements of British politicians and political commentators a select number sufficient to indicate the essential nature of these images and the factors underlying their formation.

The sources used are the statements and ideas of the various leading politicians and political theorists and writers as revealed in their diaries, memoirs, speeches, published correspondence and memoranda, magazine articles, pamphlets, autobiographies, biographies, and government documents, such as the Parliamentary Debates. In addition monographs and articles dealing with importantly related subjects have also been used.

It will perhaps be useful to add a note on terminology. The term "British" is used to refer to the people of Great Britain, even though in a strictly legal sense the

Irish were also British. But a convenient term was required to refer to the people of England, Scotland, and Wales, as distinct from the Irish, and this was really the only appropriate one. There is also a question as to whether the term "Home Rule era" is justified, since Home Rule was never achieved. But again a convenient term was needed, and the only real alternative, "late Victorian and Edwardian England," is not entirely appropriate for the period covered.

It may be also useful, if perhaps superfluous, to say a word about footnoting. Titles and facts of publication are given in full the first time they are cited. Thereafter, most titles are arbitrarily abbreviated to their key words and in such a way, hopefully, as to cause no confusion.

In conclusion I would like to express my appreciation for the important financial assistance I received from Rackham Graduate School of the University of Michigan and from Lake Superior State College. I should further like to state my gratitude to the latter institution for its profound generosity in granting me a two-year leave of absence. Finally, to Professor Gerald S. Brown of the University of Michigan I owe a special debt for having introduced me to the importance and possibilities of this type of historical research.

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**PART I**

**PROLOGUE**

## CHAPTER I

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: ROOTS OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND THE IRISH

Sir, it is the difficulty, one of the great difficulties, of the problem that Ireland is not a homogeneous community--that it consists of two nations, . . . two races and two religions.

--Joseph Chamberlain<sup>1</sup>

Ireland was--and is--a land of bitter, irreconcilable, racial and religious conflicts.

--Robert Blake<sup>2</sup>

During the approximate half century which spans the period from 1869 to 1921 when Irish affairs played a prominent and divisive role in British politics, with Conservatives and Liberals waging a long and bitter controversy over the Irish demand for Home Rule, race and ethnicity were predominant elements in the consciousness of most Englishmen. There was an almost irresistible tendency among many of them to ascribe the achievements of certain nationalities and the seeming lack of commendable accomplishment by others to biological and cultural characteristics. With respect to

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<sup>1</sup>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 3d ser., Vol. 304 (Mar. 26- Apr. 16, 1886), col. 1200.

<sup>2</sup>Unrepentent Tory: The Life and Times of Andrew Bonar Law, 1858-1923, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1956), p. 208.

the British and the Irish therefore most Englishmen looked upon the former as a progressive and advanced people while they saw in the latter only the sluggish characteristics of backwardness. Such a conclusion required the assumption that the Irish and the British were biologically and ethnically distinct; and most Englishmen of the Home Rule era were convinced that this was a fact. They thought of themselves proudly as Anglo-Saxon, while they looked upon the Irish rather contemptibly as Celtic. They were willing to concede that prior to the Germanic invasions of England in the fifth and sixth centuries both Great Britain and Ireland had been predominantly populated by various Celtic peoples.<sup>3</sup> However, while most of these remained among the Germanic invaders,<sup>4</sup> many Englishmen of the Home Rule era chose to believe that they had been driven, by the more able and masterful Germanic peoples, out of England and lowland Scotland into Wales, Ireland, and the Scottish highlands.<sup>5</sup>

The eagerness of most Englishmen during the Home Rule era to believe that they were biologically and ethnically distinct from the Irish is revealed by the fact that while they were willing to recognize the Danish, Norwegian, and

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<sup>3</sup>William Dalton Babington, Fallacies of Race Theories as Applied to National Characteristics (London: Longman's, Green, & Co., 1895), p. 233.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>5</sup>Goldwin Smith, Irish History and Irish Character (London: James Parker and Co., 1868), p. 8.

Norman factors in their biological and cultural makeup they generally ignored the existence of a Celtic element. The tendency to do so stems in part not only from a strong anti-Irish prejudice but from a rather widespread derogatory opinion of the Celtic people in general. It also reveals the inclination among Englishmen to think of themselves as biologically and ethnically homogeneous. They felt that even though the Danes, Norwegians, and Normans had invaded and settled in England, there had been no major biological or cultural dichotomy between them and the Anglo-Saxons, and that the absorption and assimilation of these into Anglo-Saxon culture had been relatively easy. The term Anglo-Saxon therefore tended to obscure the many elements that had gone into the making of British ethnicity. It lent credence to the assumption that the British were a superior people, mentally and culturally, who had developed a unique and superior language and institutions, and who had spread that language, those institutions, and British dominion round much of the world. It increased, and gave plausibility, to the widespread tendency to view the Irish as very different from them. They thought of the Irish as Celtic and many of them repeatedly referred to them as such. With few, though growing and important exceptions, they used the term "Celtic" derogatorily and they were convinced that the Celts were an inferior biological and ethnic group.<sup>6</sup> The more they

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<sup>6</sup>L. P. Curtis, jr., Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England (Conference of British Studies at the University of Bridgeport, 1968), p. 12.

emphasized this fact, the more they seemed to become oblivious to the Celtic strain in their own background. They thought of the Irish as a weak, submissive, and unadvanced people,<sup>7</sup> who, unable to assimilate and dominate invading ethnic groups, had themselves been dominated and ruled by their invaders.<sup>8</sup> In this period many Englishmen believed that those who had the power to conquer had the right to rule. This right of rule by conquest lies at the very root of racist and imperialist theories, and the attempt to apply this principle in Ireland was one of the fundamental factors in the long history of Anglo-Irish conflict.

Ireland, of course, like England has been subjected to a number of invasions, both in medieval and in modern times. There were Norwegian, Anglo-Norman, English, and Scottish invasions in the Middle Ages. Of these the arrival of Strongbow and the Anglo-Normans in the 1160s was the most momentous event, for it marks the beginning of an intrusion by England into Irish affairs from which it has never been able to extricate itself. It also marks the beginning of Irish resistance to English dominion, which has been one of the characteristics of Anglo-Irish relations

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<sup>7</sup>G. Smith, Irish History and Irish Character, p. 220.

<sup>8</sup>This concept of course lies at the root of Kipling's imperialism where "the British are God's chosen people," and where conquest, power, and the importance of the army are repeatedly highlighted. See D. C. Somervell, English Thought in the Nineteenth Century (New York: David Mc Kay Company, 1964), pp. 187-88.

ever since. While the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in the twelfth century was the first step in the long, slow military conquest of Ireland, it was the influx of English and Scottish colonists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which had the most harmful and enduring consequences for the Irish and which led to the bitter and prolonged hostility between them and the British. There were three important aspects to these sixteenth- and seventeenth-century invasions: (1) The number of people who came was very large; (2) they came principally as colonists to occupy and settle the land, though many would remain in England as absentee landlords; and (3) they came determined not only to resist assimilation, but to impose their institutions and their rule on the Irish. From these settlements stems the conflict between the British and the Irish that raged between Ireland and England until 1922 and continues to rage within the boundaries of Northern Ireland today.

Why did these invasions trigger such ill consequences, consequences which have had such long-term durability? In this respect it is interesting to compare briefly the colonization of Ireland, and the consequences that ensued, with similar colonizations in what became the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The colonization of the two North American countries took place contemporaneously with the colonization of Ireland. The colonists in North America were confronted with a native population which they steadily pushed westward, appropriating their lands by

various means, and gradually exercising dominion over them. For nearly three centuries the native people resisted this process but were eventually overcome and forced to submit. In Australia and New Zealand a similar process of colonization and appropriation occurred. In these countries too the indigenous peoples offered opposition but were gradually overcome and forced to submit to the political dominion of the colonists. In all of these areas the colonists and their descendants eventually became more numerous than the native populations, a fact which may explain in part why the latter have never been able to regain political control of the territories over which they once held sway.

Similar efforts were undertaken to conquer and dominate the Irish. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries English rulers gradually confiscated, under various pretexts, almost all the land of Ireland and granted it to their English supporters. These in turn rented much of the land of northern Ireland to Scottish and English tenants who settled there in large numbers, and in so doing radically altered the ethnic makeup of the country. These English and Scottish colonists came eventually to form a majority of the people in the province of Ulster where they settled mostly as small tenant-farmers. In the remaining three provinces, however, the new estate owners were less successful in finding Englishmen and Scots to migrate to Ireland to assume the role of tenant-farmers, so that in those regions most of the Irish remained on the land as tenants

and laborers dominated by a small, powerful, and largely English, property-holding minority. From this time until 1922 Ireland, though still overwhelmingly Irish in terms of population, was dominated and ruled by these great English landlords and their descendents, or Anglo-Irish as they later came to be called.

By the end of the seventeenth century therefore the British and Irish had been lodged side by side in Ireland under conditions which laid the basis for the economic struggle, ethnic conflict, and religious animosity that would color Anglo-Irish relations during the succeeding centuries. The question arises as to how the British, Anglo-Irish, and Ulster Scots could have developed such intense and enduring prejudices toward a people who were in many ways not very different from themselves. But when one studies the manner by which the English and Scots were settled in Ireland and the nature of the relationship that was thereby created between them and the native population the causes become reasonably clear.

It is unquestionable that this prejudice grew to a very large extent out of the methods which surrounded the settlement of the British in Ireland. The Irish, having had most of their land confiscated and granted to the invader, not unnaturally viewed this as an outrageous crime that must eventually be rectified. The new settlers of course were fully aware of the hostility that had been engendered in the Irish and prepared to resist the reprisals and the

retaliation that would come from them. They banded together therefore much more tightly than might otherwise have been the case to protect themselves and their property from the superior numbers of their enemy. This welded them into a close community with common interests against a vengeful outsider; and, perhaps much more importantly it also helped increase their tendency to view themselves as distinctly different from the native people.

This is not to say that an extreme ethnic consciousness would not have existed had it not been for the material conditions of the plantations. There were other important differences between the British invaders and the native Irish. Most conspicuous among these were religious and linguistic factors. The two centuries during which the plantation of Ireland took place coincided with an intense and widespread religious revivalism. This was the period of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter Reformation when men, with unbending religious fervor and self-righteousness, slew each other on a massive and prolonged scale for the sake of a particular religious creed. It was an era when those who held the reins of power tended to legislate on behalf of their own particular version of Christianity and to discriminate against those religious denominations of which they disapproved. It was an age not only generally devoid of religious toleration, but seized by the belief that alien religious creeds often contained something Satanic or diabolical about them. Thus the

immense gulf between Protestantism and Catholicism which existed at the time of the plantations further intensified the hostility between the two peoples and accentuated another aspect of their distinctiveness.

This religious difference was supplemented by a linguistic one. The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Irish spoke Gaelic, a language which was utterly foreign and incomprehensible to the British colonists. Conversely, the English spoken by the new settlers was equally incomprehensible to the Irish, so that this linguistic difference created a formidable and conspicuous barrier to intercommunal communication. Apart perhaps from skin color nothing can more effectively reveal the distinction between two people. The absence of easy and familiar linguistic communication between the British and the Irish created an additional obstacle to the development of a harmonious relationship between them, and fed the feelings of fear, suspicion, and hatred that developed on both sides.

This antagonism was greatest in Ulster where the British colonists formed a large proportion of the population. The majority of them were small tenant-farmers and would generally have been indistinguishable from their Irish counterparts had it not been for linguistic and religious differences.<sup>9</sup> In most parts of the remaining

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<sup>9</sup>Edmund Curtis, A History of Ireland (3d ed.; London: Methuen & Co., 1937), pp. 230-32.

provinces, the colonists stood out clearly because of their ownership of large landed estates. In these areas the Irish were tenant-farmers who worked the land which now belonged largely to British landlords.<sup>10</sup> Had the intense colonization and extensive conquest of Ireland that took place in the seventeenth century occurred prior to the Protestant Reformation in England, the differences between the two peoples would not have been so marked. In particular the highly important religious distinction would have been absent. But coming as they did in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when England and Scotland had become Protestant, the differences between the two peoples were further accentuated. Religious identity between the British and the Irish would probably not, in any case, have prevented the confiscation of the land but it may have tempered British treatment of the Irish and prevented some of the Draconian measures that were enacted against them.

The assumption that the Irish would probably have been dispossessed of their land in any event is based on the fact that the policy of confiscation had been initiated, not as one would expect by a Protestant monarch, but by the Catholic and proselytizing Mary Tudor. At her command the population of the counties of Leix and Offaly were to be removed and replaced by English colonists who, it was presumed, would be more loyal and trustworthy, and who were to

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 253.

hire only English labor.<sup>11</sup> This fact is revealing, for it indicates that, though there were strong religious overtones surrounding the colonization of Ireland, especially in the seventeenth century, economic and political factors played an essential part. Nor did the British make a serious and concentrated effort to convert the Irish to Protestantism.<sup>12</sup>

The laws they enacted against the practice of Catholicism were intended primarily to degrade, not convert, the Irish.<sup>13</sup> If the British had seriously wished to convert the Irish to Protestantism, they might well have succeeded had they made a genuine effort to do so and had the methods they employed been less oppressive. But a combination of economic and political motives forced them to enact a series of severely discriminatory anti-Catholic laws which, rather than convert the Irish, served only to degrade and differentiate them socially and economically from the British community and to increase their denominational fervor and intensify their hostility toward the British. This had unfortunate and undesirable consequences, for the more the Irish resented the new settlers, the more the latter drew

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<sup>11</sup>Giovanni Costigan, A History of Modern Ireland, with a Sketch of Earlier Times (New York: Pegasus, 1969), p. 53.

<sup>12</sup>J. C. Beckett, The Making of Modern Ireland, 1603-1923 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 159.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 159. See also Beckett's A Short History of Ireland (Harper Colophon Books. New York: Harper & Row, 1952), p. 98.

together to defend themselves and their property, emphasizing more keenly their common interests and their identity as a community, while at the same time accentuating the divergence of interests and characteristics between them and their Irish enemies.

In addition to the religious and linguistic distinctions between the British and the Irish there was a third factor which was perhaps of equal importance in aggravating the clash between them. This was the political structure of Ireland. There is a well known Marxist theory that at any given time in history those who possess the major portion of the wealth of a country will also control the political power. Whether this theory is applicable at all times and in all places need not concern us here. What does concern us is the fact that, at least until 1829, it was very true in the case of Ireland. Until the Act of Union in 1800 Ireland had its own Parliament in Dublin. Despite this, the members of this Parliament did not represent the Irish community. They were nominated and elected by the Protestant Anglo-Irish colonists and they represented their interests and objectives. Irish Catholics--and practically all of the native Irish remained Catholic--were denied any part in either the legislature or the executive. The former was the preserve of the Anglo-Irish and the latter was in the hands of the British. It was not until 1795 that Catholics were permitted to participate in Irish politics. Even then, however, the degree of participation was

extremely small, since it merely involved the permission of those Catholics who met certain property qualifications to vote in Parliamentary elections. They were still legally barred from holding political office. The abolition of the Irish Parliament in 1800, bringing about the legislative union of Britain and Ireland and the transference of Ireland's M.P.s from Dublin to Westminster, did not alter the situation as far as Catholics were concerned. It was not until 1829, under the influence of Daniel O'Connell, that Catholics were permitted to sit in Parliament. But while the British conceded this reform they simultaneously disfranchised many of those Irish Catholics who had been eligible to vote since 1795. This was achieved by raising the property qualifications. The Irish were thus excluded from any role in the making of Irish law until 1829. Even then, and in fact as long as the union existed, the power of Irish M.P.s to influence legislation was extremely minimal. They could never hope to form a majority in the British Parliament, and their ability to influence legislation depended on their capacity either to persuade English M.P.s or conversely to coerce Parliament by obstruction. But if their legislative power was restricted, their executive power was negligible. Until 1922 the British maintained a separate executive for Ireland, an executive from which the native Irish were perennially excluded from all positions of power.

It is only to be expected that these legislative and governmental conditions would give rise to increasing

friction in Ireland. This was produced not only by the fact that the British and the Anglo-Irish monopolized the law-making and governmental machinery but also because this was used against the Irish in an extremely discriminatory way. Beginning in the seventeenth century the Anglo-Irish aristocracy proceeded to enact a series of laws that not only discriminated against the Irish in the area of political rights but in civil and religious rights as well. Most of these were designed to protect the colonists and their property from Irish revenge, but they also ground the Irish down to a very low level of subsistence, barring them from educational, professional, and business opportunities, and thus from social mobility.<sup>14</sup> They were designed to keep the Irish in a subordinate and subservient position,<sup>15</sup> and bore all the marks of what today would be called racist legislation.

Racism is a set of attitudes, a way of behaving, both in thought and in action, that is not necessarily confined to a certain pattern of relations between two distinct races as scientifically defined by the anthropologist. It is not restricted exclusively to a certain attitude of people of one color toward those of a different color.<sup>16</sup> When one

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<sup>14</sup>Beckett, The Making of Modern Ireland, pp. 151-52, 157-59.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 151-52, 157-59.

<sup>16</sup>Jacques Barzun, Race: A Study in Superstition (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 14.

ethnic or national group considers itself generally superior to other such groups, when it believes itself to be more capable in most areas of endeavor, when it assumes its culture or its institutions to be superior, and when it derives a certain satisfaction--often rather arrogant and self-righteous--from these assumptions, it is behaving in a typically racist way. Racism, like ethnocentrism, is a form of extreme group egotism; and as such it clashes vigorously with the widely held concept that modesty and humility in the individual are virtuous. Denied thus the satisfaction of self-praise, the individual achieves a degree of compensation by merging himself in the group, and applying to the latter the commendations he would otherwise have bestowed upon himself.

The racist, or ethnocentrist, does not always reveal his prejudice in explicit and unambiguous ways. He is at times culturally or intellectually inhibited from making an open and straightforward profession of his views. In fact he may not himself be aware that he is behaving in a racist way. In the period of the Home Rule struggle, however, many Englishmen believed firmly in a hierarchy of races, with themselves at the top, and they did not consider it out of place to state publicly that Englishmen were superior to most other peoples. While some of them would have protested against similar public statements with regard to the Irish, there were nevertheless many Englishmen who repeatedly expounded publicly on their inordinate

shortcomings.<sup>17</sup> A. P. Thornton is not entirely correct therefore when he states that "Englishmen of the best kind talked little of their superiority to others, they were content to assert that superiority in action."<sup>18</sup> Englishmen have in fact spoken at times with extremely undiplomatic candor about the nature of the Irish. This was especially so during the Home Rule era and particularly when the union was seriously threatened. Lord Salisbury's description of them as Hottentots does not say much for the Irish or for the Hottentots.<sup>19</sup> English imperialists could remain silent about their superiority only so long as it was not seriously challenged. As soon as a serious threat was mounted they would assert their superiority both in verbal and in stronger terms. Throughout the history of British dominion in Ireland English imperialists have shown their disdain for the Irish and their culture in numerous ways. They have repeatedly enacted laws to prevent the acceptance and

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<sup>17</sup>The best evidence on both sides of this question is furnished by the debate that occurred when Lord Salisbury explicitly and publicly asserted that the Irish were inferior to the Anglo-Saxons. See Lady Gwendolen Cecil, Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury (4 vols.; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1931-1933), II, 303.

<sup>18</sup>A. P. Thornton, The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power (Anchor Books. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1959), p. 240. Of course much depends on Thornton's definition of the term "the best kind," and it would be interesting to probe the underlying assumptions and ramifications of this phrase.

<sup>19</sup>Cecil, Life of Salisbury, III, 302-04.

adoption of that culture by English settlers, and they have at times attempted to destroy it. From their earliest contact with the Irish they have shown their disdain for them, as The Topography of Ireland, written by the historian Giraldus Cambrensis after visiting Ireland in the first years of England's conquest, reveals. As early as the fourteenth century efforts were made to segregate the British and Irish communities in Ireland. The Statutes of Kilkenny, enacted in 1366, prohibited the British colonists from recognizing Irish law, from speaking the Irish language, from dressing in the Irish vogue, or from taking an Irish spouse.<sup>20</sup>

With the military and political triumph of the British in the seventeenth century the laws of Ireland were reconstructed to reflect the aims and objectives of the new settlers. They ceased entirely to represent the will or aspirations of the Irish.<sup>21</sup> In fact they became utterly

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<sup>20</sup>See Edmund Curtis and R. B. McDowell, eds., Irish Historical Documents, 1172-1922 (London: Methuen & Co., 193), pp. 52-59. Terence de Vere White states that the Statutes of Kilkenny "bore a striking resemblance to the modern apartheid law of South Africa." See The Anglo-Irish (Victor Gollancz, 1972), p. 270.

<sup>21</sup>In his book Why England Maintains the Union: A Popular Rendering of England's Case Against Home Rule (London: John Murray, 1887), pp. 18-19, the famous English professor of constitutional law A. V. Dicey agrees with this point. And yet Dicey not only remained a fervent unionist but was one of those who in the period 1911-1914 supported the view that the Ulster Scots would be justified in armed rebellion in order to prevent the application of Home Rule to Ulster. For this point see Ronald Mc Neill, Ulster's Stand for Union (London: John Murray, 1922), p. 170, and David James, Lord Roberts (London: Hollis & Carter, 1954), p. 473.

adverse to Irish needs.<sup>22</sup> They became largely the laws of an imperialistic and aristocratic class, expressing the will, outlook, and objectives of that class. Insofar as these corresponded to the needs of the Irish they were of course beneficial, but such correspondence was minor. Even the British tenant class, which resided mainly in Ulster, was permitted to develop distinct and more advantageous land tenure customs than the Irish tenants of the other three provinces, so that even in the economic sphere, where one would have expected the English and Scottish tenants to develop common interests with their Irish counterparts, they were largely prevented from doing so. This is not to say that the law in other countries, including England, was not principally the product of a particular class. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century enclosure acts in Britain certainly represented the aims of the large landowners and thrust many of the peasants into the burgeoning cities. It was an Anglo-Irish poet in fact, Oliver Goldsmith, who in "The Deserted Village," criticized the inequity of class law and the destruction of British peasants:

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
 Where wealth accumulates, and men decay;  
 Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;  
 A breath can make them, as a breath has made.  
 But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,  
 When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

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<sup>22</sup>Dicey, Why England Maintains the Union, pp. 18-19.

But if law was largely class law in England, in Ireland it was not only the law of a dominant class but also of a particular and alien ethnic group, and as such it was much more inclusive and much more discriminatory, aiming to break the spirit of the native population and to keep them ignorant, uneducated, poor, passive, and deferential.<sup>23</sup> Michael Davitt, who in the late nineteenth century devoted himself entirely to the elimination of this class and colonial system, was fully aware of its social consequences. "There was," he wrote,

a greater evil than economic ignorance to beat down among the tenantry of Ireland, and that was their slavish social attitude towards not alone the landlord but his agent and whole entourage. It was a hateful and heartbreaking sight to see manly looking men, young and old, doffing their hats and caps and cringing in abject manner to any person connected with an estate, and before magistrates and others associated with the administration of pro-landlord laws.<sup>24</sup>

This slavishness of attitude was born of the fact that the colonial and landed class had wealth, government, and the law on their side, and seldom hesitated to use them fully. As Davitt wrote:

It was a moral malady, . . . the demoralizing results of the poor possessed by those who owned the land and who had the legal authority to carry out the dreaded penalty of eviction. Generations of suffering and tyranny had inflicted this slavishness of manner upon a Celtic peasantry.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>J. C. Beckett, A Short History of Ireland, pp. 98-100, and Michael Davitt, The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland (London and New York: Harper & Brothers, 1904), pp. 164-65.

<sup>24</sup>Davitt, ibid., pp. 164-65. My italics.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 164-65.

This "power of landlordism to demoralize" was perhaps its "most hateful feature."<sup>26</sup> It was harmful not only to those on the bottom of the ladder but to those on the top as well. It not only bred hatred and hostility in the peasantry but also in the landlord class. These people arrogated to themselves "a status of social superiority which taught" them "to despise the very people by whom and upon whom they lived."<sup>27</sup> This contempt may have been psychologically necessitated by the exploitative and parasitic nature of the landlord's existence. He may have found in his image of the Irish as ignorant, lazy, and inefficient, a degree of justification for his exploitation of them. Such an explanation would be consistent with the economic theories of the Classical Economists. These men argued that societies would unavoidably, because of the nature of man and the laws of economics, be divided into rich and poor; and they justified, on the basis of these theories, the existence of the Irish peasantry, or the poor of any country, on the verge of starvation. Thomas Malthus even justified death through starvation.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 164-65.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>28</sup>T. R. Malthus. An Essay on the Principle of Population: or a View of Its Past and Present Effects on Human Happiness (7th ed.; London: Reeves and Turner, 1872), pp. 531-35.

But the expropriation of the land of Ireland, coming as it did in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, before the promulgation of these views, was of such vast proportions that it was bound to raise a certain moral restlessness among those who questioned its ethical basis. These confiscations, which may have left perhaps as little as five per cent of the land, often the most infertile,<sup>29</sup> in the hands of the Irish, required strong legal and ethical grounds for their justification. The general argument used was that the Irish had been disloyal to the Crown and hence the land was legally forfeited. This was the argument used by James I to justify the confiscation of much of Ulster.<sup>30</sup> It was also used as the basis of the Adventurer's Act of 1642. The adventurers were English speculators who advanced funds for the reconquest of Ireland after the rebellions of the previous year. The Act explicitly stated that there would be no clemency for the rebels,<sup>31</sup> thereby insuring that the speculators would gain possession of the land; and subsequently Cromwell's victories were followed by the payment of

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<sup>29</sup>The figures differ as to the exact amount of land held by the Irish. These are discussed at length in William F. T. Butler, Confiscation in Irish History (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1970).

<sup>30</sup>Beckett, The Making of Modern Ireland, pp. 44-45. Irish historians usually refer to these colonizations as "plantations."

<sup>31</sup>See Curtis and McDowell, eds., Irish Historical Documents, 1172-1922, pp. 177-79.

this debt.<sup>32</sup>

The final conquest of Ireland and the final confiscations were followed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries by the enactment of the Penal Laws, a series of measures designed to insure that all opportunity for learning and advancement was denied to the Irish.<sup>33</sup> Their degradation to the lowest level of society, therefore, soon followed.<sup>34</sup> The extreme severity, vindictiveness, and injustice of these laws were vigorously condemned by the conservative, Edmund Burke. They were, he wrote, a "machine" of "elaborate contrivance, and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man."<sup>35</sup> As the population increased, and the economy, especially its commercial and industrial sectors, failed to expand proportionately, the social and economic condition of the Irish

<sup>32</sup>Curtis, A History of Ireland, pp. 252-54.

<sup>33</sup>Beckett, The Making of Modern Ireland, pp. 151-52, 157-59.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 151-52.

<sup>35</sup>Edmund Burke, "A Letter to Sir H. Langrishe, Bart., M.P., on the Subject of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, and the Propriety of Admitting Them to the Elective Franchise, Consistently with the Principles of the Constitution as Established at the Revolution, 1792," in Letters and Speeches and Tracts on Irish Affairs, ed. by Matthew Arnold (London: Macmillan and Co., 1881), p. 277.

deteriorated still further. Excluded by law from most educational opportunities, and from most of the professions, they were restricted largely to the role of agricultural laborers; and because of the land tenure system, which barred the tenant in the three provinces outside Ulster from compensation for any improvements he might make, there existed little incentive to improve his holding.

It was the conscious policy of the colonists to depict the Irish as lacking the qualities of diligence and efficiency. They were contrasted unfavorably with their British counterparts, and this derogatory image soon became widespread and predominant. It was doubly welcomed by the Anglo-Irish, for in their view it was further justification for both their ownership of the land and their control of the legislature. It could justify class and colonial rule, and it was an easy scapegoat for the consequences of absentee landlordism. It precluded the necessity of questioning the justice and efficacy of the economic and political systems. It disproved the suggestion that the landlords themselves pursued exclusively their own self-interest. It saved the politician and government official from the charge that the laws were inequitable or that they themselves were administratively inept. All deficiencies could be charged to Irish character. The British were struggling valiantly to uphold justice and to uplift and civilize the Irish. Any criticism from the latter merely revealed their ingrained ingratitude and obstructionism, and served as

evidence that the only way to rule such people was through strong, resolute, and authoritarian government.<sup>36</sup>

By the 1870s the Irish had become completely dissatisfied with conditions under the existing political system. If little benefit had accrued to them under the Anglo-Irish parliaments that sat in Dublin until 1800, conditions under the union were even worse. The "great hunger" of the 1840s, resulting in widespread disease, death, and emigration, surpassed in terms of human suffering anything that Ireland had previously experienced. Irish tenants existed at a primitive subsistence level so that the largest possible profits could be extracted, profits which were then often spent in England, depriving Ireland of needed opportunities for capital investment and economic development.<sup>37</sup> Ireland and the Irish were in fact being exploited for the benefit of England and absentee Anglo-Irish landlords. "In so far as any flow of capital was stimulated by the union," writes Professor J. C. Beckett, "it was a flow away from Ireland."<sup>38</sup>

Such conditions could hardly fail to demoralize the Irish people and cause grave social and psychological consequences. Frederick Engels, travelling in Ireland in 1856, noted some of these evils in his correspondence with Karl

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<sup>36</sup>Cecil, Life of Salisbury, III, 302-04.

<sup>37</sup>Beckett, A Short History of Ireland, pp. 132-33.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

Marx:

Despite all their Irish nationalist fanaticism the fellows [the Irish] feel that they are no longer at home in their own country. Ireland for the Saxon! That is now being realized. . . . Emigration will go on until the predominantly, indeed almost exclusively, Celtic character of the population is all to hell. . . . By consistent oppression they [the Irish] have been artificially converted into an utterly demoralised nation and now fulfil the notorious function of supplying England, America, Australia, etc., with prostitutes, casual labourers, pimps, thieves, swindlers, beggars and other rabble.<sup>39</sup>

The laissez-faire economic philosophy that dominated most of the nineteenth century largely precluded any determined positive action by the government to alleviate economic conditions. Ironically the first important break with this philosophy, at least with regard to Ireland, was made by Gladstone when he enacted the Land Act of 1870. Even then, however, while this act and additional such acts enacted between 1881 and 1909 marked a break with strict laissez-faire economics and eliminated some of the grievances which existed, they did not erase all sources of Irish dissatisfaction. It was necessary throughout most of the period to maintain large numbers of troops and police in Ireland.<sup>40</sup> If in the 1850s Engels could write that he had

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<sup>39</sup>Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Correspondence, 1846-1895, trans. by Dona Torr (New York: International Publishers, 1942), p. 94.

<sup>40</sup>In 1886 Sir William Harcourt stated that the English were maintaining "an army of occupation of 30,000 men" in Ireland. "In order to maintain the union in Ireland," he stated, "we are obliged to keep there in arms more British troops than fought at Waterloo, more than we sent against

"never seen so many gendarmes in any country,"<sup>41</sup> the situation had changed little by the 1880s when Sir William Harcourt warned Gladstone that the passage of the 1884 Reform Bill, extending the political franchise in Ireland, would reveal to the world the moral weakness of England's position there. "When full expression is given to Irish opinion, he wrote, "there will be declared to the world in larger print what we all know to be the case that we hold Ireland by force and by force alone as much today as in the days of Cromwell. . . ." <sup>42</sup> This situation continued throughout the entire Home Rule period and was revealed vividly both in 1916 and again during the Anglo-Irish conflict of 1919-1921 when thousands of troops were poured into Ireland in a last desperate effort to maintain English dominion.

In the late nineteenth century a new sentiment emerged in Ireland, a sentiment which many English statesmen would fail to understand. "A new age was struggling to be born," wrote the British historians Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher of this period, an age of intense

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the Russians in the Crimea. . . ." A. G. Gardiner, The Life of Sir William Harcourt (2 vols.; London: Constable & Company, 1923), I, 593. Walter Long writes that the Royal Irish Constabulary alone constituted 12,000 men during George Wyndham's administration, but he adds that this was reduced during his, that is, Long's own administration. Viscount Long of Wraxall, Memories (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1923), p. 155. The number of armed forces necessary to hold Ireland greatly increased of course after World War I.

<sup>41</sup>Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, 1846-1895, p. 93.

<sup>42</sup>Gardiner, The Life of Sir William Harcourt, I, 497.

nationalism.<sup>43</sup> This force lay at the bottom of the bitterness and conflict that marked the relations between Britain and Ireland during the Home Rule era and made impossible the pacification and conciliation of Ireland on any terms which did not concede a large degree of national self-government. Those statesmen who urged the unimpaired maintenance of the existing political status quo failed to understand the nature of this new force. Those who felt that land reform, government assistance toward minor industrial development, and a measure of democratic local self-government would satisfy the Irish, failed equally to comprehend the uncompromising nature of nationalism. The Irish were caught in the grip of this new force, which British and Anglo-Irish policies and attitudes in Ireland had helped create, and with it came an unappeaseable demand for some degree of national self-government.

Even in ordinary circumstances these aspirations would have met with strong resistance from England, but coming as they did in this highly charged imperialist age, they met with inflexible opposition. For England too was in the grip of an intense nationalism, a nationalism which had been transformed into an aggressive imperialism, and

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<sup>43</sup>Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, with Alice Denny, Africa and the Victorians: The Climax of Imperialism (Anchor Books. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1968), p. 287. It is interesting that while Robinson and Gallagher admit the existence and impact of nationalism in the colonial world they deny the existence of an influential nationalism in Great Britain. See pp. 465-72.

which had engendered widespread aspirations for Anglo-Saxon world domination.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, an additional factor intervened to confound the situation still further. The Anglo-Irish and Ulster Protestants, who continued to think of themselves as British rather than Irish, and who identified with British imperialism rather than Irish nationalism, expressed their categorical opposition to national self-government for Ireland. To live under the rule of the Irish was to them utterly unthinkable.<sup>45</sup> They had nothing in common, they maintained. The Irish were mentally, morally, and culturally inferior to them. They were economically inefficient, religiously unemancipated and intolerant, and politically despotic.<sup>46</sup> The Anglo-Irish and Ulster Protestants, on the other hand, were not only economically efficient, but freedom-loving in religion and democratic in politics. Furthermore they belonged to a different ethnic group. If the Irish claimed the right to govern themselves on the basis of ethnicity or nationality, what about the Ulster Protestants? Should they be denied equal consideration?

The merits of this question were debated passionately

<sup>44</sup> See Carlton J. H. Hayes, A Generation of Materialism, 1870-1900 (Harper Torchbooks. New York: Harper & Row, 1941), pp. 216-38, and Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1951), pp. 147-57, 175-84.

<sup>45</sup> Costigan, A History of Modern Ireland, pp. 281-83.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 281-83.

and repeatedly throughout the period of the Home Rule struggle. That the Ulster Protestants<sup>47</sup> were of different ethnic origin was partly correct. That this fact justified the withholding of national self-government from Ireland was another matter. It was the argument of the Ulster Protestants that if ethnic or national differentiation justified the right of self-government to Irish Catholics, the same principle applied to them. The Irish replied that since the Ulster Protestants were a minority in Ireland, they must conform to the wishes of the majority. The Ulster Protestants in turn pointed out that the Irish held a majority in the three southern provinces only, that they did not have a majority in the province of Ulster.

It was this demand by the Irish for a modicum of national self-government that dominated Anglo-Irish relations from the 1870s to the early 1920s. And it is within this framework that one must analyze the British attitude toward Ireland. One of the consequences of the Reform Bill of 1867 and the Ballot Act of 1872 was that a large number of Irish M.P.s were returned to Westminster dedicated primarily to the achievement of Home Rule. The period began

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<sup>47</sup> At various times the Ulster Protestants have been distinguished in Irish history by the term "Presbyterians." During the Home Rule era they, with the assistance of their unionist allies in Great Britain, attempted to distinguish themselves by the term "Ulstermen." This was an effort to proclaim their ethnic differentiation from the Irish, but it was really an unsuitable term since it tended to obscure the fact that almost half the population of Ulster were Irish.

with the inflexible opposition of both major political parties to any such concept. Such opposition stemmed from the historical relations between the two islands. The British and the Anglo-Irish had long dominated Ireland. They had made the laws and administered them. In so doing, they had developed an image of themselves that was highly eulogistic. At the same time they had formed an equally dyslogistic image of the Irish. They thought of themselves as uniquely qualified to rule. They viewed the Irish as uniquely unqualified to rule. Behind the long and impassioned opposition to Home Rule lay this image of the Irish, an image so abhorrent, especially to Conservatives and to the Whigs and Radical Unionists who joined them in the 1880s essentially on the Irish issue, that it forced them to adopt the position that the Ulster Protestants would be justified in armed rebellion rather than be governed by an Irish-dominated government.<sup>48</sup> The Conservative image of the Irish was in fact so repulsive that most Conservatives were irretrievably convinced that no Anglo-Saxon could in justice be asked to live under their rule.<sup>49</sup> The Liberal image, which largely lost its anti-Irish aspects early in the period, became very different from the Conservative. Most Liberals, under the leadership of Gladstone, abandoned

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<sup>48</sup>Mc Neill, Ulster's Stand for Union, pp. 170, 108-09, and James, Lord Roberts, p. 473.

<sup>49</sup>Costigan, A History of Modern Ireland, pp. 277-86.

their anti-Irish prejudices and came to look upon them as a people not very different from themselves. Partly because of this they came to sympathize with most Irish objectives. It was the polarity between these two images which caused so much Anglo-Irish and inter-party bitterness during the Home Rule era. And it is the nature of these images, and the forces which helped shape them, that is the subject of the following chapters.

PART II

THE CONSERVATIVE POSTURE

## CHAPTER II

### THE CONSERVATIVE RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIAL CHANGE

The Tory, however much he may sympathize with democracy, is at bottom a patriarch. --Crane Brinton<sup>1</sup>

No old dominant class ever really relinquishes power until its nerve has failed--until, losing confidence in its own virtue and its own justness, that powerful order allows the sceptre or the sword to slip from its grasp, mesmerized rather than vanquished. --Russell Kirk<sup>2</sup>

The half century which lies between the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland and the creation of the Irish Free State is one of the most eventful in English and Irish history. It began with the fall of Anglican religious privilege in Ireland, and ended with the collapse of English political dominance. It opened with the fortunes of imperialism on the rise; it closed with the virtues of imperialism widely questioned. It witnessed the rise of democracy, and with it a bellicose working-class support

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<sup>1</sup>Crane Brinton, English Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 225.

<sup>2</sup>Russell Kirk, The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Santayana (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), p. 288.

of a jingoistic imperialism. It observed the growth of a colonial nationalism which challenged the right and the ability of the imperialists to rule the colonial world. It saw the rise of trade unionism, of nationwide strikes, and of the Labor Party. It witnessed the growth of collectivism and the enactment of land laws for Ireland which challenged the predominant economic philosophy of the nineteenth century and largely transferred the ownership of land in Ireland from the small Anglo-Irish aristocratic class to the Irish people. It saw the power of the House of Lords reduced to a mere shadow of its former self. It experienced the rise of German and American economic power which forced England to seek a federation of the empire, to abandon her isolationism, and to form alliances with Japan and with various European states. All this culminated in the outbreak of World War I and the collapse of the four continental empires. And although England, militarily victorious, seemingly strengthened her empire through the mandate system of the League of Nations, the successful attack on the very core of that empire by the Irish in the period 1919-1921 paved the way for similar demands by other parts of the empire, thereby helping to set in motion a process of imperial disintegration which has proceeded ever since to reduce and transform the empire, and in the 1960s drove England to seek her future prosperity in the European Economic Community.

This was a period therefore when the familiar and

assuring beliefs of the nineteenth century were encountering multipronged attacks. The widening acceptance of Darwin's theory of evolution among scientists caused grave concern among theists and theologians, and led to prolonged and bitter controversy. The spread of secularism frightened those who felt that any weakening in the role of the church and the practice of religion would lead in the end to a transformation of values, to an attack on individualistic property rights, and to the adoption of socialism. It was a period of polarization. On the one hand were those who embraced the theory of evolution; on the other stood those who rallied even more fervently behind the Bible. On one side gathered those who supported the seating of the atheist Charles Bradlaugh in the House of Commons; on the other were arrayed those in opposition. For a time the attractions of imperialism swept the great majority to its banner; later those attractions lost much of their gloss. And in the years immediately preceding World War I the conflict between the Conservative and Liberal Parties became so envenomed over social, economic, political, and Irish policy that some men tried to escape from these difficulties by forming a coalition. This failed in 1910, but succeeded in 1915 and continued after the war until the historic Liberal Party suffered a seemingly irreparable defeat.<sup>3</sup> Thus one of the professed aims of

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<sup>3</sup>It might be added that the same period witnessed the fall of the Nationalist Party in Ireland and its replacement by Sinn Fein.

Disraeli, which had been to unite the two "nations," the aristocracy and the workers, or the classes and the masses as they were often referred to,<sup>4</sup> and to avoid the formation of political parties along class lines, had failed.<sup>5</sup>

This was a period when new ideas, new forces, new ideologies steadily gathered momentum and in so doing appeared to threaten the traditional social order and with it the privileges of the propertied classes. These ideas and the programs and policies which they forebode clashed head-on with the traditional British stratified social structure. A prime objective of the Conservatives was to maintain that social order.<sup>6</sup> Those who advocated the new democratic and collectivistic ideas viewed it as inequitable and wished to transform it in a less inequalitarian direction. The clash of these two forces, those seeking to reform society and those wishing to maintain the traditional order, lies at the root of the intense bitterness that permeated most of this period. Into this impassioned milieu entered the Irish demand for Home Rule. To most Conservatives the maintenance of the union between Britain and Ireland was imperative to

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<sup>4</sup>Paul Smith, Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 324-25.

<sup>5</sup>Somervell, English Thought, p. 145, and Peter Viereck, Conservatism, from John Adams to Churchill (Princeton: D. van Nostrand Company, 1956), p. 43.

<sup>6</sup>Lord Hugh Cecil, Conservatism (London: Williams & Norgate, 1912), pp. 241-42; and Robert Blake, The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1970), pp. 132, 167-68.

the maintenance of the existing social order, and they viewed the Home Rule movement as a part of those forces which were seeking to break down and radically transform that order. Hence they tended to look on concessions to the working class or to the Irish as a weakening of the social structure, and this view forced them to resist such concessions with any effective means available to them, even to the extent of advocating armed rebellion against the government. The Conservatives viewed the ideal society as one in which the propertied classes would make the laws and administer them.<sup>7</sup> Many of them would have preferred to maintain society as it had existed prior to the Reform Bill of 1867. This was their ideal. But failing that, they hoped to be able to maintain a paternalistic and deferential order in which, to use the typical terminology of the time, though the masses might vote, it was the classes that ruled.<sup>8</sup>

The rise of political democracy is one of the most conspicuous developments of the Home Rule era. It began with the Reform Bill of 1867 and ended with universal adult suffrage in 1918, though means would still be found to discriminate against women until 1928. Still, the extension of the franchise in this period was momentous, and this

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<sup>7</sup>Dicey, Why England Maintains the Union, p. 9, and J. L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain (6 vols.; London: Macmillan & Co., 1932-1969), II, 191.

<sup>8</sup>Dicey, Why England Maintains the Union, p. 9.

development was the cause of serious misgivings on the part of many upper and middle class Englishmen. Some of the leading statesmen, as well as some of the leading scholars, of the period thought that the rise of democracy foreshadowed an age of decadence in England. Lord Salisbury, the most successful Conservative statesman of the period, bore a well known disdain for democracy. He feared that such a political system would weaken the concept of individual ownership of property, and he supported the strengthening of the monarchy as a defense against it. Given a choice between the strengthening of democracy and the extension of the powers of the monarchy Salisbury would have chosen the latter. His biographer Lady Gwendolen Cecil writes:

Loyalty to the monarchy was with him more than a sentiment. . . . He believed the monarchy to be . . . the only certain guarantee of the country's stability. He held it as a paramount duty to maintain its prerogatives, and would gladly have seen them extended had that been possible. . . . He used to lament that he had not been born under a more actively monarchical constitution; he should have preferred service to a king than to a parliament.<sup>9</sup>

Salisbury's successor as prime minister, Arthur Balfour, had an equal disdain for democracy, a disdain which showed more conspicuously after the disastrous Conservative electoral defeat of 1906. Balfour looked upon the House of Lords as a Conservative instrument to prevent the enactment of legislation which the Conservatives disapproved. After his defeat and the defeat of the Conservative Party, in the 1906 election,

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<sup>9</sup>Cecil, Life of Salisbury, III, 180.

Balfour stated quite frankly that "the great Unionist party should still control, whether in power or whether in opposition, the destinies of this great Empire."<sup>10</sup> This amounted in theory to a condition whereby the principles of one party would dominate important legislative enactments; and in practice these principles were strongly adhered to, too strongly in fact, for the rejection of the 1909 budget by the Lords led directly to a major reduction in the power of that chamber.

A leading writer on conservatism, Peter Viereck, has pointed out that democracy "is often despised by conservatives as a passionate mob agitated by revolutionists."<sup>11</sup> This view and the despair that gripped many Conservatives after the 1906 electoral defeat forced them to look upon the period as one of decadence. Balfour expressed this feeling in a speech at Newnham College in 1908:

When through an ancient and still powerful state there spreads a mood of deep discouragement, when the reaction against recurring ills grows feebler, and the ship rises less buoyantly to each succeeding wave, when learning languishes, enterprise slackens, and vigour ebbs away, then, as I think, there is present some process of social degeneration which we must perforce recognize, and which, pending a satisfactory analysis, may conveniently be distinguished by the name of "decadence."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Quoted in Blake, The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill, p. 190.

<sup>11</sup>Viereck, Conservatism, p. 19.

<sup>12</sup>A. J. Balfour, Essays Speculative and Political (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1920), p. 27.

What Balfour and those who shared his views saw as decadent was really the spread of democracy, a fact which one of the leading Conservative thinkers of the period, W. E. H. Lecky stated quite explicitly. "Parliamentary government in England," he wrote in 1896, "has entered on its period of decadence."<sup>13</sup> The idea that the majority of the people should determine legislative and governmental decisions was utterly alien to Lecky.<sup>14</sup> In fact he despised democracy as many despised Jesuitism and in his writings he made a clever attempt to discredit democracy by comparing it to Jesuit teachings. By criticizing democracy in this way, Lecky was able to strike subtly at the nature of Catholicism as well, and thereby darken further the prevalent British image of the Irish and burden the path of Home Rule. In a work which won wide acclaim in Britain Lecky wrote: "This new Jesuitism," meaning of course democracy,

has, indeed, much real affinity with the old one. The root idea of the old Jesuitism was strongly realized conviction that the Catholic Church is so emphatically the inspired teacher of mankind, and the representative of the Deity upon earth, that no act can be immoral which is performed in its service and is conducive to its interests. The root idea of the new Jesuitism [democracy] is the belief that the moral law has no deeper foundation and no higher sanction than utility, and that the greatest happiness of the greatest number is its supreme test and ideal.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>William Edward Hartpole Lecky, Democracy and Liberty (2 vols.; New York: Longman's, Green, and Co., 1896), I, 247.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., I, 223-24.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., I, 224.

There was obviously a good deal of anti-Catholic prejudice in this statement and the tactic of associating democracy with Jesuitism, a movement that held disagreeable connotations for most Englishmen, was designed to retard further democratic progress.

And yet there was an apparent split in English Conservatism, a split between those like Salisbury and Balfour who were highly skeptical about the extension of the franchise, and Conservatives like Benjamin Disraeli who took the "leap in the dark" in 1867. But this division existed essentially in respect to methods. As regards ultimate objectives both wings of Conservatism were largely in agreement. Both sought, as a primary goal, the maintenance of property rights as they then existed,<sup>16</sup> and with these they associated the continuance of the existing social system.

"Nothing," wrote Lord Hugh Cecil,

has more effective significance in Conservatism than its bearing on questions of property. Ever since Conservatism arose to resist the revolutionary movement of 1789, the defence of property has been one of its principal purposes.<sup>17</sup>

The Disraelian brand of Conservatism was premised on the assumption that the working class were largely conservative, that they were sentimentally attached to traditional values and traditional institutions. It might be possible therefore to safely extend the franchise to them, for their

<sup>16</sup>Lord Hugh Cecil, Conservatism, p. 118.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

predominant inclination would be to preserve, not to innovate. Despite this, however, Disraeli showed no particular zeal for the extension of the franchise. The Reform Bill of 1867 was, under Liberal pressure, more encompassing than he had anticipated and his acceptance of it was, in the final analysis, based as much, and perhaps more, on political tactics as on democratic theory.

Moreover, Disraeli's planned alliance between the "classes" and the "masses" was not intended to be functionally equalitarian. In political affairs the role of the aristocracy would be very different from that of the working class. It was certainly not intended, for instance, that the working class should sit in the House of Commons or participate in governmental decision-making. These roles were reserved for the aristocracy. The role of the working class would be to participate in the election of the members of the House of Commons, but these members would be selected exclusively from the "classes." A. V. Dicey seemed to be suggesting a similar system when he wrote that "the rich must be the guides of the poor; the poor must put trust in the rich."<sup>18</sup>

The second wing of Conservatism was skeptical about the possibility of a successful alliance between the aristocrats and the working class. They feared that such an alliance would require concessions which Conservatives could

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<sup>18</sup>Dicey, Why England Maintains the Union, p. 9.

not safely make.<sup>19</sup> These Conservatives rejected Disraelian reformism and the effort to build an alliance between themselves and the working class and aimed instead at obtaining cooperation between the aristocracy and the middle class. This was the objective of Sir Robert Peel in the 1840s, an objective which was partly responsible for Disraeli's break with Peel.<sup>20</sup> But in the 1880s the Peelite objective took practical shape when a large group of Radical Unionists broke with Gladstone, essentially on Irish policy, and aligned with the Conservatives. The new Conservative Party, or Unionist Party as it is sometimes called because of its rigid opposition to Home Rule,<sup>21</sup> was in the process of formation. The middle class element continued to grow, and when in 1911 one of their members, Bonar Law, took over the leadership of the Party the influence of the middle class had reached a very high peak. The Disraelian brand of Conservatism had largely vanished with its founder. After his death Conservatism allied with the middle class, and the principles of this alliance have dominated Conservatism since the 1880s.

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<sup>19</sup>Paul Smith, Disraelian Conservatism, pp. 324-25.

<sup>20</sup>Somervell, English Thought, p. 145.

<sup>21</sup>L. P. Curtis states that this alliance was founded largely on the concept of Anglo-Saxon superiority and racial prejudice toward the Irish: "The best examples of Anglo-Saxonist prejudice against the Irish Celts emanate from the Unionist coalition which was hastily patched together in the winter of 1886 in order to destroy the first Home Rule Bill." Anglo-Saxons and Celts, p. 16.

In the Home Rule period, and since, Conservatives generally have claimed that one of the most important theorists of Conservatism was Edmund Burke. Since both the Conservatives and the Whigs claimed ideological descendency from Burke, the contest over this issue ended when the Whigs joined the Conservatives in the 1880s. However, there were two important elements in late nineteenth-century Conservatism which did not form a part of Burke's philosophy. These were democracy and imperialism. Both of these were added after 1867, and both were added by Disraeli. It is true that universal suffrage did not become a fact during Disraeli's lifetime, but his belief that the working class were innately conservative, and that the aristocracy should strive for an alliance with them, pointed in this direction. The 1867 Reform Bill was a first step toward that goal, and though, as has been pointed out, not all Conservatives could welcome future franchise bills with unbounded enthusiasm, a successful reform precedent had been set and a gesture made toward winning working class support.

It is interesting to ask how two such elements as democracy and imperialism could be made a part of the same ideology. Are they not contradictory? Are they not mutually exclusive? Does not democracy imply the right of distinct nationalities to self-determination, the right to frame their own mode of government, to decide their own alliances, mold their own future? And does not imperialism, on the contrary, imply the political control of one country

or people, directly or indirectly, by another? Does it not in fact deny the precepts of democracy? Most English imperialists tended to believe that there was no real contradiction between these two concepts. They were convinced in fact that they had not only a moral right, but a moral obligation, to rule those whom they deemed to be backward peoples. They believed that by ruling such peoples they were performing a civilizing mission, a mission that was in keeping with humanitarian principles. It is only later that they would begin to develop doubts in this mission, doubts that once unloosed would lead to widening cracks in the imperialists' convictions and undermine the imperialist rationale.<sup>22</sup> Winston Churchill was very much aware of the dangers of doubting the imperial mission and in debate on the justice of Britain's imperial role in Asia he exhorted his fellow countrymen to maintain an unwavering faith in their work: "Once we lose confidence," he said, "in our mission in the East . . . our presence in those countries will be stripped of every moral sanction, and . . . cannot long endure."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>This subject is well treated in two recent studies: Allen J. Greenberger, The British Image of India: A Study in the Literature of Imperialism (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), and A. P. Thornton, The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power (Anchor Books. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1968).

<sup>23</sup>Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th ser., Vol. 233 (Dec. 9- Dec. 24, 1929), col. 2009.

That many English imperialists felt no uneasiness in advocating both democracy and imperialism is revealed in their statements. After a conversation with Joseph Chamberlain in March 1886, Arthur Balfour was able to console his uncle Lord Salisbury about the nature of Chamberlain's radicalism. Though it might be democratic, they could rest assured that it was also imperialistic. "I think a democratic government," Chamberlain told Balfour,

should be the strongest government, from a military and Imperial point of view. . . .

The problem is to give the democracy the whole power, but to induce them to do no more in the way of using it than to decide on the general principles which they wish to see carried out. . . .<sup>24</sup>

It is noteworthy that Chamberlain's concept of democracy bore strong similarities to Disraeli's. It called for an alliance of the "masses" and the "classes," with the important difference that Chamberlain included a large segment of the middle class in a governing role with the landowners, whereas Disraeli seemed to exclude them. But in both philosophies the function of the working class was very different from that of the upper and middle classes. The working class, or "the democracy," to use Chamberlain's term, were merely to participate in elections; to the upper and middle classes was reserved the function of ruling.

In the summer of 1886 Chamberlain's opposition to Gladstone's Home Rule Bill was an encouraging sign to

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<sup>24</sup>Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, II, 191.

Conservatives. "If he is now firm in standing by his convictions," wrote The Times, "and bold in attacking measures he regards as dangerous to the State, he will vindicate the faith of those who have discerned in his radicalism a strong leaven of imperial instincts and democratic spirit."<sup>25</sup>

Chamberlain's views showed a remarkable harmony with those of the Conservative Primrose League whose motto was Imperium et Libertas, which might be translated as liberty at home and imperialism abroad.

Differing with the Conservatives on this issue, Peter Viereck feels that "there was a strong ethical conflict between the increased imperialism and the increased democracy of British Toryism."<sup>26</sup> Viereck argues that the logic of British democratic principles implied that where a colony expressed a desire for self-government and national self-determination such wishes should be recognized as legitimate and should be granted. But the Conservatives, and most English imperialists, would have rejected the argument that the principles of democracy applied to all peoples at their existing stage of development. This was not their position, and one of the most candid expressions of this fact came from Lord Salisbury. In May 1886, in a speech opposing Home Rule for Ireland, he stated that the Irish were incapable of self-government, and went on to list a number of

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<sup>25</sup>Quoted in ibid., II, 198.

<sup>26</sup>Viereck, Conservatism, p. 142.

other peoples possessing similar disabilities. Among those explicitly named were the Hottentots, the Indians, the Russians, and the Greeks.<sup>27</sup> Having listed these groups specifically, Salisbury then proceeded to explain that in fact most national, ethnic, or racial groups were unfit for self-government: "When you come to narrow it down," he concluded, "you will find that this--which is called self government but is really government by the majority--works admirably when it is confided to people who are of Teutonic race, but that it does not work so well when people of other races are called upon to join in it."<sup>28</sup>

Professing the same theory was Joseph Chamberlain. By espousing the principles of imperialism, he rejected the proposition that each national group has the right to determine its own destiny. Addressing himself to the Irish demand for Home Rule, he argued that the national will of a people does not constitute a right. "I do not," he said, "consider that wishes and rights are necessarily identical, or that it is sufficient to find out what the majority of the Irish people desire in order at once to grant their demands."<sup>29</sup> Chamberlain's democracy therefore had a rather narrow application, and like Salisbury he made a conscious

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<sup>27</sup>Cecil, Life of Salisbury, III, 302-04.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., III, 302-04.

<sup>29</sup>Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, I, 579.

distinction between the mental and cultural level of the Anglo-Saxons, and that of the various non-Anglo-Saxon peoples. There was a dangerous emotionalism underlying this assumption of Anglo-Saxon superiority. This can be seen in the passionate outbursts that occurred over the Liberal contention that the Irish were capable and deserving of self-government. Chamberlain's official biographer, J. L. Garvin, describes the emotional demonstration that erupted among the anti-Home Rulers on the defeat of Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill. When it is considered that this outburst came from men who generally prided themselves on the high rationality of their behavior, the intensity of their feelings on this issue is revealed. "Members of the Stock Exchange," Garvin wrote, "marched in formation, and burnt the Bill in front of the Guildhall, where Chamberlain, the principal speaker, was hailed with shouts of excitement."<sup>30</sup> There can be little doubt, therefore, that there was an inordinate measure of emotionalism in the opposition to Home Rule.

Ever since Burke had proclaimed that one of the functions of government was to restrain the passions of individuals and groups,<sup>31</sup> Conservatives had attempted to set

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., II, 563. In the House of Commons on the defeat of the Bill "the rank and file of the Conservative party shouted themselves hoarse with cheering, at the same time waving in exultation." See "The Division," The Times, June 8, 1886, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, in The Works of Edmund Burke (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1826), III, 78.

themselves up as the exclusive guardians of that precept. But the passions to be restrained were always those of some non-Conservative group. Conservatives seldom felt that their own passions required to be controlled, a fact which is explained by the nature of their self-image. They felt that they, the possessors of extensive property, had been especially endowed by birth, training, and by virtue of their wealth, to control their own passions and those of the masses. In this, too, they could look back to Burke who had expressed these sentiments rather fervently.<sup>32</sup>

It was a widely-held view among most British imperialists that the non-Anglo-Saxon peoples of the empire were incapable of self-government and it was therefore the duty and responsibility of England to govern them. It is only in this light that one can understand why they were able to advocate both democracy and imperialism simultaneously. Democracy was a system of government applicable only to those peoples who attained a certain mental and cultural level and who possessed a highly rational disposition. English imperialists generally believed that non-Anglo-Saxon peoples at their current stage of development did not possess the qualities necessary to the successful operation of democracy and any attempt by them to do so would lead only to disaster.

It is in a sense ironic that one of the great liberal thinkers of the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill, should

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

have given a degree of approval, albeit indirect, and perhaps inadvertantly, to these ideas. For in his classic work, On Liberty, Mill stated that "despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians. . . ." <sup>33</sup> Much depended, however, on his definition of the term "barbarian," and on this perhaps he would have been less inclusive than most imperialists. Mill also maintained that the forceable government of "barbarians" was acceptable only if "the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end." <sup>34</sup> It was, however, never difficult for the imperialists to persuade themselves and the British electorate that that end was being accomplished. They thought of themselves as lifting these backward peoples upward, as educating and civilizing them, as preparing them for eventual self-government. To ask people who were as yet incapable of it to govern themselves would, in their view, have been both irresponsible and a dereliction of duty. Few Englishmen would have given it serious consideration. To most of them, imperialism was an obligation demanded by moral and humanitarian principles. It was, as Kipling pointed out, a "burden" which the imperialist undertook in order to educate the empire's "fluttered folk and wild," to improve their material conditions, and to prepare

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<sup>33</sup> John Stuart Mill, On Liberty (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1863), p. 24.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

them for eventual self-government.<sup>35</sup>

But the tragedy of this position was that many imperialists, especially among the Conservatives, could never seem to foresee a time when the various people of the empire would be ready to govern themselves. In fact most of them harbored serious reservations about the eventual advent of colonial self-government, for it seemed to foreshadow the dissolution of the empire. They were in fact prepared to undertake strong coercive measures, even to go to war, to prevent this eventuality, as they did, for example, against the Boers, the Irish, the Egyptians, even when it seemed apparent that these people were capable of governing themselves. The fact is, as has already been pointed out, that the principles of democracy and national self-determination were often subordinated to imperial objectives. Conservatives in particular acquiesced in democracy under the pressure of political circumstances and because it seemed to offer the surest way of maintaining their social and political dominance. Crane Brinton perhaps captured their attitude correctly when he stated that "the Tory, however much he may sympathize with democracy, is at bottom a patriarch."<sup>36</sup> He harbors certain reservations about the fundamental principles on which democracy is based--trust in the political wisdom and the autonomy of

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<sup>35</sup>Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden."

<sup>36</sup>Crane Brinton, English Political Thought, p. 225.

the individual. As Brinton states it:

Tory democracy . . . is a contradiction in terms. One half despairs, the other half hopes. One half distrusts the human animal, the other half trusts him. Eventually one half is bound to triumph over the other. Disraeli the Tory was always stronger than Disraeli the democrat.<sup>37</sup>

This paternalistic outlook was supported by the social ideas of Walter Bagehot. In his famous work on the English constitution Bagehot argued that the success of British institutions rested on the long tradition of deference that existed in English society.<sup>38</sup> That Englishmen bore a deep respect for rank was a fact of supreme importance, for it would help insure that the extension of the suffrage would not threaten the existing social system. "If a political agitator were to lecture the peasants of Dorsetshire and try to excite political dissatisfaction," Bagehot wrote, "it is much more likely that he would be pelted than that he would succeed." For "rebelliousness against the structure of society is to their minds rebelling against the Queen."<sup>39</sup>

Conservatives generally denied the basic goodness of man and, as Russell Kirk points out, wished to "put a control upon his will and his appetite," for man is "governed

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>38</sup>Walter Bagehot, The English Constitution, in The Works of Walter Bagehot, ed. by Forrest Morgan (4 vols.; Hartford: Travellers Insurance Company, 1891), IV, 267-73.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 270.

more by emotion than by reason." He in fact possesses an "anarchic impulse" which must be held in check by "tradition and sound prejudice."<sup>40</sup> The anarchic impulse which the Conservatives assumed to exist in man was merely part of the image that they themselves had fashioned of certain classes and certain peoples. When they spoke of an anarchic impulse existing in man, they did not include themselves in this definition.

What the Conservatives really feared was the rise of the philosophy of socialism, a system which they ceaselessly condemned,<sup>41</sup> fearing that it would lead to a policy of income redistribution that would drastically reduce their wealth and undermine their social and political position. When they spoke of the anarchic impulse of such groups, for example, as the working class or the Irish, they were responding to the demand of these groups for social and political reform. They felt that accession to these demands would lead to a decline of the spirit of deference and a rejection of the view that "the highest classes . . . have more political ability than the lower classes."<sup>42</sup> Like Bagehot they felt that only the wealthy classes should rule, only they were capable of ruling, and that the working classes were unable to do so because of the nature of their

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<sup>40</sup>Russell Kirk, The Conservative Mind, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>42</sup>Bagehot, The English Constitution, IV, 270.

work which rendered them incapable of intelligent thought or rational behavior. Bagehot explained it thus:

A life of labor, an incomplete education, a monotonous occupation, a career in which the hands are used much and the judgment is used little, cannot create as much flexible thought, as much applicable intelligence, as a life of leisure, a long culture, a varied experience, an existence by which the judgment is incessantly exercised and by which it may be incessantly improved. A country of respectful poor, though far less happy than where there are no poor, . . . is never the less far more fitted for the best government.<sup>43</sup>

As late as 1921 many Conservatives were still strongly motivated by deferential concepts. Arthur Balfour, for example, was appalled at the government's submission to Irish demands. His biographer Blanche Dugdale writes that it "outraged all his traditions and instincts."<sup>44</sup> It was not that he was any longer seriously opposed to the terms of the "Treaty."<sup>45</sup> It was simply that his aristocratic and paternalistic temperament made it difficult for him to accept the fact that an English government had been driven, under pressure of armed force, to yield to the demands of the Irish. Balfour, like most Englishmen, tended to believe that armed force, when used by the Irish against Britain, was the act of criminals. The Irish, he stated, "owed their success to crime. . . . They had defied British

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 270-71.

<sup>44</sup>Blanche E. C. Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour (2 vols.; London: Hutchinson & Co., 1936), II, 337-38.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., II, 337-38.

rule,--and British rulers had given in to them."<sup>46</sup> There was also resentment of the fact, as R. C. K. Ensor points out of an earlier period, "that in Ireland justice had been overborne by force, and that England's reputation for fair dealing had been compromised."<sup>47</sup> Many British imperialists tended to feel that surrender to physical force was an extremely dangerous act, for it would convince Irish rebels and other colonial nationalists that physical force against Britain would be successful. It would encourage other colonial rebels to resort to violence, and would in the end lead to the disintegration of the empire.

It is hardly surprising that as formal class barriers were removed in England the Conservatives, lacking Disraeli's confidence in the working class, experienced increased fears and tensions. The period from 1867 to 1918 witnessed the elimination of all formal, or legal, political privileges based on wealth. These privileges had guaranteed to the upper and middle classes that no radical alteration could constitutionally be made in the social system without their approval. With the gradual extension of the franchise that guarantee began to lose its value. Philip Mason writes that:

as formal barriers went down, more rigid barriers went up in the mind. . . . In the twenty years before 1914, communication between classes in England was probably

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., II, 337-38.

<sup>47</sup>R. C. K. Ensor, "Some Political and Economic Interactions in Later Victorian England," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 4th ser., Vol. XXXI (1949) p. 27.

at its lowest ebb--and the reason . . . was a deep unconscious fear among the upper and middle classes.<sup>48</sup>

These fears increased after 1917, as is revealed by the various actions taken against the Bolsheviks, by the reaction to the "Zinoviev letter" in 1924 and to the general strike of 1926. Mason describes the intense class feelings that the general strike unleashed among his fellow students at Oxford:

I remember in Britain the general strike of 1926, when I suddenly realized that in their attitude to the class structure of Britain some of my fellow undergraduates were poles apart from myself. They identified themselves with the propertied classes in a way I certainly could not, rushed off to join up as special constables and talked eagerly of the chance of fighting and hurting the strikers.<sup>49</sup>

It is significant that Mason, who sees a close link between class, ethnic, and racial prejudice, finds that this period of increasing social antagonism in Britain was paralleled by a growing racism. Referring to the situation in India Mason writes that in that country "white racial arrogance was at its worst from about 1880 to about 1920."<sup>50</sup> The same period witnessed "the worst of snobbishness in Britain. . . ."<sup>51</sup>

As late as 1917 this snobbery and arrogance had a deleterious influence on British-American relations. C. P. Scott reports that the U. S. ambassador Walter H. Page informed him that

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<sup>48</sup> Philip Mason, Patterns of Dominance (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 22-23.

<sup>49</sup> Mason, Prospero's Magic (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 34.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

apart from the Irish question the greatest obstacle to closer relations between the two countries was "the supercilious arrogance still remaining in a large part of our governing class."<sup>52</sup>

This air of superiority had its roots in a deep-seated conviction among the propertied classes that they were indeed superior. Lecky reflected and supported their feelings when he argued that the possession of a large amount of wealth was proof of one's superiority. "Superior talent, superior industry, superior thrift; lie at the root of the great accumulations of every civilized age."<sup>53</sup> Lecky of course was attempting to justify the extremes of poverty and wealth and to dispel any collectivist effort to radically alter the social system. Any attempt by government, Lecky argued, to reduce the existing degree of economic inequality would be unnatural and artificial, for men were naturally unequal, and it was this "great natural inequality" which was "the true source of the enormous disparities" that existed.<sup>54</sup>

The widespread discussion and advocacy of a less inequalitarian social system which occurred throughout this period was a constant source of trepidation for the

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<sup>52</sup>C. P. Scott, The Political Diaries of C. P. Scott, 1911-1929, ed. by Trevor Wilson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 263.

<sup>53</sup>Lecky, Democracy and Liberty, II, 317.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., II, 317.

Conservatives. This does not mean that all Conservatives were opposed to meaningful social reform or that all Liberals supported it. But when one compares, for example, the elements of the Newcastle Program and the social legislation enacted by the Liberals between 1906 and 1914 with that enacted by the Conservatives during their long tenure of office prior to December 1905, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that, whatever individual Conservatives may have felt, the Party as a whole enacted little meaningful social legislation during this lengthy period. Despite the assertions of Tory democracy Conservatives by and large continued to subscribe rather firmly to the views of Herbert Spencer that the state should not intervene in economic matters in order to modify the extremes of income distribution. Gladstone's partial abandonment of the principles of laissez-faire with respect to the system of land tenure and rent in Ireland and his disestablishment of the Anglican Church there were anathema to most of them. They opposed these as a step in the direction of socialism. When the Bishop of Peterborough, Dr. Magee, denounced the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland in 1869 he prophesied that this would eventually lead to communism: "Revolutions," he said, "commence with sacrilege and they go on to communism; or, to put it in . . . more . . . euphemistic language, . . . revolutions begin with the Church and go on to the land."<sup>55</sup> Lady

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<sup>55</sup>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3d ser., Vol. 196 (May 3- June 16, 1869), col. 1855.

Gwendolen adds that the principles contained in the Land Act of 1881 were "profoundly shocking to the ideas of British Conservatism."<sup>56</sup> And W. H. Smith was so disturbed by Gladstone's proposed Land Bill of 1886 and by the Home Rule Bill of the same year that he considered fleeing the country. "I have been studying the new Home Rule and the Land Purchase Bill. . . ," he noted, "and if these bills pass I am very much inclined to clear out of the country altogether, . . . and find a home clear of the dishonour of English politics."<sup>57</sup>

Despite their resistance to Gladstone's land bills and the economic and political principles they contained, the Conservatives themselves were later forced to adopt and even extend those principles in the enactment of further land legislation. But they did so reluctantly and with great bitterness, for the social transformation of Ireland into a land of peasant proprietors would eradicate the Anglo-Irish landed aristocracy, the system of primogeniture that maintained it, and consequently perhaps the stratified and privileged social order that was based upon it. But it is unlikely that the landlords could have maintained their position much longer because of the fall in the price of farm goods under foreign competition. They also resented the system of dual ownership which Gladstone's land laws had created, as well as

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<sup>56</sup>Cecil, Gwendolen, Life of Salisbury, III, 42.

<sup>57</sup>Sir Herbert Maxwell, Life and Times of the Right Honourable William Henry Smith (2 vols.; Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1893), II, 172-73.

the judicial fixing of rents, which had substantially reduced them. Many landlords therefore came to welcome government financing of peasant land purchase as a relatively secure and profitable way of liquidating their holdings. John E. Pomfret, who has made an extensive study of the land problem in Ireland from 1800 to 1923, writes as follows:

The system of dual ownership was no more popular with the landlords than with the tenants. Fair rents had meant lower rents and lower rents, in the face of an organized peasantry, were as difficult to collect as high rents. Moreover, with the rise of democracy their power waned and in Great Britain their arguments were no longer accepted at face value. Under the kindly aegis of the Conservative Party they were enabled to seek cover. A succession of land purchase acts permitted them to retire from the field with a minimum of loss.<sup>58</sup>

As late as 1932, however, Lady Gwendolen Cecil, despite the fact that the Conservatives had continued and extended the principles of Gladstone's land laws, could still refer to those laws as "pernicious."<sup>59</sup>

The Liberals and Conservatives had at first tried a combination of coercion and economic war against Irish tenants. While the various administrations pursued a policy of extraordinary law some of the leading Whig and Conservative landlords undertook their own remedies. When the tenants united to force down the price of rents, some landlords attempted to form syndicates to resist them. The purpose of

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<sup>58</sup>John E. Pomfret, The Struggle for Land in Ireland, 1800-1923 (Princeton University Press, 1930), p. xi.

<sup>59</sup>Cecil, Life of Salisbury, III, 151.

these syndicates was to step in when a particular landlord appeared likely to yield to tenant pressure, purchase his estate, and maintain the rents at their previous level. If the tenants then refused to pay these amounts, they were evicted. Lord Midleton describes these tactics in the following passage:

Parnell made a special onslaught upon the owner of the Ponsonby Estate near Youghal. . . . The owner . . . was on the point of surrendering. . . . Smith-Barry, with the aid of some other Southerners, enlisted twelve of the strongest capitalists in Great Britain and Ireland to subscribe £10,000 a piece, and within a week sent Ponsonby an offer of twenty years' purchase, which was promptly accepted. The syndicate then challenged Parnell who at once withheld all rent; 300 tenants were evicted.<sup>60</sup>

Although the successes the landlords achieved along these lines were rather limited, the relish with which they acclaimed each victory, as the above passage indicates, reveals the bitterness of the conflict between landlord and tenant. Lord Lansdowne gives further evidence of the nature of this struggle. He, too, was waging an economic contest with the tenants on his estate. In December 1880 he wrote to his mother: "The . . . tenants are obdurate. . . . They are too far gone, and nothing is left for it but to fight it out. We shall probably single out the two richest men and make bankrupts of them."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Earl of Midleton, Records & Recollection's, 1856-1939 (London: John Murray, 1939), p. 227.

<sup>61</sup>Lord Newton, Lord Lansdowne: A Biography (London: Macmillan and Co., 1929), p. 20.

Queen Victoria fully supported these coercive tactics. She was an unwavering advocate of repressive policies and she constantly urged Liberal governments to undertake more stringent measures. She found it insufferable that Irish peasants should violate the law in quest of economic demands. Beyond that she had a deep fear that the violence in Ireland might lead to revolution there and perhaps even spread to Britain.

In December 1880 she wrote, in her usual third person, to the Chief Secretary for Ireland, W. E. Forster:

She does not doubt that the Irish Government wish to do what they can to put a stop to a state of lawlessness which is quite unexampled and which brings the British Government into the greatest disrepute. But she does blame them for not insisting on more powers being given them long ere this, and for not taking measures earlier to prevent a state of affairs which is becoming every day more and more serious, and may spread to England and Scotland if the strongest measures are not speedily taken.<sup>62</sup>

The economic revolution that was occurring in Ireland and the seeming growing advocacy of collectivistic and socialistic theories in England were a source of much concern for the Conservatives. How were they to dispel the appeal of these new ideas? Disraeli's answer had been to make certain concessions to the working class in order to unite them with the aristocracy. But his successors did not successfully continue these policies, as is revealed by the strikes of the 1880s and the rise of the Independent Labor Party in the

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<sup>62</sup>George Earle Buckle, The Letters of Queen Victoria (6 vols.; London: John Murray, 1926-1932), 2d ser., Vol. III, p. 165.

1890s. Disraeli's most conspicuous achievement, the uniting of the working class behind a policy of nationalism and imperialism, which he hoped would prevent the development of class conflict, had been pursued by his successors, but with only partial success. The basic reason for this was that the Conservatives did not adequately continue to develop and implement Disraeli's social reformism. They concentrated primarily on wooing the workers with a policy of nationalism and imperialism. But without, at the same time, enacting effective and timely reforms it was impossible to deflect for long their awareness, impatience, and dissatisfaction with their social conditions. Working-class aspirations tended to exceed what most Conservatives were willing to yield. Lord Salisbury was aware of this, but for ideological and Party reasons he was unable, and perhaps unwilling, to do much about it. "We have so to conduct our legislation," he wrote to Lord Randolph Churchill, "that we shall give some satisfaction to both Classes and Masses. This is especially difficult with the Classes because all legislation is rather unwelcome to them as tending to disturb a state of things with which they are satisfied. . . ." <sup>63</sup>

Out of these conditions there gradually emerged among the propertied classes the concept of what has come to be called social imperialism. Joseph A. Schumpeter defined

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<sup>63</sup>Quoted in T. C. Worsley, Barbarians and Philistines: Democracy and the Public Schools (London: Robert Hale [1940]), pp. 72-73.

social imperialism as an attempt by the "entrepreneurs and other elements" to "woo the workers" to a program of imperialism.<sup>64</sup> This was to be achieved through a number of "social welfare concessions" which, it was asserted, would only be possible on the basis of successful imperialism and "export monopolism."<sup>65</sup> It was also hoped that social imperialism would defeat the divisive class arguments of the socialists. Bernard Semmel, who deals at length with this subject in his Imperialism and Social Reform, explains that

social-imperialism was designed to draw all classes together in defence of the nation and empire and aimed to prove to the least well-to-do class that its interests were inseparable from those of the nation. It aimed at undermining the argument of the socialists. . . .<sup>66</sup>

Cecil Rhodes, one of the most aggressive imperialists of the Home Rule era, was convinced that only through a vigorous policy of imperial expansion could civil war and social revolution be prevented in Britain. He called, therefore, on all those who cherished the existing social order to support an imperialist policy. "I was in the East End of London yesterday," he stated,

and attended a meeting of the unemployed. And as I listened to the wild speeches, which were just a cry for bread, bread, bread, I became more than ever

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<sup>64</sup>Joseph Schumpeter, Imperialism: Social Classes (Meridan Books. Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company), p. 175.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., pp. 86-87, 175-76.

<sup>66</sup>Bernard Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914 (Anchor Books. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1960), p. 12.

convinced of the importance of imperialism. . . . My cherished idea is a solution of the social problem, that is, in order to save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population, to provide new factories and mines. The empire, as I have always said, is a bread and butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists.<sup>67</sup>

The Conservatives of course were not alone in their opposition to socialism. On this matter there was very little difference between the two major parties, although Liberals on the whole did gradually become more amenable to collectivistic social reform. This, however, did not reduce their general distaste for pure socialism, as is revealed quite clearly by the cooperative efforts of the Coalition Liberals and the Conservative Party after World War I to discredit the Labor Party by arguing that it was in league with Bolshevism and that it was a threat to British liberties and institutions. Arno J. Mayer, who has made an intensive study of the diplomacy of World War I, holds that the prime preoccupation of the diplomats at Versailles was to strengthen and maintain the position of the ruling classes against the challenge of labor and socialism.<sup>68</sup> And when one finds Lloyd George, the erstwhile radical and democrat, the maker of the famous Limehouse speeches, contemplating in 1919 that the House of Lords should be strengthened as a barrier

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<sup>67</sup>Quoted in ibid., p. 4.

<sup>68</sup>See Arno J. Mayer, Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles, 1918-1919 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967).

against the programs of the Labor Party,<sup>69</sup> one becomes aware that the fear of socialism was indeed widespread.

In seeking to dike the socialist tide the opponents of socialism were fortunate to find intellectual support among the biological sciences. Darwin's theory of evolution through natural selection could be, and was, used to reinforce the view that competition and struggle were an inevitable part of human existence. Darwin was speaking primarily of biological evolution and argued that in that sphere there rages a continual struggle for existence which brings about the survival of the fittest. Others quickly adopted this theory and applied it to human activities as a whole. It was used to justify laissez-faire economics and political rule by the propertied classes. In 1898 Benjamin Kidd argued that "the law of life has always been the same from the beginning,--ceaseless and inevitable struggle and competition, ceaseless and inevitable selection and rejection, ceaseless and inevitable progress."<sup>70</sup> By linking struggle and progress together in this way Kidd was attempting to prove that struggle was the sole source of progress, and that only through this means could progress be attained. "It is an inevitable law of life," he wrote, "amongst the higher forms, that competition and selection must not only always accompany

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<sup>69</sup>Diaries of C. P. Scott, p. 38.

<sup>70</sup>Benjamin Kidd, Social Evolution (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1894), p. 39.

progress, but that they must prevail amongst every form of life which is not actually retrograding."<sup>71</sup> This argument was enthusiastically embraced by the opponents of meaningful collectivistic social reform. As Crane Brinton points out, these ideas, advanced by Benjamin Kidd in his Social Evolution, served a function similar to that supported a century earlier by Robert Malthus in his Essay on Population.<sup>72</sup> They justified existing social conditions and the existing social and economic system.

If struggle and competition were the only source of progress, then it followed that anything which weakened these forces would impede human and social advance. Since the essence of socialism was that in theory it substituted cooperation for competition among individuals, classes, and nations, it followed that socialism would retard progress. Some eugenicists in fact even questioned the wisdom of further developing medical science, feeling, as D. C. Somervell points out, that it would make "possible the survival and propagation of the unfit who formerly went to the wall."<sup>73</sup>

But if socialism was theoretically cooperationist, pacifist, and internationalist, Conservatism emphasized competition, struggle, and nationalism. The force of nationalism in Britain received renewed vigor and meaning in the late

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>72</sup>Brinton, English Political Thought, p. 282.

<sup>73</sup>Somervell, English Thought, p. 140.

nineteenth century when Disraeli adopted it and linked it to imperialism. Two factors motivated Disraeli. One was the need for a policy or creed that would win working class electoral support for the Conservative Party. The other was the rise of socialism on the premise that in existing society class interests were antipathetic. Disraeli saw well the dangers that would ensue if an ideology which held that the interests of the various classes were antithetical was permitted to gain popular acceptance. He therefore undertook to discredit this ideology and to unite the aristocracy and the working class. For this a new ideology had to be found, and Disraeli discovered it in the concepts of nationalism and imperialism.

That Disraeli's nationalistic ideology would win an easy victory over socialism is not surprising. In the Home Rule era most Englishmen could identify with the concept of conflict between nations much more easily than conflict between classes. The idea that class interests were antipathetic was relatively new. In addition it was difficult for large numbers of the working class to assume that the men who had ruled them for generations had pursued their own interests at the expense of theirs. Especially was this so in a differential society, where workers often tended to look upon their leaders as basically men of altruistic conscience and impartiality who were committed to the interests of society as a whole. It was also much easier to believe that evil existed in foreign nationalities. Nations had fought

each other for centuries. It was widely believed that their interests were often antagonistic. Classes had seldom fought each other, and had in fact usually fought together against foreign enemies.

While national conflict might deflect attention from class antagonism, however, it also carried with it other characteristics from which the thoughtful Conservative could take little solace. Conflict between nations could lead to the assertion that one is right and the other wrong, that one is just and the other unjust, that one is good and the other evil. This in turn can lead to the rise of national, ethnic, or racial prejudice. It can lead to an unquestioning assumption of national superiority or national genius, an assumption that permeated much of English society throughout the Home Rule era. It was this overwhelming characteristic which led the Victorian Englishmen to the confident feeling "that he was a member of the greatest nation in the world. . . ." <sup>74</sup>

In addition nationalism, while it succeeded in reducing class conflict temporarily, failed to do so permanently. Instead it helped lead to World War I, which ended with the defeat of the old aristocratic ruling elites in many parts of Europe and the rise of socialism in Russia. In many of the defeated countries the workers had lost much of their former respect for the ruling classes, and in England itself more

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

of them were turning to the support of the Labor Party. Nationalism also helped open an unbridgeable gulf between England and Ireland, which led eventually to war and to the termination of the union. The course which the Conservatives had pursued as an antidote to class consciousness, major social reform, and Home Rule failed in the end to achieve those ends. This failure is well summarized by Peter Viereck: "Conservative hopes that nationalism would stabilize the status quo against revolutions were dashed when, instead, it brought two world wars, causing revolutions, social chaos, and the moral chaos of racist atrocities."<sup>75</sup>

If the Conservatives adopted a policy of nationalism and imperialism to counter radical social change, they also proved willing to resort to stronger tactics where necessary. For generations they had proclaimed the sanctity of law. Disrespect for the law was abhorrent to them. They portrayed themselves as the party of law and order, and denounced any violation of the law in the severest terms. This was especially so in relation to Ireland, where they continually criticized the Liberals for being soft and timid, and demanded that the law be enforced rigorously.

Yet in 1886, in 1893, and again during the period 1912-1914 influential and leading members of the Conservative Party openly advocated resistance to the law. They asserted that if Parliament passed a Home Rule Bill the Unionists

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<sup>75</sup>Viereck, Conservatism, p. 24.

would not only be justified in resisting by force the implementation of that Bill in Ulster, but that they would in fact do so.<sup>76</sup> This threat by the Unionists to revolt against the government, to refuse to acknowledge the legality of an act of Parliament, was an astonishing event in English history. Those men who had for centuries proclaimed their respect for Parliament, and for constitutional processes, had suddenly declared their refusal to abide by its enactments. Their willingness to advocate rebellion reveals an attitude, state of mind, and extremism that were produced by inordinate circumstances.

The fact is that Conservatives felt, especially in the period 1906-1914, that the social system was gravely endangered by those forces which were seemingly pushing England toward a collectivistic and socialistic society and they determined to use the House of Lords to prevent this.<sup>77</sup> Sir Robert Ensor believes that the Conservatives were losing their control and felt strongly, as early as the 1880s, the pressure of those forces seeking to reform society. He writes that the "nineteen years of Unionist supremacy that ended in 1906 may be looked on as a successful rally of the governing families to maintain their position, propped

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<sup>76</sup>The threat by the Conservatives to resort to civil war, what George Dangerfield calls the Tory Revolt, will be discussed at greater length in the following chapter.

<sup>77</sup>Blake, The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill, p. 190.

and modified by their alliance with the ablest leader of the upstarts--Chamberlain."<sup>78</sup> When Balfour's decision to employ the House of Lords to prevent the enactment of progressive legislation led to the Taff Vale decision, the rejection of the 1909 budget, and consequently to the passage of the Parliament Act, many Conservatives, feeling frustrated, turned against him and removed him from the Party leadership.<sup>79</sup>

To explain therefore the outburst of Conservative passions, as revealed in the support of armed insurrection and the encouragement of the army to disobey the government solely in terms of the Irish problem would be inadequate. It was a product of various factors discussed in this chapter.<sup>80</sup> It was a reaction and a response to what the Conservatives viewed as an undermining democratic, socialistic, and secular attack on the existing social order. They feared that the aristocratic world was slipping away, aided by the attack of these various forces, and they determined to fight with every weapon available, constitutional or unconstitutional, legal or illegal, to maintain it. In The Conservative Mind Russell Kirk writes: "No old dominant class ever really relinquishes

<sup>78</sup>R. C. K. Ensor, England, 1870-1914 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 388.

<sup>79</sup>Balfour's use of the House of Lords in this period is well analyzed in Roy Jenkins, Mr. Balfour's Poodle: An Account of the Struggle between the House of Lords and the Government of Mr. Asquith (London: Collins, 1954).

<sup>80</sup>This explosion of Tory passions and the factors behind it are dramatically discussed for the period 1910-1914 by George Dangerfield, The Strange Death of Liberal England (New York: Capricorn Books, 1935).

power until its nerve has failed--until, losing confidence in its own virtue and its own justice, that powerful order allows the sceptre or the sword to slip from its grasp, mesmerized rather than vanquished."<sup>81</sup> While it is true that by the end of the Home Rule era the landed aristocracy had lost much of its power, and the sceptre and the sword had largely passed to a new class, that class had been deeply influenced by the aristocracy and professed many of its social, economic, and imperial principles.<sup>82</sup> If the landed aristocracy had lost much of its former distinctive political predominance, this was partly a reflection of the fact that land was losing its pre-eminence as a source of individual wealth and the former landed magnates were deriving much of their income from industrial, commercial, and financial investments.<sup>83</sup> This was true to an even greater extent of the Anglo-Irish landlords, who in this period relinquished most of their land to the peasants. Thus while the middle class was exercising an increasing influence in the Conservative Party, many of the aristocrats had also developed middle class interests. The middle class did not bring an entirely new set of values or objectives to the Conservative Party. They adopted many of the social, economic, and imperial principles of the aristocracy, as is revealed especially by their willingness to

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<sup>81</sup>Kirk, The Conservative Mind, p. 288.

<sup>82</sup>Worsley, Barbarians and Philistines, p. 35.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

revolt over the Irish issue.<sup>84</sup> Given this development, it was certain therefore that no radical transformation of the social order would occur and that no major concessions would be freely and willingly made to the nationalist aspirations of the Irish.

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 35. See also A. P. Thornton, The Habit of Authority: Paternalism in British History (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966), p. 17.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CONSERVATIVE SELF-IMAGE

Our vocation in the world has been to undertake the government of vast uncivilized population and to raise them gradually to a higher standard of life.

--Lord Hugh Cecil<sup>1</sup>

No other people are doing so much to explore, subdue, and civilize far-distant and savage lands.

--W. E. H. Lecky<sup>2</sup>

All the law and all the civilization in Ireland are the work of England.

--Arthur James Balfour<sup>3</sup>

The Victorian Englishman felt that he was a member of the greatest nation in the world. . . .

--D. C. Somervell<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the period of the Home Rule struggle most Englishmen in general and Conservatives in particular held a highly complimentary self-image. They looked upon themselves with a sense of pride and accomplishment that would be difficult to duplicate in any historical period. They thought of England as having attained the highest level of

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<sup>1</sup>Lord Hugh Cecil, Conservatism, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup>Lecky, Democracy and Liberty, I, 249.

<sup>3</sup>Balfour, Aspects of Home Rule (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1912), p. 170.

<sup>4</sup>Somervell, English Thought, p. 233.

civilization that had yet been developed anywhere,<sup>5</sup> and they thought of themselves as seated at the pinnacle of that civilization. They looked upon themselves as the wisest law-makers and the most capable and generous governmental and imperial administrators in existence; and they viewed the English constitutional and political system as the very paragon of excellence.

What a contrast they detected when they looked at the various non-Anglo-Saxon peoples throughout the empire. Almost everywhere they saw what they considered to be mentally and culturally backward peoples, peoples who, in their view, lacked both law and civilization. In fact many Englishmen seemed to believe that no people could be civilized unless they partook to some extent of the English political and legal system. Arthur Balfour's assertion that "before the English . . . went to Ireland, Ireland was . . . without law" is a prime example of this attitude.<sup>6</sup> Of course Ireland had possessed laws, but they were not England's laws, and to Balfour this invalidated them. Lord Hugh Cecil expressed similar sentiments when he specifically excluded from the pale of civilization all societies which were not influenced to some extent by the English constitutional system: "The Constitution," he said,

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 233; and A. P. Thornton, The Imperial Idea, p. 240.

<sup>6</sup>Balfour, Aspects of Home Rule, p. 170.

is the greatest contribution that the English people have made to human progress and it bears deeply imprinted upon it their peculiar characteristics. With various degrees of faithfulness it has been copied in every civilized country in the world. Nowhere where civilization exists is there a land which does not bear traces of its influence.<sup>7</sup>

One of the yardsticks which was widely used for measuring the degree of backwardness or advancement of a particular people was their military ability to defend themselves from conquest by foreign powers. Those peoples, such as the Irish, who had proved unable to maintain their sovereignty were charged with possessing various characteristics of inferiority. Conversely, those peoples who were able through military force to conquer and dominate others were considered to be the bearers of certain superior attributes.<sup>8</sup> It was a method which was highly satisfying to most Englishmen because it seemed to prove their assumption of superiority. It was in fact nothing more than the continued application of the old might-makes-right argument, the argument that those who have the power to do so are justified in imposing their will wherever they desire. It was a naked appeal to force. Force became the arbiter and final proof of the rightness of those who wielded it. In fact the successful use of force proved not only the superiority of those who exercised it but the

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<sup>7</sup>Lord Hugh Cecil, Conservatism, p. 218.

<sup>8</sup>See Carlton J. H. Hayes, A Generation of Materialism, 1871-1900, pp. 249-50. This theme is also touched upon in a recent work by Christine Bolt, Victorian Attitudes to Race (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971).

backwardness of those who suffered from it.

These ideas were not restricted only to militarists or jingoists, or to the unintellectual elements of society. Even some presumably highly thoughtful members of the Fabian Society assumed that Englishmen, on the basis of their military power, were mentally, culturally, and morally superior to other less powerful peoples, and they approved, on that basis, the military conquest and political domination of the latter. The Fabians, therefore, supported the Conservatives in the Boer War, and produced a pamphlet, Fabianism and the Empire, setting forth their justification for so doing and for their imperial views in general. They assumed that England's higher sense of moral responsibility would insure that she would not go to war without strong and justifiable reasons. "The fact remains," wrote Bernard Shaw,

that a Great Power, consciously or unconsciously, must govern in the interests of civilization as a whole; and it is not to those interests that such mighty forces as gold-fields, and the formidable armaments that can be built upon them, should be wielded irresponsibly by small communities of frontiersmen.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bernard Shaw, ed., Fabianism and the Empire: A Manifesto by the Fabian Society (London: Grant Richards, 1900), p. 23. It is interesting to note that Shaw, while implicitly supporting the might-makes-right argument, was, somewhat paradoxically it would seem, a bitter opponent of the theory of natural selection and an advocate of the creative, rather than competitive, evolution of J. B. Lamarck and Henri Bergson. See especially the Preface to his Back to Methuselah: A Metabiological Pentateuch (New York: Brentano's, 1921).

The use of the term "frontiermen" is important, for it is obviously and intentionally pejorative, reflecting the unstated assumption that Englishmen were morally superior to, and politically more responsible than, the Boers, and presumably also the Irish and other less technologically advanced and militarily powerful peoples.

Competition, struggle, and power became important concepts among many Englishmen. Force was considered a necessary factor in ruling the Irish and other such rebellious and turbulent colonial people. In addition power was visualized as a measure of a people's greatness, and their advanced degree of development and achievement. It demonstrated their technological, organizational, and military prowess, and won, or at least ought to win, admiration and respect for those who possessed it. There was a widespread tendency in late Victorian and Edwardian England to think of war in terms of inevitability. This was in part a product of the concept that individuals, classes, and nations were in a state of constant competition and struggle. However, this does not mean that no attempt was made to avoid war. One of the arguments for increased military strength and for firmness in dealing with foreign powers or Irish outrages, for example, was that it would prevent, or at least reduce, the frequency of military conflict. Still, there was a strong tendency to exalt martial values, as in Sir Henry Newbolt's exhortation "to count the life of battle good,"<sup>10</sup> or as in the following

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<sup>10</sup>See "Clifton Chapel."

passage from Tom Brown's Schooldays. "After all," wrote Thomas Hughes,

what would life be without fighting? . . . From the cradle to the grave, fighting, rightly understood, is the business, the real, highest, honestest of every son of man. Everyone who is worth his salt has his enemies, who must be beaten, be they evil thoughts and habits in himself or spiritual wickedness in high places, or Russians, or Border-ruffians. . . .

It is no good for Quakers, or any other body of men, to uplift their voices against fighting. Human nature is too strong for them. . . . Every soul of them is doing his own piece of fighting, somehow and somewhere.<sup>11</sup>

The basic cause of the conflict, which many Englishmen viewed as a constant element in the human experience, lay not in institutions, but in the nature of man himself. Most Englishmen, however, believed that man could be reformed and improved. This was a highly important theory to the imperialist, for without it he would have been unable to depict his imperialism as a charitable attempt to civilize backward peoples. It was, after all, only on the assumption that man was reformable that the mission to civilize him and prepare him for self-government became meaningful. The Irish, for example, were thought of as being in a rather backward cultural, moral, and intellectual state. The British had a duty and responsibility to rule them while they were in that condition. When they resorted to outrage and rebellion, they should be punished promptly and firmly, because Irish mental and cultural characteristics were such that they responded

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<sup>11</sup>Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown's Schooldays (London: Macmillan and Co., 1868), Pt. II, ch. v.

most favorably to prompt and firm repression. There should be no vacillation on the part of the British administration in Ireland, for the successful imperial ruler must always demonstrate his authority fearlessly and swiftly.

These views, and the policies based upon them, led to endless difficulties for the British administration in Ireland, for as Irish nationalism developed, British imperial rule was more and more rejected. The fundamental element in Irish nationalism was the demand for self-government, and this the Unionists refused to concede. Their only resource therefore, when conciliatory overtures failed, was the application of increased force to maintain British dominion. In fact the Irish demand for self-government infuriated most Englishmen, for they viewed it as a callous and ungrateful rejection of their civilizing efforts. "The Irish claim," writes A. P. Thornton, "that Ireland was a nation was one that was bitterly and passionately refuted by the late-Victorian Englishman and the generation he trained, who saw in it only a deliberate rejection of his own standards, which were, he was genuinely persuaded, the highest that men had yet attained to."<sup>12</sup>

The Unionists therefore could not bring themselves to concede self-government to Ireland. And all the threats, bombings, boycotts, killings, that the Irish perpetrated against English rule only stiffened their determination to

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<sup>12</sup>Thornton, The Imperial Idea, p. 240.

maintain it. In fact such acts of violence strengthened their belief that the Irish were basically criminal and anarchic, and therefore incapable of wise and efficient self-government. In this respect it is interesting to compare their attitude toward acts of violence committed by the Irish and similar acts committed in Ireland by the British. When the latter used force to achieve their goals this was looked upon as a dignified, restrained, and responsible use of power to bring law, justice, and civilized order to a situation that was gravely threatened by the erratic schemes of Irish anarchists and revolutionaries. Violence, thus, when used by the British was the just and orderly act of grave and sagacious imperial statesmen; when used by the Irish it was the reckless and terroristic act of criminals.

Given these conditions, it would, the Unionists argued, have been totally irresponsible and a dereliction of duty to grant self-government to the Irish, and they repeatedly attacked on this basis those followers of Gladstone who supported it. They pictured themselves as improving, at the greatest possible pace, the condition of a rather backward and recalcitrant people, and they became extremely indignant when their efforts were criticized and denounced. Some Englishmen even asserted that England should continue to rule Ireland no matter what the results were. This was certainly the case with Lord Salisbury who stated quite frankly that he was not interested in the justice or injustice of Home Rule. The ethics or practical merits of the question did

not concern him. "Rightly or wrongly," he stated, "I have not the slightest desire to satisfy the national aspirations of Ireland."<sup>13</sup>

The Unionists had profound faith in the rightness of their position and refused to be shaken in that faith by Irish Nationalists or Gladstonian Liberals. Irish opinion of course was quite worthless, since the Irish were not intellectually equipped to make an intelligent judgment. The honorable and wise path therefore was to ignore it. In the House of Commons Arthur Balfour usually treated the Irish representatives with contempt and considered their statements and questions so unimportant as to refuse either to take them seriously, or at times even to condescend to answer them. When Irish M.P.s would question his policies, Kenneth Young writes,

he would simply laugh at their heroics, and his reply would be a playful prodding in the ribs rather than a serious attempt to answer.

He refused to treat Parnell and his associates as true representatives of Ireland; and often, instead of answering himself, would show his disdain by simply sending in his Parliamentary Secretary . . . to read out a statement.<sup>14</sup>

The Queen shared Balfour's attitude toward the Nationalist M.P.s and on occasion exhorted Gladstone, and even Lord Salisbury who indeed needed little encouragement, to avoid

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<sup>13</sup> Cecil, Life of Salisbury, III, 293.

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth Young, Arthur James Balfour: The Happy Life of the Politician, Prime Minister, Statesman, and Philosopher, 1848-1930 (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1963), p. 103.

any intercourse with them.<sup>15</sup> By some seemingly unfathomable process of analysis the Queen and the Unionists would argue on occasion that the Nationalist M.P.s did not represent the Irish people. It is difficult to discover how they reached this conclusion or exactly what their motives were. It may simply have stemmed from a wish to believe that a majority of the Irish people were loyal; or conversely, and much more likely, they may merely have used this as justification for ignoring the criticisms and demands of the Irish.<sup>16</sup>

The correct course, most Unionist believed, was for Britain to continue to govern Ireland imperially despite Irish criticism and objections.<sup>17</sup> Since the Conservatives and the Whigs generally considered themselves the best judges of what was good for Ireland they were determined to act accordingly. It was true that this might lead to resistance and the consequent use of force to maintain order, but neither the Whigs nor the Conservatives recoiled from this. Indeed they believed that the periodic application of force was a highly effective way of demonstrating to the Irish that British statesmen knew how to impose their authority and did not shrink from whatever means were necessary to do so. On

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<sup>15</sup>Buckle, The Letters of Queen Victoria, 2d ser., Vol. III, pp. 294, 687.

<sup>16</sup>Young, Arthur James Balfour, p. 103.

<sup>17</sup>Bernard Holland, The Life of Spencer Compton: Eighth Duke of Devonshire (2 vols.; London: Longman's, Green & Co., 1911), II, 143-44.

the contrary they were proud of their ability to administer punishment to wrongdoers.<sup>18</sup> It was a mark of their Stoicism and imperial temper, of their ability and right to rule,<sup>19</sup> and proved that they were neither weak, timid, nor effeminate--characteristics which they disdained, and which they associated contemptuously with the Irish.<sup>20</sup> There was little critical analysis of the merits of these values. Intellectualizing on such matters was looked upon as a feminine, and hence objectionable, pursuit. The imperial administrator espoused the ideals of firmness and toughness, of masculinity and muscularity. These were the qualities fostered in the public schools, institutions which almost every imperial administrator passed through at one stage of his life and to which he looked back with fond nostalgia.

An example of these views may be cited from the writings of G. F.-H. Berkeley, who had once been a student at Wellington College, and who was certainly not among the most extreme in his adherence to public school values.<sup>21</sup> He approvingly defined public school objectives as aiming for the development of "hardy and dashing breed" of a young

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<sup>18</sup>Worsley, Barbarians and Philistines, p. 43.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 43; see also Hayes, A Generation of Materialism, 1871-1900, pp. 256, 269.

<sup>21</sup>Berkeley opposed the Coalition's nakedly ruthless policy of repression and reprisal in Ireland in the period 1919-1921.

men.<sup>22</sup> The faculty at Wellington, he stated, were ideal for this purpose since they were "competent and muscular Britons."<sup>23</sup> Berkeley depreciated the intellectual and scholarly teacher. "One knows," he wrote,

that in many schoolrooms throughout England, the boys have looked at the master in charge and have said, "This man can pester us with his Latin and Greek and I can't retaliate, but in reality what a poor type of fellow he is! I could smash him at any type of game or sport."<sup>24</sup>

In Berkeley's view the mark of a good teacher was his ability to dominate on the sports field. "That was the sort of master that was required. . . ."<sup>25</sup>

The purpose of education, as generally purveyed in the public schools, was to inculcate these physical values. The student was to become loyal, obedient, and courageous, characteristics deemed basic, not only to the soldier, but to the successful imperial administrator as well. In "Ionicus" Sir Henry Newbolt warmly praised the public school teacher who spent his days far "from fame and power," but who dreamed faithfully and loyally to the end of his life "of the sound and splendour of England's war." Newbolt left no doubt of his admiration for the martial values instilled by the public schools, as is revealed in the following

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<sup>22</sup>George F.-H. Berkeley, My Recollections of Wellington College, (Newport, Mon.: R. H. Johns, 1945), p. 30.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

nostalgic passage about Clifton:

Clifton, remember these thy sons who fell  
 Fighting far over sea;  
 For they in a dark hour remembered well  
 Their warfare learned of thee.<sup>26</sup>

The inculcation of these values was the principal objective of public school education. However, there was another aspect to this education which was equally important. This was the pedagogical method used not only to achieve academic results but to instill discipline and self-control. This method amounted largely to the liberal application of corporal punishment. The beatings perpetrated in the public schools were designed not only to instill discipline in the recipient, but to mold in him the kind of temper and disposition deemed necessary to successful imperial rule. In suffering them unflinchingly, the student was learning not only to endure in silence whatever trials or hardships he might later encounter in his imperial and governmental career, but also to inflict similar punishment on those he governed, in the firm knowledge that he was thereby furthering the maintenance of law, order, and the cause of England's civilizing mission. By this process the student learned to control his passions and emotions, and through a similar process he would perhaps some day control the passions and emotions of the Irish and other backward and rebellious colonial peoples.

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<sup>26</sup>Henry Newbolt, Collected Poems, 1897-1907 (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons [1910]), "notes."

In later life these students could recall their public school beatings not only with pride, but with unshakeable confidence in their value and effectiveness. Sir Ian Hamilton's pleasant recollections of the punishment he received at Wellington College are highly illustrative. He describes how the headmaster, the Reverend Edward White Benson, undertook to instill in him the habit of punctuality:

That term he had set before himself the high design of making me punctual. So to his study every morning at 9:30 a.m. I brought a little note from my form masters. On reading this he rushed about searching for a cane. . . . A great deal depended on the cane; there was a special sort which grew larger and heavier towards the business end. The moment he found one he laid on to my back till all was blue. . . . When I went to the bathing lake and stripped, I felt as a peacock must feel when spreading his tail. . . . The blues of the previous week had turned to green and yellow, whilst along the ribs, under my arms, where the point of the cane curled, the stripes were dark purple. . . .<sup>27</sup>

Hamilton was aware that his public school education had taught him nothing of an intellectual nature; it had put little emphasis on objective thought or value analysis. This, however, was a fact to be proud of, not ashamed. "Wellington College," he boasted, "taught me no learning, brought me no fame, but it taught me to smile while I was being thrashed."<sup>28</sup>

And yet it was extremely difficult to achieve reforms

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<sup>27</sup>General Sir Ian Hamilton, Introduction to J. L. Bevir, The Making of Wellington College: Being an Account of the First Sixteen Years of Its Existence (London: Edward Arnold, 1920), p. vii. It is interesting to note that Benson later became archbishop of Canterbury.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. vii.

in public school education. Those who defended the emphasis on muscular and physical values and the severity, frequency, and necessity of corporal punishment felt that these were indispensable to the development and training of aristocratic youth. As T. C. Worsley points out, "In the practice of flogging and being flogged the gentleman is supposed to display his aristocratic virtues, courage and the ability to bear and to inflict pain without flinching."<sup>29</sup> Rather than question or examine the nature and merits of the values which the public schools inculcated, or the methods applied there, public school enthusiasts more often condemned those who did. This was perhaps a natural consequence of public school education. It tended to foster loyalty, duty, and obedience, and stifle such intellectual activities as rigid self-analysis or critical disputation regarding the merits of British cultural or moral values.

The tendency of most Whigs and Conservatives therefore was to guard against the possibility of a decline in "those stronger and more robust qualities that chiefly lead to political greatness."<sup>30</sup> One of the most prominent Conservative theorists of this period, the Anglo-Irish historian W. E. H. Lecky, addressed himself to this question in the 1890s and found that generally "the fibre of the race is

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<sup>29</sup>Horace Annesley Vachell, The Hill: A Romance of Friendship (London: John Murray, 1905), ch. i.

<sup>30</sup>Lecky, Democracy and Liberty, I, 249.

still unimpaired."

Whether . . . there has been any decadence . . . is a question on which it is difficult to pronounce. The last occasion in which England was engaged in a life-and-death struggle against overwhelming odds was in the Indian Mutiny; and, in that now distant crisis, it must be owned that there was no failing in the stronger, fiercer, and more tenacious qualities that have made England what she is. Amid all the much-obtruded sentimentalisms of our time there are indications that the fibre of the race is still unimpaired. The old love of manly sports was never more abundantly displayed; in the great fields of adventure and discovery, in the forms of commercial and industrial enterprise that most tax the energies and resources of men, modern Englishmen bear their full part, and no other people are doing so much to explore, subdue, and civilize far-distant and savage lands.<sup>31</sup>

Although Lecky's analysis exudes a general air of self-confidence there runs throughout his work an undercurrent of doubt, or pessimism, as indicated not only by his reference to "all the much-obtruded sentimentalisms of our time," but by the very fact that he would consider it necessary to undertake a discussion of this question. The rise of democracy, the widening acceptance of socialism, and the growing concern among certain groups for the welfare of the poor, as revealed, for example, by the works and activities of Charles Booth and Beatrice Potter, was not an entirely happy omen for most Conservatives. Nor was the fact that in the 1890s the Ladies' Football League began to play "manly sports" before large crowds. Many Englishmen tended to react to such signs of decadence by adopting a more stubborn adherence to the old values. It was doubtless under a sense of siege and defensiveness that the British

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., I, 249.

exalted Lord Kitchener as a sort of virility symbol while rejecting and incarcerating Oscar Wilde as symbol of decadence.

The Whigs and Conservatives gave little critical consideration to the merits of the ideas, values, and practices they espoused. The justice of British rule in Ireland, for example, and the right of the Irish to self-government were matters that were not open to discussion. Most of them found it impossible to entertain seriously the view that other ideas or other customs might be as valid or as tenable as theirs. The tendency to do so called forth their wrath and condemnation. In a world of struggle ideas, cultures, and peoples were in constant competition. It was outrageous to ask most English imperialists to discuss seriously the possibility that their ideas and customs could possibly be little more than a conglomeration of concepts and practices that had emerged over a period of time in response to the aspirations of a particular group in a specific locale under a particular set of conditions, and that in different circumstances other ideas and practices might have developed. The admission of this possibility would open the door to a pervasive relativism which most of them abhorred. It might mean that any set of customs could be justified on the basis of environmentalism, and would undermine the concept of absolutism in these matters which they wished to maintain.

The moral and cultural relativism implied in the philosophy of democracy was a disturbing factor for many

upper and middle class Englishmen. It was only in rare moments and then only reluctantly and grudgingly that they conceded that some non-Anglo-Saxon customs might be appropriate and permissible in their native setting. Even then such concessions were usually made merely as an expedient to facilitate a degree of harmony in colonial government. It was never admitted that such customs were of the same standard as those of the imperialist. Such a concession could not be granted, for to do so would have been to remove one of the important bases of imperialism--the need to civilize backward peoples. The Irish argument, for example, that the conditions of land tenure in Ireland were inequitable, and that the tenants were justified in banding together to alter those conditions and to force down the cost of rents, appeared as stark injustice to most Whigs and Conservatives. Here were two antithetical concepts of economic justice existing within the United Kingdom, and produced by closely related economic factors. The molding of ideas by circumstances was obvious. And yet most English imperialists refused to acknowledge this. While they were willing to concede that Irish ideas on the land laws were produced by their economic conditions and aspirations, they denied that such factors influenced their own attitudes. They seemed to assume that the social system in Ireland had been created in the absence of egoistic forces, and that it was the embodiment therefore of pure justice. Far from conceding validity to Irish ideas, the Unionists generally ignored

them as self-oriented and therefore unworthy of consideration. Most of the imperial administrators who governed Ireland seemed to look upon the Irish as being in a long and protracted stage of infancy.

The obverse side of the coin of course implied that English society was adult, that it was mature. From this it was an easy step to the concept of a father-child relationship. England was the mature adult society; Ireland was in a state of immaturity. Britain therefore should rule Ireland just as the father rules the child. And correct paternal behavior, in the view of most imperialists, was the very opposite of democratic. It was strictly authoritarian. The father was a rigid disciplinarian, an advocate of punishment, and possessed of the necessary temper to administer that punishment unflinchingly. It was firmly believed that ample application of punishment would correct most problems of Irish misbehavior. To most imperialists punishment was an important ingredient for successful rule of the Irish. They applied it with such uncommon liberality that one wonders whether it was intended primarily to alter Irish behavior or as an element of justification for British imperialism. Winston Churchill points out that his father, Lord Randolph, reached the revealing conclusion "that special legislation was not regarded by the Government as a hateful necessity; but as something good in itself, producing a salutary effect on the Irish people and raising the temper of the

Ministerial party."<sup>32</sup>

These tactics, coupled with the authoritarian and self-righteous character of the typical English imperial administrator, led to a form of despotism in Ireland which studiously ignored the advice or appeals of Irish Nationalist M.P.s. Major pieces of legislation were drawn up and enacted into law without any consultation with Irish Parliamentary representatives.<sup>33</sup> Not only were the Nationalists habitually excluded from the construction of Irish legislation, but the innumerable special powers acts, those acts suspending habeas corpus and ordinary law in Ireland, were passed expressly against their wishes. Indeed the very virtue of much of the legislation dealing with Ireland often seemed to lie in the fact that the Nationalist members opposed it.<sup>34</sup>

These practices and attitudes had deleterious consequences for English rule in Ireland. The close association with the Anglo-Irish class, both in London and Dublin, and the refusal to give serious consideration to Nationalist

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<sup>32</sup>W. S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill (2 vols.; New York: Macmillan Company, 1906), II, 342.

<sup>33</sup>Lord Eversley, Gladstone and Ireland: The Irish Policy of Parliament from 1850-1894 (London: Methuen & Co., 1912), p. 151.

<sup>34</sup>John Morley states that it was "almost a point of honour . . . for British cabinets to make Irish laws out of their own heads." John Morley, The Life of William Ewart Gladstone (new ed., 3 vols.; New York: Macmillan Company, 1932), II, 292; see also Eversley, Gladstone and Ireland, p. 151.

complaints, prevented English administrators from discovering the real nature of Irish conditions and from learning the consequences of their policies. Lord Eversley's description of W. E. Forster was characteristic of most Conservative and Whig administrators in Ireland. "There was in him," Eversley wrote, "a dogmatic self-confidence, which, added to a brusque manner, made it difficult for those, with whom he did not agree, to present their views, and prevented him from learning, by free communication with all classes of persons, the effect of his measures, and the necessity for a change of policy."<sup>35</sup>

Whig and Conservative administrators in Ireland tended to view their institutions and policies as the best that could be devised, and they became extremely critical of those who suggested otherwise. If the Irish were suffering from economic or other ills, the basic cause was not to be found in British policies and institutions, but in the character of the Irish themselves. If the Irish repeatedly violated the law this did not so much indicate the existence of an unjust law as the anarchic and criminal propensities of Irish character. Violation of the law in Ireland was anathema to most Unionists, and any leniency or compromise with law-breakers was unthinkable.<sup>36</sup> To the Unionists it

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<sup>35</sup>Eversley, Gladstone and Ireland, pp. 211-12.

<sup>36</sup>R. C. K. Ensor believes that Irish agrarian crime in the 1880s was one of the major determinants in the Radical Unionists' decision to oppose Gladstone on Irish policy. Ensor, "Some Political and Economic Interactions."

was more than just a matter of the sanctity of the law. It was the challenge of an inferior social class and ethnic group to the authority of the ruling class. Such challenges were seen to be in the long run a threat to the whole social and political fabric, and as such they could not be endured. Unionist M.P.s therefore tended to despise the Irish and their Parliamentary representatives whose demands they viewed as "unparalleled effrontary."<sup>37</sup> It was, W. H. Smith stated, extremely "annoying to have to endure insult and provocation from these men."<sup>38</sup>

The fact that from 1886 onward the Nationalists held more than 80 per cent of Ireland's Parliamentary seats was of grave concern to the Unionists, since the major plank in the Nationalist platform was self-government for Ireland. In this situation the Whigs and Conservatives, as has previously been pointed out, resorted to the novel argument that the Irish Nationalists did not represent the Irish people. The reasoning behind this seemed to be that the Nationalists had attained their victory through deceit and coercion of the electorate, and that consequently they were not representative of Irish opinion. This was of course merely a political tactic to justify rejection of Home Rule, for the fact is that most Whigs and Conservatives constantly characterized all elements of nationalist Ireland as untrustworthy,

<sup>37</sup>G. Smith, Irish History and the Irish Question, p. 198.

<sup>38</sup>Sir Herbert Maxwell, Life and Times of the Right Honourable William Henry Smith, II, 197.

criminal, and anarchic. A typical example of this was demonstrated by Lord Randolph Churchill at the time of the debate on the first Home Rule Bill. Churchill's statement reveals the widely held opinion among British Unionist politicians that the Irish unionists, who were exalted by their British counterparts as Protestant and Anglo-Saxon, could never be expected to live under a government dominated by Irish Catholics. "If political parties and political leaders," Churchill wrote,

. . . hand over coldly [the Irish Unionists] . . . to their hereditary and most bitter foes, make no doubt on this point--Ulster will not be a consenting party; Ulster will resort to the supreme arbitrament of force; Ulster will fight, Ulster will be right; Ulster will emerge from the struggle victorious, because all that Ulster represents to us Britons will command the sympathy and support of an enormous section of our British community, and also, I feel certain, will attract the admiration and the approval of free and civilized nations.<sup>39</sup>

By supporting the Ulster Protestants in their refusal to live under a government dominated by Irish Catholics, Unionists presumably saw themselves as furthering the cause of freedom and civilization. Churchill does not indicate precisely what he means by the words "all that Ulster represents to us Britons," but the rest of his statement would seem to bear out the interpretation that what Ulster represents is in fact freedom and civilization. British Unionists tended to see in Irish Protestants those qualities which they assumed to exist in themselves, and in the native Irish they saw only

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<sup>39</sup>W. S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill, II, 65.

those characteristics which they abhorred. Churchill concentrated his attention on Ulster, making little reference to the Anglo-Irish scattered throughout the other three provinces. This was merely a political tactic, however, for if the Protestants of Ulster could not in justice be asked to live under a government dominated by Irish Catholics, certainly the Protestants of the other three provinces did not deserve less consideration. By pointing out the dishonor, and presumably therefore the impossibility, of placing the Ulster Protestants under Irish rule, Churchill hoped to prevent the enactment of self-government for any part of Ireland. His highly laudatory view of the Ulster Protestants was expressed in 1886. In 1911 Arthur Balfour could still publicly repeat the same sentiments:

When you remember who and what [my italics] they are who plead with you that the Union should be maintained, . . . when you compare . . . the character . . . of those who ask for Home Rule in Ireland, and the character . . . of those who implore you not to hand over the minority helpless to a majority, then I think the Constitutional statesman will feel a generous and irresistible irritation at the cowardly policy of the Government, which has proposed to sacrifice [the unionists of Ireland].<sup>40</sup>

How exactly were the unionists of Ulster to be sacrificed? By placing them under a government that would be dominated by Irish Catholics. When Goldwin Smith asserted that Ulster was "a part, not so much of Catholic and Keltic Ireland, as of Saxon and Presbyterian Scotland," he was emphasizing a religious distinction between the various

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<sup>40</sup>Balfour, Aspects of Home Rule, p. 20.

groups in Ireland which was important to British Unionists.<sup>41</sup> Since they were looking for divisive factors rather than unifying ones, they concentrated on ethnicity and religion as dichotomous elements that could not be surmounted. By so doing they drove the wedge of religious and ethnic division deeper between the two principal groups in Ireland, and they prolonged the anti-Catholic prejudice that still existed in England making an amicable settlement of the Irish problem impossible and the promotion of Catholics to important political positions more difficult. Efforts to appoint Catholics to high political office almost invariably called forth a wave of dissent. In 1886 the Protestant Alliance of Scotland warned Lord Randolph Churchill that they could not and would not accept the "elevation of Roman Catholics to positions of power and trust in the British Empire."<sup>42</sup> Five years later, when Gladstone sought to remove certain civil and political disabilities on Catholics, he was confronted by a startling storm of opposition. The Liberal leader had introduced in the House of Commons a bill to permit Catholics to hold the office of Lord Chancellor and Viceroy of Ireland. But the Unionists vehemently opposed this measure, and thereby prevented its passage.<sup>43</sup> Harold Nicolson points out that as late as 1913 the king was inundated with letters opposing

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<sup>41</sup>G. Smith, Irish History and Irish Character, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup>W. S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill, II, 134.

<sup>43</sup>Maxwell, Life of William Henry Smith, III, 300-01.

the Home Rule Bill on religious grounds. The general theme of these was that it would be immoral and dishonorable to place the Protestants of Ulster under the dominion of a Catholic-dominated government.<sup>44</sup>

It was a common view among many Englishmen that the Irish were slavish in religion and tyrannical in politics and that the British were the guardians of religious freedom and equal rights for all citizens of the United Kingdom. They maintained this view of themselves with such tenacity that it was impossible to demonstrate its inaccuracy to them. It did no use to point out the long history in England of discriminatory laws against Catholics. It did no use to point out, as the Nationalist member of Parliament Thomas O'Conner Power did, that "the number of Catholics . . . returned to Parliament by English and Scotch constituencies since the Reformation might be counted on the fingers of one

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<sup>44</sup>Harold Nicholson, King George the Fifth: His Life and Reign, (London: Constable & Co., 1952), p. 221. There was a deep and widespread religious prejudice in England, even in the early decades of the twentieth century, which is often ignored. This prejudice did not extend only toward Catholicism but toward non-Christian religions also. An example of this appeared in 1895 when Lord Rosebery advised the Queen, at the latter's request, that in the future she should deny the Garter to all non-Christians:

"I desire to leave on record at your Majesty's command . . . the expression of my earnest hope that, in spite of at least two unfortunate precedents in the past, which induce every Oriental Potentate, however little civilised, to hope for the same distinction, the Garter will never again be conferred on non-Christian Sovereigns.

To do so is in fact to lower the Garter. . . ." Buckle, The Letters of Queen Victoria, 3d ser., Vol. II, p. 530. Lord Salisbury, a few months later, advised the Queen to the same effect. Ibid., 3d ser., Vol. II, p. 530.

hand."<sup>45</sup> It did no use to point out that in recent history the Irish had successively elected two Protestants as leaders of the Nationalist Party--Issac Butt and Charles Stewart Parnell. Arguments of this nature had little effect, for Englishmen whose thought tended to run along these lines had a rather firmly fixed view not only of the respect for individual liberty which they practiced but of the lack of such respect among Irish Catholics. Their "great defect," wrote Goldwin Smith, "is want of independence and of that strong sense of right by which law and personal liberty are upheld."<sup>46</sup> E. R. Norman, who has made an extensive study of anti-Catholicism in Victorian England, bears out the pervasiveness of this view: "To the Protestant . . . Catholics seemed obvious candidates for control and even suppression. Their religion was believed to be opposed to enlightenment, and therefore to sound civil government. . . ."<sup>47</sup> Most English imperialists were in fact thoroughly convinced that they were doing the work of God, with the approval of God, and that God was solidly on their side. "It was also a commonplace," writes Norman, "that Catholic countries were bad at trade and commerce; an indication to most Englishmen

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<sup>45</sup>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 3d ser., Vol. 255 (Aug. 3-Aug. 24, 1880), col. 2049.

<sup>46</sup>G. Smith, Irish History and Irish Character, p. 18.

<sup>47</sup>E. R. Norman, Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968), pp. 18-19.

that God's blessing was withheld."<sup>48</sup> The assumption that God and the Unionists were working hand in hand was indirectly asserted by Arthur Balfour in the House of Commons: "There are those," he stated, "who talk as if Irishmen were justified in disobeying the law because the law comes to them in foreign garb. I see no reason why any local colour should be given to the Ten Commandments."<sup>49</sup> W. E. Forster supported this contention, and repeated Balfour's warning that in violating England's laws the Irish were violating God's laws. The Irish, he said, "have got a stronger force against them than the Irish Government, or Parliament, or the British people--they have got against them the force of God's laws."<sup>50</sup>

And yet there was a serious discrepancy in Unionist policy toward Ireland. If the Unionists were to be true to their expressed mission, which was to civilize the Irish, then, since Catholicism was identified with a lower form of civilization, since it was looked upon as a regressive force, one of their prime objectives should have been the conversion of Catholics to Protestantism. This was all the more significant since most of them believed that Catholicism inspired effeminacy, submissiveness, obscurantism, despotism, and the

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>49</sup>Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour, I, 134.

<sup>50</sup>T. Wemyss Reid, Life of the Right Honourable William Edward Forster (2 vols.; London: Chapman and Hall, 1888), II, 400.

discouragement of work. If these vices were to be eradicated and the Irish civilized, conversion to Protestantism was essential. But the Unionists did not undertake to convert the Irish to Protestantism, a fact which would seem to indicate that the urge to civilize them was far from overwhelming.

To many Englishmen, religion was a signpost to one's character as well as one's commercial and political propensities. And just as Catholicism was considered the religion of the weak, submissive, and effeminate, so Protestantism was looked upon as the religion of the strong, dominant, and masculine. In this way religion became associated with the characteristics and aptitudes of a people, it became a mark of progressiveness or backwardness, and gradually became an element in English nationalism and imperialism, and as such became identified with patriotism. Conversely, support of Catholicism could be interpreted as bordering on treason, while anti-Catholicism could be viewed as patriotic. As E. R. Norman points out, "British anti-Catholicism was peculiarly related to popularly subscribed precepts about the ends and nature of the British state; it was chauvinistic. . . ."51

This attitude toward Protestantism and Catholicism played a large part in molding the Conservative image of

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<sup>51</sup>E. R. Norman, Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968), p. 20.

themselves and their allies in Ireland. In the character of Irish Protestants, Conservatives saw a partial reflection of themselves. They attributed to them all those characteristics which they found commendable and which they were convinced formed the essence of their own character. They looked upon Ulster Protestants, therefore, as "naturally reserved, laconic of speech, without 'gush,' far from lavish in compliment, slow to commit themselves or to give their confidence without good and proved reason."<sup>52</sup> There was, most Unionists maintained, a profound distinction between the Irish Catholics and the Protestants of Ulster. The latter were "a strong and masterful Saxon element."<sup>53</sup> The unstinting praise lavished on them contrasts sharply with the criticisms levelled at the nationalists. Two of the most famous leaders of the Ulster Protestants during this period were Colonel Edward Saunderson and Sir Edward Carson. Of Colonel Saunderson, Walter Long, a former chief secretary for Ireland, wrote: He "was really a most remarkable man. . . . He was one of the most attractive personalities with whom I ever came in contact. He possessed many accomplishments and loved

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<sup>52</sup>McNeill, Ulster's Stand for Union, p. 43. It is ironic that it was the Irish unionist McNeill who wrote this description of the Anglo-Saxon Irish being "naturally reserved" in contrast to the "volatile" Celt, for it was he who in the House of Commons in 1914, in a fit of rage, threw the Standing Orders at Winston Churchill, striking him on the head. (McNeill, incidentally, was one of the editors of the 11th edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica.)

<sup>53</sup>G. Smith, Irish History and Irish Character, p. 220.

his country with passionate devotion."<sup>54</sup> And of Sir Edward Carson Long wrote: He was "one of the most distinguished Irishmen that country has ever produced--a great lawyer, with an immense practice--has sacrificed all his own personal advantages and devoted the whole of his strength, wonderful ability and passionate enthusiasm to the cause of Ulster."<sup>55</sup> It is revealing that in praising these two men Long emphasized their patriotism, or love of country. But to most Englishmen love of country meant love of England. It did not mean love of Ireland. This love of England, however, was usually expressed as love of the union or the empire. It was asserted that the Irish unionists possessed an exalted sense of duty and a selfless willingness to sacrifice themselves and their own particular material self-interests to the higher and nobler objectives of the British empire.

Nor was this highly favorable image confined solely to propertied and aristocratic unionists. It is true that many Whigs and Conservatives looked upon this class as endowed with special political and administrative abilities denied to the working class. But, still, all unionists, by the very fact that they were unionists, revealed that they possessed virtues and characteristics which set them apart from and on a higher plane than Irish nationalists. Since they were also Protestant and assumed to be of Anglo-Saxon

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<sup>54</sup>Long, Memories, pp. 171-72.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 208.

origin, these basic traits were used to create a picture of the Irish unionist that contrasted sharply with that of his nationalist counterpart.

A fine example of this differentiation is afforded by the Ulster rebellion. During the various instances when the nationalists protested, demonstrated, and rebelled against what they considered to be unjust laws English unionists saw in them only anarchy, criminality, and ungratefulness. Such behavior, they felt, could emanate only from irresponsible and irreligious people. When, however, the Ulster Protestants engaged in similar activities, when they set up a provisional government, smuggled arms and other war material into the country, and threatened armed insurrection against the government, English Unionists described their actions as those of solemn and religious men. During the period 1912-1914 when Ulster Protestants, encouraged and supported by the Unionists, demonstrated against the passage of the Home Rule Bill, and asserted openly that they would refuse to acknowledge its legality, The Times, not known for its advocacy of resistance to the law, supported the Ulster rebellion:

We remember no precedent in our domestic history since the Revolution of 1688 . . . for a movement among citizens, law-abiding by temperament and habit, which resembles the present movement of the Ulster Protestants. It is no rabble who have undertaken it. It is the work of orderly, prosperous, and deeply religious men.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>"The Ulster Covenant," The Times, Aug. 22, 1912, p. 5.

In supporting the proposition that one has the right to rebel against those laws he considers unjust, The Times had to move extremely cautiously, for this was a period of profound social restlessness among the working class in Britain--and in Ireland--and it was important therefore, while justifying the rebellion of the Ulster Protestants, to make sure that one did not, by virtue of the same reasoning, justify the rebellion of industrial workers as well.

Certain working class leaders did in fact ponder where the line between obedience and resistance to the law was to be drawn. If, they asked, the Conservatives' conscience was sufficient to justify the violation of laws which they considered unjust, did not the conscience of other classes merit equal consideration?<sup>57</sup> In the House of Commons in March 1914, while debating the resignation of those army officers who refused to maintain the law in Ulster if Home Rule were enacted, John Ward said:

This debate is the best illustration that we workmen have ever had in this House that all the talk about there being one and the same law for the rich and the poor is a miserable hypocrisy. Hon. Gentlemen belonging to the wealthy classes have no more intention of obeying the law that is against their interests than of flying to the moon.<sup>58</sup>

Apart from the danger of justifying working class revolt Conservatives also had to insure that they did not

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<sup>57</sup> See the speeches of J. H. Thomas and John Ward in The Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th ser., Vol. 60 (Mar. 23-April 1, 1914), pp. 251-55, 274-78.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Blake, Unrepentent Tory, p. 199.

justify insurrection by Irish nationalists. This was attained by the rather tenuous method of distinguishing between the high mental, cultural, and moral level of Ulster Protestants and the much lower level of Irish Catholics. The Times therefore argued that the Ulster rebellion would be very different from the agrarian unrest that had long marked the behavior of the Irish nationalists. The reason for this was that the people engaged in it were of a different character. They were "law-abiding," both by "temperament and habit," the implication being that Irish nationalists were not. They were, The Times asserted, "no rabble," an apparent suggestion that Irish nationalists were. And the final statement, that they were "deeply religious," merely underlines once more the fact that many in England tended to identify Protestantism with religiousness and social responsibility, and Catholicism with superstition and disloyalty.

The problem therefore of determining when rebellion against the government is justified is extremely difficult for the genuine adherent of democracy, parliamentarianism, and constitutionalism. The last time Englishmen had rebelled against their government was in the seventeenth century. Since that time they had prided themselves on the smooth and constitutional operation of the political system. In 1886, 1893, and in the period 1910-1912, however, many Englishmen, especially among the members and supporters of the Conservative Party, claimed the right to rebel in arms, and asserted that they would exercise that right, if Home Rule were enacted.

They also, both privately and publicly, urged army officers to refuse to impose Home Rule in Ulster. In this they were successful, and in March 1914, when they were ordered north from the Curragh, a large number of influential officers resigned instead. In so doing they argued that this was not a mutiny because they had been given the alternative of resigning, and they merely exercised that option. Still, it is interesting that when describing this event in his memoirs, one of the leading officers involved, General Hubert Gough, found it necessary to undertake a discussion of rebellion and its justification. He asserted that the question of determining when rebellion was justified was never a problem for him.<sup>59</sup> "God's voice" informed him of the appropriate moment.<sup>60</sup> In such matters he was privy to God's wishes, an enviable privilege that, according to Alice Miller, none but Englishmen may have shared. Gough quotes Miller's poem in explanation:

Knowing what the English have always known,  
 . . . And perhaps have known alone--  
 Something that none can teach or tell--  
 The moment when God's voice says "Rebel."<sup>61</sup>

There was a very large element of self-righteousness in this attitude, a self-righteousness that was further

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<sup>59</sup>General Sir Hubert Gough, Soldiering on, Being the Memoirs of General Sir Hubert Gough (London: Arthur Barker, 1954), p. 104.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 104; see also Alice Duer Miller, "The White Cliffs," LI.

evidenced by an important event in 1912. In that year the First Lord of Admiralty, Winston Churchill, planned to deliver a speech in the Ulster Hall in Belfast in favor of the Home Rule Bill. The Ulster Hall was a public building belonging to the people. But to Ulster unionists "the people" did not include Irish Catholics. This definition of the term never seemed to occur to them. Consequently they asserted their exclusive right to the building and refused to let Churchill speak there. The Ulster unionist attitude is typified in a statement by the Unionist M.P. Ronald McNeill. The unconscious self-righteousness, religious overtones, and disrespect for civil and political liberties that have pervaded much of Ulster's history since the seventeenth century are obvious in McNeill's statement: "Not only was he [Winston Churchill] coming to Belfast; he was coming to the Ulster Hall--to the very building which his father's oration had . . . consecrated to the Unionist cause,<sup>62</sup> and which had come to be regarded as almost a loyalist shrine."<sup>63</sup>

The fact that the Irish unionists were opposed to any change in the union endeared them to the Conservative Party. The maintenance of the union as the core and basis of the empire was a prime Conservative goal. Involved in the

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<sup>62</sup>Lord Randolph Churchill had denounced Gladstone and Home Rule there in 1886. His denunciation was so violent that it touched off a series of sectarian riots and killings in Belfast and led to a Parliamentary inquiry. See W. S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill, II, 64-66.

<sup>63</sup>McNeill, Ulster's Stand for Union, p. 62.

continuance of this was much that the Conservatives believed in. First was the assumption of their right to rule. As has already been pointed out the Conservatives feared that the dissolution of the union would lead to the disintegration of the empire and that this would lead inevitably to a deterioration of their social, economic, and political position. They therefore commended the Irish unionists, and by implication themselves, for their loyalty. To most Conservatives, loyalty meant avid fidelity to the British empire. Those who showed such loyalty were lauded lavishly; those whose policies appeared in any way to weaken the existing imperial structure were condemned as disloyal and traitorous. The Conservatives were extremely adept at arrogating to themselves an exclusive claim to loyalty and all they had made that term stand for. Their opponents (Liberals, Irish Nationalists, and later the Labor Party) were ceaselessly branded as the advocates of disloyalty, disunity, weakness, and imperial retreat. This practice had been initiated by Disraeli, not only for its electoral value, but as a device to maintain the institutional structure of England and to stave off radical reform by identifying it as un-English and traitorous. During the election campaign of 1880 he deliberately used the issue of Home Rule as a device to win electoral support. He ignored the enmity, or the consequences thereof, which his tactics would create between the Irish and the English. Self-government for Ireland, he stated, would "in its ultimate results" be "scarcely less disastrous than pestilence and

famine."<sup>64</sup> "Disraeli set a tradition," wrote Robert Blake,

from which the party has never deviated. Again and again . . . Conservatives were to try to pin the label of spiritual treason upon first their Liberal then their Labor opponents. . . . The Home Rulers, the pro-Boers, the pro-Russians exposed by the Zinoviev letter, . . . one can multiply examples.<sup>65</sup>

In 1886 Disraeli's tactics were continued by Lord Salisbury. He too exploited anti-Irish prejudice in Britain in order to win votes. He informed Lord Randolph Churchill that the Conservatives could attack the Irish with political impunity. They need not fear the loss of votes because any such losses would be richly compensated for by gains in the anti-Irish vote. Any attack on the Irish could only bring electoral success, for "the instinctive feeling of an Englishman is to get rid of an Irishman."<sup>66</sup> In 1909 Sir Michael Hicks-Beach called for greater concentration on these political methods. He was disturbed by the extent of the Conservative defeat in 1906 and he was determined that this should not happen again. What the Conservatives needed, he pointed out, was an issue that would arouse the emotions, an issue that involved the power and prestige of England. In 1909 the only such issue readily available was Home Rule, and Hicks-Beach drew Balfour's attention to this fact. "All the

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<sup>64</sup>George Earle Buckle and W. F. Monypenny, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli: Earl of Beaconsfield (6 vols.; New York: Macmillan and Company, 1910-1920), VI, 515.

<sup>65</sup>Blake, The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill, p. 130.

<sup>66</sup>Cecil, Life of Salisbury, III, 298.

political history of the last 50 years," he warned, "shows that the Unionist (or Conservative) party cannot win a General Election without some special aid, such as Home Rule or the South African War."<sup>67</sup>

While the Conservatives held a highly exalted image of themselves, and while the qualities embodied in that image were usually restricted to political and social leaders, at times they could in a curious way be extended to members of the working class as well. In the general election of December 1910 the Nationalists carried the borough of Londonderry, giving them a majority of the seats in Ulster. This was a source of deep despair for the Unionists, who had long argued that a majority of the people of Ulster were opposed to Home Rule. Their explanation for the loss of this seat harmonizes neatly with the Conservative self-image. The "better class of artisans," they explained, that is, the Protestants, had migrated to Belfast to seek employment, and a low type of worker, Catholic and nationalist, had "drifted in from the wilds of Donegal," giving the Nationalist Party candidate a majority in the city. The words "drifted" and "wilds" are highly significant, for they indicate quite clearly the prevalent Conservative view of Irish nationalists as being unstable and unsettled. There would also seem to be an impression of them as somewhat savage-like, a conclusion

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<sup>67</sup>Lady Victoria Hicks Beach, Life of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, II, 260.

which seems justified by the connotations of the word "wilds." In contrast unionist workers were described as a much "better class of artisans."<sup>68</sup>

There was a fairly common view among members of the Conservative Party, including its Irish wing, that they were the rightful guardians of the British empire and British liberties, which were wrapped up in traditional British institutions. The true loyalist and patriot was considered to be a Protestant and a unionist. If he belonged to the working class he was honest and hard-working.<sup>69</sup> He was contented and law-abiding.<sup>70</sup> And yet he could rebel if conditions so warranted, and he knew when to rebel. Rebellion was not an undertaking he embarked on lightly and irresponsibly. It was a serious and somber matter, to be undertaken only when the government, the guardian of British institutions, had failed to live up to its responsibilities. When the government threatened to overturn traditional British institutions, as it did, according to the Conservatives, in the period 1910-1914, then it was the duty and responsibility of the Conservatives to protect those institutions. Accordingly, F. E. Smith could warn the government during the struggle over the third Home Rule Bill that this measure was a "betrayal" of the

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<sup>68</sup>McNeill, Ulsters' Stand for Union, pp. 144-45.

<sup>69</sup>Long, Memories, pp. 207-08.

<sup>70</sup>F. E. Smith, Unionist Policy and Other Essays (London: Williams & Norgate, 1913), p. 116.

constitution and as such it "shall never deface the Statute Book."<sup>71</sup> Smith and the leaders of the Conservative Party had arrogated to themselves the right to judge the constitutionality of Liberal legislation. They had also assumed that they must take whatever steps were necessary, including the use of armed force, to insure that their interpretation of the constitution was adhered to. Smith warned the government that if it did not follow his instructions civil war would result: "Vote it [the Home Rule Bill] as you please," he warned. "There is a company of poor men that will spend all their blood before they see it settled so."<sup>72</sup> This "company of poor men" was the Ulster Protestants, and behind them, "drawn up rank behind rank," was "the whole force of British Unionism."<sup>73</sup>

Although this self-assumed authority to judge the constitutionality of Liberal legislation came to a head in 1914, it had existed and had been openly expressed long before that. As far back as 1885 Lord Randolph Churchill had asserted the Conservative right to make such judgments, and to act upon them, when he urged the Protestants of Ulster to rebel against Home Rule,<sup>74</sup> stating that if they did so they would have the full support of "those of position and

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>73</sup>F. E. Smith, Unionist Policy and Other Essays, pp. 108-09.

<sup>74</sup>W. S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill, II, 28-29, 59, 61-63.

influence."<sup>75</sup> Conservative leaders consistently followed this position. It was approved by Lord Salisbury and Lord Wolseley, who threatened to organize the forces of revolt,<sup>76</sup> a threat which Lord Roberts actualized during the struggle over the third Home Rule Bill. In 1893 Lord Hartington and Arthur Balfour urged rebellion against the government if Home Rule were enacted.<sup>77</sup> "Who can say," Lord Hartington stated, "that they have not a right . . . to resist?"<sup>78</sup> The answer of course was that only the Conservatives could say.

The assumption by the Conservatives that they were the guardians of the constitution and the social and imperial system, and that they had the right, duty, and responsibility to rebel to preserve these, was perhaps the loftiest peak on the mountain range of Conservative self-esteem. They viewed themselves as the very paragon of mental, moral, and cultural,

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 28-29, 63.

<sup>76</sup>Marquess of Crewe, Lord Rosebery (2 vols.; London: John Murray, 1931), II, 358.

<sup>77</sup>Bernard Holland, The Life of Spencer Compton: Eighth Duke of Devonshire (2 vols.; London: Longman's, Green, & Co., 1911), II, 249-50.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., II, 249-50. Some of the most illustrious names in English Conservatism either publicly advocated rebellion against the government or contributed large sums of money for the purchase of arms and other war material, including medical supplies. Apart from the names already listed a few of the others were Lord Lansdowne, Austen Chamberlain, Bonar Law, Sir Edward Carson, F. E. Smith, A. V. Dicey, Rudyard Kipling, Sir Henry Wilson, the Duke of Marlborough, Walter Long, Lord Milner, Admiral Seymour, and Lord Balfour of Burleigh. See Long, Memories, pp. 201-02; McNeill, Ulster's Stand for Union, p. 170; and James, Lord Roberts, p. 473.

excellence, a position they had achieved in the competitive and constant struggle which, they were convinced, rages in all societies. It was their responsibility to rule and to guide "lesser breeds." This was a duty which came with their social and economic position. Only they possessed the competence, rationality, and objectivity to rule equitably. The existing social system was arranged in accordance with the laws of nature and the nature of man, and any attempt to alter it in an equalitarian direction would fly in the face of these facts. The only major reforms necessary was the reform of human character. The only people in the United Kingdom in serious need of such reform were the Irish. For Conservatives, the Conservative self-image was highly consolatory.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CONSERVATIVE IMAGE OF IRELAND

Nothing would be easier at the present moment than to get up in every large town an anti-Irish agitation almost as formidable as the anti-Jewish agitation in Russia.

--Joseph Chamberlain<sup>1</sup>

And your Ulsterman might, perhaps, go on to say "Do you intend to hand me over to a majority differing from me in race, differing from me for the most part in religion, whose ways are not my ways, who have not shown my power of enterprise, my forethought, my endurance; who have left the South and West of Ireland, a bye-word among agricultural countries, while the corner of the North-west [sic] which I inhabit, though it be the poorest soil in the whole island, blossoms like a garden? Are you going to hand me over to this majority, who have shown that they cannot govern themselves, and who assuredly are incapable of governing me?"

--Arthur James Balfour<sup>2</sup>

Of course the Irish are utterly irresponsible people. They differ so entirely from us that their mentality is not understandable by the average Englishman. Hence the impossibility of governing them except despotically. Free government in Ireland means chaos.

--Viscount Reginald Esher<sup>3</sup>

It is safe to say that throughout the period of the Home Rule struggle few issues so incensed and inflamed the passions of most Unionists as the Irish demand for a measure

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<sup>1</sup>Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, I, 352.

<sup>2</sup>Balfour, Aspects of Home Rule, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup>Viscount Reginald Esher, Journals and Letters of Viscount Reginald Esher, ed. by Maurice V. Brett (4 vols.; London: Ivor, Nicholson, & Watson, 1934-1938), IV, 23.

of national self-government. Indeed for long they even opposed the establishment of democratic self-government at the county and local level in Ireland, and when county government was reformed along more broadly representative lines in England in 1888, the Conservative government saw to it that Ireland was carefully excluded. Though the United Kingdom was supposedly a unilinear and homogeneous political unit, county government in Ireland continued on an exclusive and undemocratic basis until 1898. Even then it was granted, not because of a general Unionist ideological commitment to democratic principles, but because it was viewed as a useful and acceptable political expedient--now that the landlords were being protected by the various land purchase schemes--to make the governing of Ireland possible by methods acceptable to the democratic world and to dispel the demand for Home Rule. It was granted, in other words, as part of a policy of killing home rule by kindness.

Why did most Unionists become so enraged at the prospect of a separate parliament and executive in Dublin? In other parts of the British empire parliaments and executives responsible to them had been permitted to develop, notably in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, though in the latter case not without a bitter and complicated struggle. Why should a similar degree of self-government for Ireland have been so abhorrent? The explanation for this has several aspects, but its essence lies in the basic social, economic, and political objectives of the Unionists,

objectives which played a predominant role in the molding of their image of the Irish, forcing them to emphasize the negative and unappealing aspects of Irish character and the inability of the Irish to govern themselves and the Anglo-Irish and Ulster Protestant minorities. Most Unionists held trenchantly to this position in the fear that to admit the ability of the Irish to govern effectively and equitably might lead to the dissolution of the union, the consequent gradual disintegration of the empire, and eventually, as Cecil Rhodes warned so articulately, a social revolution in England.

As has already been pointed out most British imperialists viewed mankind as composed of a number of different races, some highly intelligent and advanced, some extremely unintelligent and backward. Not surprisingly most of them placed themselves in the former group and the Irish in the latter. For the Irish one of the irritating consequences of being placed in this category was that they were generally characterized as possessing various unflattering traits and of being incapable of self-government. In accordance therefore with Unionist political and moral principles England should maintain her rule of Ireland for the benefit of that country and civilization as a whole. The Irish were not permitted to decide for themselves whether they wished to be governed by a foreign power, or if so, by which foreign power, since by definition they were intellectually incapable of making such a decision. This point was stated in plain

and candid terms by Lord Salisbury in 1886. He was arguing, as his biographer Lady Gwendolen Cecil explains, against the contention that the Conservatives ought "to show confidence in the Irish people by giving them independent representative government."<sup>4</sup> Salisbury's famous retort, for which he was severely criticized by the supporters of Home Rule, was: "You would not confide free representative institutions to the Hottentots," would you?<sup>5</sup>

It is important to note that in condemning Salisbury his opponents did not question or rebuke the validity or scorn of his remarks about the Hottentots. That a hierarchy of races existed was accepted by almost everyone, as was the lowly place of Negroes within that hierarchy. What they condemned him for was his assertion that the Irish were on the same low level as the Hottentots and that they therefore were similarly incapable of self-government. Nor did Salisbury see the Irish as a reasonably progressive people who, if not currently capable of self-government, at least would be in the foreseeable future. He never expressed this view in explicit terms but it is implied in his various assumptions and pronouncements. When he stated in 1886 that what the Irish needed was twenty years of resolute government,<sup>6</sup> he did not intend that at the end of that period they would then be capable of governing themselves. On the contrary

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<sup>4</sup>Cecil, Life of Salisbury, III, 302.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., III, 302.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., III, 302-04.

what he meant was that after twenty years of such government they would see that the English were determined to maintain their rule by whatever means were necessary, and whether the Irish opposed or approved, and that realizing this they would cease their agitation:

What she [Ireland] wants is government--government that does not flinch, that does not vary; government that she cannot hope to beat down by agitations; . . . government that does not alter in its resolutions or its temperature by the party changes which take place at Westminster.<sup>7</sup>

If Ireland were governed "resolutely for twenty years," Salisbury stated, agitation and outrage would cease and it would then be possible to govern it by ordinary law.<sup>8</sup>

It is apparent that in Salisbury's political philosophy the principles of democracy played little part. This is not surprising, for since the imperialists tended to believe firmly in the inequality of racial, ethnic, and national groups, it followed that democracy could, and should, be reserved for those deemed capable of it. It merely had to be shown that the Irish were a sufficiently backward people in order to justify English domination of them. For most Unionists this was not difficult to do, since they measured intelligence, ability, and progressiveness largely by the quantity of one's wealth, and by the consequent military power that could be built on it.

The fact that Ireland was dominated by large land-owners of English extraction went far toward proving the

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., III, 302-04.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., III, 302-04.

competency of the Anglo-Saxons and the corresponding backwardness of the Irish. That much of the land had been confiscated and allotted to the British in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and had since been maintained by an institutional apparatus of foreign making, caused no theoretical or moral problem for most Unionists. The power to conquer, to confiscate, and to rule, was in itself justification for so doing. Those who questioned this rationale were dismissed with varying degrees of indignation, impatience, or contempt, in accordance with their social or ethnic background. Even Gladstone was denounced impatiently by his former colleague Lord Derby for suggesting that England had historically mistreated Ireland. In October 1885 Lord Kimberley informed Derby that on a recent visit to Hawarden he had found Gladstone contemplating Home Rule for Ireland. "He was much troubled," Kimberley reported, "by the immoral means which were used to bring about the Union; he felt that a great National sin had been committed and his conscience was troubled." "Oh damn his conscience," was Lord Derby's response.<sup>9</sup>

The Anglo-Irish landlords, as the historian J. C. Beckett points out, "represented not only a social class but a political system. . . . The whole local administration of the country was in their hands. They controlled the

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<sup>9</sup>Arthur D. Elliot, The Life of George Joachim Goschen, First Viscount Goschen, 1831-1907 (2 vols.; London: Longman's Green, and Co., 1911), I, 316.

magistracy, the police, the grand juries and the municipal corporations."<sup>10</sup> An important consequence of this was that social and ethnic prejudice became embedded in the institutional structure. Since Ireland had been conquered and the land confiscated in opposition to the will of the native people, and since the economic conditions resulting from this confiscation were, in addition, extremely unfavorable to them, it became necessary to construct a political and legal structure that would of necessity be dominated by the landlord class, since its prime purpose was to protect their interests. To attain social and economic reforms the Irish were often forced to pursue an extra-legal course. This in turn usually forced the landlords to resort to coercion and extraordinary law. These two social, and indeed political, groups, the landlords and the tenants, viewed each other as alien and hostile forces. Ireland constituted a classic colonial situation, with a large alienated, poverty-stricken, politically and legally powerless mass of human beings at the bottom of the pyramid, dominated by a small group of people at the top, foreign in ethnic makeup, in outlook, and in loyalty, who considered themselves culturally, morally, and intellectually superior to the native population. Intercourse between these two groups was kept to a minimum, being in general no more than was required for strictly business purposes. Social relations seldom crossed class and ethnic lines. A perpetual

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<sup>10</sup>Short History of Ireland, p. 134.

state of dissatisfaction existed, with the native Irish living in continual alienation, and the Anglo-Irish in a state of trepidation and uncertainty.

Throughout the period of the Home Rule struggle England was permeated with racial concepts and dogmas. "From 1870 to 1914," writes Jacques Barzun, "English public opinion was saturated with the notion of a superior Anglo-Saxon race. . . ." <sup>11</sup> The economic and imperial expansion of England contributed to the growth of a "self-righteous pride" which was "heightened by racial contempt for the Irish." <sup>12</sup> Goldwin Smith, who always "preferred to describe himself as an Anglo-Saxon," <sup>13</sup> repeatedly expressed such contempt. In her study of Smith, Elizabeth Wallace writes:

His prejudices were deep, and on few subjects was he more prejudiced than on Catholics . . . and on Celts, an ethnic group of which he thought the Irish the least attractive example. He described them succinctly as [a] . . . "thriftless, uncommercial, saint-worshipping, priest-ridden race." <sup>14</sup>

To most Unionists these characteristics were highly undesirable. They were evidence that the Irish were a backward people requiring the guiding hand of the British for their

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<sup>11</sup> Barzun, Race, p. 74.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 74. It should be remembered that while there was a widespread "self-righteous pride" about the economic and imperial expansion of England there were also those, such as William Booth, who questioned the condition of the working classes in England.

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Wallace, Goldwin Smith: Victorian Liberal (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), p. v.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

salvation. It is enlightening to juxtapose Smith's view of the Irish with Lord Charles Beresford's portrait of the Anglo-Saxons, a portrait with which Smith would have happily agreed. This "race," Beresford wrote, in reference to the Anglo-Saxons, possesses not only "the keenest commercial instincts," but "superior intellect, honesty in dealing, and special aptitude for trade."<sup>15</sup> Through the intelligent use of these it has "held all comers at bay."<sup>16</sup> In fact the Anglo-Saxons, Beresford optimistically concluded, were "a practical common-sense people" through whom "all the nations of the world shall be blessed."<sup>17</sup>

These lofty sentiments, and the hint of divine missions which they contain, were somewhat belied by the nature of British imperialism in practice. One of the professed aims of British imperialists was to prepare the various backward colonial peoples for self-government, to train them to rule themselves in accordance with the social, economic and political principles of the imperialists. This meant that when so trained a particular people would be able to govern themselves, and whatever minorities existed in their state, in a fair and equitable way, just as the imperialists, in their own estimation, ruled the various peoples of the empire.

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<sup>15</sup> Lord Charles Beresford, "The Future of the Anglo-Saxon Race," North American Review, CLXXI (Dec. 1900), 806.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 806.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 810.

But the question of when a particular people were ready for self-government posed a dilemma for many of them. On the one hand it was their professed aim to civilize and prepare people for self-government; yet on the other they were inflexibly committed to the maintenance of the empire. In addition, in relation to Ireland most Unionists spoke and acted in such a way as to imply that the Irish would never be capable of fair and equitable government. They would certainly never be considered capable of ruling the Anglo-Irish and Ulster Protestant minority. Accordingly, since the Irish could not be educated to govern justly, and since, in the Unionist view, the ability to do so was one of the prime marks of civilization, the civilizing mission in Ireland could have little meaning.

Not only did the Unionists consider the Irish incapable of enlightened government, they derived a peculiar satisfaction from this fact. One would have expected that, in keeping with their professed sympathy for, and sense of obligation toward backward peoples their admission that the Irish had severe limitations in this sphere would have been made with sincere sympathy and regret. But this was not the case. On the contrary the Unionists emphasized either existent or non-existent Irish shortcomings enthusiastically, often arrogantly, and went to great lengths to prove the truth of their assertions. George C. Brodrick asserted in the 1880s that the Irish were totally incapable of "the

honest exercise of civil rights."<sup>18</sup> Nor could this failing be attributed to English or Anglo-Irish misgovernment. It was the native Irish themselves who were "mainly to blame."<sup>19</sup> The cause lay in their sluggish, lethargic, and unambitious character. As a people they were a "lamentable failure in civilization."<sup>20</sup>

The Conservative member of Parliament C. W. Radcliffe Cooke discovered that Ireland may have been better governed and more remedial legislation enacted had it not been for the Nationalist M.P.s.<sup>21</sup> Though this was a rather novel and startling explanation for the condition of Ireland, Cooke expressed it with amazing confidence and candor. The Nationalists, he stated, often weakened their case in Parliament "by the ignorance they displayed, by the irrelevancy and even incoherency of their speeches."<sup>22</sup> This is a highly revealing statement, displaying one of the frequent difficulties of racist thinking. Cooke was so obsessed with the desire to condemn the character of the Irish that he slipped unconsciously into admitting the truth of Nationalist criticisms. In his eagerness to attack the Nationalists he

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<sup>18</sup>George C. Brodrick, "Plain Facts about Ireland," The National Review, XI (Mar. 1888), 90.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>21</sup>W. C. Radcliffe Cooke, "The Parnellites in Parliament," The National Review, XIII (Mar. 1889), 181.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

inadvertently admitted the failures of English rule in Ireland; but in order to free the English from responsibility, and to fix the blame squarely on the shoulders of the Irish, he implied that corrective legislation would have been enacted for Ireland had it not been for the "ignorance," "irrelevancy," and "incoherency" of the Nationalists' Parliamentary speeches.

In 1889, during the long press and Parliamentary campaign against Parnell and the Nationalists, a rather unusual article appeared in the National Review. It bore the interesting title, "Macbeth considered as a Celt," and was written with the obvious intention of demonstrating the unattractiveness and weakness of Irish character. The author discovered that "perhaps the most striking point in Celtic history is the consistency with which the Celts preserve their inconsistent character."<sup>23</sup> He proceeded to lump together a number of dyslogistic and stereotyped images of Celtic character and presented them as the findings of sophisticated and objective research. Despite this claim, the author's prejudiced, condescending, and paternalistic attitude is extremely transparent. Every potential Irish virtue is overshadowed by a vice. There is, he writes,

a rare identity of temperament in the Celtic race in all ages and under the most diverse conditions. Warm-hearted, but fickle; brave, but wanting in endurance; brilliant, but ineffective; religious, but unprincipled;

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<sup>23</sup>Jesse Douglas Montgomery, "Macbeth Considered as a Celt," The National Review, XIII (Mar. 1889), 181.

fascinating, but infinitely provoking; with the fierce passions of men, the lack of sober calculation which often limits the power of the cleverest women, and the unreasonableness of children, they call forth very conflicting feelings. We love them, but they irritate us; we admire them, but they disappoint us; we would fain trust them, but . . . they betray us.<sup>24</sup>

The picture that emerges here is one in which the morally, emotionally, and intellectually superior Anglo-Saxon stand ready to offer every aid, hope, and consideration to the Irish only to be repeatedly frustrated and disappointed. They love, only to be irritated. They admire, only to be disappointed. They trust, only to be betrayed. The decline of imperialist enthusiasm after the Boer War, and the holocaust of World War I, brought no conspicuous change in the Unionist image of the Irish. It was still largely rooted in the racist quagmire of the 1880s. The National Review could still ask in complete seriousness, "Are the Irish Celts an inferior race?" And it could answer in the affirmative with a confidence still unshaken by the rise and predominance in Europe and North America of the theory that peoples have a right to national self-determination.<sup>25</sup> The author's definition of an inferior race was amazingly simple:

If in the course of centuries a race has proved prolific in criminals and degenerates, and at the same time has been markedly deficient in persons of distinction, few, I think, would dispute that such a race must be regarded as an inferior race.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>25</sup>"Are the Irish Celts an Inferior Race?" The National Review, LXXIV (Feb. 1920), 807.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 797.

The question was whether the Irish fitted this definition, whether they were "prolific in criminals and degenerates," and whether at the same time they were "markedly deficient in persons of distinction." The author found to his obvious satisfaction that this was very definitely the case. He summarized the results of his investigation as follows:

(1) The Irish Celtic race has produced hardly any men of genius--certainly not one-tenth of the proportion produced by the English and Scotch; (2) such contributions as they have made have been mainly, if not entirely, as actors or orators whose talents have been of no permanent service to the human race; (3) . . . the Irish Celts have no capacity for greatness in art, literature, or science, and have, in the course of their whole history, not produced a single person of pre-eminent gifts; (4) . . . while the Irish Celt is a good fighting man when properly led, he has no capacity for leadership, and the race has never produced a great master of strategy; (5) . . . as a race they are characteristically lawless. . . .<sup>27</sup>

This was an extremely depressing picture, not only of the existing capabilities of the Irish but of their future potentialities, for it seemed to suggest that there was little hope for progress. There was little in Irish history to indicate any latent talents possible of development. This of course proved the futility of attempting to prepare them for self-government.

The fact that the author, in attempting to determine the potentialities of the Irish, would select martial combat as one of his criteria reveals once again the importance of physical struggle in the value system of most imperialists. The horror of World War I does not seem to have dampened

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 807.

their admiration for the value of martial competence as a measure of a people's greatness. When, however, they descended from the organized clash of armies to the area of common street brawls and proceeded to deprecate the capacity of the Irish in this rather questionable sphere of human activity, the full importance of combat in their value system becomes clear. In an article entitled "The Irish as Fighters" John J. Colquhoun, contrasted the combat skills of Irish Protestants with the shortcomings of their Catholic counterparts. "The Protestants of Ireland," he wrote, "are . . . second to none as fighters. . . ." <sup>28</sup> The reason for this was that "they inherit all the fighting qualities of the Anglo-Saxon race to which they belong." <sup>29</sup> Not only were they generously endowed with a particular aptitude for this rather questionable talent, but they had an exclusive possession of pugilistic morality as well. As Colquhoun explains, "the sense of fair-play and chivalry which is so strongly marked in all classes of the British is absolutely non-existent among the native Irish." <sup>30</sup> The latter possess no sense of fair play, honor, or courage. The only kind of combat in which they will engage is "six men with sticks attacking one man without a stick." <sup>31</sup> Moreover, in contrast to British

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<sup>28</sup>The National Review, LXXV (July 1920), 624.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 624.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 626.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 626.

standards this mode of behavior was fully in keeping with the Irish concept of morality. "In any part of Great Britain, Colquhoun asserts, "a man who hired a crowd to batter his rival . . . would be ashamed to look his fellows in the face."<sup>32</sup> In Ireland, on the other hand, "a man would consider himself a fool if he faced his foe single-handed when he could get half a dozen others to help him."<sup>33</sup> That the Irish were cowardly and treacherous were facts whose truth had been proven in all wars in which the Irish had engaged since the Middle Ages, including the Boer War and World War I.<sup>34</sup> Newspaper accounts of sustained bravery and battle-skill in the First World War were mere fabrications of an irresponsible press.<sup>35</sup> The Irish were simply too emotional, excitable, and lacking in calm and rational deliberation to be capable of such acts. "Like all emotional races, they are capable, under the influence of strong excitement . . . of making a brilliant dash, but they are quite incapable of sustaining any such effort. . . . In retreat or defence they are not only useless, but worse than useless. . . ." <sup>36</sup>

The phrase "like all emotional races" is important, for it reveals the continuing tendency among many Englishmen,

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 626.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 626.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 626.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 625-26, 631.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 631.

even at this late date, to think of the Irish as not only quite different from the Anglo-Saxons but also as very unattractive. This attitude also reached into the ranks of the London police who in 1921 made little effort to intervene<sup>37</sup> when a crowd of Londoners attacked a small group of Irish men and women who gathered outside a London prison to demonstrate in behalf of a number of hunger-striking Irish political prisoners.<sup>38</sup> Two years later the publication of a pamphlet entitled The Menace of the Irish Race to Our Nationality revealed that many Scots, too, still thought of the Irish as a peculiarly unattractive people. This pamphlet asserted that the Irish "cannot be assimilated and absorbed into the Scottish race."<sup>39</sup> The reason was that "they remain a people by themselves, segregated by reason of their race, their customs, their traditions and, above all, by their loyalty to their Church."<sup>40</sup>

And yet the claim that the Irish constituted a distinct national group with the right of national self-determination aroused indignation and opposition among large number of Englishmen. They vigorously denied the truth of this

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<sup>37</sup>Dorothy Macardle, The Irish Republic: A Documented Chronicle of the Anglo-Irish Conflict and the Partitioning of Ireland, with a Detailed Account of the Period 1916-1923 (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1965), p. 345.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 345.

<sup>39</sup>Quoted in James Edmund Handley, The Irish in Scotland, 1798-1845 (Cork University Press, 1945), p. 288.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 288.

proposition. This is somewhat puzzling in light of the fact that they repeatedly asserted that the great mass of the Irish people were of the Celtic "race" and were therefore "racially" different from the British. It is explained to some extent by the desire to maintain the union. Unionists seem to have felt, though this was never clearly spelled out, that to admit the contention that the Irish constituted a distinct national group implied their right to self-determination. In response therefore to the arguments of the Home Rulers that the Irish constituted such an entity the Unionists replied that if that were true then the Protestants of Ireland also formed a distinct national group, and a superior one as well. And since this was the case, it was unthinkable that they should be asked to participate in a parliament and government which would be dominated by Irish Catholics. It was the assumed inferiority of the latter that precluded the application of the 1867 Reform Bill to Ireland and necessitated the establishment of special franchise standards there, aiming to limit the franchise to as few Irish Catholics as possible so that the Anglo-Irish might continue as previously to dominate the country. In 1880 a resolution in the House of Commons to correct this anomaly was strongly opposed by the Conservatives. During the debates on this resolution the Chief Secretary for Ireland, James Lowther, admitted candidly that the Irish hated British rule.<sup>41</sup> Lowther, however, was

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<sup>41</sup>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 3d ser., Vol. 250 (5-28 Feb. 1880), col. 871.

not particularly disturbed by this. He drew a peculiar consolation from the fact that, in his view, the Tories were not hated quite so much as the Whigs. "The Irish people did not love the Tories much," he said, but "they hated the Whigs more."<sup>42</sup>

He did not believe that Ireland should be governed in accordance with the wishes of the Irish majority. Nor did he believe that a government which generates widespread, deep-seated, and perennial hatred and hostility toward it has necessarily failed in certain basic governmental functions. He would not concede that the aggravation of bitter and irreconcilable feelings among the various communities in Ireland was the fault, at least in part, of the social and political system. To him the enmity that existed between them was merely additional proof of the turbulent nature of Irish Catholics and indicated that what Ireland needed was more, not less, imperial and authoritarian government.

Despite the fact that the Unionists refused to concede the right of self-determination to the Irish they repeatedly condemned them for their lack of democratic principles. It would be unethical to grant them self-government, they maintained, because such government would not be democratic. Not only was it the natural inclination of the Irish to seek a dictator, but in addition they had no sense of the rights of

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., col. 871.

the individual or of minority groups.<sup>43</sup> The Queen advanced these views in her correspondence with Gladstone. "Whether the Irish people," she wrote, "can be trusted with the same liberties as the people of Great Britain, it is useless to discuss, as it is a question on which opinions differ so widely."<sup>44</sup> The uselessness of discussing it, however, did not prevent the Queen from immediately proceeding to do so. In incredibly contorted prose, purporting to give an air of objective aloofness, she sided as usual with those who questioned the governing capacity of the Irish. She held grave doubts, she stated, as to "whether those who might find themselves in future opposed to the policy of purely Irish Government could rely on that impartial hearing of their appeals, which has hitherto given confidence to the Queen's subjects and encouraged them to depend on the proverbial 'fair play' of an Englishman."<sup>45</sup>

This lack of trust in the Irish is well typified in the English reaction to the series of articles published in The Times in 1887 entitled "Parnellism and Crime."<sup>46</sup> One

<sup>43</sup>G. Smith, Irish History and Irish Character, p. 18; Esher, Journals and Letters, I, 66; Buckle, Letters of Queen Victoria, 2d ser., Vol. III, p. 655; and Holland, Life of Devonshire, I, 390.

<sup>44</sup>Buckle, Letters of Queen Victoria, 3d ser., Vol. II, p. 182.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>46</sup>See especially the following issues of The Times, Mar. 7, 10, 14, Apr. 18, May 13, 20, and June 1, 1887.

object of these was to identify Parnell and the Nationalist Party with those who had assassinated Lord Frederick Cavendish and Thomas Burke in 1882.<sup>47</sup> By associating them with these assassins The Times hoped to portray Parnell and the Nationalist members of Parliament as criminals, thereby creating opposition toward them and the policy of Home Rule.<sup>48</sup> During this campaign The Times printed the facsimile of a letter purportedly written by Parnell to those who had plotted the assassinations.<sup>49</sup> This letter was of course a forgery, but the important point is that most Englishmen never doubted the claims of The Times that it was authentic, while the denials of Parnell were summarily dismissed.<sup>50</sup> A half century later the writers of The History of The Times could recount, not without amazement, the remarkable faith that Englishmen placed in the trustworthiness of The Times and lack thereof in the Irish.<sup>51</sup> This attitude prevailed not only among Unionists, but among many Liberals as well. "It is significant," stated the writers of The History of The Times, "that even among the majority of Home Rule Liberals

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<sup>47</sup>"Parnellism and Crime," The Times, Apr. 18, 1887, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup>The History of The Times, Vol. III: The Twentieth Century Test, 1884-1912 (4 vols.; London: Times Publishing Company, 1935-1952), pp. 43-44, 49-50, 56-57.

<sup>49</sup>"Parnellism and Crime," The Times, Apr. 18, 1887, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup>The History of The Times, III, 57.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

faith in the accuracy of The Times so far outweighed confidence" in the Nationalist Party "that the idea of forgery occurred to very few."<sup>52</sup> It did, however, occur to Parnell, and the nonchalance, the complete lack of emotion and surprise with which he reacted to the letter and the indictment, reveal that while the Queen might think of the English as possessing a proverbial sense of fair play, Parnell's view was generally not quite so lofty. On being shown the letter in The Times, he glanced at it for a moment, then responded quite indifferently with respect to what was alleged to be his signature: "I did not make an S like that since 1878."<sup>53</sup>

This wilful campaign by one of the most prestigious and reputedly responsible newspapers indicates one of the difficulties of Unionist policy toward Ireland. The prime objective of that policy was to maintain the union. Yet culturally and religiously most Unionists found the Irish quite contemptible. To mold the United Kingdom into a permanently harmonious political entity it was necessary to treat all religious and ethnic groups equitably. But the Unionists were prevented from so doing by their social and cultural outlook and by their image of the Irish. Consequently, the conditions created by British rule in Ireland helped stimulate the growth of an intense nationalism among

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>53</sup>John Howard Parnell, Charles Stewart Parnell: A Memoir (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1914), p. 223.

the Irish, which the Unionists were never able to dispel. The more the Irish resisted British law, policies, and administration, the more the Unionists denounced them. Lord Eversley states that Arthur Balfour, during his chief secretaryship (1887-1891), never consulted or cooperated with the Nationalist Party in the framing of policy or legislation for Ireland or in the administration of that country. On the contrary,

he adopted the airs of a superior person, who looked down from philosophic altitudes on the disorderly crew which Ireland sent to Parliament. His attitude in Parliament gave the cue to the Castle officials, the resident magistrates, the police and the prison wardens in Ireland in their treatment of Irish members. . . . He defended these subordinates with unflinching zeal. . . . He never made the smallest concession to the Irish members.<sup>54</sup>

This mode of behavior prevailed among the Unionists as long as the Irish struggle for self-government continued. They treated the Irish as political and social outcasts with whom it was dangerous to associate or even communicate without endangering one's political or moral purity. Their participation in World War I, the principles for which that war was allegedly fought, and the mounting pressure of Irish opinion in the Dominions and the United States did little to transform these basic attitudes.<sup>55</sup> It was still possible to undertake a vicious military campaign against Ireland after World War I. It was still possible for Austen Chamberlain

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<sup>54</sup>Eversley, Gladstone and Ireland, p. 346.

<sup>55</sup>Diaries of C. P. Scott, p. 402.

to boast that he and the Irish had nothing in common. Of Michael Collins he wrote: "He had his own code of honour; . . . but it was not mine, and between him and me there could be no real sympathy. . . ." <sup>56</sup> And it was still possible for Sir Henry Wilson to assert that he would prefer "to be shot at" by the Irish "than to have to shake hands with them." <sup>57</sup> The Unionists were determined to retain within the existing political structure a people for whom they possessed neither sympathy nor affection. As far as they were concerned the Irish were, ironically, an alien and unwelcome force at Westminster, whose Parliamentary speeches had to be auricularly tolerated though in practice the demands and indictments contained in them could be magnanimously ignored.

This was logically possible for the ethnocentric Englishman because of his belief that the will of the Irish was subordinate to the will of the Anglo-Saxons. The demands of the former could be rejected therefore in accordance with

<sup>56</sup> Sir Austen Chamberlain, Down the Years (London: Cassell and Company, 1935), p. 146.

<sup>57</sup> Major-General Sir C. E. Callwell, Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries (London: Cassell and Company, 1927), II, 344. Incidentally, Wilson's feelings are not unlike those expressed by Sir William Harcourt after Gladstone's split with Parnell over the O'Shea divorce case in 1890. "I feel some satisfaction," Harcourt stated, "in remembering that I have never shaken hands with him." When one considers that Parnell had sat in Parliament for fifteen consecutive years and had led the Nationalist Party for most of that time the extent of the antipathy toward the Irish, and the pursuant social ostracism, is to some extent revealed. For Harcourt's remarks see Gardiner, Life of Sir William Harcourt, II, 87.

this principle. But even if this had not justified Unionist policy, even if there had been no plausible theoretical or practical justification for it, most Unionists would probably have pursued it anyhow. Lord Salisbury had stated explicitly that whether the objectives of the Nationalist Party were right or wrong was a matter with which he was not concerned. He did not intend to grant them in any case.<sup>58</sup> Even the Tory Democrat Lord Randolph Churchill was in agreement with this view.<sup>59</sup> He expressed in passionate terms his opposition to the wishes of nationalist Ireland. "Let the Irish know," he told an audience at Edinburgh,

that, though they cry day and night, though they vex you with much wickedness and harass you with much disorder, though they incessantly divert your attention from your own affairs, though they cause you all manner of trial and trouble, . . . there is one thing you will never listen to, there is one thing you will never yield--and that is their demand for an Irish Parliament, and that to their yells . . . you answer an unchanging, an unchangeable, and an unanimous "No."<sup>60</sup>

By 1916, however, having witnessed the failure of three Home Rule bills, an important segment of the Irish abandoned all faith in the ability or desire of English governments to solve Irish problems. They decided that they would no longer appeal to Westminster. They would simply set up their own government unilaterally and proceed as if Britain and British institutions did not exist. Under these conditions

<sup>58</sup>Hammond, Gladstone and the Irish Nation, p. 73.

<sup>59</sup>W. S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill, I, 281.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., I, 281.

the old methods of repression could no longer keep Ireland tolerably quiescent; nor could they be indefinitely employed in the face of world opinion. Still, it was difficult for many Englishmen to abandon their belief in them. Thousands of troops therefore were poured into Ireland in a last desperate effort to maintain British authority. The indiscriminate and destructive reprisals carried out by these troops, and the satisfaction they derived from these activities, are difficult to reconcile with the affection that purportedly formed the driving force behind England's civilizing mission. C. P. Scott felt that "the things done" in Ireland, "in 1921 were on the whole worse than those done in 1798."<sup>61</sup> For a parallel, Scott felt, "it would probably be necessary to go back to Cromwell."<sup>62</sup>

When certain Coalition leaders, at the direct suggestion of the South African Prime Minister Jan Smuts, finally agreed in 1921 to attempt a negotiated settlement, a number of Unionists, led by Sir Edward Carson, opposed this policy, insisting that a solution could still be found through the use of coercion.<sup>63</sup> The contrast between such willingness, indeed eagerness, to coerce Irish Catholics and the oft-enunciated view that the coercion of Ulster Protestants

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<sup>61</sup>Diaries of C. P. Scott, p. 394.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 394.

<sup>63</sup>Parliamentary Debates (House of Lords), 5th ser., Vol. 48 (Dec. 14-19, 1921), cols. 35-53.

would be unthinkable is highly enlightening. It reveals the divergent Unionist attitude toward the two communities in Ireland. Because of the ethnic, mental, and religious nature of the Ulster Protestants they could not be compelled to live under a Dublin government to which they were opposed. The nature of the Irish Catholics, on the other hand, was such that the long enforcement of them to live under a London government to which they were opposed was thoroughly justifiable.

What justified it of course, in the final analysis, was the egotistic and national objectives which the Unionists sought. Underlying this, however, and making possible the severe and frequent coercion of the Irish was the predominant Unionist image of them. The fairly widespread assumption, whether explicit or obscure, that they were both superstitious and savage-like justified much. "You fought for your Union against Slavery," Goldwin Smith wrote to an American friend in reference to the United States' Civil War, "we are fighting for ours against Savagery and Superstition."<sup>64</sup> Such a distorted and prejudiced attitude blinded the Unionists to the fact that if the Irish were still savages after several centuries of English contact, influence, and rule, surely this was, to some extent, an indictment of British policies and administration. If the Irish were not civilized after the years of effort already expended, what grounds were there

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<sup>64</sup>Wallace, Goldwin Smith: Victorian Liberal, p. 92.

for optimism? By condemning the Irish the Unionists tended to condemn themselves, the policies they pursued, and their civilizing abilities. The prudent path therefore might well have been for England to withdraw and leave the Irish to govern themselves, a proposal which Gladstone advanced in a limited form in the 1880s. But this the Unionists would not consider. Lord Salisbury expressed their opposition to it in the following terms: "If we have failed after centuries to make Ireland . . . civilized, we have no moral right to abandon our post. . . ." <sup>65</sup> Arthur Balfour was appalled at the proposal to grant self-government to the Irish. These were people who, in his view, were simply incapable of approaching problems in an unemotional way. They were therefore incapable of self-government. They were simply not "reasonable beings" with whom it was possible to carry on rational debate. <sup>66</sup> He would as soon, he told an audience at Limehouse, argue with "a cage of monkeys in a menagerie." <sup>67</sup>

If the Irish were apish in respect to their ability to engage in orderly and rational disputation, they resembled a much more destructive animal in other activities. Many Unionists looked upon them as incorrigible law-breakers with little respect for human or property rights. They

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<sup>65</sup> [Lord Salisbury], "Disintegration," The Quarterly Review, CLVI (Oct. 1883), 355.

<sup>66</sup> Balfour, Aspects of Home Rule, p. 54.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

persistently advanced this point of view when expediency required it. Having imprinted it firmly in the minds of most Englishmen, they kept it in reserve as an extremely efficacious device that could be drawn upon and utilized when occasion warranted. Parnell found it necessary to point out in the House of Commons the injustice of this tactic. "What," he asked,

did the English nation know of the Irish nation? Every day the English people read in their newspapers accounts of murders and outrages in Ireland, many of which were carefully rehashed and kept alive week after week, to be reproduced when necessary. . . . This was the only type of news which the English people ever obtained respecting Ireland. . . .<sup>68</sup>

The writers of the History of The Times point out that "throughout the year 1887 The Times constantly kept the subject of Irish terrorism and its support by the Irish leaders before its readers' eyes."<sup>69</sup> Not only did politicians and the popular press engage in this kind of image-making, so also did many respected publicists. In this area of anti-Irish attack, as in so many others, Goldwin Smith excelled. The number of disparaging epithets that he could pack into a brief passage was a tribute not only to his creative genius but to his enthusiasm for his task. He depicted the Irish as the embodiment of cruelty, recklessness, and fiendishness; as given to the use of "violent invective" and "uncontrolled

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<sup>68</sup>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 3d ser., Vol. 255 (3-24 Aug. 1880), col. 2015.

<sup>69</sup>The History of The Times, III, 60.

exhibitions of passion."<sup>70</sup> They were not, he was generous enough to concede, totally depraved, but possessed rather by a "most wretched kind of weakness."<sup>71</sup> Smith describes some of these characteristics in the following passage:

Cruelty and recklessness of human life seem the qualities of a fiend. But it will be found that, like indulgence in violent invective and other uncontrolled exhibitions of passion, they are often connected less with deep depravity than with a most wretched kind of weakness. They may often be classed among those infirmities to which the Latin language gave the expressive name of impotentia. The civil wars, the religious persecutions, the revolutions of French history are marked by these qualities in their worst form; and the same may be said of the civil wars, rebellions, and agrarian insurrections of Ireland.<sup>72</sup>

Addressing an audience of unionists in Belfast in 1912, F. E. Smith contrasted their character with that of Irish nationalists. The former, he said, were "contented, prosperous, law-abiding, and loyal."<sup>73</sup> Unlike the nationalists, he stated in commendation, "you have maimed no dumb animal; you have shot no woman; you have stabbed no Sunday-school child."<sup>74</sup> When the final struggle for national self-government in Ireland erupted after World War I the Unionists once more resorted to these old tactics. The Irish

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<sup>70</sup>G. Smith, Irish History and Irish Character, p. 12.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>73</sup>F. E. Smith, Unionist Policy and Other Essays, p. 116.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

Chief Secretary, Sir Hamar Greenwood,<sup>75</sup> reopened the old grab-bag of stereotypes, though he also added a number of new ones. The members of Sinn Fein and the Irish Volunteers were constantly referred to as the "murder gang." Greenwood, however, sorted out the new Irish leader, Eamon de Valera, for special treatment. De Valera, he said, belonged to a "race of treacherous murderers."<sup>76</sup> Presumably he was referring to the non-Irish aspect of De Valera's ethnic background, for the Irish leader, he said, had "inducted Ireland into the murderous treachery of his race."<sup>77</sup>

It was also the practice among many Englishmen to characterize the Irish as collectivistic and clannish, or as Jacobins, a term which in this period was synonymous with terror, republicanism, and communism. They maintained that the Irish intended to expropriate the propertied classes and undertake a program of economic and social levelling. So sensitive were certain Englishmen on this issue that they tended to identify almost any call for a reduction in the extremes of wealth and poverty as communistic and anarchic. They believed that there could be no stable political system if the upper and upper middle classes were

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<sup>75</sup>Greenwood was actually a Canadian from Whitby, Ontario. His ancestors were among the American loyalists who fled to Canada after the American Revolution. See The Dictionary of National Biography, 1941-1950, pp. 324-25.

<sup>76</sup>Quoted in Bromage, De Valera and the March of a Nation, p. 111.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

subjected to any serious reduction in their economic status. It followed therefore that proposals for meaningful social and economic reform could be characterized as the first steps toward anarchy. Queen Victoria herself was saturated with these ideas,<sup>78</sup> so that she constantly harangued her ministers with anxious exhortations to enforce the law vigorously in Ireland. The propertied classes in particular deplored the fact that "there appears to be something in the Keltic character . . . which loves the social equality arising from minute subdivision of property. . . ."<sup>79</sup> Many of them opposed the establishment of the franchise in Ireland on the same basis as in England and Scotland on the grounds that the Irish were susceptible to "obnoxious influence--the influence of revolutionary agitators, . . . demagogues, men who traded in politics, and loved revolution because it led to disorder. . . ."<sup>80</sup>

Lord Midleton was explicit and outspoken in his view that the Irish sought not only a political but a communistic social and economic revolution. He denounced the land reformer Michael Davitt as having embarked on a "mission of communistic propagandism."<sup>81</sup> The Irish, he argued, thought

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<sup>78</sup>Buckle, Letters of Queen Victoria, 2d ser., Vol. III, p. 301.

<sup>79</sup>G. Smith, Irish History and Irish Character, p. 23.

<sup>80</sup>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 3d ser., Vol. 250 (5-28 Feb., 1880), col. 831.

<sup>81</sup>Viscount Midleton, "Irish Legislation and Its Results," The National Review, I (Mar. 1883), 135.

in class terms and were consequently incapable of governing in such a way as to treat all classes justly. For the same reason they should not be permitted to undertake important legal roles, such, for example, as judges or jurors, for, in Midleton's words, they made "no secret of their sympathies being with the people and against the 'quality.'"<sup>82</sup> The result of Gladstone's Irish legislation, such as the land acts and the Ballot Act, Midleton argued, has been "to break the power of the heretofore ruling class. . . . The influences of birth, of breeding," he maintained, have been destroyed and revolutionaries are gaining control of Ireland.<sup>83</sup>

Lord Cranbrook criticized Gladstone's Land Bill of 1886 and his first Home Rule Bill on the same grounds. "The gentry," he complained, "are to be bought out, . . . and one dead and uniform level of society is sought. . . ."<sup>84</sup> In 1885 Edward Styche Hart, opposing the extension of the franchise in Ireland, condemned "the Catholic vote" because of its socialist leanings. The Irish, he said, "have devoted themselves to the teaching of doctrines which resemble more nearly the Socialism of the Continent than any phase of English political life."<sup>85</sup> With this attitude prevailing,

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>84</sup>Viscount Cranbrook, "Dismemberment Disguised," The National Review, VII (May 1886), 293.

<sup>85</sup>Edward Styche Hart, "The Catholic Vote," The National Review, VI (Sept. 1885), 105.

it is not surprising that during the 1880s the Nationalist members of Parliament were largely outcasts in London, both socially and politically. While the great estate owners of Ireland were acceptable guests in England's stately homes, the Nationalists were not.

In 1912, in a book describing the historical and current nature of Conservatism, Lord Hugh Cecil still thought of the Irish in terms of republicanism and communism, as tainted with all the characteristics Conservatives associated with French Jacobinism. "Home Rule," he wrote,

is repulsive to them [the Conservatives] because they regard it as the triumph of a movement deeply tainted with Jacobinism. According to Conservative ideas, there has been nothing more Jacobinical in modern politics than the Land League agitation under the leadership of Mr. Parnell and Mr. Davitt. The violence and intimidation that disfigured it; the hideous crimes that ominously coincided with it; the reckless disregard of private property and the cruel oppression which it involved, reproduced some of the worst features of the spirit of French terrorism. Conservatism would fail in its primary character as the opponent of Jacobinism, if it did not oppose to the utmost the setting up of an Irish Parliament which would be in the hands of a party whose history is so deeply stained.<sup>86</sup>

According to this statement the prime function of Conservatism was to fight Jacobinism, which was defined as a composite of terror, republicanism, and communism. Since the Irish supposedly embodied these characteristics, it was essential for the Conservatives to prevent the enactment of Home Rule. As late as 1922 many of them still thought of

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<sup>86</sup> Lord Hugh Cecil, Conservatism, pp. 241-32.

the Irish in these terms. In an article in the National Review the Duke of Northumberland launched a passionate attack on Sinn Fein. He condemned it as a world communist revolutionary movement, a description which was of course far from the truth. When he characterized James Connolly, executed for his part in the rebellion of 1916, as an "International Revolutionary," he was on reasonably safe ground.<sup>87</sup> But when he asserted that his "successor" was "admirably fitted" to follow in his footsteps he was really stretching the bounds of accuracy.<sup>88</sup> The successor Northumberland had in mind was of course Eamon de Valera, whom he described in highly racial tones as "a South-American Jew Irishman."<sup>89</sup>

Associated with the presumed widespread communist tendencies of the Irish, and in part explaining the cause of these tendencies, was the vice of laziness. It is interesting to find that these two characteristics were usually coupled in the mind of many Unionists. They stem in part from the assumptions of laissez-faire. According to these assumptions those who worked industriously and practiced thrift became materially successful, a state which was defined as the achievement of material abundance, or, at the

<sup>87</sup> Duke of Northumberland, "The Irish Tragedy," The National Review, LXXVIII (Jan. 1922), 616.

<sup>88</sup> Northumberland was also wrong of course in referring to De Valera as the successor to James Connolly as the leader of Sinn Fein. Connolly was never the leader of that Party.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 616.

very least, material security. The achievement of either of these instilled in the individual a high degree of satisfaction with the nature of his society. For him there was little reason to attack his social and political institutions. Such attacks came from the lazy and lethargic, from those who were unwilling to work or incapable of diligence, and therefore had not succeeded. It was they who advocated social reform or revolution, and it was they consequently who were the adherents of communism. The Unionists fully appreciated the importance of this analysis, for it explained, without indicting English rule, the cause of poverty, unemployment, and economic and social stagnation in Ireland. It is hardly surprising therefore to find them constantly emphasizing the inordinate laziness of the Irish. It was the self-righteousness, however, with which this was done that betrays their motivation, for it is apparent that they were rather pleased with this analysis. They were happy to be able to postulate with conviction that the Irish were lazy, for it both explained the degraded state of their social conditions and justified English rule.

In the 1890s Sir Herbert Jekyll complained that the Irish lacked initiative and self-reliance. They habitually depended on the government to solve their problems. "This," said Jekyll, "is the natural fruit of the system of doles and grants that have prevailed for so long. . . ." <sup>90</sup> By this

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<sup>90</sup> Sir Algernon West, Private Diaries of the Rt. Hon. Sir Algernon West, ed. by Horace G. Hutchinson (London: John Murray, 1922), p. 181.

statement Jekyll was inadvertently condemning English rule in Ireland, for by permitting the long existence of unemployment it had, in his view, destroyed in the Irish the virtues of self-reliance and initiative, and had bred in them an inordinate degree of apathy and dependence. But instead of proceeding to condemn British statesmen and the policies which had produced these characteristics, Jekyll lapsed into the usual habit of condemning the Irish for possessing them. Many small farmers and agricultural laborers go off to England for the harvest, he said, "and they come back in the autumn with enough money to keep them through the winter, which they spend in idleness."<sup>91</sup> They had little interest in the improvement of the dwellings in which they existed, dwellings which, in some cases, revealed, according to Jekyll, "a lower state of civilization than I had ever seen out of a savage country."<sup>92</sup> Many homes, he stated, especially in parts of the west of Ireland,

had neither window nor chimney. One end of the house was divided into two compartments, in one of which lived a pony and a foal, and in the other a cow. The fire was on the floor, and the whole interior was black with smoke. In one corner was a heap of dark rags that might have been a bed, and there was a shelf above it that might have been another.<sup>93</sup>

Jekyll believed that the Irish could have improved their

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., pp. 181-82.

material conditions had they chosen to do so.<sup>94</sup> But, he stated, the problem lay in their nature. "There would seem," he wrote, "to be some racial instinct in the pure Celt which is too strong to be overcome, otherwise it is impossible to account for the deliberate squalor in which he elects to live."<sup>95</sup>

This description of the Irish contains a number of seeming contradictions. While, on the one hand, they refused to work "for more than half the year,"<sup>96</sup> they possessed, at the same time, a startling "short-sighted greediness of gain."<sup>97</sup> While they could live for an entire year on savings accumulated during six months of work, they also showed "a terrible want of thrift," with their earnings being "generally spent at once--mostly on drink."<sup>98</sup> This picture is remarkably reminiscent of that drawn previously by Goldwin Smith. "What an Englishman wants to make him happy," Smith had written, ". . . is a full belly and a warm back; what an Irishman wants to make him happy is a glass of whiskey and a stick."<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>99</sup>G. Smith, Irish History and Irish Character, p. 13.

The Unionists had of course fostered a widespread antipathy toward the Irish among the English working class. They had established a kind of reservoir of prejudice upon which they were able to draw when political or electoral expediency so demanded. Those politicians who denounced the Irish with the greatest enthusiasm and seeming sincerity were generally assured of victory in English constituencies. When still a member of the Liberal Party Joseph Chamberlain repeatedly warned that "anything like a bargain with the Celtic Irish" for electoral purposes "would be resented by the English and Scotch workmen and that a Tory-Whig coalition appealing to their prejudices . . . would carry all before them."<sup>100</sup> The Unionists of course exploited these prejudices. They warned English workers that if Home Rule were enacted Ireland would be so misgoverned that England would be swamped with Irish labor.<sup>101</sup> The wise policy therefore was to support the existing union in order to keep the Irish out of England. This projected influx of job-seeking Irish peasants contrasts sharply with the usual charge of laziness attributed to them. Moreover, the fact that Unionists were able to base their appeal on these grounds reveals the extent of anti-Irish feeling among English workers. As Karl Marx wrote in 1870 the "ordinary English worker hates the Irish

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<sup>100</sup> Algar Labouchere Thorold, The Life of Henry Labouchere (London: Constable and Company, 1913), p. 250.

<sup>101</sup> Balfour, Aspects of Home Rule, pp. 28-29.

worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life."<sup>102</sup> In addition he attains a special satisfaction from the fact that "in relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the ruling nation."<sup>103</sup> Incredible as it may seem this anti-Irish prejudice carried over into the Communist International where, according to Friedrich Engels, the English members detested the Irish and tried to keep them in a subservient position, a policy against which Engels had to fight desperately.<sup>104</sup> A. P. Thornton points out that English workers had little interest in "the ultimate destinies of the Irish."<sup>105</sup> In fact they looked upon "Irish labour as 'black,' and therefore stayed resolutely unsympathetic to catalogues of the wrongs of Ireland."<sup>106</sup>

Another stereotype that prevailed among many Englishmen was that the Irish were peculiarly deceitful. In either a professional or social capacity it was impossible to trust them. Lady Blanche Waterford believed that they possessed an uncontrollable urge to lie. She did not describe what factors were responsible for the growth of this characteristic, whether it was culturally or genetically produced,

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<sup>102</sup>Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, 1846-1895, p. 289.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>104</sup>Gustav Mayer, Friedrich Engels: A Biography (London: Chapman & Hall, 1936), p. 193.

<sup>105</sup>The Habit of Authority, p. 315.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., p. 315.

but she left no doubt of her belief in its existence.

They cannot help lying [she stated], and they have no shame, not merely in being found out, but in being known to be lying as the words come fresh from their lips. Man, woman, and child, they are soaked and saturated in insincerity.<sup>107</sup>

John Morley found a similar attitude prevailing among the county inspectors in Ireland. Their typical view was that the Irish "simply don't know what truth means. They know no difference between the truth and a lie. Which ever comes uppermost at the moment does well enough."<sup>108</sup>

The fact that many Englishmen could hold such an unfounded and encompassing opinion with such conviction reflects not only their attitude toward the Irish but the emotional factors which underlay their opposition to Home Rule. Their fears of the consequences of self-government for the Irish forced them to adopt an attitude of hostility and contempt toward them. They described them as incredibly ignorant and unintelligent. Not only did they argue that it would be folly to grant them self-government, but in the 1860s and 1880s many even opposed the extension of the franchise to Ireland on an equal basis with Britain. To "give electoral power to that poor, miserable, ignorant residuum of the people of Ireland," it was argued, would be

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<sup>107</sup>Quoted in John Morley, Recollections (2 vols.; New York: Macmillan Company, 1917), II, 36-37.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., I, 332.

outrageous.<sup>109</sup> In the 1890s Joseph Chamberlain revealed how shallow were the roots of his democracy by proclaiming that the Irish members of Parliament should not be permitted to vote on what he referred to as strictly English legislation. This he defined as all legislation that did not deal directly with Irish affairs. He maintained, in phrases which even his highly sympathetic biographer was forced to condemn,<sup>110</sup> that they were unqualified to do so because they were "nominated by priests" and "elected by illiterates."<sup>111</sup> In the same decade W. E. H. Lecky criticized the Reform Bill of 1884 because it had extended the franchise among the Irish. The "loyal and well-educated men," he complained, men of "intelligence," that is, the Anglo-Irish, were being "swamped by an ignorant and influenced peasantry."<sup>112</sup>

During World War I many Unionists still thought of the Irish as an "unthinking population." The suggestion to impose conscription on them, Lord Midleton asserted, "brought together . . . the Catholic hierarchy, all the new Republicans, the Old Home Rulers, and other representatives of an unthinking population."<sup>113</sup> The post-World-War-I efforts of

<sup>109</sup> Charles Lewis, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 3d ser., Vol. 250 (Feb. 5-28, 1880), col. 827.

<sup>110</sup> Garvin, Life of Chamberlain, II, 570.

<sup>111</sup> Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 4th ser., Vol. 14 (June 26-July 18, 1893), col. 1519.

<sup>112</sup> Lecky, Democracy and Liberty, I, 28.

<sup>113</sup> Midleton, Records & Reactions, 1856-1939, p. 248.

the Irish to wrest national independence from England by force, and the often ruthless nature of the struggle that ensued, served once more to reinforce the old prejudices. While the Unionists were at last forced to concede a large degree of national self-government to the Irish, this did not mean that they had changed their basic image of them. It was still possible to describe them as "cowardly butchers" of human beings.<sup>114</sup>

Even after the Irish problem had been removed from English politics and the Irish had long since begun to govern themselves, it was still possible for some Englishmen to deprecate retrospectively the character of the former members of the Nationalist Party. Years later, when composing his memoirs, Lord Newton could still write of them that "the majority were quarrelsome, unmannerly, and ill-educated."<sup>115</sup> When it is remembered that Newton was writing in 1941, long after the Irish members had forsaken the halls of Westminster, it is surprising to find that he was still unable to temper the severity of his judgment. In this, there was little progress, little compromise. In such men, contemplation of the Irish still conjured up the old derogatory picture.

The lingering prominence of this image in the period 1919-1921, when the Unionists finally acquiesced in the

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<sup>114</sup>Callwell, Sir Henry Wilson, II, 347.

<sup>115</sup>Lord Newton, Retrospection (London: John Murray, 1941), p. 37.

establishment of self-government in Ireland, played a fundamental part in the solution that was adopted. In this respect the Conservative image of Irish Protestants was of equal importance. These two factors coalesced to influence the political settlement that was finally hammered out. Though the Anglo-Irish had at last to be abandoned to live under a Catholic-dominated government, the Ulster Protestants could still be protected. Their consolidation into the northeast corner of Ireland made it possible to divide the country into two separate states. Thus the various cultural, mental, and religious concepts that dominated the Conservative image of the Irish played a significant role in the settlement that was finally adopted.

PART III

THE LIBERAL POSTURE

## CHAPTER V

### THE CHANGING NATURE OF LIBERALISM

The virtues, the efficiency, the justice of self-government--that is one Liberal principle. The appreciation and encouragement of national sentiment--that is another Liberal principle. The recognition of the popular will constitutionally expressed through the people's representatives--that is another Liberal principle.

--Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman<sup>1</sup>

What Liberalism had in view was a natural, peaceable step-by-step transition from aristocracy to democracy. . . .

--Hamilton Fyfe<sup>2</sup>

The Liberal . . . is at bottom an egalitarian.

--Crane Brinton<sup>3</sup>

One of the most remarkable developments of late Victorian and Edwardian England was the transformation that came over Liberalism. This had important consequences not only for the nature of English society but for Liberal attitudes and policies toward Ireland. Liberalism altered markedly its concept of the just society and the role of government in social and economic affairs. It partly

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<sup>1</sup>J. A. Spender, The Life of the Right Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (2 vols.; London: Hodder and Stoughton, II, 28.

<sup>2</sup>Hamilton Fyfe, The British Liberal Party: An Historical Sketch (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1928), p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Brinton, English Political Thought, p. 225.

abandoned its rigid adherence to the theory of laissez-faire and adopted to some extent the principle of state intervention in an effort to secure to the lower classes the cultural and material equity they could not achieve under the regime of extreme economic individualism. In its policy toward Ireland too Liberalism followed a new direction. Not only was the power of government injected into the economic relations between tenant-farmer and landlord in order to secure more favorable conditions for the tenant, but most Liberals also adopted the view that the Irish had a right to a modicum of national self-government, and that they had the ability to operate it. The new Liberal concept of the just society and the role that government should play in its achievement, together with a changing attitude toward the character and rights of both the lower classes and the Irish, lie at the root of the transformation that occurred in Liberal theory and practice during this period. The Liberals' image of the just society was closely linked to their theory of the nature and rights of the lower classes, and this in turn interacted with and helped mold their perception of themselves and of the Irish.

In order, however, to reveal more vividly the path which Liberalism took with the advent of Gladstone to the premiership in 1868, when he uttered those epochal words, "my mission is to pacify Ireland,"<sup>4</sup> it will be helpful to

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<sup>4</sup>Philip Magnus, Gladstone: A Biography (London: John Murray, 1954), p. 193.

go back briefly and describe its predominant nature prior to this time. For Gladstone's first ministry not only triggered the transformation of Liberalism, it also recognized the existence of various wrongs in Ireland and committed the Liberal Party to their solution. After 1868 the Liberals became, for the next half century, closely associated with the problems of Ireland, and it was in part while seeking solutions to those problems that it was forced to abandon many of its former precepts regarding the relationship between government and socioeconomic matters. The widening acceptance among Liberals of the principles of democracy and the concept that a suitable and evolutionary degree of autonomy, consistent with British interests, should be conceded to those mature national groups which clearly articulate a demand for it helped force them into a progressively closer identification with the objectives of Irish nationalism and those of the working class in Britain, and this in turn helped influence the transformation that Liberalism underwent.

It should be remembered that the changing posture of Liberalism led to serious conflict and factional disputes within the Liberal Party. As has already been pointed out, there was a number of groups that could not accept some of the new ideas. The most important of these were the Whigs and the Radical Unionists, who in particular could not accept Gladstone's new policies toward Ireland. In 1886 therefore they withdrew from the Party and aligned with the

Conservatives. From this date the Liberal Party was a much less heterogeneous entity than previously--and on Irish policy it was reasonably homogeneous. There was still a number of people, the Liberal imperialists in particular, who lacked the commitment to Home Rule that Gladstone and certain of his followers experienced. However, with the possible exception of Lord Rosebery, they were not opposed to this policy. Their attitude tended to be one of indifference, or a playing down of Home Rule for electoral expediency. Thus while certain Liberals did not support Home Rule with much enthusiasm, they did not actually oppose it, so that on the Irish issue the Liberal Party was, after 1886, reasonably united.

Prior to 1868, when Gladstone first became prime minister, Liberalism was predominantly concerned with the role--or lack of role--of the state in economic matters. Liberals were staunch supporters of the doctrine that the state should intervene as little as possible in the economic sphere. The three principal groups which developed this philosophy were the Classical Economists, the Philosophical Radicals, and the Manchester School. Between them these groups successfully discredited the old mercantilistic concept that intervention by the state in economic affairs could benefit the nation and the individual. In 1776 Adam Smith, the most influential figure among the Classical Economists, launched a momentous attack against state

intervention.<sup>5</sup> He denounced the theory that the state should engage in extensive regulatory activities in order to increase the wealth and self-sufficiency of the nation. It was self-defeating, he argued, for the state to establish colonies and regulate their industry and commerce. The national competition and exclusiveness that ensued not only led to wars but actually hindered economic growth and development. It was Smith's view that if individual entrepreneurs were left free to pursue their own economic interests untrammelled by the weight of state interference, not only would the wealth of individuals increase, but so also would the wealth of nations.

The philosopher Jeremy Bentham adopted Smith's economic theories, marshalled additional arguments in their support, and gave them a wide publicity. Bentham attempted to establish Smith's economic principles firmly on a theory of human nature and the economic relationships between individuals. According to Bentham human beings were motivated by an extremely egoistic impulse.<sup>6</sup> Their prime objective was the pursuit of pleasure.<sup>7</sup> In quest of this self-oriented goal the individual contributed in the most

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<sup>5</sup>This was of course the year in which he published his Wealth of Nations.

<sup>6</sup>See Elie Halevy, The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism, trans. by Mary Morris (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), pp. 14-15, 30.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-33; and John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957), 9-18.

efficient way possible to the general welfare of society, or, as Bentham put it, to the greatest happiness of the greatest number, for there could be no conflict between individual objectives and the objectives of society as a whole.<sup>8</sup> This conclusion was based on the assumption that a natural harmony, or natural identity, of interests existed among all individuals in a given society.<sup>9</sup> Adam Smith had also believed in the existence of this harmonizing factor, which he had of course referred to, rather metaphysically, as "an invisible hand."<sup>10</sup>

In the system constructed by the Classical Economists and the Philosophical Radicals there was little room for positive government action. This followed logically from the postulate that the interests of all individuals harmonized naturally. Generally, government should not interfere in economic matters because such intervention would prove counter-productive. Both these groups would sanction government involvement in only the most exceptional circumstances. The Classical Economists agreed that government should perform those functions which the individual or a group of individuals would not do because of their unprofitability.<sup>11</sup> The Philosophical Radicals reluctantly conceded

<sup>8</sup>Halevy, The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism, pp. 15-17.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 15-17.

<sup>10</sup>Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, I, 421.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., II, 184-85.

that the state might legitimately intervene to insure the availability of an education to each citizen.<sup>12</sup>

In the early nineteenth century there emerged in Manchester a group of businessmen who fervently welcomed these ideas. They became uncompromising advocates of individual liberty in economic matters. They did not, however, press these principles quite as vigorously in non-economic areas. And they did very little to implement the concept of universal manhood suffrage, which the Philosophical Radicals had advocated,<sup>13</sup> and which was perhaps the logical implication of their philosophy. They concentrated their attention almost exclusively on economic matters, and the repeal of the Corn Laws and the Navigation Laws in the 1840s represented the most extensive and successful implementation of their philosophy.

The practical application of these Manchester School ideas reached its peak in the mid-Victorian era. Manchester School Liberals firmly believed that the acquisition of wealth was proof of superior ability. They were opposed to the idea that government should intervene to redistribute the national income in such a way as to reduce the extremes of poverty and wealth. They believed that the best government was that which spent, and therefore taxed, least. In

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<sup>12</sup>Halevy, The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism, pp. 289-90, 490.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 168, 262-264, 491.

their view a society based on complete individual liberty in economic affairs provided a just opportunity for everyone to achieve material success. In addition this system separated the intelligent and the industrious from those who lacked these qualities. Any attempt by government to tamper with the operation of the system of economic individualism by a policy of income redistribution would only destroy incentive, penalize the proficient and the diligent, retard production, and increase rather than decrease poverty. This was a highly flattering theory for those who succeeded, for it proved their superior competence. It was a correspondingly depressing one for those who did not succeed, for it verified their lack of success-producing qualities. It not only placed individuals on a different plane, but justified, in economic, social, and political terms, the perpetuation of a conspicuously stratified society. Moreover, by logical extension these theories could be applied to those countries which lagged behind technologically, industrially, and commercially, to prove that they too lacked those qualities which contributed to material progress. Those classes, nations, and races therefore which failed to make significant advances in technological and material matters were in danger of being stigmatized as possessing the characteristics of backwardness or inferiority not only in economic terms, but in cultural and biological terms as well.

This was the predominant nature of Liberalism at the beginning of the Home Rule era. It was a set of ideas and

principles that had sprung from divergent and multifarious sources, and consequently was composed of various aspects. The change that came over it in the late nineteenth century was made possible primarily by the reception given to certain new social, economic, and political ideas, but also by the emergence of some of Liberalism's latent elements. The predominance of Manchester school principles in the mid-nineteenth century tended to cloud the fact that Liberalism also comprised certain other important factors, some of which were clearly enumerated by Alan Bullock and Maurice Shock. The Liberal tradition, they wrote,

owes much to the Dissenters with their strong belief in individualism, the place of conscience in politics and their democratic tradition of self-government, but something also to the Whigs with their aristocratic tradition of civil and religious liberty and their dislike of arbitrary government. It inherits a belief in natural law and natural rights only to see these scornfully repudiated by Bentham and the Philosophical Radicals in favour of the principle of utility. From the Classical Economists and the Manchester School it derives the orthodoxy of free trade and laissez-faire, yet at the end of the 19th century embraces the heretical view of working-class radicalism that something ought to be done for the poor.<sup>14</sup>

A close examination of these various elements indicates that there lay at the roots of Liberalism a dualistic concept of man and the just society. There was within it a certain polarity of ideas and principles which seem highly incompatible. In consonance with Manchester School ideas

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<sup>14</sup>Alan Bullock and Maurice Shock, eds., The Liberal Tradition: From Fox to Keynes (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1956), pp. xix-xx.

there was a strong emphasis on economic individualism, irrespective of the social and economic conditions that ensued. But there was also a certain emphasis on democracy and the nobility of all human life. There was a demand for the application of conscience to politics; and in the Home Rule era there developed the concept that the state has a moral obligation to intervene in economic and social affairs to improve the conditions of the working class and to make available to all citizens the opportunity to attain an education and to enrich their cultural and social life. Throughout the Home Rule era this collectivistic principle was in constant competition with the free trade, freedom of contract, and laissez-faire ideas of the Manchester School. The gradual acceptance among certain Liberals of the principle of state intervention and the concept of collectivism slowly forced the Party in a new direction. Liberalism therefore was in a long state of flux, moving from the position of rigid economic individualism to a cautious acceptance of the principle of collectivism. When the ideas of such Liberal theorists as the later John Stuart Mill, T. H. Green, D. G. Ritchie, John Hobson, and John Maynard Keynes are considered, as well as the policies and programs of the various Liberal governments throughout the Home Rule period, the gradual, though often reluctant, shift in Liberalism away from the laissez-faire of the Classical Economists and the Manchester School to the adoption of state intervention as a means of solving certain social and

economic grievances becomes apparent.

It was this new trend in Liberalism, especially as reflected in the legislation in behalf of Irish tenant farmers and the decision to concede the Irish a degree of self-government, that drove most of the Whigs out of the Liberal Party. With their exodus the Party was henceforth composed largely of the middle class,<sup>15</sup> with a slowly growing segment of working class representation. The continuing disunity of the Liberal Party was in part a product of the complexity and heterogeneity of the middle class and the disharmony of interests that it represented. It was composed of a number of different elements, ranging from the great industrialists, bankers, and commercial magnates at one end of the scale to the artisan and laboring class, which made up the Lib-Labs, at the other. Sandwiched between these two groups was the professional middle class, among them professors and journalists, who in this period were often the theorists and advocates of new collectivist ideas. Carlton J. H. Hayes describes the complex and conflicting composition of the middle class as follows:

The urban "middle class"--the "bourgeoisie"--was not a simple class but a congeries of classes. There was a moneyed bourgeoisie, growing mightily in wealth and influence. . . . It embraced well-to-do industrialists, commercial magnates, and bankers. . . . Between industrialists and commercial magnates developed

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<sup>15</sup>It should be noted that many of the Whigs were also developing middle class economic interests. Sir Ivor Jennings, Party Politics, Vol. II: The Growth of Parties (Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 123.

conflicts of economic interest and political policy; and bankers who tried to resolve the conflicts found themselves frequently assailed from both sides. There was likewise a professional bourgeoisie, comprising lawyers, physicians, engineers, journalists, professors, trained civil servants. . . . There was, most numerous of all, a petty bourgeoisie, made up of small manufacturers and traders, retailers and shopkeepers, handicraftsmen and clerks, and tailing off into an artisan class.<sup>16</sup>

These three major groupings had not only conflicting interests and outlooks but even within the various groups there was a lack of harmony. Hayes's description of the contrasting interests of the upper middle class, the haute bourgeoisie, is borne out by Bernard Semmel, and helps explain the divergent attitudes of this group toward the empire and Home Rule.<sup>17</sup> Those industries and interests, such as banking, insurance, ship-building, and the cotton industry, which had not yet felt the pinch of foreign competition, continued to support free trade imperialism and did not in general oppose self-government for the Irish.<sup>18</sup> Those industries, such as the iron and steel industry of the Midlands, which were struggling against the pressure of foreign competition, tended to become converts to protectionism, supporters of imperial federation, and opponents of Home Rule.<sup>19</sup> Many of these Liberals, led of course by

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<sup>16</sup> Hayes, A Generation of Materialism, 1871-1900, p. 62.

<sup>17</sup> Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform, pp. 133-40.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 136-38.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 131-43.

Joseph Chamberlain, withdrew from the Liberal Party from the 1880s onward.

As the various theorists espoused the principles of collectivism they added a new dimension to Liberalism. This new development is symbolized by the former Benthamite John Stuart Mill who in later life moved steadily away from laissez-faire toward the principle of state intervention. He abandoned the belief that the policy of laissez-faire gave rise to the most equitable society possible. He came to feel that the extremes of wealth and poverty were unjust, that they could, with general social advantage, be modified; and in each edition of The Principles of Political Economy he extended the areas in which government might intervene in the economic relations between individuals. Mill in fact eventually abandoned much of his Benthamite Liberalism and adopted a rather sympathetic view of socialism.<sup>20</sup>

It is perhaps not surprising that one of the most destructive challenges to laissez-faire should come from the intellectual community. It is true that professional politicians were simultaneously denying piecemeal the universal application of laissez-faire principles by enacting selective collectivistic measures to remedy specific social ills. The Education Act of 1870 was the first major step in this direction. The Irish Land Act of the same year was also an epochal act of government intervention in economic matters.

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<sup>20</sup>Brinton, English Political Thought, p. 212.

Although collectivist reforms were thereafter inaugurated extremely slowly, it is a fact that by 1914 collectivist principles had been embodied in a number of important social programs, mostly by Liberal administrations, though Conservatives had also made important contributions, especially in Ireland. Although these reforms were often enacted in response to the pressures of politically important segments of society, rather than on the basis of pure philosophic commitment, it is also a fact that if the principles of laissez-faire were to be successfully abandoned, their intellectual underpinnings would have to be destroyed, and it was here that the intellectuals rendered their greatest service. The task was not easy, since the newly propounded theory of natural selection, and the philosophy of social Darwinism built upon it, was interpreted as lending renewed credence to laissez-faire principles. The belief that government and the individual were in irreconcilable opposition, so persuasively juxtaposed in Spencer's title, Man versus the State, was difficult to break down.

It is in a sense therefore ironic that one of the first important attacks on this theory should come from John Stuart Mill, for Mill had previously been very much concerned with the possible tyranny of the state over the individual, as he had explained in his essay, On Liberty. This is in part explained by Mill's own personal intellectual history which steadily underwent a slow metamorphosis. Having started out as a firm supporter of complete freedom of contract, he had

by 1868 so abandoned this philosophy that he was able to write a pamphlet acknowledging its failure as it applied to landlord and tenant in Ireland, and calling for the intervention of the government to buy out the landlords.<sup>21</sup>

The Oxford philosopher T. H. Green pursued a similar line of reasoning. It was useless, he said, "to insist on maintaining the forms of free contract where the reality was impossible."<sup>22</sup> He rejected the view that a natural identity of interests existed among all individuals in a given society and that freedom of contract would bring the best possible benefits to all. Crane Brinton writes that no one marks better than Green "the change which came over English Liberalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century."<sup>23</sup> "The nature of the genuine political reformer," Green maintained, is perhaps "always the same."<sup>24</sup> The cause for which he fights does not vary. It is the "cause of social good against class interests."<sup>25</sup> "It is the business of the state," Green argued, "to take the best security it can for the young citizens' growing up in such health and with so

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<sup>21</sup>John Stuart Mill, England and Ireland (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1868).

<sup>22</sup>"Lecture on Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract," in Works of Thomas Hill Green, ed. by R. L. Nettleship (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1888), III, 382.

<sup>23</sup>Brinton, English Political Thought, p. 212.

<sup>24</sup>"Lecture on Liberal Legislation," p. 367.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 367.

much knowledge as is necessary for their real freedom."<sup>26</sup> He rejected the proposition that "the enlightened self-interest or benevolence of individuals, working under a system of unlimited freedom of contract," brought the greatest good to the greatest number.<sup>27</sup>

In an influential work published in 1891, entitled The Principles of State Interference, D. G. Ritchie took issue with the Spencerian concept that the state and the individual were in opposition. He was willing to admit that this may have been true prior to the advent of democracy, but in a democratic society the state represented the individual; it was his instrument, to be used for the development of the general good. "The arguments used against 'government' action," he stated,

where the government is entirely or mainly in the hands of a ruling class or caste . . . lose their force just in proportion as government becomes more and more genuinely the government of the people by the people themselves. The explicit recognition of popular sovereignty tends to abolish the antithesis between "the Man" and "the State." The State becomes not "I" indeed, but "we."<sup>28</sup>

Ritchie completely denied the validity not only of Spencerianism but of the laissez-faire ideas of the Classical Economists, the Benthamites, and the Manchester School. "The

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 375.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 376.

<sup>28</sup>David G. Ritchie, The Principles of State Interference: Four Essays on the Political Philosophy of Mr. Herbert Spencer, J. S. Mill, and T. H. Green (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1891), p. 64.

main reason for desiring more State action," he said, "is in order to give the individual a greater chance of developing all his activities in a healthy way."<sup>29</sup> If, under the system of laissez-faire, the individual was reduced to grinding poverty, as was too often the case, that was a mere caricature of liberty. Liberty, it was now argued, consisted, in part, of the opportunity to develop one's talents to the full; it involved access on equitable terms to a meaningful existence. The state therefore, where necessary, should intervene positively to make available whatever opportunities were required. There must "remain in Liberalism," John Hobson stated, "no relics of that positive hostility to public methods of co-operation which crippled the old Radicalism."<sup>30</sup> In fact the state must undertake to insure "an enlargement of personal liberty, . . . to set free new and larger opportunities. . . ."<sup>31</sup> The system of laissez-faire cannot provide these opportunities. They can only be attained through positive government action, and when such action is required "no theoretic objections to the State can be permitted to militate" against it.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>30</sup>J. A. Hobson, The Crisis of Liberalism: New Issues of Democracy (London: P. S. King & Son, 1909), pp. 94-95.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

It was fitting that the last great blow to the economic theories underlying laissez-faire should have been struck by an economist. One and a half centuries after Adam Smith propounded his non-interventionist economic theory in The Wealth of Nations, John Maynard Keynes impressively refuted it in a study appropriately entitled The End of Laissez-faire. Keynes levelled his main attack against the assertion that there existed in society a natural harmony of interests between the goals of the individual and those of society as a whole. There was, he stated, no evidence for the existence of such a principle.

The world is not so governed from above that private and social interests always coincide. It is not so managed here below that in practice they coincide. It is not a correct deduction from the Principles of Economics that enlightened self-interest always operates in the public interest. Nor is it true that self-interest generally is enlightened; more often individuals acting separately to promote their own ends are too ignorant or too weak to attain even these. Experience does not show that individuals, when they make up a social unit, are always less clear-sighted than when they act separately.

We cannot therefore settle on abstract grounds.

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While the theoreticians were abandoning the principles of laissez-faire, so also, to some extent, though often with great reluctance, were some of the politicians. The various governments from 1868 to 1914 slowly undertook a number of collectivistic reforms, and in the period 1906-1910 actually laid the foundation for England's welfare state. Surprisingly

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<sup>33</sup>John Maynard Keynes, The End of Laissez-faire (London: Hogarth Press, 1927), pp. 39-40.

the first steps in this direction were taken under Gladstone during the Parliament of 1868-1874. R. C. K. Ensor states that this "was the greatest reforming Parliament" since the early 1830s."<sup>34</sup> It was the aim of Gladstone's ministry "to abolish class privileges and unbar to all the doors of political, economic, and cultural opportunity."<sup>35</sup> This is not to say that Gladstone achieved this goal, either in this ministry or in his later ones. Indeed it was really not achieved during the Home Rule period. However, important steps were taken in this direction, steps which not only altered in a revolutionary way the concept of the role of government in social and economic matters but were founded on a new image of man.

This new Liberalism began with two basic assumptions:

One of these started from the postulate that all men are brothers, that the differences between them are trifling when set beside their points of resemblance, that all have an equal right to the necessaries and the pleasures of life. The second channel was hollowed out by a vague belief that it was possible, by using the machinery of government, to do away with poverty and with superfluous wealth; to even things up so effectually that all should have enough and none more than enough.<sup>36</sup>

If all men were "brothers," if the differences between one class and another, between one nationality and another, between the English and the Irish, were "trifling," it would

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<sup>34</sup> Ensor, England, 1870-1914, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Fyfe, The British Liberal Party, p. 20.

be difficult to argue on moral or mental grounds that one class should rule another or that the British should rule the Irish.

The implication of these ideas was not only that all classes should have a similar voice in political matters but so also, it would seem, should all nationalities. It took most Liberals some time of course to recognize and acknowledge the full consequences of these principles, and in fact many of them became enthusiastic and rather self-righteous imperialists. However, the most influential Liberal of this period, Gladstone, never adopted the new imperialism; and his ideas on imperial matters continued to play an important role in Liberalism, as is revealed by the predominant Liberal policies toward South Africa prior to the Boer War, to some extent during that war, and again afterwards; by the advocacy of self-government for Ireland; and by the attempts, as revealed, for example, in the Morley-Minto reforms, to evolve a system of self-government in India.

In light of these facts it is not surprising to find that one of the most momentous developments of this period was the rise of political democracy. Prior to 1867 the right to participate in the political process, the right to the franchise, was based on property. It was property really that was represented in Parliament despite the fact that the Reform Bill of 1832 was officially entitled "An Act to Amend the Representation of the People. . . ." The Second and

Third Reform Bills did not abolish this anomaly. The right to vote was still based on property, and the maneuvering on this issue of both political parties reveals that practical political considerations were perhaps as important a motivating factor as political theory or ideals. It should be understood therefore that in this area, as in others, Liberals did not follow the implications of their assumptions to their logical conclusion. Although they took steps to extend the franchise, they did not extend it universally to all adults, or indeed to all male adults. It was in fact not until 1918 that property as a basis for the franchise was finally abolished.

It is interesting to note that even after many members of the working class had been granted the Parliamentary franchise women of all classes were still excluded. This tendency to discriminate against women was the product of a male self-image, coupled with a perception of the female and her role, which may have had its roots in the same soil that produced the social prejudice and political discrimination toward the working class in England and the ethnic and racial prejudice toward the Irish. It is, in any case, a fact that this discriminatory attitude toward women was so deeply embedded in the mind of most males, Liberal and Conservative, that all the demonstrations, disturbances, and destruction that the Suffragettes perpetrated in the years prior to World War I were powerless to remove it. When the Reform Bill of 1867 was being debated, John Stuart Mill

proposed an amendment to extend the suffrage to women, an amendment that was solidly defeated. Mill then published an essay with the challenging title, The Subjection of Women, in which he continued to advocate this cause. But all the persuasiveness of that highly accomplished logician could not sway the majority of M.P.s. It was not until 1918 that Parliament agreed to extend the franchise to women-- an act which was finally made possible by their contributions during World War I. It should be pointed out that on this issue there was very little difference between the attitudes of the two major parties. Neither had a majority in support of it until the advent of the war. Even then, the intensity of the resistance to equal rights for women on this matter is revealed by the fact that women were still not permitted to vote until they had attained the age of thirty.

If Liberals and Conservatives held similar positions on the issue of voting rights for women, this was not the case on the question of education. Prior to 1870 elementary education in England was for most children nonexistent. There was no real government effort to create an effective system of schools. Those which did exist were owned and run by non-government agencies, mostly by the Church of England. The Education Act of 1870 was the first major attempt to apply the principle of collective responsibility to education.<sup>37</sup> Local school boards were created and given

<sup>37</sup> Sir Henry Slessor, A History of the Liberal Party (London: Hutchinson & Co., n.d.), p. 105.

the authority to levy rates to build, staff, and administer schools. Elementary education was not by this Act made free for all children, but it was made free for the children of those parents who could not afford the fees. In addition the local school boards were given the authority to compel children to attend school until the age of thirteen. Government thus not only assumed the responsibility to provide an education for the children of those parents who were unable to pay, but felt also that it had an obligation to compel children to obtain an education, thereby adopting a principle of social responsibility which was a major break with previous practice.

The school problem, however, was not satisfactorily solved; it continued to remain a source of agitation. One reason for this was that the so-called voluntary schools, basically those schools which were run by the Church of England, were not permitted to levy rates and were given no support from them.<sup>38</sup> In addition the board schools were prohibited from teaching denominational religion. These conditions disturbed the Anglican Church and its ally the Conservative Party, both of which continued to agitate this problem. In 1891 the Conservatives took the next major step in educational reform by abolishing school fees in all elementary schools. This raises the question as to why the

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<sup>38</sup>They did, however, continue to receive small government grants, which they had obtained since 1833.

Conservatives, opposed in general to the principle of collectivism, would adopt such a measure. The answer, however, is not far to seek. They did so in an attempt to save the Anglican schools from extinction.<sup>39</sup> They felt that at some point in the future, when the Liberals returned to office, they would undertake to make education free for all students in board schools, an act which would put the Anglican schools at a grave financial disadvantage. Lord Salisbury pointed this out in a speech at the Carlton Club. It was imperative, he said, that the Conservatives deal with this issue, for "if their opponents should obtain a majority in a future Parliament, they would deal with it in such a manner that the voluntary schools would be swept away."<sup>40</sup>

Though the Liberal Education Bill of 1870 had serious limitations, particularly in its failure to make education free for all children in board schools, it should be acknowledged that the adoption of the principle that society as a whole was responsible for the welfare of its members as far as education was concerned was a momentous event. It was an important repudiation of laissez-faire Liberalism,<sup>41</sup> and it indicated that in general the Liberal Party no longer accepted the principle that complete freedom of contract among individuals catered adequately to the needs of all

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<sup>39</sup>The Annual Register for the Year 1891, p. 81

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>41</sup>Slessor, A History of the Liberal Party, p. 105.

citizens. It implied that individual and social interests did not harmonize naturally, that there might in fact, at least in some areas, be a serious conflict between them. This new line of reasoning denied the existence of a natural identity of interests among all individuals. Belief in this concept began to erode. Consequently, as Alan Bullock and Maurice Shock point out, the "distrust of the power of the state that was characteristic of 19th century Liberalism up to the last decades of the century,"<sup>42</sup> (my italics) was slowly broken down, and the principle of state intervention to attain a more equitable society underwent renewed consideration.

Epochal as the Education Act of 1870 was, both in theory and in practice, it was accompanied in the same year by another important innovative measure. This was the Irish Land Act. With this statute Gladstone took another, though doubtless minor step as far as practical results were concerned, away from the system of laissez-faire. He denied, in relation to Irish land issues, that the theory of free contractual relations between individuals would bring the most judicious degree of equity to each participant. He assumed in fact that the tenant, as the economically weaker party, could not obtain the kind of contract he deserved. The government therefore should intervene in his behalf to achieve for him certain basic terms he had proved incapable

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<sup>42</sup>Bullock and Shock, The Liberal Tradition, p. xxv.

of obtaining for himself. While the new law stipulated that the tenant must receive compensation for eviction, or disturbance as it was typically called, and while it provided that he must, under certain conditions, be compensated for whatever improvements he might have added to the property he rented during his period of tenure, it did not by any means meet the tenants' major demands, which were security of tenure and fair rents.

It is interesting to find that on this issue even such a staunch Manchesterite as John Bright agreed that the policy of freedom of contract operated unfairly against the tenant and that the government, in the tenant's interest, should intervene to rectify this. Bright was of course denying, whether he was fully aware of it or not, the validity and justice of a basic principle of laissez-faire. "It is said," he explained,

that all this must be left to contract between the landlord and the tenant; but the public, which may be neither landlord nor tenant, has a great interest in this question; and I maintain that the interests of the public require that Parliament should secure to the tenant the property which he has invested in his farm.<sup>43</sup>

But Bright went even further than this. He argued that in Ireland the laws had failed in another way. They had permitted the land of Ireland to accumulate in the hands of a comparatively few proprietors. Bright held therefore that

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<sup>43</sup>John Bright, Speeches on Questions of Public Policy, ed. by James E. Thorold Rogers (2d ed.; 2 vols.; London: Macmillan and Co., 1869), I, 373.

the government should intervene to bring about a redistribution:

The great evil of Ireland is this--that the Irish people--the Irish nation--are dispossessed of the soil, and what we ought to do is to provide for, and aid in, their restoration to it by all measures of justice. Why should we tolerate the system of entails? Why should the object of the law be to accumulate land in great masses in few hands, and to make it almost impossible for persons of small means, and tenant-farmers, to become possessors of the land?<sup>44</sup>

Bright therefore proposed that the government advance funds to help tenants purchase their holdings, to transform Ireland into a land of peasant proprietors. This was certainly an unusual proposal for a leading Manchester School Liberal. But it was adopted by the Party, and enacted into law as part of the Land Act of 1870.<sup>45</sup> However, because of the amount of capital tenants were required to advance to purchase their holdings, this aspect of the Act had little immediate impact. Its real importance lay in the fact that it was later expanded in such a way in successive measures--not only by Liberals but more importantly the Conservatives--that Ireland was eventually transformed into a nation of small proprietary farmers. Though the 1870 Act did little to attain a definitive solution of tenants' problems, it was

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., I, 373.

<sup>45</sup>This act may well denote the most radical or liberal phase of Bright's career as far as social questions and his position toward Irish problems were concerned. From this point on he became increasingly conservative. See James L. Sturgis, John Bright and the Empire (London: Athlone Press, 1969), p. 175.

in principle, as John Morley quite rightly pointed out, "a vast revolutionary stride."<sup>46</sup>

Electoral, educational, and agrarian reforms were only three of the first important measures undertaken in this period. It is worth noting that though the Liberals set in motion the processes that led to the advent of reform in each of these areas, the Conservatives also added important practical contributions in each field. As has been pointed out, however, they did not for the most part, do so out of a philosophic commitment to the principles involved. They made education free in all elementary schools, for example, to save the Anglican schools. They adopted and extended the Liberal land acts in Ireland primarily to protect the landlords and to stave off the demand for Home Rule. And their acceptance of the Reform Bills of 1867 and 1884 was certainly the result of political expediency and necessity rather than a philosophic commitment to democratically oriented principles. This is not by any means to suggest that the Liberal commitment to these measures was morally pure and void of political pressure and expediency. But, as Alan Bullock and Maurice Shock have pointed out, Liberalism was composed in part of various groups--the Dissenters, the Philosophical Radicals, and the working class radicals--who advocated either all or some of

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<sup>46</sup>John Morley, The Life of William Ewart Gladstone (new ed., 3 vols.; New York: Macmillan Company, 1932), II, 294.

these policies and who therefore gradually pushed the mainstream of Liberalism toward the acceptance of these ideas and made it a generally positive, if often divisive, force working for their realization. Conservatism, on the other hand, apart from a small group of Tory Democrats, represented more socially conservative forces, and became therefore, especially after the passing of Disraeli, a largely acquiescent, rather than innovative force, as far as social and political reform was concerned. Thus while a number of Conservatives gave evidence of accepting some of these ideas, Conservatives as a whole concerned themselves primarily with imperial matters, arguing that reform could come only as a result of successful imperial policies.

Nevertheless the enactment of the above reformist measures set in motion a cautious trend toward social reconstruction which was continued in succeeding administrations. In keeping with their changing concept of social justice and the role of government in its achievement, a small number of Liberals refused to accept as inevitable and ineradicable the often stringent and insecure conditions of the working class. A social system which permitted the existence of superfluous wealth on the one hand and extreme poverty on the other came to be viewed as intolerable,<sup>47</sup> and

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<sup>47</sup>For explicit public statements of this point of view see Spender, Life of Campbell-Bannerman, II, 120, and Better Times: Speeches by the Right Hon. D. Lloyd George (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910), pp. 174-75.

it was assumed that this could not only be corrected but that government had a responsibility to do so. Though the short-lived Liberal administration of the 1890s enacted little social legislation, it did strike a further blow at the concept that the individual's property was inviolable and that he had the right to pass that property on to his heirs without interference by the state. The rather moderate Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir William Harcourt, introduced a measure to impose a system of graduated taxes on inherited wealth. These were ranged on a scale from one to eight per cent, and were important more for the principle they embodied than for any immediate social gain they effected.<sup>48</sup>

The last Liberal administrations enacted a number of important social reforms which at last lifted England clearly out of the era of extreme laissez-faire and laid the basis

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<sup>48</sup> It should be noted, however, that Hamilton Fyfe believes this act did more "to break down the aristocratic principle in English government" than the Reform Acts of 1832 or 1867. The repeated application of the principle involved, he wrote, was "to have an effect on England greater than that of any other event in this period. It was to destroy the power of the aristocracy by breaking up their vast estates." See Fyfe, The British Liberal Party, pp. 140, 143. R. C. K. Ensor, however, disagrees with this point, believing that the severest blow to the aristocracy and to British agriculture in general came from foreign competition and from the failure of the government to erect tariffs against foreign goods. Although Fyfe's point is probably exaggerated, it is also doubtful that Ensor's explanation is adequate, since foreign competition came mainly in the area of grains, and there seems to be no reason why English agriculturalists could not have transferred to a different kind of farming.

for the welfare state. The principle of collectivism was applied on an unprecedented scale so that among the measures enacted were a Workingmen's Compensation Act, an Old-Age Pensions Law, a more steeply graduated income tax, a tax on unearned increments and on monopolies, a National Insurance Act, and a Minimum Wage Law. These reforms were achieved not only despite the skepticism of the right wing of the Liberal Party but in the face of persistent opposition and obstruction from the Conservatives, especially in the House of Lords, where they even went so far as to reject the budget of 1909. The Conservative opposition to the 1909 budget, as Blanche Dugdale admits, "sprang from the irresistible instinct of self-preservation in the class from which the Party derived its tradition and much of its strength. The land taxes and the land valuation clauses were a death blow to the landed gentry."<sup>49</sup>

But while the Conservatives and a number of right wing Liberals were appalled by these measures, left-wing Liberals were elated. In 1911 L. T. Hobhouse enthusiastically expressed his approval of the progress being made in the achievement of social reform. "On all sides," he wrote,

we find the State making active provisions for the poorer classes and not by any means for the destitute alone. We find it educating the children, providing medical inspection, authorizing the feeding of the necessitous at the expense of the ratepayers, helping them to obtain employment through free Labour Exchanges, seeking to organize the labour market with a view to the mitigation

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<sup>49</sup>Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour, II, 55.

of unemployment, and providing old age pensions for all whose incomes fall below thirteen shillings a week, without exacting any contribution.<sup>50</sup>

The historian E. L. Woodward, who lived through the years prior to World War I, recalls that "there was almost continuous excitement in the programme of the left wing of the Liberal Party, in the support of the great strikes which occurred during these years, in the plans for the nationalization of the means of production, the expropriation of the landlords, the raising of the standard of life."<sup>51</sup>

It has often been charged against the Liberals that their preoccupation with self-government for Ireland prevented them from enacting the advanced social legislation that would have won electoral approval and given extended life to the Party. It is undoubtedly true that identification with the policy of Home Rule cost the Liberals a large degree of electoral support. It is also true, however, that the social legislation they enacted in this period far surpassed that of any previous administration, or any previous era, and when they attempted to enact further reformist measures in the budget of 1909, the voters reduced their support of them in the elections of the following year. Nor did they turn en masse to the Labor Party. The bulk of the support which the Liberals lost went to the Conservatives,

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<sup>50</sup>L. T. Hobhouse, Liberalism (London: Williams and Norgate [1911]), pp. 157-58.

<sup>51</sup>E. L. Woodward, Short Journey (London: Faber and Faber, 1942), p. 39.

who had enacted little social reform during their long tenure of office, who opposed the reforms embodied in the budget, and who supported the power of the House of Lords. The contention therefore that a more vigorous policy of social reform would have won increased electoral support for the Liberals is probably not, as it stands, an acceptable thesis. If, however, such reform had been coupled with an aggressive foreign and anti-Irish policy, then the likelihood of the Liberals being more successful at the polls would have been much greater.

It is true that the Liberals' sympathy for the Irish cause earned them the opposition of many voters, and its lingering on as an unfinished issue for several decades may well have absorbed Liberal time and attention that might have been devoted to further social issues. But the fault for this must go to the Conservatives, and particularly to the House of Lords. It was the Lords that rejected the Home Rule Bill of 1893 and therefore were responsible for the continuance of this issue as a problem in British politics. Until the outbreak of World War I the Liberals were forced to wage a constant political struggle with the Lords. Time after time the upper house rejected Liberal measures, becoming in a sense an extension of the Conservative opposition, or as Lloyd George put it, Mr. Balfour's Poodle. Not once throughout the Home Rule era was a Conservative bill rejected,<sup>52</sup> while advanced Liberal measures were not only

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<sup>52</sup>Anthony Sampson, Anatomy of Britain (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1962), p. 24.

obstructed in the House of Commons by amendments and embittered debate, but were eventually nullified in the upper house if the Conservative leaders so requested. The Lords had long advertised themselves, without any conspicuous show of humility, as an august, cautious, and grave body, carefully guarding the traditions of the constitution. But when in 1894 they rejected in a few days bills which the Liberals had labored over for almost a year they displayed a reckless disregard for the will of the people that earned them the condemnation of the one man who could lend incalculable prestige and respectability to a cause--the reform of the House of Lords--which had hitherto seemed extremely radical. That man of course was Gladstone.

From time to time there had been various calls for changes in the upper chamber, but none of these had succeeded in winning much support. When, however, Gladstone threw his immense prestige behind this cause in 1894 it not only became a part of Liberal policy, but within eighteen years was enacted into law. What had become intolerable was the increasingly contemptuous rejection by the Lords of so much Liberal legislation. In one session alone, that of 1893-1894, they rejected such major measures as the Employers' Liability Bill, the Salmon Fisheries Bill, and the Home Rule Bill. In addition they so amended the Parish Councils Bill that it lost much of its meaning.<sup>53</sup> "It was, therefore,"

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<sup>53</sup>The Prime Ministers' Papers: W. E. Gladstone, Vol. I: Autobiographica, ed. by John Brooke and Mary Sorenson (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1971), p. 119.

Gladstone wrote, "not too much to say that they had destroyed the year's work which had cost the House of Commons two hundred nights of labour."<sup>54</sup>

If the Lords were permitted the constitutional power to reject whatever legislation they wished, the Reform Acts and the Ballot Act would be rendered almost meaningless. The reconstruction of the political system to insure that the House of Commons represented the people was a mere facade if the will of the people could not receive legislative expression. As long as the Lords retained a veto power over the House of Commons this was a distinct possibility. The Liberals therefore, led by Gladstone, undertook to remove this power. In 1894, when they had rejected most of Gladstone's major legislation, he proposed to resign and call an election on this issue. "It appeared to me," he wrote,

that they had . . . given us an opportunity, so brilliant as could not have been hoped for of raising the question between the two Houses by a dissolution. They had in their intemperance committed themselves to a hopeless position.<sup>55</sup>

But a majority of the cabinet were reluctant to take this step, and Gladstone, therefore, because of his age, dropped the matter. He could not help feeling, however, that the Liberals had missed "one of the finest opportunities ever offered to statesmen." The Lords, Gladstone noted in extremely critical terms, "were not so far gone in idiocy as to refuse all concessions on the Parish

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., I, 116.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., I, 119.

Councils Bill."<sup>57</sup> But at "this cheap and insignificant price they were allowed to walk peaceably out of the impasse in which they had lodged themselves."<sup>58</sup>

When a few weeks later, he made his last speech in the House of Commons, he launched a vigorous attack on the upper house.<sup>59</sup> This was a fitting and revealing close to the political career of a man who had begun as a high Tory and had moved throughout his life, though perhaps often rather slowly, in a liberal and democratic direction, until in the end he was prepared to undertake the removal of the last overt aristocratic barrier to the expression of the will of the people. Though his colleagues were unwilling, due to a combination of both political and philosophic motives, to follow him in 1894 they were forced, within a

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., I, 120.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., I, 120.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., I, 120. It is interesting to note that Gladstone held a very low view of the constitutional practice which required that the government dissolve the House of Commons and go through the throes of an election if it could not get its legislation through the Lords. He described it as follows:

"A marvellous conception! On such a dissolution, if the country disapproved of the conduct of its representatives, it would cashier them: but, if it disapproved of the conduct of the Peers, it would simply have to see them resume their place of power to employ it to the best of their ability as opportunity might serve, in thwarting the desires of the country expressed through its representatives." Ibid., I, 104.

<sup>59</sup>The Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 4th ser., Vol. 21 (5 Feb.-5 Mar., 1894), cols. 1146-52.

few years, under the leadership of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, to renew this campaign. The presumptuousness of the Lords in rejecting Liberal measures after 1906 is incredible in light of the fact that the Liberals had a working majority in the House of Commons of 350 members, the strongest position any Party had enjoyed since the Reform Bill of 1832.<sup>60</sup> "It is plainly intolerable," Campbell-Bannerman stated, "that a second Chamber should, while one party . . . is in power, be its willing servant, and when that party has received unmistakable and emphatic condemnation by the country, be able itself to neutralise and thwart and distort the policy the electors have shown they approve."<sup>61</sup> It was obvious, he concluded, that the House of Lords had become "a mere annexe of the Unionist Party."<sup>62</sup>

The event which spurred the Liberals to final action was the rejection of their budget in 1909. Whether the Lords possessed the constitutional authority to reject the budget was highly questionable. Lloyd George, however, had injected into it a number of measures designed to attain a moderate redistribution of the national income. This, in addition to the various social reforms which the Liberals had enacted, was too much for the Conservatives. Fearing

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<sup>60</sup>Fyfe, The British Liberal Party, p. 167.

<sup>61</sup>The Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 4th ser., Vol. 167 (Dec. 11-21, 1907), cols. 1739-40.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 4th ser., Vol. 176 (June 14-26, 1907), col. 916.

the consequences for their own social and economic position they determined to use the Lords to maintain the status quo.<sup>63</sup> The fear and bitterness which Liberal policies engendered in Conservatives during these years reverberated through social as well as political life. The American ambassador, Walter Hines Page, described their reaction as follows:

You see their fear of an on-sweeping democracy in their social treatment of party opponents. A Tory lady told me with tears that she could no longer invite her Liberal friends to her house: "I have lost them--they are robbing us, you know."<sup>64</sup>

It was obviously impossible for the Liberals to govern effectively if the House of Lords could force them into an election when they so desired. The Liberals therefore, in the midst of bitter political dispute, enacted the Parliament Bill, which finally abolished the Lords' absolute veto. It left to them however, the power to delay most legislation for a period of two years. This was a rather conservative measure compared to the six-month suspensive veto which Campbell-Bannerman had proposed in 1907,<sup>65</sup> and it would prove disastrous to the success of the Third Home Rule Bill. However, it meant that the Conservatives could no longer block Liberal legislation permanently. At least they could no

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<sup>63</sup>Hobson, The Crisis of Liberalism: New Issues of Democracy, pp. x-xi.

<sup>64</sup>Burton J. Hendrick, The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page (3 vols.; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1926), I, 145.

<sup>65</sup>Spender, Life of Campbell-Bannerman, II, 357.

longer do so within the existing constitutional framework. The only channel left to them was extra-legal. It was in fact rebellion against the government. It was civil war; and the Conservatives were not deterred by this prospect. On the contrary they proceeded to prepare for it, justifying their actions on the grounds that the government had become a "revolutionary committee."<sup>66</sup> The rationale for this charge lay in the assumption that the Liberals had curtailed the power of the Lords by illegal means, by threatening to create a large number of new peers. Though the practice of creating new peers was not common, it was certainly not illegal, as Conservatives in moments of calm must very well have known. They were incensed, however, by the fact that they had at last lost the power to control legislation, to control the nature of the social order; and they were haunted by the knowledge that the Liberals, in alliance with Labor and the Irish Nationalists, would be able to enact legislation, and particularly Home Rule for Ireland, despite their opposition. Behind the sarcasm and humor there was a good deal of truth in Lloyd George's famous characterization of Conservative attitudes. "At the back of the Tory mind," he said,

you find this: Tories firmly believe that Providence has singled them out to govern this land. They think that they are the governing classes, and that if they are not governing there must be something wrong. In 1906 they were turned out of power. They thought it

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<sup>66</sup>Blake, Unrepentent Tory, p. 130.

was just a temporary visitation. . . . But when a second election came with the same result and a third election came and Radicals were still in power, the Tories became troubled. They saw Radical bills go through Parliament and, what was still worse, they found Tories were expected to obey them as if they were common people.<sup>67</sup>

During the Home Rule era the possibility of a democratic political system came into existence in England for the first time. It was the product of various factors. Although philosophic commitment played a part, it also received a strong impetus from the interplay of party politics and the desire of one party or the other to appeal to the interests of a particular social group. In 1867 the Conservatives made a bid for the urban worker's support; in 1884 the Liberals made a similar pitch for the votes of the rural worker. Despite the opportunism involved in the advent of democracy, the practical consequences for the reform of society were the same. Entirely new electoral classes could now exercise the franchise, they had the opportunity to elect their own members to Parliament, to frame legislation that would actualize their own ideas. The value, efficacy, and equity of that legislation would be determined by the majority of the people, not as previously by the members of the upper and upper middle classes. Theories of social justice which were based on the privileges or egocentric aspirations of a particular class and designed

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<sup>67</sup>"Mr. Lloyd George and His Critics: Speech at the National Liberal Club," The Times, July 2, 1913, p. 13.

to maintain in a largely unaltered form the privileges and the position of that class would presumably be no longer accepted. The old economic laws which justified the inviolability of property and laissez-faire were abandoned. The Liberal Party in particular, though also to some extent the Tory social imperialists, accepted the theory that government could rightly intervene to secure a more equitable distribution of the national income. There was, as John Maynard Keynes pointed out, "no 'compact' conferring perpetual rights on those who Have or on those who Acquire."<sup>68</sup> If the majority wished to maintain the existing social order, they were perfectly free to do so. Should they choose, on the other hand, to restructure society in a less inegalitarian way, they also had the right--and the legal political power--to do that.

Consciousness of this important fact explains why many Conservatives acquiesced reluctantly in the democratization of the political system. While accepting the various political reforms, they took consolation in the fact that they still possessed one seemingly impregnable barrier against unacceptable social change. That barrier was the House of Lords. But when the Liberals removed this last defense many Conservatives became extremely apprehensive. Their decision to resort to civil war revealed conclusively that they had not, in the final analysis, fully accepted the

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<sup>68</sup> Keynes, The End of Laissez-faire, p. 39.

underlying principles of democracy.

The Liberals, on the other hand, though often proceeding doubtfully, reluctantly, and against internal factional opposition, had nevertheless proceeded to adopt and extend political and social reforms. When the various democratically oriented measures which they enacted during this period are juxtaposed, it is possible to see the extent and direction in which both Liberalism and society were being transformed. Liberal legislation not only aimed at creating greater cultural and material opportunity and equity for the working class but also struck down aristocratic privilege in many areas. It was the Liberals, for example, who began the reforms in education which led to free and compulsory elementary education for all children. It was they who initiated the programs of free school meals and free medical inspection. It was they who enacted the Workingmen's Compensation Act, the Old-Age Pensions Act, sickness insurance, unemployment insurance, a graduated inheritance tax, and a more steeply graduated income tax. It was they who disestablished such privileged bodies as the Anglican Church in Ireland and in Wales, they who abolished the religious tests at Oxford and Cambridge, who struck down the purchase of commissions in the army, and who opened the civil service to all citizens through competitive examination. It was they finally who abolished the power of the House of Lords to permanently veto legislation and thwart the will of the newly created democracy.

This is not to imply that the Conservatives did not also play a role in the advancement of political and social reforms or that the motives of the Liberals were always pure. Certainly the interplay of party politics, political expediency, and the pressures of various interests were significant factors. However, since the Liberal Party contained within it a working class element, it was imperative that it adopt certain policies that would appeal to their interests and win their continued support. Conservatives attempted to win working class support too, but they relied more on the appeal of imperialism--and opposition to the Irish--promising improved social conditions as a result of a successful imperial policy. Consequently the number of effective social reforms which they enacted during all their years in office was rather limited.

The question arises as to why, if the Liberals were pursuing such seemingly enlightened policies, the Party won only one general election decisively after 1880, why it was almost constantly out of office between 1886 and 1906, why it lost so much support in the two elections of 1910, and why it declined so disastrously after World War I. It is not required by the purpose of this chapter to explain why the Liberal Party declined. Its function is to describe what the nature of Liberalism was during this period in order to explain, elucidate, and make understandable its policies and attitudes toward Ireland, to reveal the similarities and contrasts between those policies and attitudes and

those of the Conservatives, and to clarify the causes thereof. However, it will be useful to draw from this description some brief conclusions as to why the Liberal Party may have declined. Two principal factors seem to stand out: One was the nature and objectives of the Party itself; the other was the nature and sentiments of the British electorate and the existence and policies of the Conservative and Labor Parties.

It was an important factor that after 1886 the Liberal Party was caught between two conflicting pressures. It embodied elements of two classes, with largely anti-thetical objectives. On the right it included a rather conservative element representative of the middle class. This group was often reluctant to make concessions to working class opinion. It was generally opposed to extensive social reform. It tended to act as a brake on the Party, to withdraw from it entirely, as Lord Rosebery did, or to join the Conservatives, as many did after World War I, the most notable example being Winston Churchill. On the left, on the other hand, were the Lib-Labs, a small group representative of some segments of working class opinion. This group persistently confronted the Party with a demand for social reform and for labor legislation. The Liberals therefore were attempting to represent elements of two different classes, the entrepreneurs and the workers. To the extent that the goals of these two classes conflicted, the Party was forced to compromise and to temporize.

In addition to this difficulty the Liberals were

confronted with the competition of two political parties-- the Conservatives on the right, and the rising Labor Party on the left. These two parties posed an insurmountable problem for them. As Liberalism became more reformist-oriented, the Party found that it could never represent the entrepreneurs as convincingly as the Conservatives. In addition the generally cosmopolitan and democratic spirit of the Liberals prevented them from out-maneuvering the Conservatives on foreign and imperial policy. In an age of militaristic and imperial aggressiveness, in an age of war scares and arms races, of Anglo-Saxon ethnocentrism and its concomitant contempt for the Irish, the Liberals were largely identified in the public mind as the Party of weakness and retreat. It was impossible for them to get to the right of the Conservatives on these issues. The famous jingoistic jingle of the 1870s, the mafficking of Mafeking night, the bellicosity of the slogan, "We want eight, and we won't wait"--all reveal that the Liberals could never outdo the Conservatives in appealing to these sentiments. It is noteworthy that in the one election which the Liberals won decisively after 1880, that of 1906, this racist and jingoistic spirit may in fact have worked in their favor. D. C. Somervell states that because of the opposition to the importation of cheap Chinese labor into the Transvaal "the most effective Liberal poster" in the election of 1906 "was a hideous yellow Chinese face." "Whether this poster," Somervell concludes, "won votes for Liberalism because we

hated Chinamen or because we hated the enslavement of Chinamen, is far from clear."<sup>69</sup>

If the Liberals could not outbid the Conservatives on the right, they had a similar problem with the Labor Party on the left. This Party had arisen to fill a political vacuum. After the franchise was extended in 1867 and 1884 a new group of voters demanded representation. Either the Conservative or the Liberal Party would have to alter its makeup, philosophy, and policies if it wished to garner the support of these new electoral classes. Both parties made a bid for this support. The Conservatives combined nationalism and imperialism with the promise of full employment, higher living standards, and even some collectivist social reform--if their imperialist policies were successful. The Liberals also made occasional bids to appeal to imperialist sentiment, but their principal weapon was the actual enactment of social and labor legislation. However, they could never represent the goals of the workers as credibly or as forcefully as the Labor Party. Caught therefore between these two forces, they lost ground on both sides, and in the end sank to the level of a third and minor party.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Somervell, English Thought, p. 190.

<sup>70</sup>In a recent study of the Liberal Party in the period 1906-1914 Peter Rowland finds that the decline of the Party was not at all obvious on the eve of World War I and concludes that the indications were--had the war not occurred--that in a general election held in 1915 the Liberals would probably again have emerged victorious. See Peter Rowland, The Last Liberal Governments (2 vols.; London: Cresset Press, 1968-1971).

## CHAPTER VI

### DIVERSITY AND TRANSFORMATION IN THE PERCEPTION OF LIBERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD IRELAND

Our neglect [of the Irish] has been infamous.  
--John Morley<sup>1</sup>

Ireland has always been governed, not by Irishmen or  
for Irishmen, but by Englishmen for the bastard Anglo-  
Irish. . . .

--Sir William Harcourt<sup>2</sup>

What weighs upon my mind is this--that when the  
future historian speaks of the greatness of this Empire,  
and traces the manner in which it has grown through suc-  
cessive generations, he will say that in that history  
there was one chapter of disgrace, and that that was the  
treatment of Ireland.

--W. E. Gladstone<sup>3</sup>

In our analysis of the Conservative self-image we saw  
that in every commendable area of human endeavor the Con-  
servatives viewed themselves as highly superior to the  
Irish. There was no important area of achievement in which  
they saw the Irish as surpassing or even remotely approach-  
ing the level of accomplishment which they, and the English  
people in general, had attained. In fact the Irish were

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<sup>1</sup>Morley, Recollections, I, 178.

<sup>2</sup>Gardiner, Life of Sir William Harcourt, II, 151.

<sup>3</sup>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons),  
3d ser., Vol. 288 (May 12-June 10, 1884), col. 607.

considered to be so far behind in cultural and mental development that it was idle to look for points of comparison. This lowly image of the Irish and the correspondingly elevated Conservative image of themselves formed one of the essential bases of Conservative justification for their domination and rule of Ireland. It was on this foundation that Conservatives built the proposition that they were performing there a selfless and charitable civilizing mission.

Given the composition, philosophy, and objectives of the Liberal Party it is not surprising to find that until the era of the Second Reform Bill there was very little difference between the attitude and policies of the two political parties toward Ireland. To be sure it is possible to retreat into the history of Anglo-Irish relations and find isolated criticisms of British behavior, such, for example, as Charles James Fox's famous assertion that "we ought not to presume to legislate for a nation in whose feelings and affections, wants and interests, opinions and prejudices, we have no sympathy."<sup>4</sup> But such criticisms were the product of isolated voices crying in a hostile wilderness, and as such they were largely ignored until Liberalism during the Home Rule era began to undergo the transformation which is described in the preceding chapter. As long as the Whigs dominated the Liberal Party the attitude and policies of that Party toward Ireland differed little from those of the

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<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Fyfe, The British Liberal Party, p. 85.

Conservatives. The Whig self-image was certainly not less flattering than its Conservative counterpart; and the Whig and Conservative images of the Irish were likewise indistinguishable.

It was this similarity not only in their attitude toward Ireland but in their approach to social problems which gradually drew the Whigs closer to the Conservatives until they eventually fused in the Conservative, or Unionist, Party. The withdrawal of the Whigs, and with them the Radical Unionists, left the Liberal Party a less heterogeneous and factionalized entity--especially on Irish issues. It did not, however, become a homogeneous unit because there still remained within it a division between the Gladstonians who generally opposed the new jingoistic imperialism and the Liberal imperialists who tended to support it. The most prominent member of this group was Lord Rosebery. He had been the Queen's personal choice for foreign secretary in 1892 and on Gladstone's retirement in 1894 he took over the leadership of the Party. He was supported by such prominent Liberals as the future prime minister Herbert Asquith, by Sir Edward Grey, and by R. B. Haldane. While Rosebery remained a staunch advocate of the new imperialism and eventually withdrew from the Liberal Party because of its social and imperial policies, his followers did not adhere to these policies with the same degree of inflexibility. After the Boer War in fact many of Rosebery's most prominent supporters quietly discarded the more aggressive aspects of their

imperialism. Asquith, Grey, and Haldane were all members of the Liberal governments that granted union to the states of South Africa and undertook various reforms for India, in an attempt to evolve democratic and self-governing institutions there.

Nor did Rosebery's followers support him in his opposition to Home Rule. As leader of the Liberal Party in 1894 Rosebery had stated in the House of Lords that until a majority of the English people, as distinct from the Scottish, Welsh, and Irish, had given their approval to Home Rule that measure should not be enacted. Rosebery practically isolated himself on this issue. Neither Asquith, Grey, nor Haldane explicitly supported his position, and, as in the case of the South African and Indian reforms, these three men were leading members of the government that enacted the third Home Rule Bill. Nor is it right to assume that the Liberals had abandoned Home Rule after 1894 and that they re-adopted it in 1910 only because they needed Nationalist support in the House of Commons if they wished to remain in office. Most of them had in fact made no secret of the point that Home Rule was still a part of their program. In addition it was fully consistent with the policies they were pursuing in South Africa and India. In fact the Liberals had not waited until 1910 to advance a measure of self-government for Ireland. In 1907, when they had an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons, and had no need of Irish support, they proposed an evolutionary measure of

self-government which Redmond at first accepted, then mysteriously rejected.<sup>5</sup> It is true to say, however, that Home Rule ceased to play in British politics the conspicuous role it played prior to 1894. But this was not because Liberals were opposed to it. It was simply because they were not in office, and consequently Home Rule was not a practical problem. The fact is that in 1886 Gladstone pinned Home Rule to the banner of the Liberal Party and thereafter it was never removed. By that date a new attitude toward English rule in Ireland had been adopted by most Liberals and this continued henceforth to be the predominant motivating influence on the Liberal posture toward that country.

The adoption of the view that the Liberals harbored serious prejudices against the Irish, and that the law and administration they maintained in Ireland were geared primarily to the ambitions and objectives of the Anglo-Irish class and to the aims of British imperialism, was primarily a development of the period 1868-1886. As a number of Liberals came to recognize and acknowledge the pervasion among themselves of deep-seated anti-Irish prejudices, they proceeded to re-evaluate the mental and moral makeup of the Irish and their self-governing capacities. The developments

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<sup>5</sup>There are conflicting reports as to why Redmond rejected this offer. For two differing interpretations see Leon ÓBroin, The Chief Secretary: Augustine Birrell in Ireland (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969), pp. 14-15 and Denis Gwynn, The Life of John Redmond (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1932), pp. 137-48.

which brought about a major readjustment in the Liberal posture toward Ireland were twofold: One was the extension of the franchise in 1867 and 1884, along with the enactment of the Ballot Act, which revealed that Irish sentiment was overwhelmingly in favor of Home Rule; the other was the constant charge by a small group of Liberals that British policies in Ireland were unjust and that they should be reformed. By the mid-1880s therefore a new Liberal posture toward Ireland had emerged, and since this remained reasonably constant thereafter, it is predominantly with the nature and growth of this new outlook as it developed in the period 1868-1886 that this chapter will deal.

One of the most conspicuous points about the transformation of Liberal attitudes toward Ireland was the fact that it was the achievement of a mere handful of dedicated men. What is more surprising, even ironic, is the fact that some of those who contributed most to the formation of this new outlook later became vehement anti-Home Rulers. The most outstanding political name in this group was that of John Bright. Among those Radicals who broke with Gladstone in 1886, he was almost unique; for while most of them were enthusiastic adherents of the new imperialism, Bright's entire career had been molded in an older tradition. His long record of support for the policy of pacifistic cosmopolitanism was seemingly incompatible with the aggressiveness, emotionalism, and militarism inherent in the new imperialism. And yet despite this, Bright succumbed to an

emotionalism not unlike that which characterized late nineteenth-century jingoism. His attitude toward Ireland became highly charged with nationalism and with the self-righteousness to which he was always rather susceptible. He developed an impregnable conviction that England had the right to legislate for and administer Ireland in all matters, and an unshakable faith that for Ireland such legislation and administration could only be, all in all, beneficial. This attitude was even more puzzling in light of the fact that he had long been among the vanguard of those Liberals who had criticized English rule in Ireland for its many injustices. In the early attempts to create a more sympathetic approach to Irish problems Bright was among the few men who undertook and maintained this task against overwhelming and bitter opposition. He denounced English policies as predominantly class oriented, condemning both their ends and their methods. It is perhaps safe to say that few men did more than Bright to make Liberals aware of the inequity of the social system they sanctioned in Ireland and to mold in them a new and more accurate concept of the consequences of English legislative and administrative behavior there. In fact until Gladstone joined this campaign in 1868 Bright waged it almost single-handedly.<sup>6</sup> Englishmen, he persistently reiterated in Parliament and on the public platform, had almost

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<sup>6</sup>R. Barry O'Brien, John Bright: A Monograph (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1910), p. 1.

invariably ruled Ireland by the methods of coercion and extraordinary law, methods made necessary by the desire to maintain English dominion and the supremacy of a particular class. "The sword," he stated,

has scarcely ever been out of the hand of the governing power in Ireland. And if a fair, simple, and unadorned narrative were given of the transactions of this Parliament with Ireland, with regard to its different enactments--coercive restrictions, suspensions of the Habeas Corpus Act, and so forth--it would form a narrative which would really astonish the world and would greatly discredit us. . . . Many victims have perished on the scaffold in Ireland, and . . . the fields of Ireland have been more than once drenched with the blood of her people.<sup>7</sup>

If the Irish were engaged, or seemed to be engaged, in perennial insurrection and agrarian crime, this, in Bright's view, was a product of the social conditions which Englishmen had created. Ireland "is a country," he stated, "where there has been, for generations past, a general sense of wrong, out of which has grown a chronic state of insurrection. . . ."<sup>8</sup> He characterized English behavior in Ireland as despotic, comparable only to the practices of the despots who ruled in the countries of Eastern Europe, men whose autocratic temper and system of government Englishmen usually looked upon with contempt. Ireland, he said, constitutes

a miserable and humiliating picture. . . . Bear in mind that I am not speaking of Poland suffering under the

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<sup>7</sup>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 3d ser., Vol. 191 (Mar. 23-May 8, 1868), col. 651.

<sup>8</sup>R. Barry O'Brien, John Bright: A Monograph, p. 2.

conquest of Russia. . . . I am not speaking about Hungary, or of Venice as she was under the rule of Austria, or of the Greeks under the dominion of the Turk, but I am speaking of Ireland--part of the United Kingdom--part of that which boasts itself to be the most civilized and the most Christian nation in the world.<sup>9</sup>

Besides attempting to enlighten Englishmen about the nature of their rule in Ireland, Bright also tried to make them aware of the enormous prejudices they harbored toward the Irish people. He condemned the religious prejudice which underlay the opposition to the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in that predominantly Catholic country. He asserted that the English have shown, with respect to this issue, "very little statesmanship and very much neglect. . . . I think we ought to take shame to ourselves," he observed, "and . . . try to get rid of some of our antiquated prejudices on this matter, and look at it as men . . . whose vision is not impaired by the passionate condition of things which in this country has so often prevailed with regard to this question."<sup>10</sup> What Englishmen must do is discard their prejudices and adopt a new posture--one "which is liberal and generous and just. . . ."<sup>11</sup>

And yet despite these enlightened sentiments it was Bright who in 1881 urged Gladstone to denounce Parnell

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>10</sup>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons) 3d ser., Vol. 191 (Mar. 23-May 8, 1868), col. 652.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 3d ser., Vol. 250 (Feb. 5-28, 1880), col. 870.

publicly when the latter sought through a system of boycotts to attain some relief for Irish tenants.<sup>12</sup> It was he who finally convinced the Radical Unionists in 1886 to vote against Gladstone's Home Rule Bill.<sup>13</sup> As he grew older Bright became increasingly conservative. James L. Sturgis writes that "his last years in public life were a real tragedy."<sup>14</sup> He had become "Conservative in all but name," and yet he was unable to bring himself to join formally "the other side of the House."<sup>15</sup> A supporter of national autonomy for the continental minorities, he could not concede that the case of Ireland was analagous. So opposed was he to any move that might weaken the political union of Great Britain and Ireland that he actually took up the defense of certain traditional aristocratic institutions as a barrier against it. Gladstone's proposal to grant self-government to the Irish, Sturgis writes, "soured Bright so much" that he resorted to "defending many aspects of politics for which his previous approval would have been unthinkable."<sup>16</sup> The climax of this transition occurred in 1887 when he spoke

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<sup>12</sup>James L. Sturgis, John Bright and the Empire (London: Athlone Press, 1969), p. 170.

<sup>13</sup>Morley, Life of Gladstone, III, 336.

<sup>14</sup>Sturgis, John Bright and the Empire, p. 175.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

admiringly of the "enormous influence" of the House of Lords,<sup>17</sup> an act which seems to have been in complete disharmony with his entire previous political career.

Why did Bright and the Radical Unionists, who generally saw themselves as the leading advocates of democracy, and at times had been the most outspoken critics of Whig and Conservative policies in Ireland, suddenly become so hostile to Irish demands? The answer in part may well lie in the word "demands." It is important to note that the Radical Unionists assumed an extremely patronizing posture toward the Irish. This would seem to have conflicted with their democratic principles, insofar as those principles meant more than simply votes for Englishmen. Having adopted the ethnocentric mantle of imperialism, and having come to place the requirements of an English export market in Ireland above the self-governing aspirations of the Irish people, they proceeded to tailor, or perhaps sacrifice, their democratic and reformist policies to their imperialist objectives. This chauvinistic impulse helped convince them that British rule in Ireland was essentially just. They therefore came to resent Irish demands and the coercive and unlawful means that were used to secure them. R. C. K. Ensor writes that in general the Radical Unionists believed that justice was being done in Ireland, and they felt that the resort to boycotts and agrarian crime was consequently

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

unnecessary and was compromising "England's reputation for fair dealing."<sup>18</sup> Moreover, since they were "intensely patriotic," they resented Irish actions "as an affront to England."<sup>19</sup> They looked upon Irish demands as a rather impertinent challenge, a challenge which evoked in them "a peculiar kind of patriotic impulse."<sup>20</sup> This patriotism was extremely nationalistic. It was one of the essential ingredients in the new aggressive imperialism, an imperialism which combined a high degree of national self-exaltation with a correspondingly inverse opinion of the nature and capabilities of the Irish.

Not all Englishmen, however, succumbed to the seemingly magnetic appeal of the various self-adulative, egocentric, and aggressive forces embodied in the new imperialism. A number of Liberals, following perhaps in the "Little England" tradition, and in that set by Gladstone in the 1870s, nurtured serious reservations about the aggressiveness of British imperialism as it revealed itself in such events as the Fashoda crisis and the Boer War. In so doing they developed a highly critical view of certain aspects of British imperialist activities, as was evidenced, for example, by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and Lloyd George

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<sup>18</sup>"Some Political and Economic Interactions in Later Victorian England," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 4th ser., Vol. XXXI (1949), p. 27.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

during the Boer War. As early as 1868 Sir William Harcourt had criticized the oppressiveness of English administration in Ireland. "England," he wrote, "has already enough and too much of the blood of Ireland on its hands."<sup>21</sup> Although Harcourt called for a new dispensation, this was not immediately inaugurated. The leader of the Liberal Party, William Gladstone, was in complete sympathy with Harcourt's statement, but as long as he was unwilling or unable, for political reasons, to defy the intransigent Whig element in the Party it was impossible for him to pursue these ideas fully. In the early 1880s therefore the Whigs were able to draw Gladstone into a policy of coercion in Ireland very much against his sympathies and inclination.<sup>22</sup>

A number of Liberals bitterly criticized this renewed resort to coercion. They condemned English behavior as autocratic and arbitrary. When Gladstone warned the Nationalist M.P.s in 1881 that he would not tolerate their support of the Land League, and then proceeded to incarcerate a number of them, including Parnell, he aroused vociferous and indignant opposition from a small but important element in his own Party. The Liberal M.P. Joseph Cowen characterized British behavior as uncivilized.<sup>23</sup> It was "in principle

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<sup>21</sup>Quoted in Gardiner, Life of Harcourt, I, 180-81.

<sup>22</sup>Fyfe, The British Liberal Party, p. 85, and Slessor, A History of the Liberal Party, p. 116.

<sup>23</sup>Quoted in Davitt, The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland, p. 334.

and spirit," he stated, no different from that which had "filled" French jails during the Second Empire, making them a "chamber of horrors," and which is "now darkening the highways that lead to Siberian mines."<sup>24</sup> Henry Labouchere took a similar view.<sup>25</sup> The "eviction of tenants who could not possibly pay their rents through no fault of their own," he declared, "was palpable injustice."<sup>26</sup>

But the man who perhaps held the bleakest view of Liberal attitudes and policies toward Ireland was John Morley. In the attempt to reveal to Liberals the real nature of their conduct Morley was the successor to John Bright. Writing in the Pall Mall Gazette and the Fortnightly Review he constantly attacked the self-righteousness of Liberal behavior. The moral certitude and aura of infallibility which permeated the attitude of most Liberals and which made possible the perpetual employment of coercion and the suspension of ordinary law infuriated him. He could not understand how so many Liberals could hold such a lofty image of themselves and why they were unable to see themselves and their administration of Ireland as they actually were. Their tone, he wrote, "makes me boil. Parnell ought to be hung--transported--blown from a gun--anything you

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 334.

<sup>25</sup>Thorold, The Life of Henry Labouchere, pp. 151-52.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

please! This sort of insane rage hardens my heart."<sup>27</sup>

While travelling in Ireland in 1882 he found that officials were utterly peremptory in their conduct toward the Irish, that the display of authority was often more important to them than the protection of the innocent, and that they were usually unconcerned as to whether the men they arrested were guilty. Such matters, he was told, were not important "so long as somebody or other was arrested."<sup>28</sup> Morley believed that in the long run the prime objective of British policy should be to win the sympathy and support of the Irish people. He disagreed with those Liberals who felt that this could be achieved only through the exercise of arbitrary authority. In an article in the Fortnightly Review in 1881 he wrote:

England . . . had and still has a given thing to do, a given problem to solve. Her task is not merely to preserve law and order, . . . but to lay the foundations of good and settled government, and one of the first conditions of securing this is to conciliate the Irish population. To do this it is above all things indispensable to make that population believe that our sympathies are on their side. The Irish never have believed this; they have had no very great reason to believe it; and the Coercion Act<sup>29</sup> is the worst possible argument for making them believe it. It is in the eyes of the Irish the regular and accepted symbol of our sympathy, not with them, but with those whom justly or

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<sup>27</sup>Morley, Recollections, I, 174.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., I, 181.

<sup>29</sup>This act, suspending habeas corpus and ordinary law in Ireland, had been passed in 1881. Such acts, usually running for a specified period, were legion in the nineteenth century.

not they regard as their oppressors. It always has been thus; we cannot be surprised if it still wears in their eyes its old and hated colours.<sup>30</sup>

It is obvious that for a number of years before the Liberal Party split occurred in 1886 a widening gulf emerged between those Liberals who perceived themselves as striving charitably, industriously, and dutifully to bring justice, order, and prosperity to a people who were steeped in ingratitude and agrarian crime, and those who visualized the English as imposing autocratically a ruthlessly unjust social system on the Irish people in order to protect and maintain an alien landowning class and the authority of British imperial rule. Gladstone seemed to share the perception and attitudes of the latter group. He seemed to indicate this when he assumed the premiership for the first time in 1868 by stating specifically that his mission was to pacify Ireland, and by proceeding during that first administration to address himself to the two predominant Irish grievances--the church and the land. When he resumed office in 1880 he found that his previous land reforms had been insufficient, that further reform was required, and that in addition the Irish demand for Home Rule had become more formidable with the rise of the Nationalist Party. Moreover, agrarian crime in Ireland had seriously increased. Gladstone thus was caught between the Whigs on one side

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<sup>30</sup>John Morley, "England and Ireland," The Fort-  
nightly Review, XXXV (April 1, 1881), 412.

who demanded strong coercion and strict adherence to the law, and Liberals such as Morley and Labouchere on the other who demanded the redress of Irish grievances and a policy of conciliation. Confronted with these conflicting alternatives, Gladstone, concerned with the problem of placating both groups and holding the Party together, decided to enact elements of both programs--to pursue further land reforms but to follow a policy of coercion at the same time, to appease the left and the right of his Party. It would appear that his own sympathies, however, were opposed to the coercive, autocratic, and arbitrary system of government which was demanded by the right wing of the Liberal Party. In 1882, therefore, he abandoned it and arranged to have Parnell and other Nationalist M.P.s released from prison, an act that forced his chief secretary in Ireland, W. E. Forster, to resign in protest.

In attempting to abandon the practice of extreme coercion Gladstone was in fact rejecting his own previous policies. He had adopted coercion less out of conviction than for political and Party expediency, and his decision to abandon it raised a storm of protest not only from Conservatives but among the right wing of his own Party. Agrarian crime in Ireland was widely resented among the English electorate, who generally preferred a vigorous policy of law enforcement, and tended, under the influence of Whig and Conservative propaganda, to associate concessions with weakness. It was one of the misfortunes of

Gladstone's administration that no sooner had he dropped the policy of coercion, released Parnell and his colleagues from jail, and accepted the resignation of his coercionist chief secretary, than his new chief secretary, Lord Frederick Cavendish, and his undersecretary were assassinated. Under these conditions it would have been extremely difficult and certainly politically unpopular to pursue a policy of conciliation, so that coercion was once more adopted despite the continuing opposition of the Liberal conciliationists.

During his second administration therefore Gladstone pursued a twofold policy in Ireland. On the one hand he continued the reformist measures he had adopted during his first administration, though on a far too inadequate basis, while at the same time, and more out of political and Party expediency than conviction, he undertook a policy of coercion. From the time when he first became prime minister in 1868 until he retired in 1894 his prime objective was the pacification and conciliation of Ireland. He did not believe that the source of Irish discontent lay in Irish nature and that only by a policy of coercion could the Irish be made to obey the law. As early as the 1860s he revealed that he held a much less exalted view of British behavior in Ireland than most of his Liberal colleagues. "You cannot look at Ireland" he stated, "and say that the state of feeling there is for the honour and the advantage of the

United Kingdom."<sup>31</sup> The English people, he complained, neither knew how bad the condition of Ireland was, nor did "they feel as they ought how disgraceful" it was "to themselves."<sup>32</sup> In 1870 he condemned English conduct in still more trenchant terms. "To this great country," he said, "the state of Ireland after seven hundred years of our tutelage, is in my opinion . . . an intolerable disgrace. . . ." <sup>33</sup>

In his criticism of English conduct, and in his quest for a new approach, Gladstone received strong support from a small but dedicated and articulate group of Liberals. Many of them came to recognize the existence and the extent of British religious and ethnic prejudice toward Ireland and of the influence of this on British policies and on Anglo-Irish relations. John Morley declared that "religious passion and the prejudice of race" were the most harmful forces motivating Englishmen in their relations with Ireland, and if they were to do justice to that country they must recognize and overcome these prejudices.<sup>34</sup> In 1869 Gladstone took the first important step in this direction when he won the support of the Liberal Party for the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland. He took the second step

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<sup>31</sup>Quoted in Fyfe, The British Liberal Party, p. 62.

<sup>32</sup>Hammond, Gladstone and the Irish Nation, p. 110.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>34</sup>Morley, Life of Gladstone, II, 246.

the following year when he enacted the first of his land bills in an attempt to reduce some of the evils of the Irish social system, which, John Morley pointed out, "was infected with grievous injustice."<sup>35</sup>

In 1884 a degree of equity was introduced into the Irish electoral system when the third Reform Bill was applied to Ireland on the same basis as England. This removed some serious Irish political grievances that had existed since 1867 when the British had refused to establish the franchise in Ireland on the same basis as England. In 1884 there were still many, especially among the Conservatives, the Anglo-Irish, and the Ulster Protestants, who opposed the extension of the franchise to Ireland on the same terms as the rest of the United Kingdom. The Anglo-Irish in particular dissented, arguing that this would reduce their political power in relation to Irish nationalists. Most Liberals, however, were unmoved by these arguments. The fact that the Anglo-Irish would lose political power was not in their view justification for disfranchizing a large number of the Irish people. The Anglo-Irish, wrote John Morley, "had held Ireland in the hollow of their hands for generation upon generation."<sup>36</sup> It was they who had created the deep antipathy between the Irish and the English. And it was they who were

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<sup>35</sup>Morley, "England and Ireland," The Fortnightly Review, XXXV (April 1, 1881), 408.

<sup>36</sup>Morley, Life of Gladstone, III, 141.

responsible "for the odious and dishonouring failure, so patent before all the world, to effect a true incorporation of their country in a united realm."<sup>37</sup> The fact that the Anglo-Irish would lose political power did not justify withholding "civil rights" from the great majority of the people. "What sort of reason was that," he asked, "why the principle of exclusion and ascendancy which had worked such mischief in the past, should be persisted in for a long and indefinite future?"<sup>38</sup>

The old Liberal view that Englishmen were purveyors of justice and progress in Ireland was slowly breaking down. Lending his name and his pen to the list of those who had begun to deny its validity was Matthew Arnold. For too long, Arnold argued, Englishmen have treated the "native Irish" with "contempt and tyranny."<sup>39</sup> For too long they have treated them as a "race of bigoted savages."<sup>40</sup> Englishmen are prone to speak of "Ireland's lower civilization resisting the higher civilization of England."<sup>41</sup> But Englishmen, Arnold stated, ought rather to question the quality of their own civilization. They ought to make sure that it was not

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., II, 141.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., III, 141.

<sup>39</sup> Matthew Arnold, Irish Essays and Others (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1882), p. 43.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

only "higher," but "high enough to exercise attraction."<sup>42</sup> They should carefully examine their own perception of themselves and their attitude toward the Irish. "In order to attach Ireland to us," he explained, . . .

English people have not only to do something different from what they have done hitherto, they have also to be something different. . . . As a whole, as a community, they have to acquire a larger and sweeter temper, a larger and more lucid mind.<sup>43</sup>

In short they have to overcome their various anti-Irish prejudices in order to recognize that the "traditional, existing, social arrangements" in Ireland were unjust.<sup>44</sup> They must come to see their administration of Ireland as it actually was. They must redress the grievances of the Irish people. And they must cease to support the Anglo-Irish in their inflexible opposition to reform.<sup>45</sup>

The old complacent, exalted, and self-congratulatory Liberal self-image began slowly to erode under the impact of these attacks. The picture of Liberal generosity and selfless government in behalf of the Irish for their improvement and enrichment was gradually, though often reluctantly,

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. vi.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. xiii.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. xiii. Despite his severe criticisms of English policy in Ireland and its failure thus far to solve the injustices of the Irish social system, Arnold felt that Englishmen could eventually be persuaded to redress these grievances, and on this basis he opposed Home Rule.

dismissed. A new image slowly emerged alongside it. The component elements of this image were almost antithetical to those which comprised the old one. Herbert Gladstone indicated how some Liberals were coming to view their historical treatment of the Irish when he charged that for centuries they had subjected them to "invasions, massacres, plantations, Protestantism, . . . destruction of promising manufacturers, [and] evictions of rack-rented tenants. . . ." <sup>46</sup> They have victimized them with "social and racial" prejudice and with arbitrary government. <sup>47</sup>

Those Liberals who began to reject the old postures, and who for convenience, may be called Gladstonian Liberals because of their general agreement with Gladstone's attitude and policies toward Ireland, began to feel that in the final analysis Ireland was ruled by England very much as a colonial possession. They reached the conclusion that the Irish ought to have control, insofar as this was compatible with imperial supremacy, over the making of Irish laws and over Irish administration. As long as the legislative union of Ireland and Britain existed in its current form, the Irish could not exercise such control. It is true that they could influence legislation and Irish administrative practices to some extent, especially if they held the balance between the

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<sup>46</sup>Viscount Gladstone, After Thirty Years (London: Macmillan and Co., 1929), p. 264.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 264.

two major parties in the House of Commons. But this happened only twice during the Home Rule era, in 1886 and in the period 1910-1914. Even then, however, they were still confronted with the overwhelmingly Tory and anti-Irish House of Lords which crushed Gladstone's Home Rule Bill of 1893 and rejected Asquith's in three successive sessions from 1912 to 1914. Ireland had in the House of Lords a contingent of 28 representative peers who were elected almost exclusively by the Anglo-Irish class. Bills designed to eradicate Irish injustices, wrote John Morley, were "effectively controlled by the peerage, without a single representative among them, direct or indirect, of the vast mass of the population of Ireland."<sup>48</sup> It is only necessary to look at the deplorable state of Ireland throughout the nineteenth century to realize that the Irish had little influence in either legislating for, or administering, their own country.

In an article in the Fortnightly Review in 1881 Morley denounced the methods by which England continued to rule Ireland autocratically despite the fact that superficially the Irish seemed to have an equitable role in the making of law and in the system of responsible government. "Our grand source of Irish unrest," he wrote,

and of the incessant and intolerable friction in Irish affairs, is that there have been no administrative changes to match the political changes. We have gradually admitted larger and larger masses of the Irish

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<sup>48</sup>John Morley, Recollections, (2 vols.; New York: Macmillan Company, 1971), I, 173.

people to political power, but the system of Parliament of Westminster, and of centralized administration at the Castle in Dublin, has prevented them from using this power for any of the purposes which its possessors may happen to desire. We mock the Irish people with an invitation freely to exercise political rights, but we have never remodelled the legislature and executive machinery in such a way as to make their rights a political reality.<sup>49</sup>

Gladstone too had begun to discern what he considered to be an inconsistency between Parliamentary representation for the Irish and their simultaneous exclusion from a meaningful self-governing role.<sup>50</sup> England, he stated, must rectify "the hopeless contradiction" which gives the Nationalists a "Parliamentary representation, hardly effective for anything but mischief without the local institutions of self-government which it pre-supposes and on which alone it can have a sound and healthy basis."<sup>51</sup> Gladstone, thus, having denied the justice of the established church, then the land system, was finally proceeding to deny the justice of the political system. As early as 1881 he began to question the Liberal opposition to Irish self-government and find merit in some of the objectives of Home Rule. It "has for one of its aims," he stated, "local government--an excellent thing to which I would affix no limits except the

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<sup>49</sup>Morley, "Conciliation with Ireland," The Fortnightly Review, XXXVI (July 1, 1881), 17.

<sup>50</sup>Morley, Life of Gladstone, III, 58-59.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., III, 58-59.

supremacy of the imperial parliament."<sup>52</sup> Gladstone, however, nurtured certain forebodings about the possibility of passing such a measure, forebodings which, as events were to prove, were only too justified. "I have a fear," he wrote, "that when the time for action comes, which will not be in my time, many Liberals may perhaps hang back and may cause further trouble."<sup>53</sup> Despite this he continued to criticize the British system of ruling Ireland. England, he wrote to the Queen in May 1885, "continually maintains and presents in Ireland the idea of Government as a thing 'foreign' and not indigenous; and even good laws are not likely to be loved when the administration of them is not in native hands."<sup>54</sup>

Gladstonian Liberals were adopting the view that the Irish had a right to self-government. This was based on two principal factors: One was the view that distinct nationalities, having reached a certain degree of maturity, and having expressed a clear and overwhelming demand for national autonomy, had a right to have those wishes recognized. The

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., III, 57-58.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., II, 58. There is a certain interesting ambivalence in this statement. Gladstone states that action on Home Rule will not come in his time, and yet he expresses fear that when the time for action does come "many Liberals may hang back and may cause further trouble." It is difficult to believe that this seemingly sincere expression of fear could have come from a man who genuinely believed he would never be confronted with the problem of enacting this measure.

<sup>54</sup>Buckle, The Letters of Queen Victoria, 2d ser., Vol. III, p. 653.

other was the concept that when such a demand was overwhelmingly and insistently expressed, imperial rule could only be maintained through a system of government, judicial procedure, and law enforcement that were a violation of certain Liberal principles. Condemning the system of coercion in Ireland, for example, John Morley wrote, "You cannot have Liberalism in England without its application to Ireland."<sup>55</sup> Under these conditions the rule of Ireland by the application of extraordinary law was contrary to those Liberal principles, as certain Liberals understood then, and so also was the practice of governing in opposition to the will of the Irish people as constitutionally and overwhelmingly expressed in their elected representatives. Gladstone even went so far as to assert that as long as Irish opinion was ignored in the ruling of Ireland, the Irish were not bound by the decisions reached.

Until we have seriously responsible bodies to deal with us in Ireland [he wrote], every plan we frame comes to Irishmen, say what we may, as an English plan. As such it is probably condemned. At best it is a one-sided bargain, which binds us, not them. . . .<sup>56</sup>

The implication of these views seemed to be that if the Irish refused to recognize the validity of the law they were completely justified in doing so. This is precisely what the republicans of 1916 and 1919 did. The latter set up their own legislative and administrative organs and proceeded on

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<sup>55</sup>Morley, "England and Ireland," The Fortnightly Review XXXV (April 1, 1881), 418.

<sup>56</sup>Morley, Life of Gladstone, III, 58.

the assumption that Britain had no jurisdiction in Ireland. The leaders on both occasions, like the American colonists of 1776, issued a unilateral declaration of independence; and like them they were immediately confronted with a display of armed might.<sup>57</sup> The right to independence was of course a principle that Gladstone had not conceded. What he proposed was autonomy in domestic or non-imperial affairs. The Irish republicans therefore of 1916 and 1919 were taking a step which Gladstone's ideas, as incorporated in his two Home Rule bills, did not explicitly justify.

From the 1880s onward the force and prestige of Gladstone's leadership gave tremendous impetus to his ideas on Ireland. His point of view won a slow, but steadily widening reception among the majority of Liberals. They gradually rejected the old assumption that English administration was just, and acknowledged that most Irish crime had its roots in Irish social conditions. "The agrarian outrages," Lord Eversley wrote, "had their origin in the agrarian difficulty."<sup>58</sup> John Morley went even further, condemning English administration of Ireland as rigidly inflexible, and justifying violence as the only means by which the Irish could hope

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<sup>57</sup>In using this analogy it is not intended to imply that the Irish were the colonial equivalent of the American colonists. The latter were indeed colonists; the Irish were not. In Ireland the colonists were the Anglo-Irish and the Ulster Protestants.

<sup>58</sup>Lord Eversley, Gladstone and Ireland: The Irish Policy of Parliament from 1850-1894 (London: Methuen & Co., 1912), p. 182.

to achieve meaningful reform. "Even in her most gracious moments," he wrote, "England has always been harsh and narrow to Ireland."<sup>59</sup> Englishmen have never addressed themselves to Irish grievances except under the threat of physical coercion. Every reform in Ireland has about it the "association of force, of grudging assent, of unworthy vindictiveness, of yielding only to compulsion."<sup>60</sup> The often reiterated view therefore that "the Irish will never gain anything by violence" was simply "not true. The Irish know better. They know that they have never gained anything without violence."<sup>61</sup>

This was an extremely critical judgment of English rule in Ireland. It was an assertion that such rule had driven the Irish into criminal activity as the only method by which they could achieve meaningful reform. Morley rejected outright the old self-serving Liberal charge that the Irish were inherently incapable of living according to law.

If you want him [the Irishman] to respect the laws [he warned his English critics] you will have first to persuade him that they are made for his benefit and not for yours. You will have to give him grounds for believing that when the laws were being made, his wishes and interests have been consulted, and the voices of his representatives listened to.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Morley, "England and Ireland," The Fortnightly Review XXXV (April 1, 1881), 413.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 413.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 414.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 413.

This, however, was usually not the case. Laws for Ireland were generally made by Englishmen, with the Irish seldom being consulted. Years later Morley recalled the predominant British attitude toward Ireland in those stormy years prior to 1886. It was "almost a point of honour in those days," he stated, "for British cabinets to make Irish laws out of their own head."<sup>63</sup>

This practice forced the Irish in desperation to undertake a policy of obstruction in the House of Commons in order to prevent the passage of what they considered to be unjust legislation. The pursuit of this tactic, and the bitterness and delay which it caused, was often construed as further proof that the Irish were unfit for self-government. Few Englishmen concluded, as did Sir Ivor Jennings, that most Irish legislation deserved to be obstructed.<sup>64</sup> Even among Gladstonian Liberals, only a handful of them, prior to 1886, proved capable of comprehending this. To do so involved the development of a new perspective, a more accurate and critical degree of self-perception, and the espousal of various new principles and attitudes. A few outstanding Liberals pioneered this path and in the end, though not without struggle, they carried most of their colleagues with them.

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<sup>63</sup>Morley, Life of Gladstone, II, 292.

<sup>64</sup>Sir Ivor Jennings, Party Politics, Vol. II: The Growth of Parties, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 179.

By 1886 therefore most Liberals had abandoned the view that Britain should continue to govern Ireland according to its own ideas whether the Irish opposed or approved. This new approach was founded basically on certain principles which Liberals espoused regarding the rights and demands of what they considered to be mature nationalities. It was therefore also based to some extent on a new image of the nature of the Irish and their ability for equitable law-making and political administration. There were still many Liberals, even among the followers of Gladstone, who believed that a gap existed between the capabilities of the English and the Irish in these areas. But they no longer believed that the Irish were still incapable of reasonably impartial government. They no longer visualized them as inordinately backward and immature in cultural and biological terms, and since this was the case they could see no valid reason why England should continue to legislate for Ireland in domestic matters. In fact, as has already been pointed out, many of them reached the self-condemnatory conclusion that historically English legislation had not been directed toward the general good of Irish society but toward the benefit and protection of a privileged class. They came to see themselves as the supporters of an extremely oppressive system. They accepted the view that the "law in Ireland" was in many cases "an accomplice of unjust dealing" and that

it operated "in connivance with oppression."<sup>65</sup> If the Irish have vices, Morley charged, English misgovernment has "directly engendered" them.<sup>66</sup> This was a strange accusation, especially to the ears of Whigs and Conservatives, who continued to think of themselves as the source of whatever degree of civilization existed in Ireland. Most Gladstonian Liberals were evolving an extremely critical view of the treatment Britain had accorded the Irish, a view epitomized in part by the following statement: "We have imposed bad laws upon them; we have persecuted their religion down to times when persecution elsewhere had gone out of fashion; . . . we have cowed them by the sword and corrupted them by gold."<sup>67</sup>

To most Gladstonian Liberals the question of whether English laws were or were not good was no longer a meaningful issue. That point had become irrelevant. The important fact was that the overwhelming majority of the Irish expressed in a thoroughly constitutional way through their elected representatives a desire for their own legislature and executive with jurisdiction in domestic matters. Such a demand, Gladstone argued, expressed in such a way, and by such a people, could not on any acceptable moral or political grounds be denied. "I do not," he told the House of Commons,

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<sup>65</sup>Morley, "Conciliation with Ireland," The Fortnightly Review XXXVI (July 1, 1881), 8.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

deny the general good intentions of Parliament on a variety of great and conspicuous occasions, and its desire to pass good laws for Ireland. But let me say that, in order to work out the purposes of Government, there is something more in this world occasionally required than even the passing of good laws. . . . The passing of many good laws is not enough in cases where the strong permanent instincts of the people, their distinctive marks of character, the situation and history of the country, require not only that these laws should be good, but that they should proceed from a congenial and native source, and besides being good laws should be their own laws. . . .<sup>68</sup>

Gladstone's declaration that the laws of Ireland should spring from a "native source" was an epochal step not only in the history of the Liberal Party but in the history of Anglo-Irish relations. Prior to this Liberals generally had assumed that the making of Irish law at Westminster, and the administration of Ireland by British politicians, was not only just but should be satisfactory to the Irish. They assumed that Englishmen would always rule Ireland fairly, and they could not understand why the Irish should be dissatisfied with this practice. In the late nineteenth century, however, some Liberals began to feel that these assumptions were no longer tenable. Conditions in Ireland forced them to conclude that that country was disastrously misgoverned. This in turn led them to undertake a series of reforms to mitigate Irish religious, social, and economic inequities. Slowly they realized that the English harbored deep religious, cultural, and even racial prejudices

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<sup>68</sup>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 3d ser., Vol. 304 (Mar. 26-Apr. 16, 1886), cols. 1080-81.

toward the Irish, which not only forced them to govern Ireland in accordance with English principles and interests, but largely in behalf of the Anglo-Irish class. They realized that most of the important judicial and administrative organs of the country were in the hands of this class and that the Irish were relegated to a subordinate and largely impotent role. They began to recognize that they had been in error when they assumed that Ireland was justly ruled. Their former perception of their own attitudes and objectives, and their custom of governing Ireland in accordance with Liberal precepts while rejecting Irish suggestions, they began to visualize as arrogant and self-serving. The Irish, they now argued, had a right to govern themselves according to their own ideas. This was the position taken by Gladstone and accepted by the bulk of the Liberal Party who followed him and supported the various bills for Irish self-government which he and his successors initiated during and after 1886.

One of the recurring problems which arose during the long debate over Home Rule was the question of whether the Irish had a right to self-governing institutions on the basis of national distinctiveness, national maturity, and national aspirations. Unionists generally took the view that they did not. They argued that the United Kingdom constituted a natural geographic unit, and implied thereby that it also formed a natural political unit. The Irish, they maintained, merely formed a minor ethnic group within that total .

structure. Furthermore, the Unionists argued, Ireland itself was not composed of a single ethnic group but of two principal ethnic groups. If Home Rule Liberals were basing the Irish claim to self-government on the principle of national homogeneity, no such homogeneity existed. The Irish, they maintained, were no more a national minority within the existing United Kingdom than the Ulster Protestants or Anglo-Irish would be within a self-governing Ireland. If, they argued, the Irish had a right to self-government so also did the Protestants of Ulster.

Gladstone and his successors countered this argument by asserting that the most populous ethnic group in a distinct geographic entity had the right to decide the destiny of the whole. To this, Unionists merely replied that in the northeastern part of Ireland which, they maintained, was a distinct geographic entity, the major ethnic group was the Ulster Protestants, and therefore they should decide the future of that area. Gladstone was willing to recognize that this argument had certain merits, and he was willing to consider proposals to deal with the aspirations of the Ulster Protestants, but he did not believe that their rights necessitated the withholding of Home Rule from Ireland as a whole.<sup>69</sup> Later, Gladstone's successors, during the struggle

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<sup>69</sup>Gladstone did, however, ask the Ulster Protestants to present a statement of their objectives. See The Speeches and Public Addresses of the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, ed. by A. W. Hutton and H. J. Cohen (10 vols.; London: Methuen and Company, 1892-1894), IX, 1-125.

over the third Home Rule Bill, when it became apparent that the Ulster Protestants were prepared to fight rather than live under a Catholic-dominated government, decided to divide Ireland into two states. This was an effort to permit the major ethnic group in each geographic region to determine the future of each area. It was also, however, the ultimate consequence of British colonialism, and as such many Irishmen refused to recognize the legitimacy of it, and many still do.

Unionists repeatedly charged that the concession of Home Rule to Ireland would lead to the complete dissolution of the union, that Ireland would eventually break away and establish an independent and sovereign state. They asserted that Ireland was essential to British national defense, and they maintained that the granting of Home Rule would be the first step toward complete Irish independence. They were wrong, however, in assuming that Gladstone's willingness to submit to the aspirations of Irish national sentiment included the recognition that the Irish had a right to establish an independent state. His concession of a degree of self-government in certain internal affairs was not based on, nor did it concede, the right of absolute national self-determination. It did not depend on the recognition of an abstract principle that the Irish national will pre-empted all other considerations. It was based primarily on the conviction that when a mature national group revealed by extensive and persistent opposition to the existing mode of government,

and by an overwhelming demonstration by the majority, that they desired a new form of government, political wisdom and morality required that those objectives be conceded. Thus when the Liberals pursued a policy of Home Rule for Ireland, when they granted responsible and federal government to the states of South Africa, when they approved the Morley-Minto reforms for India they were not acting exclusively on the basis of an abstract principle but in response to an urgent, persistent, and overwhelming demand.

In the case of Ireland the Liberal Party was not confronted with a serious demand for complete sovereignty until after World War I. Prior to that time Home Rule Liberals were convinced that Ireland would wish to remain a part of the United Kingdom, especially if timely self-governing concessions were made. The point of discussion among them, therefore, was never whether the Irish had the right to establish an independent state, but what degree of autonomy they could safely be permitted, what powers could be delegated to them, and what must be retained by Westminster. It is interesting, even ironic, to note that the origins of this concept of reserved and transferred powers, and the principle of responsible government built upon it, go back to an Anglo-Irishman, William Warren Baldwin, who settled in Upper Canada in the late eighteenth century and whose ideas came to form not only the basis of the Durham Report but also the essential foundation of the British Commonwealth of Nations. From the time when Gladstone

introduced his first Home Rule Bill, his opponents repeatedly attacked the principle of reserved and transferred powers, stating that it was impossible to define successfully the limits of each. Consequently, as time went by, and the House of Lords blocked repeated Liberal efforts to enact Home Rule, there emerged in Ireland a more extreme movement which would settle for nothing short of a sovereign republic. After the martyrdom of their leaders in 1916 the republicans steadily won popular support, and in 1918 completely overshadowed the Nationalist Party--the Party of Butt, Parnell, and Redmond--and its policy of Home Rule. It was this group that confronted Lloyd George in the period 1919-1921. He was the first English statesman in this period who had to deal with a formidable Irish republican movement. Previous prime ministers had had to contend with the problem of merely reforming on a federal basis the political structure of the United Kingdom. He was confronted with the question of severing it completely. This he would not consider. He thought of himself as in a position similar to that of Lincoln at the time of the American Civil War. He believed it his duty to hold the United Kingdom together at any cost just as Lincoln had held the United States together. Lloyd George had immense admiration for this American statesman. Lincoln "had not shrunk from employing force to secure unity," he stated, "though at the time he was reproached for violating democratic principle and he would not shrink from

it. . . ."70

Lloyd George constantly reiterated this point of view, and far from conceding that the Irish had the right to establish a republic if they so desired, he refused as late as June 1921 even to grant them Dominion status;<sup>71</sup> though it must be admitted that this would have been a degree of self-government far in excess of that incorporated in any of the various Home Rule bills. His hope, which was consistent with previous Liberal positions regarding self-government for Ireland, was to reach a settlement whereby that country would assume a federalist position within the United Kingdom, a position similar to that of Natal within the Union of South Africa or of Quebec within the Dominion of Canada.<sup>72</sup> It is true that two months later he significantly altered his position, being willing to go "the whole length of Dominion Home Rule."<sup>73</sup> But that concession was not based so much on an admission that the Irish possessed such rights as on the exigencies of an increasingly difficult political situation.

Ever since 1886 when the Gladstonian Liberals declared

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<sup>70</sup>C. P. Scott, The Diaries of C. P. Scott, 1911-1928, p. 406.

<sup>71</sup>Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George: A Diary by Frances Stevenson, ed. by A. J. P. Taylor (London: Hutchinson, 1971), p. 221.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>73</sup>C. P. Scott, The Diaries of C. P. Scott, 1911-1928, p. 399.

that in accordance with their political principles the Irish had a right to national self-government Liberal rule in Ireland became not only difficult but somewhat anomalous. Liberals were, in a sense, intruders ruling where they did not have the right to do so. Ireland, in their view, should be free to govern itself in domestic affairs, and Englishmen, by continuing to rule it, were usurping Irish rights. As Stephen Gwynn pointed out, Liberals were "governing a country which by Liberal principles ought to be self-governing. Every Liberal administration from 1885 on stood self-condemned as a stop-gap; and this inherent weakness was multiplied manifold after Home Rule was put on the Statute Book" in 1914.<sup>74</sup> The last Liberal Irish chief secretaries-- John Morley in 1886 and from 1892 to 1895, James Bryce from 1905 to 1907, and Augustine Birrell from 1907 to 1916--all governed with sympathy, patience, and tolerance. Birrell's task was the most difficult of all, for he held office in a period when the Ulster Volunteers, the Irish Volunteers, and the Citizen Army were arming and drilling throughout Ireland. After the Easter Rising his policies were condemned and he was forced to resign while the administration of Ireland was handed over to those who were not restricted by what J. L. Hammond called the principle of "morality between

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<sup>74</sup>Stephen Gwynn, "A Great Irish Official," The Contemporary Review, CXXIII (June 1923), 729.

nations."<sup>75</sup>

When the military command in Ireland executed the leaders of the Easter Rebellion, those men who sought to solve the Anglo-Irish problem as the American colonists of 1776 had solved the Anglo-American one, they drove Ireland into the arms of the republicans. From this point onward the popularity of Sinn Fein mushroomed while that of the Nationalist Party rapidly declined. Like the Liberal Party, with which its policies had long been linked, it suffered an irreparable defeat in the election of 1918. Irish opinion had clearly gone over to the support of the republicans, to the physical force party--to the men who sought an independent Ireland rather than a federal United Kingdom. In the 1870s and 1880s Parnell had been able to unite the physical force party with the constitutional one and retain control of both. Redmond tried to repeat this feat during World War I, but in the end he was unable to succeed.

The policy of repression which the Coalition pursued after 1919 must be seen therefore in a new light. A new set of circumstances had arisen. Lloyd George was now dealing with republicans, men who had rejected the constitutional approach to the solution of the Irish problem, who had unilaterally declared Ireland's independence from England and the British empire, and who had set up their own parliament and government in Dublin. Lloyd George was not fighting

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<sup>75</sup>Francis W. Hirst, Gilbert Murray, and J. L. Hammond, Liberalism and the Empire (London: R. B. Johnson, 1900), p. 167.

against the policy of Home Rule; he was fighting against unilateralism, republicanism, and complete Irish independence. In addition, though he was nominally a Liberal, he headed a Coalition that was dominated by Conservatives, men who had been the traditional hard liners as far as Ireland was concerned. If he was to protect his political future he would have to tread carefully on the Irish issue. He would certainly not be able to pursue a weak or timid policy. And Lloyd George, shrewd politician that he was, certainly did not intend to be accused of weakness.

The rather brutal policy of reprisals which British forces practiced in Ireland must be seen in light of these facts. It is hardly surprising to find the Asquith Liberals condemning this policy as bordering on the barbaric. "Things are being done in Ireland," Asquith asserted, "which would disgrace the blackest annals of the lowest despotism in Europe."<sup>76</sup> It is true of course that Asquith was now in opposition to Lloyd George, and doubtless welcomed the opportunity to attack him. But it should also be remembered that the defense of the Irish was not a popular position among the English electorate. Nor was the implied attack on the British military forces. This does not mean that political expediency played no part in Asquith's motives. On the other hand there is no reason to assume that he was insincere in his criticism of Coalition tactics. In fact such

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<sup>76</sup>Quoted in A. J. P. Taylor, English History, 1914-1945 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 155.

criticism was in keeping with his previous conduct toward Ireland. The refusal to accept or tolerate a policy of ruthless repression had been a part of the Liberal tradition since at least 1886. In the 1870s Gladstone had come out of retirement to condemn the Armenian massacres. In 1882 he attempted to terminate Forster's policy of extreme coercion in Ireland. And during the Boer War his successor, Campbell-Bannerman, denounced British tactics in South Africa as "the methods of barbarism."<sup>77</sup>

In the 1870s and 1880s a small number of Liberals urged Englishmen to re-examine their attitudes toward the Irish. They asked them to recognize that they harbored widespread and deep-seated anti-Irish prejudices. They urged them to develop an awareness of the fact that they possessed a strong "dislike" for "the history, the political claims, the religion," and the "temperament" of the Irish.<sup>78</sup> If these prejudices were recognized, the development of a new, just, and conciliatory policy toward Ireland would be possible. It was the existence of such antipathy, John Morley wrote, that made the passage of Home Rule so difficult. "The Giant mass of secular English prejudice against Ireland," he wrote, "frowned like a mountain chain across the track."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Spender, Life of Campbell-Bannerman, II, 8-9.

<sup>78</sup>Morley, Life of Gladstone, III, 308.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., III, 308.

A similar view was expressed by Gladstone during debate on the first Home Rule Bill. In response to Whig and Conservative pleas that he and his supporters stand by British traditions, he asked,

What traditions? By the Irish traditions? Go into the length and breadth of the world, ransack the literature of all countries, find, if you can, a single voice, a single book . . . in which the conduct of England towards Ireland is anywhere treated except with profound and bitter condemnation. Are these the traditions by which we are exhorted to stand? No; they are a sad exception to the glory of our country. They are a broad and black blot upon the pages of its history. . . .<sup>80</sup>

In 1905 another Liberal leader, Campbell-Bannerman, complained of the stultifying effect of British prejudice toward the Irish. Though freely admitting that he supported the cause of Home Rule, he found that certain social groups considered the mention of this subject to be highly distasteful. "I am not afraid of the Irish question," he explained. "But, of course, if you move in the smartest circles, golfing and bridging, you must make it clear that, though you retain your eccentric and unfortunate taste for pitch, you are not going to defile your hands with it."<sup>81</sup> And again, near the end of the Anglo-Irish struggle in 1921, Lloyd George's secretary, Thomas Jones, contemplating the historical course of English conduct toward Ireland,

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<sup>80</sup> Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 3d ser., Vol. 306 (May 25-June 19, 1886), col. 1239.

<sup>81</sup> Spender, Life of Campbell-Bannerman, II, 180.

commented: "It is a melancholy story and one from which the English not unnaturally turn their eyes."<sup>82</sup>

From the time in 1868 when Gladstone declared that his mission was to pacify Ireland a growing number of Liberals became increasingly critical of British policies. They gradually rejected the view that these were designed to bring the best possible conditions to the largest possible number of Irish people. They concluded that British policy, Conservative and Liberal, was a narrow and one-sided attempt to maintain the social and economic status quo, a status quo which favored British interests and the small, landowning Anglo-Irish class. They gradually rejected the old postures and the old policies which for so long had been considered just. The disestablishment of the Anglican Church, the initiation of innovative land laws, the introduction of the secret ballot, the extension of the franchise, and the repeated efforts to grant the Irish self-government--all of these indicate the rejection of the old self-satisfied and self-righteous Liberal approach to the Irish and to Irish problems and the emergence of a new one. As has previously been pointed out, there were many Liberals who could not follow this new path. By 1886 most of these had withdrawn from the Liberal Party-- and it was essentially on Irish issues that they did so. After this date therefore

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<sup>82</sup>Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary, Vol. III: 1918-1925, ed. by Keith Middlemas (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. xvii-xviii.

the Liberal Party remained a fairly homogeneous unit as far as Irish policy was concerned. It is true that a small number of Liberals remaining within the Party were reluctant to follow Gladstone's policies with respect to Ireland. This group, however, was not large. It was led by Lord Rosebery, and when his political fortunes declined rapidly after the Boer War most of his following tended to maintain a strategic silence with respect to his Irish policies. In addition, with the exception of Rosebery, this group was not particularly opposed to Home Rule. It had really no strong convictions either for or against it; and for political reasons preferred to remain silent on this issue when circumstances permitted because of English electoral opposition to it.

Gladstonian Liberals found it extremely difficult to penetrate and overcome traditional British antipathy toward the Irish. Their charges that the English were prejudiced and their policies unjust were generally unwelcome to Englishmen. The view that the British people were generous rulers, laboring long, hard, and charitably to aid, uplift, and civilize a backward and ungrateful people was much more acceptable. To be characterized as a people who had engaged in "centuries of wrong" toward Ireland, as having ruled that country for the benefit of England and the Anglo-Irish class at the expense of the great mass of the Irish people, was not likely to win enthusiastic support. In addition the widespread imperial chauvinism among the English people

during this period, coupled with Irish opposition to most imperial activities, made it more difficult to persuade the English people that the Irish were loyal, and could therefore be entrusted with a modicum of self-government. The Liberals never succeeded in this task. They looked upon British imperialism in Ireland in a way that most Englishmen did not, and apparently could not. Consequently, no groundswell of popular support or enthusiasm for the Irish cause ever developed in England. And when the Coalition finally conceded Dominion status to Ireland in 1921 there was no widespread rejoicing in England that justice had at last been done. The general mood toward Ireland was a mixture of apathy and antipathy.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE QUEST FOR A NEW LIBERAL IMAGE OF IRELAND

When we blame the Irish for being untruthful, shifty, insincere, we ought to bear in mind that they have only been emancipated from . . . odious and degrading bondage for a generation or two.

--John Morley<sup>1</sup>

You, sir, possibly have not been brought closely in contact with the Irish leaders. I have; and more practical, sensible, I may indeed say, more moderate men, when not under the influence of temporary excitement, I never came across. . . . I have indeed been greatly struck with their largeness and broadness of view. . . .

--Henry Labouchere<sup>2</sup>

One of the striking factors about the Liberal image of Ireland is that, unlike the Conservative image, which was largely fixed throughout the Home Rule period, the Liberal image, like Liberalism itself, underwent a major transformation. This occurred largely during the period 1868-1886, and remained reasonably fixed thereafter. During these years the majority of Liberals adopted a new image of the Irish and of Irish rights. They attempted to discredit

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<sup>1</sup>John Morley, "England and Ireland," The Fortnightly Review, XXXV (April 1, 1881), 417.

<sup>2</sup>The Times, Jan. 4, 1886, p. 10.

and discard the old concept and replace it with a new and more favorable one. In this they encountered extreme difficulties, for the task of persuading the British people, who had long been accustomed to look upon the Irish as a markedly inferior and unattractive race, that they had been mistaken, and that they should henceforth treat them as an appreciably endowed racial group which had for centuries been wrongfully oppressed and wilfully debarred from cultural and social development by English and Anglo-Irish misgovernment, was of Herculean proportions. Nor was it made easier by the fact that certain elements within the Liberal Party refused to adopt this new interpretation. As has previously been pointed out, most of the Whigs and Radical Unionists clung doggedly to the old postures. And while some members of the latter group seemed at times willing to contemplate a more sympathetic approach toward the Irish prior to Gladstone's decision to enact Home Rule in 1886, they were henceforth driven by their opposition to this policy to assume an even more hostile and inflexible attitude toward them. These two major factions refused to alter their image of the Irish, and consequently they withdrew from the Liberal Party entirely, and thereafter cooperated with the Conservatives.

The withdrawal of these two groups left the Liberal Party a reasonably homogeneous unit as far as Ireland and Irish issues were concerned. It is true that certain of the Liberals who remained within the Liberal Party, in particular the Liberal imperialists, did not feel that any major

political injustices requiring urgent resolution existed in Ireland. It should be understood, however, that most of the Liberal imperialists did not subscribe to the lowly and hostile image of the Irish which prevailed among the Unionists. If they did not experience, as Gladstone and some of his followers did, a strong moral obligation to right certain Irish wrongs, they at least did not attempt to explain social conditions in Ireland on the basis of inordinate defects in Irish character. Nor did they exploit anti-Irish prejudice in Britain in order to win elections. The worst that can perhaps be said of them is that after the retirement of Gladstone in 1894 they preferred, for electoral expediency, to refer to the Irish issue as little as possible.

It is apparent therefore that prior to 1886 the Liberal Party was highly factionalized. After the 1886 rupture, and the withdrawal of the Whigs and Radical Unionists, the remaining Liberals were reasonably united--especially on Irish issues. From 1886 onward the Liberal Party was, in relation to Ireland, a fairly homogeneous unit. By the Liberal image of Ireland therefore is meant essentially the image which predominated among those Liberals who remained within the Party after 1886. Since, however, this chapter will deal largely with the emergence of a new Liberal image in the period 1868-1886, and since the Whigs and Radical Unionists formed a part of the Liberal Party until the latter date, it will be necessary to use clear terminological labels to refer to these various Liberal groups. Prior to 1886

therefore, and at any point thereafter where confusion might occur, those Liberals who espoused the new attitude toward Ireland will be referred to interchangeably as Gladstonian or Home Rule Liberals in order to distinguish them clearly from other Liberal factions, such as the Whigs and Radical Unionists.

The latter two groups continued to adhere to the traditional British image of the Irish. It had long been the habit among Englishmen of both major political parties to look upon the Irish as a backward, unaccomplished, and generally unattractive people. This image had been created in two principal ways. One of these was the direct, essentially professional, contact between the Irish and those Britons and their descendents who settled in Ireland. The other was direct English contact with Irish workers who poured into English cities in search of work and who usually crowded together in deplorable slum and ghetto conditions.<sup>3</sup> The latter development occurred primarily with the advent and growth of the industrial revolution. The uprootedness, insecurity, fear, and hostility which industrialization and its concomitant, urbanization, brought to masses of English workers were aggravated and intensified by the influx of Irish laborers who merely increased the competition for jobs and the supply of manpower, thereby reducing the immediate

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<sup>3</sup>K. S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 120.

possibility of improving working and living standards.<sup>4</sup> In addition the Irish, with their un-English accents, were easily identifiable as an alien group. This, coupled with their adherence to the Catholic religion, made them a particularly unattractive element in English society. It was easy therefore for English workers to vent their fears and frustrations on them. An explanation had to be found for the state of English working class conditions. And while attacks on automated machines offered some outlet for the release of pent-up feelings, these were in the final analysis inanimate objects and could serve only a limited function. The urge to find a human scapegoat was never far from the surface, and since the Irish were the only large alien group existing in England, they became the obvious victim of this impulse. It was knowledge of this latent dislike of the Irish which impelled Joseph Chamberlain to note in 1882 that "nothing would be easier . . . than to get up in every large town an anti-Irish agitation almost as formidable as the anti-Jewish agitation in Russia."<sup>5</sup> And it was the existence of such anti-Irish and anti-Catholic prejudice that led Lord Randolph Churchill to make his famous pronouncement that if Gladstone "went for Home Rule, the Orange card would be the

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<sup>4</sup>John Archer Jackson, The Irish in Britain (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 162.

<sup>5</sup>Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, I, 352.

one to play."<sup>6</sup>

This perception of the Irish was constantly reinforced by the assertions of the Anglo-Irish. Often closely connected or associated with aristocratic society in England, the Anglo-Irish had easy entree to the press and to the public opinion-making organs generally. Popular magazine articles, the works of literature, the historical accounts of Ireland read in England were generally either the production of, or were strongly influenced by, the Anglo-Irish.<sup>7</sup> Their attitude toward the Irish often tended to be more contemptuous, unsympathetic, and less yielding than that of their English counterparts. This resulted from a number of reasons. Perhaps the most important of these was the fact that they possessed large amounts of property in Ireland, and they depended largely on the income from this for their existence. The attacks on that property by the Irish, the difficulties of collecting rent, the ugly evictions, all contributed to an uneasy sense of uncertainty and insecurity. In addition the Anglo-Irish were generally convinced that if the Irish were to gain control of the law-making machinery and the power of government, such as would be the case under a system of Home Rule, they would legislate and govern in such a way that their ownership of property and the income

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<sup>6</sup>W. S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill, II, 28-29, 59.

<sup>7</sup>The most influential historical studies of Ireland in this period were probably those of Froude, Goldwin Smith, and W. E. H. Lecky.

derived from it would be seriously jeopardized. For this reason the Anglo-Irish thought of the nationalists as incapable of fair and equitable government. They looked upon them as unashamedly class-oriented. In an effort to maintain their own position in Ireland, they fought a long, communally divisive campaign. To prevent the inauguration of reform and self-government they depicted the Irish in deeply disparaging terms. By this well-executed tactic they were able to maintain a widespread hostility toward them. This was not difficult, since most Englishmen held a rather unattractive view of them in any case. It was the overwhelming force and pervasiveness of this traditional attitude that the Gladstonian Liberals had to overcome when they undertook to advance a new policy toward Ireland in the late nineteenth century. Gladstone was well aware of the power of the opposition he had to contend with, especially the power of most of society's leading influential elements. "I do not," he stated,

disguise for myself . . . the strength of the combination that is opposed to us. . . . They have nearly the whole of the wealth of the country; they have nearly the whole of the high stations of the country; they have most of the elements of social strength that abound among them; they have with these all the influence that belongs to wealth, rank, and station in this country. . . .<sup>8</sup>

The problem confronting Gladstonian Liberals was gigantic. It was nothing less than the re-education and

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<sup>8</sup>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 3d ser., Vol. 322 (Feb. 9-Mar. 1, 1880), col. 776.

re-orientation of the English people. This task was not made easier by the fact that until this time they themselves had largely subscribed to the traditional view of the Irish. Gladstone, in his first two administrations, employed a set of laws and methods of judicial procedure in Ireland which would have been unthinkable in England. By pursuing the path of extraordinary law, he inadvertently contributed to the prevalent concept that the Irish were so criminally and anarchically constituted that it was difficult, if not impossible, to rule them by ordinary law. He had of course the right to alter his policies if he so wished, but the political inexpediency of doing so was very great. Since the Conservatives were able to charge that his commitment to Home Rule came only after the elections of 1885, they were able to convey the impression that because the Nationalists held the balance of power in the House of Commons Gladstone was willing to dissolve the union merely to win their support and attain office. This was of course not true, for Gladstone had been adopting a more sympathetic approach to the Irish and Irish problems ever since 1868, and he had declared his belief in the justice and efficacy of some form of self-government for Ireland as early as 1881.<sup>9</sup> But while in the

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<sup>9</sup>See "Mr. Gladstone in the City," The Times, Oct. 14, 1881, p. 8; Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 3d ser., Vol. 266 (Feb. 7-Mar. 2, 1882), cols. 260-66; and W. S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill, II, 29. Gladstone was aware of the dangerously divisive consequences that the attempt to enact Home Rule would have and so he offered to support the Conservatives in 1885 if they would propose it. They refused, and Gladstone then proposed it himself,

period 1868-1886 he was personally making the transition from the old traditional derogatory image to a new and more encomiastic one, he failed to carry the English people with him. In fact the only hope of persuading the majority of them to adopt this new outlook was to undertake a concentrated and consistent campaign to reconstruct and rehabilitate the public image of the Irish, and this Gladstone failed to do.

One significant consequence of this was that the English people were not immediately able to adopt this new interpretation. The old view was too deeply ingrained to be easily removed. In addition they could observe the Irish daily at work throughout England performing the lowest and most menial tasks of unskilled labor. They could see them clannishly band together to engage in private conversation. They could observe them indulge in forms of social activities and entertainment peculiar to themselves.<sup>10</sup> They were aware that they belonged to the Catholic Church, a church which they associated with superstition, iconolatry obscurantism, and the stifling of freedom. They identified submission to

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stating that he was prepared to advance it without any support whatever. "This was one of the great Imperial occasions," he stated, "which call for such resolutions." In addition, the fact that he proposed to exclude the Irish from Westminster should seriously weaken the argument that his prime objective was to garner Irish support for the Liberal Party. See The Prime Ministers' Papers: W. E. Gladstone, Vol. I: Autobiographica, pp. 108-11; Cecil, Life of Salisbury, III, 280-81; and Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour, I, 93-95.

<sup>10</sup>Jackson, The Irish in Britain, pp. 128-33.

the Pope with disloyalty to the Crown. In the press they could read of rick-burning in Ireland, of the maiming of animals, the killing of landlords and their agents. It was difficult to convince the English electorate that these people were much like themselves. And yet these were the facts which Gladstonian Liberals had to combat when they undertook to grant the Irish Home Rule and to rehabilitate the view of them that prevailed in England. It was an extremely formidable undertaking, made even more difficult by the fact that certain of the charges made against the Irish were actually true. It was true, for example, that they often lived in mud cabins in Ireland and in extremely overcrowded and unsanitary slum and ghetto conditions in England.<sup>11</sup> It was true that they had little professional training, that they were usually equipped only for unskilled occupations.<sup>12</sup> And it was true that they often got drunk on Saturdays and attended a despised church on Sundays. Many English workers, too, suffered similar material and social deprivation. But in the social and occupational stratification of English society English workers could see around them large numbers of their fellow-countrymen who had achieved various advanced levels of professional, social, and cultural success. To them, this was clear proof that Englishmen possessed advanced mental attributes. Under

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 40-71.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 96-110.

certain conditions those Englishmen whose economic, social, and cultural state was little better than that of the Irish could share vicariously in the success and achievements of their fellow-countrymen. When they contemplated the Irish, on the other hand, they perceived a people mired exclusively and irretrievably in the lowest strata of society. They saw only unskilled laborers and slum-dwellers, so that their image became fixed by these facts.

Under these conditions it was quite useless for Home Rule Liberals to inform Englishmen that the characteristics of the Irish were much like their own, that they had similar objectives and similar talents, that they were law-abiding and loyal. Throughout the 1880s English newspapers were filled with stories of agrarian outrage and murder in Ireland. There was the assassination of the chief secretary and his under secretary in the early 1880s, there was the long series of articles on "Parnellism and Crime" in the mid-1880s, and there was the seeming deceit and immorality of the Parnell liaison with Mrs. O'Shea at the end of the decade. For one brief moment in 1889, after the vindication of Parnell by the Special Commission, it appeared as if the new and more sympathetic Gladstonian view of the Irish might triumph. But then came the O'Shea divorce case, followed by the bitter leadership feud and rupture of the Nationalist Party, lending renewed vigor to the old attitude and dealing a severe blow to the Gladstonian cause.<sup>13</sup> Once more Gladstonian

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<sup>13</sup>Gladstone felt that these developments destroyed

Liberals were forced to fight against the impression created by the press that the Nationalist leader was dishonest, deceitful, and immoral. The entire episode was portrayed by the anti-Home Rule forces as further evidence of the treacherous and untrustworthy nature of the Irish. The involvement of such a leading political figure in a divorce case was certainly atypical in late Victorian England; and for that very reason the impact of the event was much more striking. Two examples of the press accounts of the affair will reveal the relentless effort to portray Parnell in disparaging terms. The Times, having failed in its previous effort to destroy his respectability, was awarded another opportunity. It wrote: "Domestic treachery, systematic and long-continued deception, the whole squalid apparatus of letters written with the intent of misleading, houses taken under false names, disguises and aliases, secret visits, and sudden flights make up a story of dull and ignoble infidelity. . . ." <sup>14</sup> The Annual Register was no more sympathetic. "The outcome," it wrote,

. . . was to show that for years Mr. Parnell had resorted to every device and subterfuge to conceal from the man he continued to call his friend the dishonour he had inflicted upon him. The facts as substantiated revealed a course of conduct more than usually base, and proved Mr. Parnell to be wholly without sense of honour or truthfulness. <sup>15</sup>

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his hopes of winning the necessary majority to push Home Rule through the House of Lords. The Prime Ministers' Papers: W. E. Gladstone, Vol. I: Autobiographica, pp. 114-15.

<sup>14</sup>The Times, Nov. 18, 1890, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup>The Annual Register for 1890, p. 232.

By such methods Gladstonian Liberals were constantly forced onto the defensive. They were repeatedly maneuvered into a position whereby they were unable to present their image of the Irish in positive terms. This was perhaps unavoidably inherent in the fact that they were forced to deny the validity of the traditional British image of the Irish. They were compelled to argue that it was the product of a series of prejudices, and that far from reflecting the real nature of the Irish, it revealed merely how most Britons preferred to visualize them. Any attempt therefore to view the Irish in a fresh light required that the English, as a first step, fashion a realistic perception of themselves. It necessitated a recognition by Englishmen that they nurtured a number of anti-Irish prejudices. It demanded an awareness of the fact that government in Ireland had often wilfully prevented economic and social development. This is the approach which Gladstonian Liberals took in the late nineteenth century. They were willing to recognize the validity of the traditional image of the Irish at many points. For example, they agreed that the Irish often violated the law. They conceded that they were often rebellious and disloyal. But they maintained that such actions were justified by the nature of the law, by the existence of an unjust social system, and by the mode of government.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>See Morley, "England and Ireland," The Fortnightly Review, XXXV (April 1, 1881), 412, 418, and his Life of Gladstone, II, 292.

This was an essential aspect of the argument which Gladstonian Liberals tried to present to the English people. That the Irish had many faults they were willing to acknowledge. But those faults were not nearly so multitudinous, nor were they so peculiarly Irish, as Englishmen often believed. Home Rule Liberals argued that in essential characteristics the Irish were not very different from the English. The basic cause of dissent and disorder in Ireland, and of Irish hostility toward England, stemmed from the fact that the English government gave repeated and overwhelming support to the objectives of the Anglo-Irish. If England would address itself decisively to the grievances of the Irish people, much of the disorder and the hostility toward England would disappear. Gladstonian Liberals, therefore, viewed Ireland very differently from the Whigs, Conservatives, and Radical Unionists. They saw in that country a host of grievances, including the system of legislating and governing from Westminster. These, they argued, had been created by the English and the Anglo-Irish, without reference to the wishes of the Irish people. Ireland, they concluded, was a land of many injustices, and they undertook the gigantic task of removing them.

It is interesting to compare the attitude of the Home Rule Liberals toward the various nationalist movements throughout Europe with their attitude toward the Irish. Their policy had been that each national group, qua national group, had the right, if they so desired, to national

autonomy. In addition England had granted self-government in important internal, or domestic matters to the states of South Africa, to Canada, to Australia and New Zealand. Gladstonian Liberals placed Ireland in the same category as the various European national groups, whether resident in Europe or in various parts of the empire. Since they, plus many Whigs and Conservatives, had supported self-government for these groups, they could not understand on what grounds similar concessions could be withheld from the Irish. It could only be, Gladstone concluded, on the basis that they were sub-human. "The Irish people," he charged

are to be deliberately . . . depressed below the standard level of mankind. . . . We have made it our mission . . . to carry our freedom, so far as we were able to do so, throughout the world. We have given it . . . to the members of our own race wherever situated. . . . In giving free Institutions to the Colonies you had to deal with one Colony the majority of the inhabitants in which were convicts, or the children of convicts. . . . But you have not limited your benefactions to our own race. You went to Canada and found there a mass of Frenchmen. Responsible government was conceded to that country, although the number of Frenchmen in it exceeded the number of Englishmen. You captured the Cape, and found there a sturdy race of Dutchmen--the most persistent and intractable of human beings. You treated these Dutchmen in the same way. . . . But one exception is to be permanently maintained, and at your own shores you are to have an island to which you are to deny the same free Institutions. . . . Your opposition to the concession of a Parliament to Ireland is always founded on the supposition that the Irish people, if they have power put into their hand, will always use it wrongly; and you deny to them not the name of men, but the proper consequences of the acknowledgement of that name. But then, say some, . . . "we do not deny them to be human. They are only too human." What is the meaning of that? In what are they too human? They are too human to have any common sense; they are too human to have any sense of justice; they are too human to have any perception of their interest. . . .<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>The Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 4th ser., Vol. II (April 11-May 3, 1893), cols. 1004-05.

Gladstone refused to accept the argument that the Irish were unfit for self-government. He looked upon this as the postulate of English prejudice. There was, he felt, no reason to make such an assumption. On the contrary, there were many examples of estimable Irish aptitudes. Furthermore, how was it logically possible to condemn the Irish on racial grounds without at the same time implying the denunciation of the Welsh and many of the Scots? For these two groups were also largely Celtic, and were so considered by Englishmen. It was perhaps feasible to differentiate plausibly between the Irish, Welsh, and Scots on national grounds, but to do so racially seemed impossible.<sup>18</sup> A few Englishmen even repudiated the assumption that England was predominantly Anglo-Saxon. This was the case with Ernest Barker who held, on the contrary, that England could be more justifiably described as Anglo-Celtic. Still the Unionists habitually and pejoratively referred to Ireland, Scotland, and Wales as the Celtic fringe and often derided the fact that the Liberals received proportionately greater electoral support there than in England.<sup>19</sup> The Scottish and Welsh preference for the Liberal Party, however, was not occasioned by any particular sympathy for Irish Home Rule, but by the fact that the Liberals were generally

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<sup>18</sup>W. E. Gladstone, The Irish Question (Authorized ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), p. 33.

<sup>19</sup>Direct Liberal electoral support largely ended in Ireland with the rise of the Nationalist Party. Except for one brief and conspicuous lapse in 1885, however, the Nationalists usually supported the Liberals.

assumed to be more sympathetic to their particular aims.

Gladstonian Liberals looked upon the racial and national makeup of the United Kingdom very differently from the Unionists. While they agreed that it was composed of two major racial groups, they also maintained that it consisted of four distinct, and politically equal, nationalities.<sup>20</sup> This assumption of national political equality is important because in 1894 Lord Salisbury seemed to reject it. In that year he pronounced in the House of Lords that until a majority of the electorate in England--as distinct from Ireland, Scotland, and Wales--declared its support for Home Rule that policy could not be enacted.<sup>21</sup> This theory gave England a special and unique constitutional position. Whether Salisbury intended this doctrine to apply to all legislative matters, to all organic or constitutional matters, or merely to this one issue he never made clear.<sup>22</sup> One of the major difficulties for the solution of the Irish problem was that these nationalities and racial groups were not geographically compartmentalized. Ireland, for example, was made up of native Irish, Anglo-Irish, and Ulster Scots. Most Home Rule Liberals

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<sup>20</sup>Gladstone, The Irish Question, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup>The anti-Home Rule Liberal imperialist Lord Rosebery expressed his approval of this theory, thereby causing suspicion and resentment among the Nationalists. The Parliamentary Debates (House of Lords), 4th ser., Vol. 22 (Mar. 12-Apr. 9, 1894), col. 32.

<sup>22</sup>For Salisbury's views on this matter see Ibid., cols. 22-24.

saw no major racial or cultural difference between these groups, and were therefore willing to grant the Irish self-government. It is true, as has been pointed out, that they visualized the Irish as occupying the lowest social and occupational position in the United Kingdom, as existing largely in mud cabins or other forms of slum housing, but they did not consider this to be the result of natural, or biological, factors. The condition of the Irish was, in their view, a product of the historical political system. The Irish had long been excluded from the paths of opportunity and training. Once these were opened up, Gladstonian Liberals argued, the Irish would reveal commendable aptitudes.<sup>23</sup>

If the Irish seemed rebellious, anarchic, and revolutionary, this was basically because they were locked into an oppressive social system. If the conditions of land tenure were reformed so that the tenant would gain economic security, agrarian crimes and disturbances would vanish. Most landowners, of course, denied the truth of these allegations. The fault, they argued, did not lie in the system of landholding or in the price of rents. It lay in the Irish themselves. It was their view that if the tenants cultivated the fields industriously, if they handled their incomes intelligently, if they avoided the excessive consumption of alcoholic drinks, their material circumstances would be adequate. Gladstonian

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<sup>23</sup>This theme was constantly reiterated during the debates on the first and second Home Rule Bills.

Liberals, however, were not persuaded by these arguments. They were not convinced that the Irish were peculiarly less efficient and less industrious than individuals elsewhere. They did not believe that the root cause of their difficulties lay in laziness, ignorance, and alcohol. On the contrary they accepted the argument advanced by the Nationalists that the real problem lay in the inequity of the social and political system.<sup>24</sup> This is how they visualized the situation in Ireland, and this explains why they undertook a series of revolutionary land reforms and the policy of Home Rule. In this matter they were finally vindicated, for as the grievances which in the late nineteenth century caused so many crimes, so many imprisonments, and so much bitterness, were finally eradicated the Irish countryside became a place of peace and order.<sup>25</sup>

From about 1870 onward, therefore, certain Liberals took an increasingly critical attitude toward the great estate owners of Ireland. They charged them with responsibility for the conditions which prevailed in the three southern provinces. Only in Ulster did a situation exist whereby the tenant was assured a reasonable degree of security. Hence

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<sup>24</sup>In a recent revisionist interpretation of tenant problems Barbara Lewis Solow argues that these did not result from the landholding system. See Barbara Lewis Solow, The Land Question and the Irish Economy, 1870-1903 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

<sup>25</sup>In this respect it is interesting to note that from about 1913 onward disorder in Ireland tended to originate in urban rather than rural areas.

much of the agrarian crime that permeated other parts of Ireland was unknown in the north. This was often interpreted by the Conservatives, Whigs, and Radical Unionists as proof that the Irish were very different from Anglo-Saxons and that they were peculiarly susceptible to crime. Rejecting this argument, Home Rule Liberals criticized the landlords for being almost completely indifferent in the conditions and welfare of the country. Many of them took little interest in their estates or in the economic development of Ireland. They employed agents to manage their properties and collect rents while they themselves spent much of their time elsewhere, often in England. This was true of such famous English noblemen as Lord Derby, Lord Hartington, and Lord Lansdowne, who owned vast estates in Ireland. Lansdowne's Irish property alone totalled 121,349 acres, being the second largest estate in Ireland; and the income from it amounted to more than £32,000 a year.<sup>26</sup> It is perhaps hardly surprising that these men were among the first to oppose Gladstone's Irish policies.

One of the problems was that most landlords showed very little interest in the economic development of Ireland. The agrarian problem might well have been less acute had the competition for land been curtailed by the development of industry. But since large portions of the profits earned in Ireland were siphoned off and spent in England, Irish industrial development was extremely limited. Had these profits

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<sup>26</sup>Newton, Lord Lansdowne: A Biography, p. 497.

been reinvested in the development of Irish industry, a portion of the surplus agricultural labor force would have found industrial employment, thereby relieving the pressure on land. English statesmen, however, often concerned themselves more with the search for schemes of emigration to remove the surplus labor force from Ireland than the question of developing Irish industry.<sup>27</sup> A number of Liberals came to look upon the great estate owners as "detestable tyrants"<sup>28</sup> who mercilessly exploited the tenants.<sup>29</sup> In the 1870s and 1880s, however, when the economic conflict between landlords and tenants was at its peak, certain Liberals who were growing more sympathetic to Irish complaints began to wonder if in fact the Irish were not more prone to violence than Englishmen. However, as the various land laws brought to the tenant a greater degree of material security, agrarian violence subsided, reinforcing among most of them a greater confidence in the law-abiding propensities of the Irish.

It was not an easy matter for men long steeped in a

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<sup>27</sup>As late as 1886 Lord Salisbury, opposing Gladstone's land act of that year, suggested that the money be used instead to ship a million Irishmen out of the country. See Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (House of Lords), 3d ser., Vol. 304 (Mar. 26-Apr. 21, 1886), cols. 1820-22.

<sup>28</sup>Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, I, 343.

<sup>29</sup>Morley, Recollections, I, 334; and Wilfred Scawen Blunt, My Diaries: Being a Personal Narrative of Events, 1888-1914 (2 vols.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923), II, 59.

certain set of attitudes, conditioned in a particular school, trained to observe a specific set of values, to suddenly change and respect that which they had formerly been taught to detest. And yet this was to a large extent what certain Liberals undertook in the period 1868-1886. The disestablishment of the Episcopal Church in Ireland did not in itself require any surrender of principle or conscience on the part of most Liberals. Establishment of a particular church was not an issue to which they were generally committed. However, behind the disestablishment and disendowment of the Episcopal Church lay the implication of a broader principle. This involved the status of the Catholic Church. Since all denominations in Ireland henceforth occupied an equal legal and constitutional position, did this mean that Catholicism was at last raised from its trough of disrespectability? This seemed to be implied in the act of disestablishment. And yet it might be argued that the Liberals still looked with a certain degree of disdain on the Catholic Church, because truly equal treatment demanded that, as the church of the majority, it be established in Ireland, just as the church of the majority was established in England and Scotland. However, the refusal to do so was not as discriminatory as it appears on the surface, for the Liberal Party, as the representative of the Nonconformists, had an important element within it that wished to see the disestablishment of all churches. Not that there was any particular desire on the part of Irish Catholics to have their Church established. The removal of the

Episcopal Church from its favored status was a sufficient victory for most of them.

However, there was still in Britain a widespread no-popery prejudice, which was, as D. C. Somervell states, "an ancient inheritance of Englishmen."<sup>30</sup> Catholic emancipation in the early part of the century had not erased this attitude; and in this period it may have gained a renewed lease on life through the writings of James Anthony Froude.<sup>31</sup> The extension of the franchise did not immediately democratize English working class thought on this question. The Liberals still had to proceed carefully in their Irish policy in order to prevent a "Protestant anti-Irish reaction."<sup>32</sup> John Bright may have mirrored the essence of this sentiment accurately when, in opposition to Home Rule, he informed Gladstone in 1886 that he could not "consent to a measure which is so offensive to the whole protestant population of Ireland, and to the whole sentiment of the province of Ulster so far as its loyal and protestant people are concerned."<sup>33</sup> Most Liberals, however, were discarding these habits of thought. They refused to regard the Irish as of incorrigible intellectual capacity simply because they subscribed to Catholic

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<sup>30</sup> Somervell, English Thought in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 148-49.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 148-49.

<sup>32</sup> Blake, The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill, p. 111.

<sup>33</sup> Morley, Life of Gladstone, III, 327.

theology. None of the Liberal Irish chief secretaries from 1886 onward adopted the old condescending attitude. John Morley in particular despised the narrowness of outlook which was responsible for the blatant discrimination against Irish Catholics. In his memoirs he points out that when he assumed the chief secretaryship in 1892 almost the entire magistracy of Ireland was Protestant.<sup>34</sup> He immediately set out to correct this anomaly. During his tenure of office he appointed "637 county justices over the heads of lieutenants of counties; 554 of them Catholic; 83 Protestants."<sup>35</sup> There could be little doubt of Morley's attitude toward Irish Catholics. He notes with regret that, despite his achievement, at the end of his term of office Protestants still outnumbered Catholics on the bench by more than two to one.<sup>36</sup> Sir Ivor Jennings makes an interesting observation on the attitude of many English people toward Catholicism. He writes that as late as the 1920s most parents still felt that if their son, "who had just gone up to Cambridge, turned Labour it was as unfortunate as if he had turned Roman Catholic. . . ." <sup>37</sup>

In their attitude toward the Ulster Protestants Gladstonian Liberals were somewhat ambivalent. Most of them could

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<sup>34</sup> Morley, Recollections, I, 341.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., I, 341.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., I, 341.

<sup>37</sup> Jennings, Party Politics, II, 283.

see no impelling reason why they should refuse to live under a Home Rule government. This fact is highly important, for it reveals that they saw no major distinction between the Ulster Protestants and Irish Catholics. Their feeling was that the Ulster Protestants held a view of Irish Catholics that had its roots in the religious attitudes of the seventeenth century. They still pictured them--and themselves--in the light of that age. They still saw themselves as a small colony surrounded by a hostile host. Since most Liberals were steadily altering their image of the Irish, they could not understand why Ulster Protestants refused to alter theirs.<sup>38</sup> But for them the transformation was not as easy as it was for Englishmen. The latter lived in a country where Catholics comprised a very small minority. There was little

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<sup>38</sup>It should be pointed out that a small number of Ulster Protestants did of course change their impression of Irish Catholics, Sir Roger Casement being perhaps the most outstanding example in this period. Another, who became extremely indignant at the tendency among Englishmen to look upon Irish Catholics with contempt, was the Ulster Protestant playwright St. John Ervine. In an extremely critical study of Sir Edward Carson he wrote:

"The first of many illusions held about Ireland by English people which must be dispelled is that there are two nations in Ireland: one, the minority, resident in Ulster and composed of Protestants, all of whom are thrifty, industrious, sober, honest, intelligent, brave and highly enlightened; the other, the majority, resident in the remaining provinces and composed of Catholics, all of whom are spendthrift, lazy, drunken, corrupt, ignorant, often cowardly and invariably supersititious."

St. John G. Irvine, Sir Edward Carson and the Ulster Movement (Dublin: Maunsel and Co., 1915), pp. 16-17. It should be pointed out that Ervine later became extremely critical of Irish Catholics and admiring of Ulster Protestants. See his Craigavon: Ulsterman (London: Allen and Unwin, 1949).

reason for them to feel any significant threat to their religious or political institutions. The position of the Ulster Protestants was very different. They resided in a land where Catholics predominated. Ever since they first settled in Ulster in significant numbers relations between them and their Catholic neighbors were, with only minor exceptions, marked by suspicion and periodic violence. The bitter conflicts of the seventeenth century formed the very core and foundation of Ulster Protestant traditions. Victories gained over Catholics became the occasion for annual celebrations. The Orange Order, founded in 1795, was dedicated to the maintenance of these traditions. "The very name of Orangeman," Archbishop Whately stated, "is a sign chosen on purpose to keep up the memory of a civil war which every friend of humanity would wish to bury in oblivion."<sup>39</sup>

Most Gladstonian Liberals therefore viewed the Ulster Protestants as an extremely militant group. This does not mean that they were willing to force them to live under a Nationalist-dominated government. Although they were convinced that the Ulster Protestants had nothing to fear from Home Rule, they still felt that they could not coerce them into a course to which they were opposed. Since the Ulster Protestants preferred to remain within the existing political structure of the United Kingdom, and since they formed a majority of the population in a unitary geographic region,

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<sup>39</sup>Quoted in Morley, Recollections, I, 223.

the logic of Liberal principles regarding the rights of mature national groups seemed to assure them the opportunity to do so. Ironically it was partly on these principles that the Conservatives were willing to support an Ulster rebellion in the period 1912-1914. It was certainly discomfoting for Liberals to be confronted with a potential rebellion justified by their own ideas. When the king asked Asquith in September 1913 if he did not consider the threat to coerce Ulster "un-English and contrary to all Liberal and democratic principles," the prime minister found it difficult to marshal a satisfactory answer.<sup>40</sup> The fact that he was unable to do so revealed his emerging belief that the Ulster Protestants should be permitted to determine their own future. Once the Liberals had conceded this point the partition of Ireland became inevitable. From this time forward it was merely a matter of how this objective could best be accomplished.

Throughout the Home Rule era a number of Liberals, in their attitude toward the Irish, seemed to be caught between the pressures of two opposing forces. There was, on the one hand, the desire to follow the new path pioneered by Gladstone and a number of his close associates. Those who followed the Gladstonian lead tended to look upon the Irish as people who were not very different from themselves. They attempted to justify Irish behavior--agrarian outrage, the agitation for self-government--as the product of longstanding

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<sup>40</sup>Nicolson, King George the Fifth, p. 232.

grievances. There was, on the other hand, motivating a number of Liberals, a latent force which seemed to press them in the opposite direction. In many cases this force was never far from the surface, and any insistent or unusual demand by the Irish would arouse in them an indignant and impatient response. It would seem as if they genuinely wished to adopt a sympathetic, democratic, and egalitarian attitude toward the Irish, but their cultural conditioning was such that they were still easily irritated by certain facets of Irish behavior. The antagonistic posture that had prevailed in England for so long continued at times to dominate their responses. They were in fact molded by two opposing traditions, and in periods of stress the old attitudes would often re-emerge.

In this respect it is interesting to note that the Liberals seemed to make no distinction between Nationalists who were Anglo-Irish and Protestant and those who were not. Since most Nationalists were in fact native Irish and Catholic, and since most unionists were Protestant and of British ancestry, the Liberals tended to think of all Nationalists as Irish--or Celtic--and all unionists as Anglo-Saxon. This assumption and the dualistic attitude which permeated Liberal behavior toward the Irish can be observed in Gladstone, who until 1886 vacillated between the policies of coercion and conciliation. There was certainly a good deal of ambivalence in the attitude which found him condemning and imprisoning Parnell in 1881 as an anarchist,<sup>41</sup> and

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<sup>41</sup>Eversley, Gladstone and Ireland, p. 170.

which later led him to invite the Nationalist leader to spend a weekend at Hawarden. On the one hand, he could describe Parnell as a man who had "made himself pre-eminent in his attempt to destroy the law,"<sup>42</sup> and on the other he could express a desire to discover Parnell's view of certain proposed land law reforms. "What I should like to know," he wrote to R. Barry O'Brien, "is Parnell's estimate of them; for that is a man of remarkable insight."<sup>43</sup> Even Henry Labouchere could not escape this ambivalence. An avid supporter of Irish causes, Labouchere sympathized with most objectives of the Nationalist Party. As much perhaps as anyone in late nineteenth century British politics he deprecated the notion of Irish inferiority. And yet when he was irritated with Parnell, as he was in the autumn of 1885, he could attribute to him certain of those characteristics which composed the English stereotype. "My own experience of Parnell," he wrote, "is that he never makes a bargain without intending to get out of it, and that he has either a natural love of treachery, or considers that promises are not binding when made to a Saxon. . . ."<sup>44</sup> (My italics). At various times certain Liberals had to guard against this latent urge to criticize the Irish in racial terms. It was extremely easy for them to slip into this habit. "There is," Lloyd George

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>43</sup>O'Brien, John Bright: A Monograph, p. 91.

<sup>44</sup>Thorold, The Life of Henry Labouchere, pp. 237-38.

stated in April 1921, "a hard side to the Irish nature. They are greedy beyond any other part of the United Kingdom."<sup>45</sup>

And a few months later when the Irish balked at a settlement that would obligate them to take an oath of allegiance to the king Lloyd George became quite exasperated. The Boers had taken it, he stated. Why should the Irish refuse? "The fact was the Boers were a finer people."<sup>46</sup>

It may perhaps be useful at this point, at the risk of digressing, to add a word in explanation of the behavior of Lloyd George and the Coalition Liberals after World War I. Lloyd George's willingness to pursue a policy of ruthless repression was in part a product of the dualism that existed in the Liberal attitude toward the Irish. It was also a result of the fact that very different forces were at work following the war. The old Nationalist Party had practically disappeared. The people being coerced were much more extreme in their demands and in their methods, and much less respectful of the forms of English constitutional processes. In England, many people had become hardened by the horrors of the war; and these attitudes were not assuaged by the policies

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<sup>45</sup>Jones, Whitehall Diary, Vol. III: 1918-1925, p. 61.

<sup>46</sup>Diaries of C. P. Scott, p. 407. The most difficult problem to resolve during the "Treaty" negotiations of 1921 was this question of the oath of allegiance, with the Irish insisting on their right to establish a republic. De Valera tried to circumvent this problem by using a Gaelic term for republic, but since Lloyd George also knew something of the Celtic tongue this route to a solution proved difficult. It was rather wittily suggested at the time that a way out of the deadlock might be found by calling the new state the Royal Irish Republic.

and practices of the Coalition. The rather aggressive and hostile attitude which it adopted toward Germany was not conducive to sympathy, patience, and understanding toward the Irish. Besides, the behavior of the Irish during the war had not in general endeared them to most Englishmen. They had not only revolted when England was engaged in a life and death struggle with Germany, but they had refused to submit themselves to the policy of conscription.

Liberal attitudes toward the Irish therefore were influenced by various new factors during and following World War I. The Liberal Party itself of course split into two competing and rather antagonistic factions. One branch, headed by Lloyd George, sought to insure its political future in an alliance with the Conservatives, much as the Whigs and Radical Unionists had done in the 1880s, though for different reasons. These Coalition Liberals adopted a rather antagonistic attitude toward the Irish. They felt that they had been disloyal to England during the war, that they had increased her difficulties immensely by rebelling in 1916, that they had refused to serve with the same enthusiasm as the Ulster Protestants, and that they actually hated England.<sup>47</sup> Lloyd George adhered strongly to these views and was quite prepared to "govern Ireland with the sword." He had, in the opinion of C. P. Scott, "surrendered to the most extreme anti-Irish hatred."<sup>48</sup> It may be relevant to point out that

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<sup>47</sup>Diaries of C. P. Scott, p. 377.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 377.

the Coalition Liberals were not alone in adopting this attitude. Even some leading members of the Labor Party succumbed to the extreme anti-Irish mood that enveloped England after World War I. John Ward resorted to the old traditional custom of finding in the Irish those characteristics which he disapproved. Denouncing resistance to conscription, he asserted that "the first organized opposition to compulsory military service began in Ireland."<sup>49</sup> It was the Irish who had created "that ugly and menacing figure of pacifism, the conscientious objector."<sup>50</sup> J. H. Thomas stated in November 1920 that very few English workers sympathized with the Irish or their cause. The prevalent mood among them was that the government was far too tolerant of them, and that it should employ whatever means were necessary to bring them to submission. In short it should "wipe 'em out."<sup>51</sup>

It is interesting to observe the behavior of Lloyd George in the years immediately following World War I, when he headed the Coalition government. He, who on occasion had

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<sup>49</sup>Ward, "The Army and Ireland," The Nineteenth Century and After, LXXXIX, No. 527 (Jan. 1921), p. 4.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>51</sup>D. G. Boyce, Englishmen and Irish Troubles: British Public Opinion and the Making of Irish Policy 1918-1922 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), p. 71. The Labor Party was split on the Irish issue but officially it supported the principles of Home Rule. It appointed a committee to visit Ireland to investigate the state of the country. The committee's report denounced the policies of the Coalition. See the Report of the British Labour Commission to Ireland.

led the fight against repression in the past, was now the staunchest practitioner of it. He had been relentless in his condemnation of British policies during the Boer War. He was now equally relentless in his application of repression in Ireland. He exhibited few qualms about the use of physical force against the Irish. During the war he had been ready and willing to pour troops, "armoured-cars and aeroplanes" into Ireland to impose conscription.<sup>52</sup> C. P. Scott was shocked at the casual attitude Lloyd George took toward violence and bloodshed in Ireland. He informed him that if he was going in for that sort of thing--repression, "rioting, bloodshed"--he at least "hoped there would be no executions."<sup>53</sup> To this Lloyd George agreed, "and said he had already given instructions to that effect. There were to be no judicial trials and punishments. If men were to be shot they were to be put up against a wall and shot on the spot, as happened in the Paris Commune."<sup>54</sup> Scott was shocked at the fact that Lloyd George "did not seem to realize that to shoot prisoners on the spot would be simply to execute them without trial or

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<sup>52</sup>Diaries of C. P. Scott, p. 342.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 342.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 342. There are one or two interesting points about this statement which may present a significant clue to an understanding of Lloyd George. One is the fact that the analogy of the Paris Commune should spring to his mind. The other is that he seems to identify with the men who suppressed it.

on the verdict of a drum-head court martial."<sup>55</sup> His attitude toward the Irish of course, had long been the subject of suspicion among Nationalist members of Parliament. When C. P. Scott once suggested him for the Irish chief secretaryship, John Dillon "repudiated the suggestion as utterly out of the question," describing him as "a slippery snake."<sup>56</sup>

There prevailed, therefore, throughout the Home Rule era a standard and stereotyped image of the Irish, and even those who generally attempted to avoid this stereotype could find themselves resorting to it in times of irritation. It was obviously difficult for Englishmen who had been conditioned in part by this image to escape from it entirely. The following discussion in 1886 between Gladstone and Sir William Harcourt affords an example of this problem:

W. V. H. [Sir William Harcourt] mentioned the "loyal" Irish. The word seemed to stir Gladstone's wrath extremely, and he said sarcastically, "Was there ever such a noble race as that! What a beautiful word 'loyalist.' How much they have done for their country. You say that the Nationalists care for nothing but money, but have not the loyalists the same tastes?" W. V. H. replied, "Certainly, the only difference is that where you can buy a Nationalist for £5 you must pay £6 for a loyalist." Turning to Lady Airlie, W. V. H. said, "I once asked your father . . . what was the smallest sum he had ever paid for a vote in the House of Commons, and he replied that he had once bought an Irish member for £5 on the morning of the Derby." Gladstone said, "You think Ireland is a little hell on earth." W. V. H. said, "Yes, I think the only mistake Cromwell ever made was when he offered them the alternative of Connaught. . . ." <sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 342.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>57</sup> Gardiner, The Life of Sir William Harcourt, I, 559-60.

Harcourt's reasoning process was not unusual. He had found among the Irish a number of men who were willing on certain occasions to sell their Parliamentary vote, and from this he drew the conclusion that the Irish were generally corrupt and that Cromwell had perhaps been too lenient with them. It is unlikely that Harcourt was basing his assessment of the Irish on this one incident alone. This was merely the event which on a particular occasion came most readily to mind when he contemplated them. If necessary, he could doubtless have marshalled a host of other examples equally derogatory. This was one of the unfortunate consequences of the widespread stereotyped image of the Irish that predominated in England. It was extremely difficult, even for the most sympathetic Liberals, to escape entirely from its influence. The tendency to see in the Irish certain preconceived characteristics was extremely strong. A long list of these characteristics was set forth by the German historian Theodor Mommsen. Mommsen had not made a first hand study of the Irish and his impression of them therefore is valuable as an example of the image to be derived from persuing British sources. In his famous History of Rome Mommsen pauses long enough to make the following observation:

In the accounts of the ancients as to the Celts on the Loire and the Seine we find almost every one of the characteristic traits which we are accustomed to recognize as marking the Irish. Every feature re-appears: the laziness in the culture of the fields; the delight in tippling and brawling; the ostentation; . . . the droll humour; . . . the hearty delight in singing and reciting the deeds of past ages, and the most decided talent for rhetoric and poetry; the curiosity--no trader

was allowed to pass until he had told in open street what he knew, or what he did not know, in the shape of news--and the extravagant credulity which acted on such accounts; . . . the childlike piety, which sees in the priest a father and asks for his counsel in all things; the unsurpassed fervour of national feeling, and the closeness with which those who are fellow-countrymen cling together almost like one family in opposition to strangers; the inclination to rise in revolt under the first chance-leader that presents himself and to form bands, but at the same time the incapacity to preserve the self-reliant courage equally remote from presumption and from pusillanimity, to perceive the right time for waiting and for striking a blow, to attain or even barely to tolerate any organization, any sort of fixed military or political discipline. It is, and remains, at all times and all places, the same indolent and poetical, irresolute and fervid, inquisitive, credulous, amiable, clever, but--in a political point of view--thoroughly useless nation. . . .<sup>58</sup>

The fact that Mommsen, trained to sift the evidence, to detect bias and prejudice, to describe entities as they actually were, could be so thoroughly ensnared by this stereotyped picture reveals perhaps the magnetic and widespread influence of racial thinking in this period. If the trained historian could not escape from it, the possibility of less analytical mortals doing so was presumably not great. Moreover, Mommsen had conceivably no ulterior reason for espousing this image. Unless he wished to maintain the general superiority of the Germanic peoples over the Celtic, his acceptance of it could only be based on the seeming plausibility of his sources. It is true perhaps that a number of the traits he attributed to the Irish were accurate descriptions of some of them. But that they were the

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<sup>58</sup>Theodor Mommsen, The History of Rome, trans. by William Purdie Dickson (5 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), V, 99-100.

predominant and generally exclusive characteristics of an entire people, and that they were presumably genetically and immutably transmitted, so that the Irish had remained and would continue to remain "at all times and all places, the same" is highly questionable.

Mommsen's acceptance of this description is revealing. It shows, to some extent, the attraction it held for many people. It offers an opportunity to gauge the magnitude of the force which Gladstonian Liberals had to combat in their effort to change English attitudes toward the Irish. In addition it helps explain why certain Liberals themselves succumbed to this characterization. Its influence was such that when under intense irritation they could slip back into traditional responses. Their attitude toward the Irish, therefore, contained a certain ambivalence. At times they would eulogize them unstintingly; on other occasions they would denounce them in typical traditional epithets.

By the end of the 1880s, however, most Gladstonian Liberals had largely abandoned their most extreme anti-Irish prejudices. The old tendency to lapse, in moments of irritation, into blanket denunciations of the Irish gave way to a more stable and more positive approach. This is not to say that certain Gladstonian Liberals did not continue to fluctuate in their attitude toward the Irish. They did. But from the late 1880s until the end of World War I there was more emphasis on their merits rather than their shortcomings. It is possible to observe this new approach in Liberal

behavior toward the Nationalist members of Parliament. Whereas during the 1870s and early 1880s Liberals, with few exceptions, had repeatedly denounced Nationalist M.P.s in the most critical terms, after this period they were often able to find words of praise for them. While prior to the mid-1880s they generally tended to think of them as aiming to destroy the functioning ability of the House of Commons, after that time they periodically described them as masters of Parliamentary debate and legislative understanding. The eulogistic exaggeration which permeates some of their remarks was an understandable reaction to the general English emphasis on Irish shortcomings. A few examples of these will illustrate the general trend. Speaking of Parnell's rapid development after entering the House of Commons, Lord Eversley wrote:

He speedily developed debating power of a very exceptional and unexpected kind. He showed great faculties of searching criticism and lucid statement, and great ability in rapidly cramming himself with facts sufficient to enable him to take part in detailed criticism.<sup>59</sup>

Gladstone lavished unlimited praise on Parnell. He maintained that he possessed exceptional skill in the oratorical art of saying exactly what he intended to say, "not any more nor less."<sup>60</sup> In this respect he compared him with Palmerston. Parnell and Palmerston, he told Arthur Balfour,

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<sup>59</sup>Eversley, Life of Gladstone, p. 73.

<sup>60</sup>Morley, Recollections, I, 241.

"were the only two men he had ever known who had been able to get up and say exactly what they wanted without adding a single unnecessary word."<sup>61</sup> After Parnell had spent a weekend at Hawarden in 1889 Gladstone said of him: "Nothing could be more satisfactory than his conversation." "He is certainly one of the very best people to deal with that I have ever known. . . ."<sup>62</sup> But the peak of Gladstone's encomium was reached when he declared with the emphasis of repetition that Parnell was "a political genius--a genius--a genius of most uncommon order."<sup>63</sup>

Similar laudations were bestowed on other Nationalist politicians. Thomas Sexton won acclamations from many Gladstonian Liberals. Of his speech against the Coercion Bill of 1881 Lord Eversley wrote:

I had rarely listened to a more reasoned, eloquent, and cogent speech. There was no reiteration, and scarcely a word was redundant. It was a presage of many speeches of the same quality from Mr. Sexton, which gained him so . . . high a reputation in the House.<sup>64</sup>

Eversley felt that of all the speeches delivered in favor of the first Home Rule Bill Sexton's was one of the few that "stood out in marked superiority."<sup>65</sup> Herbert Gladstone

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<sup>61</sup>Newton, Retrospection, p. 37.

<sup>62</sup>Hammond, Gladstone and the Irish Nation, pp. 603-05.

<sup>63</sup>Morley, Recollections, I, 236.

<sup>64</sup>Eversley, Life of Gladstone, p. 139.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 305.

thought that "Sexton's speeches . . . were perfectly phrased and admirably reasoned."<sup>66</sup> And once when speaking of the great rapier-like debating skill of Arthur Balfour, John Morley sought a comparison for him. Of the several hundred men who sat in the House of Commons Morley passed them over and selected Thomas Sexton, who, he said "for fine point and edge" was Balfour's "nearest rival."<sup>67</sup>

The Irish Nationalists, thus, were increasingly commended by Gladstonian Liberals for their understanding and eloquence. In addition to Parnell and Sexton, others singled out for special commendation were Michael Davitt, John Redmond, T. M. Healy, John Dillon, and Thomas Power O'Connor.<sup>68</sup> Herbert Gladstone was amazed at the number of "exceptionally good debaters" which this small Party contained.<sup>69</sup> Harold Spender, commenting on Michael Davitt's first oration in the House of Commons, described it as "one of the most remarkable maiden speeches ever made in the House." "I hope," he added, that it "marks the opening of . . . a great Parliamentary career."<sup>70</sup> Spender had similar praise for John Redmond's

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<sup>66</sup>Viscount Gladstone, After Thirty Years, p. 181.

<sup>67</sup>Morley, Recollections, I, 226.

<sup>68</sup>Viscount Gladstone, After Thirty Years, pp. 180-81.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., pp. 180-81.

<sup>70</sup>Harold Spender, The Story of the Home Rule Parliament (Reprinted, with additions and alterations from The Westminster Gazette. Westminster Popular No. 3, 1893), p. 20.

speech on the second Home Rule Bill. Contrasting it with that of the Conservative M. P. Henry Chaplin, he wrote:

After an appeal to Sir Robert Peel, Providence, the Empire, the civilised world, and a great many other Unionist favourites, Mr. Chaplin gave way to Mr. Redmond. Mr. Redmond's was in every way a remarkable speech--whether for its breadth of view, its moderation or its wealth of quotation. . . .<sup>71</sup>

It is obvious that many Liberals had abandoned the most extreme aspects of the old traditional image of the Irish. Though it was still possible on occasion for some of them to succumb to the feeling of contempt that had long been associated with thoughts of them, most Liberals had generally rejected that attitude. They often replaced disparagement with commendation. At times they praised the Irish as extravagantly as they had once denounced them. "They were," J. L. Hammond stated, "among the best speakers in the House of Commons. . . ."<sup>72</sup> Winston Churchill, himself not without some claim to eloquence, perhaps rendered the most encompassing verdict when he declared that the Irish were a "nation preternaturally eloquent."<sup>73</sup> Churchill's description contains an obvious touch of hyperbole. However, it reveals in emphatic terms the new attitude which Gladstonian Liberals

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 22. It is worth noting that R. C. K. Ensor believed this speech by Redmond to be superior to all others delivered on the Second Home Rule Bill. See his England, 1870-1914, p. 211.

<sup>72</sup>Hammond, Gladstone and the Irish Nation, p. 735.

<sup>73</sup>W. S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill, I, 87.

adopted toward the Irish. It was based on an attempt to see them in a new and more realistic light. It was the product in the early stages of a very few men, among whom William Gladstone, John Morley, and Henry Labouchere were the most prominent and most persistent. But having once been established, having once supplanted the old traditional impression, it continued thereafter to play an important role in the motivation of most Liberals. It can perhaps be finally summarized in a statement by Herbert Gladstone. Writing many years later, when self-government for Ireland had been attained, and the Irish Nationalists had long since ceased to stir forensic turmoil at Westminster, Gladstone, looking back nostalgically, wondered whether their withdrawal had been an entirely positive gain for England. Through all the vicissitudes of debate, he recalled, there was always "an inexhaustible fund of Irish humour which softened animosities and was often irresistible. The removal of 'the boys' has certainly not been an unqualified gain."<sup>74</sup>

It is of course possible to find in these statements an attitude of condescending tolerance, which indicates that even those Liberals who were most sympathetic toward the Irish, still did not accept them on a thoroughly equal basis. This is doubtless a product of the fact that the long habit among Englishmen of thinking of themselves as superior to

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<sup>74</sup>Viscount Gladstone, After Thirty Years, p. 180.

the Irish was not easy to discard. The transition from a prejudiced or racist position to a non-racist one is often a difficult process; and is also in many cases an evolutionary one. Given the extreme racist dogmas which existed in England in this period, which seemed to be supported by the various scientific developments, to say nothing of such influential groups as the Fabians, it is easy to understand not only why the Liberals were not really able to accept the Irish on a truly equal basis but why they seemed to adopt a rather dualistic attitude toward them. For Liberals this was a period of transition, a period of flux, highlighted by the fact that while the most extreme anti-Irish prejudices were abandoned, they had not been replaced with a completely egalitarian attitude. The Liberals therefore, while they began the transition from a racist toward a non-racist position vis-a-vis the Irish, never quite completed this process, so that their attitude remained a fluctuating compound of uneasy affection, paternalistic tolerance, and at times even a kind of good-natured contempt.

**PART IV**

**EPILOGUE**

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE LEGACY OF BRITISH COLONIALISM

The situation [in Ulster] has been made by you [England] and demands an act of repentance. You are the obstacle not Ulster.

--Gavan Duffy<sup>1</sup>

Stubborn, irritating, determined Ulster existed; no one had to create it.

--Terence O'Neill<sup>2</sup>

It was one of the major weaknesses of the British efforts to rule Ireland that until the late nineteenth century British politicians were unable to look upon the Irish with any degree of admiration or affection. They visualized them as a race of people who were distinctly different from the British and who were distinctly inferior to them. They harbored extreme anti-Irish prejudices which were manifested in a predominant attitude of scorn and contempt. The Irish were depicted as lazy, lethargic, ignorant, and unintelligent; as deceitful and treacherous. They were considered to be morally dissolute, religiously slavish, and politically tyrannical. They were depicted as criminal and anarchic, as

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<sup>1</sup>Jones, Whitehall Diary, III, 129.

<sup>2</sup>Terence O'Neill, Ulster at the Crossroads (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), pp. 166-67.

disloyal and treasonous, as incapable of living in a lawful and orderly way. They were thought of as being unable to appreciate or respect the liberties or autonomy of the individual. In short they were considered to be extremely backward and unattractive, to be morally, culturally, and racially inferior to the British.

British politicians had a large repertoire of mental and behavioral characteristics which they attributed to the Irish--practically all of which were extremely derogatory. These were precisely the kinds of characteristics which they ascribed to the various Negro peoples throughout the empire. And just as they argued that in the case of the black peoples these characteristics were genetically produced, so also did they explain the nature of the Irish. The latter, they maintained, were the product of a gene pool which was very different from that which had produced the Anglo-Saxons. Inferior genes caused inferior character, inferior culture, inferior intellect. Precisely as the various Negro peoples throughout the empire were incapable of efficient and equitable self-government, so also were the Irish. It was argued therefore that Britain must continue to rule Ireland in order to maintain a state of law, to civilize the Irish, and to protect the Anglo-Irish and Ulster Protestants. Despite the obvious fact that British politicians by and large detested and despised the Irish, they insisted that they were performing a charitable mission--they were ruling Ireland for the benefit of the Irish. This extremely derogatory

image of the Irish people was offered as justification for the atrocious social conditions in which they existed and for the autocratic and repressive nature of British rule.

The first important steps toward the transformation of this attitude came with the advent of Gladstone to the premiership in 1868. During the next two decades he and a small number of Liberals gradually pioneered a new approach to the Irish and to Irish problems. They slowly rejected the most extreme aspects of the old stereotyped image and adopted the view that in important respects the Irish were not very different from the British. They developed an awareness of some of the prejudices which the British people felt toward them. They realized that Ireland was governed in a partisan and disastrous way, and they concluded that the ills from which the Irish suffered did not stem primarily from their racial nature but from the nature of British government. Having thus adopted this new image of British conduct in Ireland, and of the nature of the Irish, the Liberal Party, under Gladstone, undertook to grant them a degree of self-government. Thus the image of the Irish which was held by each party, and also the perception which each held of British behavior toward them, had a strong impact on the composition and course of British policy. The Gladstonian Liberal decision to submit to the various Irish demands, including self-government, was based on their perception of British policy and Irish nature, together with a conviction that Home Rule for the Irish would strengthen

the bonds between them and the British rather than weaken them. By the same token the Unionist refusal to grant such demands was predicated also on their rather different attitude toward British behavior in Ireland, on their image of Irish nature, and on their concept of the consequences of Home Rule for the future of the United Kingdom and the British empire.

The nature of racial prejudice is such that the racist finds it extremely difficult to recognize its existence in himself and to emancipate himself from it. The characteristics which Englishmen tended to attribute to the Irish were and are typical racist stereotypes. The Irish were repeatedly described as a race of people who were distinctly different from the British. Difference in skin color is not necessary to the existence of these prejudices. Liam de Paor's recent assertion that in Northern Ireland "Catholics are Blacks who happen to have white skins" describes this condition perfectly.<sup>3</sup> It would not be an exaggeration therefore to conclude that throughout the Home Rule period most Englishmen, and in particular the Unionists, looked upon and treated the Irish as "Blacks" who happened to have white skins. This attitude and the policies it gave rise to had immense consequences for the course of Anglo-Irish relations, for the solution that was finally imposed on Ireland, and for the

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<sup>3</sup>Liam de Paor, Divided Ulster (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 13.

intercommunal prejudice and antagonism which has continued to plague the course of Northern Ireland history since 1921. The latter factor has perhaps been the most vicious legacy of British imperialism in Ireland. It derives not only from the British racist attitude toward the Irish, but from the policies that this attitude gave rise to. Before proceeding therefore to examine this heritage of British imperialism, it will be useful briefly to summarize British policies during the Home Rule era in order to clarify the chain of development.

It was one of the towering strengths of Gladstone, and the few Liberals who pioneered the new approach to the Irish and the Irish question, that they were able to rise to some extent above the general racist mood that prevailed in England and to perceive in truer perspective the nature of their own attitudes, the depths of some of their own prejudices, and not only admit these, but understand that if the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland were to be long maintained British policy toward Ireland would have to be erected on a foundation of affection, respect, and conciliation rather than antipathy, contempt, and coercion. Gladstone realized that the nature of Irish objectives was such that failure to concede them might in the end lead to complete separation of England and Ireland. More importantly he saw that if the two major political parties opposed each other on this issue deep antipathy between England and Ireland would inevitably ensue, for the Irish issue would become

a political football to be kicked about in Parliament, in the press, and on the public platform for mere electoral expediency. It was for this reason that in December 1885 he offered to support the Conservatives in Parliament if they would propose a Home Rule Bill. The irony of this is that the Conservatives visualized Gladstone as being engaged in precisely the kind of politics he was trying to avoid. They concluded that he announced his support of Home Rule merely to win Nationalist support in order to take office. They thereupon refused his offer, and the Irish question became henceforth a political issue which the Unionists exploited and aggravated in order to maintain the union and to win elections.

The Unionists realized that a large reservoir of hostility toward the Irish existed among the English electorate and that they could tap this sentiment with political profit. They were aware that a policy of concession with the Irish was much less likely to succeed electorally than one of toughness. A policy of sympathetic resolution of Irish demands would merely be construed as weakness, and would stigmatize grievously the party associated with it. For these reasons the Conservatives decided in January 1886 to bring in yet another coercion bill for Ireland, realizing fully that on this issue the government would be defeated, but accepting, indeed welcoming, this event because it would cast them as the party which did not shrink from strong measures against the Irish. No clearer statement of these

views could be found than the following words from Lord Salisbury to Lord Randolph Churchill:

It is evident that the great majority of the Cabinet--and, I believe, the great majority of the party--wish earnestly for a policy which will show that we do not shrink from the duty of government, and that we mean to stand by the Loyalists. The disaster I am afraid of is that we should be driven from office on some motion insisting on the necessity of a vigorous step, and our position in Opposition would then be very feeble and we should be much discredited. . . . Do not let us take any line which will brand us in the eyes of our countrymen--or will enable our opponents to do so--as the timid party. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Pursuit of these tactics forced the Conservatives to depict the Irish as enemies of law, order, and the British people. It led to attacks on the Irish and to appeals to anti-Irish prejudice among the British electorate. It made necessary the enactment by the Unionists of further coercive measures for Ireland in order to appear in the eyes of their supporters as the firm, no-nonsense party. The major weakness of this policy of course was that it further aggravated the antipathy between Ireland and Great Britain. It was in fact an implicit admission that the union was not sufficiently attractive to win the support of the Irish people. If the Irish wished to govern themselves, their supposition was that such government would be more beneficial than the existing one. The Conservative and Whig assumption that British rule in Ireland could only be maintained through a policy of firmness and toughness was a tacit admission that the bonds of union with Ireland were extremely tenuous. The contention

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<sup>4</sup>W. S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill, II, 37.

of the Home Rule Liberals that only through conciliation and respect for the wishes of the Irish people could the empire in Ireland be maintained seems much more realistic.<sup>5</sup> Free consent of the Irish was the only meaningful basis for the continuance of the British link. It may in the end have been impossible to maintain the union in any case, for the impulse of nationalism or of economic interests may have forced the Irish eventually to seek the status of an independent state. It is reasonably certain, however, that a policy based on forceful maintenance of the union, coupled with the exploitation of anti-Irish prejudice in England, could in the end result only in hostility between the two peoples and the emergence of an unbridgeable gulf between them. Had England granted Home Rule to Ireland in 1886, or indeed in 1893, it is difficult to see how the Irish republican movement could have emerged with such support, and the tragedies of the Easter Rising, the Anglo-Irish conflict of 1919-1921, the subsequent Civil War, and perhaps also the bitter sectarian prejudice and discrimination which has marked the history of Northern Ireland, might well have been avoided. Consequently the "Treaty" signed in December 1921 was not produced in a

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<sup>5</sup>On this point one is reminded of the verdict of such men as John Masters, E. M. Forster, and George Orwell with respect to the British attitude toward India. As Allen Greenberger points out, it was the view of these men that India "deserved to be and was lost because of a lack of affection for the Indians." Greenberger, The British Image of India, p. 190.

spirit of harmony and mutual respect, but in an atmosphere of bitterness, distrust, and recrimination. When self-government for Ireland was finally conceded it did not, as Gladstone had hoped, become the basis for a new, stronger, and more enduring union. It in fact signalled the end of the union. As A. J. P. Taylor pointed out, "a terrible chapter in British history was closed."<sup>6</sup>

But if one chapter in this story was closed, a new and sequential one, also "terrible," was about to unfold. The consequences of British colonialism in Ireland had not yet run their explosive course. The Ulster Protestants and native Irish would continue to engage in the bitter sectarian and ethnic strife that has periodically marked the history of Ulster since the seventeenth century. It was the view of most Englishmen that the division of Ireland into two separate states was the only acceptable solution to the Irish problem. This does not necessarily mean that it was the only workable solution. It is true that a majority of the people in the northeastern counties of Ireland were of British ancestry and were utterly opposed to being ruled from Dublin. British statesmen therefore concluded that these people could not be asked to live under a government to which they were opposed. However, they were deluded by thinking that the difficulty would be resolved by the partition of Ireland; for whichever solution was adopted, there

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<sup>6</sup>English History, 1914-1945, p. 159.

was going to be a large irredentist minority seeking reunification with what it considered to be its mother country. If the Ulster Protestants were placed under a Dublin government, they were prepared to fight to retain their previous status within the United Kingdom. If, on the other hand, a large native Irish, or Catholic, minority was placed under Ulster Protestant rule, they also were prepared to fight to gain reunification with the rest of Ireland.

Throughout the Home Rule era the Nationalist Party, and later the Sinn Fein Party, constantly maintained that the Ulster problem had been created by the British and was continually exploited by them. They argued that if the British would cease to support and exploit Ulster, the latter would be willing to accept Home Rule.<sup>7</sup> What the Nationalists and Sinn Feiners were asking was that England grant them a measure of self-government for all of Ireland, and that Ulster, when left to her own devices, would accept her fate. Of Ireland's thirty-two counties, there were only four in which the Ulster Protestants could muster a majority, and the Nationalists and Sinn Feiners felt that such a small area could not hope to hold out for long.<sup>8</sup> If they proceeded

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<sup>7</sup>Jones, Whitehall Diary, III, 88, 90, 93, 128, 129, and 131.

<sup>8</sup>These four counties, all in the northeast, were Antrim, Armagh, Down, and Londonderry. The term Londonderry is British and was adopted in the seventeenth century. Formerly the name was Derry and is still widely and deliberately used by Irish Catholics. The term Londonderry is, for similar reasons, preferred among many Ulster Protestants.

to establish their own government, as the Ulster Unionist leaders repeatedly threatened to do, such government, when unrecognized by either Dublin or London, could not possibly exist for long. What would actually have happened had England acted in accordance with the demands of the Nationalists and Sinn Feiners can now never be known, but the difficulty for Englishmen was that they had worked themselves into a position from which they could not extricate themselves without appearing to violate their former promises and abandon the Ulster Protestants. This was the case not only with the Unionists but with the Liberals as well, for in 1914 they had conceded that the wishes of the Ulster Protestants must be recognized. It had taken the Liberals much longer than the Unionists to arrive at this position, and their acceptance of it was almost wholly ascribable to Unionist pressure. Had the Unionists not taken up the cause of Ulster in 1886, had they not maintained that Ulster would be right to fight against Home Rule, and that they would support her in that struggle, the partition of Ireland might never have become a reality. For those who supported the Ulster Protestants did not, by and large, do so because they wished to see Ulster excluded from the jurisdiction of a Home Rule government. They did so in an effort to defeat Home Rule entirely.

This is another of the tragic aspects of British policy in Ireland. Hoping to prevent the enactment of Home Rule, the Unionists not only exploited latent anti-Irish

prejudice in England, they also aggravated the anti-Irish hostility that existed among the Anglo-Irish and the Ulster Protestants. By so doing they intensified and kept alive the religious and ethnic consciousness of these two groups, thereby delaying the evolution of harmony between them and the native Irish. By accentuating the British origins of the Anglo-Irish and Ulster Protestants they helped prevent in them the development of a sense of being Irish, with a devotion to Ireland and a patriotism that found its object in Ireland rather than across the Irish Sea. One of the major consequences of this policy was the partition of Ireland in 1921. An additional result was the fact that the Ulster Protestants had developed such strong antipathies toward the native Irish that any attempt to establish a degree of cooperation between them, such as was undertaken by those British statesmen who attempted to establish a Council of Ireland in 1921, with the aim of developing a degree of harmony and cooperation between the two states, found the task impossible. The purpose of this Council was to attempt to deal with matters of common interest between the two Irish governments, but the reluctance of the Ulster Protestants to associate in any way with the Free State for fear of losing their separate status made the success of the Council of Ireland impossible.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>It is interesting to note that in the new British settlement for Northern Ireland, undertaken recently by the Heath government, a Council of Ireland is to be re-established.

The division of Ireland into two separate states in 1921 was, as has been pointed out, one of the most conspicuous and most rancorous legacies of British colonialism in Ireland. One of these states, officially called Northern Ireland, comprises the six northeastern counties. The other, whose official name was the Irish Free State, is comparatively large, being composed of twenty-six counties.<sup>10</sup> Both states were given a bicameral legislature, responsible executive, and governor, who of course was the representative of the British Crown. The Free State was given dominion status and powers along the same lines as Canada. Northern Ireland, on the other hand, was given less power. Even though it had its own legislature and government at Stormont, it was also given representation in the Westminster House of Commons. It was permitted to send thirteen members there. One of these represented the Queen's University in Belfast, an anachronistic seat which was finally abolished by the Labor Party in 1948. Of these Northern Ireland seats, the Unionists, who at Westminster accept the Conservative whip, have usually held about ten, giving an almost constant and reliable bloc of support to the Conservative Party. On the basis of population the Northern Ireland representation at Westminster should have been much larger, but because

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<sup>10</sup>Since 1921 southern Ireland has undergone three official changes of name. From 1921 to 1937 it was called the Irish Free State; from 1937 to 1949 its official name was Eire; and since 1949 it has been called the Republic of Ireland.

Northern Ireland was given the authority to legislate on many local matters, its representation at Westminster was arbitrarily reduced to thirteen (now twelve) members.

It is ironic that Northern Ireland, which throughout the Home Rule era wanted no part of Home Rule, was in fact the only region of Ireland which was given it. What the Ulster Protestants wanted was the retention of the union as it existed prior to 1920. Carson had organized a provisional government for Ulster during the struggle over the third Home Rule Bill in order to defeat Home Rule entirely; and when dominion status was granted to the Irish Free State in 1921, he bitterly denounced the Conservatives, in particular F. E. Smith, for abandoning the cause of the union for which they had once been prepared to resort to civil war. Carson's bitterness stemmed in part from the fact that he viewed the two governments in Ireland and the Council that was to coordinate certain activities between them as the first step toward the submergence of Ulster in an all-Ireland government. This was certainly the view of his closest associate in Ulster, James Craig, who later conceded, when prime minister of Northern Ireland, that the reunification of Ireland was in the long run inevitable.

It is difficult to see why Craig should have been so convinced of this. It may simply have stemmed from the fact that in the early years of partition the idea of a small six-county state in northeastern Ireland was as novel and as startling to many Ulster Protestants as it was to the

Nationalists and Sinn Feiners. They may therefore have felt it somewhat incongruous, and concluded that it could not survive as a permanent structure. As time went by, however, and the state continued to exist, Ulster Protestants grew accustomed to it and began to insist on its permanence. Even Craig himself, who had expressed his belief in the inevitability of reunification, did not in practice behave as though he was convinced of this. He did everything in his power to insure that it would survive, and his policies were followed by all Northern Ireland governments from 1921 until the abolition of the Northern Ireland Constitution by the London government in 1972. After half a century of turbulent existence the Northern Ireland Constitution and Parliament, the structure which Lloyd George had erected as a solution to the Irish problem, were abolished, and a period of direct rule of Northern Ireland from London was initiated. Northern Ireland, after fifty years of self-government, was in the throes of bitter communal and sectarian strife. Habeas Corpus was abolished. British soldiers, rushed into the state, were unable to maintain order. Barricades were thrown up, first by Catholics who blocked off their own ghettos to defend themselves from the police and from extreme anti-Catholic forces; later by Protestants, who in a retaliatory bid to force the government to dismantle the Catholic barricades and impose its writ on Catholic ghettos, erected their own barricades, blocking off Protestant areas. The result was the creation of numerous "no-go" areas, which

were patrolled by local citizens, and which were closed to all traffic except that which the patrols at the barricades agreed to admit. The political system had completely broken down. Members of the two communities, Catholic and Protestant, after half a century of existence under a Northern Ireland government, were shooting each other in the streets. The Irish problem, which English statesmen thought they had solved in 1921, continued to haunt them, and the task of finding a lasting solution seemed as difficult in the 1970s as it had half a century earlier.

The question immediately arises as to why the conflict in Northern Ireland should have proved so durable? Why after half a century in which the two communities had ample time to learn to coexist did sectarian and communal prejudice still reign so triumphantly? The answer to this question has deep historical roots. The long-term underlying causes are to be found, of course, in British colonialism. It seems extremely amazing that the descendants of colonial people who were planted in Northern Ireland some three centuries ago should still think of themselves as a people distinct from, and superior to, the native Irish, and that they should have constructed a society in which Catholics and Protestants are segregated in many aspects of life. The descendants of the old colonial communities and their Catholic fellow citizens seem to be little closer to fusing into one harmonious community than at any time in the past. Religious denomination forms the great basic distinguishing factor between the two

communities. It is religion, by and large, which determines the individual's politics. And it is largely his ethnic background which determines his religion. The native Irish tend to be Catholic and in favor of some sort of political link with the Republic of Ireland. The descendents of the colonists are almost entirely Protestant and are bitterly opposed to any political association with the Irish Republic.

With such seemingly irreconcilable polarization of political viewpoints and political objectives there has been no significant common ground on which the two communities could meet in an attempt to harmonize their differences. They support what appear to be thoroughly antithetical political ends. One seeks to retain its British identity; the other pursues fusion with the Republic of Ireland. One feels that its civil liberties and living standards can only be maintained by remaining a part of the United Kingdom; the other is convinced that its civil rights have been constantly denied within that system. One has developed a rather strong and widespread abhorrence for the Republic of Ireland; the other, under the combined yoke of oppression and the impetus of nationalism, has developed a strong retributive sense which forces them to look to the reunification of Ireland not so much as a panacea but as a means of avenging their oppressors, both British and Ulster Protestants, for the wrongs they feel have been imposed on them, and as the most conspicuous example of triumphant self-assertion.

This means that the Northern Ireland state has been confronted throughout its history with political problems unlike those that confront most democratic countries. Because of the dichotomy between the objectives and sympathies of the two communities, the fundamental political problem and issue in Northern Ireland has been the existence of the state itself. Every other issue has been relegated to a secondary position. Since its inception Northern Ireland has had to face the potential disloyalty of approximately one-third of its population. Consequently political parties have developed around this basic constitutional issue. Support of, or opposition to, the state became the basis of party affiliation. Since those who supported the state were also largely Protestant and of Scottish or English extraction, while those who opposed it were largely Catholic and native Irish, the division of the two communities along political, religious, and ethnic lines was complete. "The Ulster community," as the reforming prime minister of the 1960s, Terence O'Neill, pointed out, "is a place in which two traditions meet--the Irish Catholic tradition and the British Protestant tradition. . . ." Furthermore, adds O'Neill, "these religious traditions have been synonymous with political views."<sup>11</sup>

Under these conditions it has thus far proved impossible to create in Northern Ireland the respect for civil

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<sup>11</sup>O'Neill, Ulster at the Crossroads, p. 113.

liberties and rights, and the kind of politics, that are usually identified with democratic states. This is not because the people are intellectually or temperamentally incapable of practising democracy. It is because of the nature of the communal and political polarization of the province. With the major political issue being the continued existence of the state, and with the principal opposition party seeking the destruction of that state and the reunification of Ireland, it was difficult to develop an official, or loyal, opposition. Nor was it possible to concentrate political debate around the issues of political or social reform. Since the prime objective of the major opposition party, the Nationalist Party, was the abolition of the state, it took extremely little interest in the question of social improvement. It was not in fact until 1925 that the representatives of the Catholic community took their seats in the Northern Ireland Parliament. By abstention from Stormont they had hoped to deny recognition to the new state, and thereby help bring about its demise.

Unfortunately these tactics served only to reinforce among Protestants their conviction that the Catholics were out to destroy the state. It strengthened the siege mentality that had been a part of their experience since the seventeenth century. It made them even more fearful of the Catholic minority and the Catholic state that existed to the south of them. In addition they were not always completely convinced that the British would stand by them and would

support them in their efforts to maintain their separate status. They felt that they had saved themselves from submergence in a Dublin government only by their own readiness and willingness to fight, and that in the future they must maintain a similar vigilance. Though they constantly professed their loyalty to the British, they were extremely skeptical as to whether the British would always maintain a similar reciprocal loyalty toward them. They were often suspicious that perhaps in times of stress or emergency, such, for example, as during a period of war, the British might be willing to acquiesce in the reunification of Ireland as a quid pro quo for cooperation or alliance from the Irish Republic.

These various fears forced the Ulster Protestants to organize and administer the state in a blatantly discriminatory manner. Based on the assumption that the Catholic community could never be persuaded to develop a loyalty to the state, the Protestants set out to exclude them from all important political, civil, and professional positions, either in government or in private business, and to force them into a position which would reduce their capacity to act as a serious threat. This has been the policy of most of the leading Protestant organizations and the majority of the Unionist Party throughout most of the period from 1921 until advent of Terence O'Neill to the premiership in 1963. Since the representatives of the Catholic community could never hope to form a government in Northern Ireland, and

indeed since they were perennially so outnumbered by the representatives of the Protestant community, the Unionists, that they could never really form a meaningful opposition, the Protestants were certain that they could discriminate against Catholics with impunity. They could do so, that is, as long as the British government chose to ignore the situation. However, with the widespread international emphasis on civil rights that emerged during the 1960s, coupled with the violent revolt that erupted in Northern Ireland, the Unionists were no longer able to conceal from the rest of the world the nature of their government and the society they had created. The British government was at last forced to intervene. They were forced to abolish the Northern Ireland government, Parliament, and Constitution completely and set about the process of constructing a new constitution and devising a new form of government for the state. Nothing could prove better than this act that the Unionist Party had failed to govern in an equitable way. After half a century of one-party rule the British government had had to assume direct administration of the province, an act which most Protestants bitterly opposed as a condemnation of their administration.

It is rather ironic that the Ulster Protestants, who had repeatedly opposed Home Rule on the grounds that the Irish were incapable of fair and equitable government, and that they would deprive them of their civil liberties, were themselves condemned by the British in the 1960s on this very

score. Moreover, it was not only the Labor and Conservative Parties in Britain that condemned the Unionist mode of government in Northern Ireland, it was also condemned by a number of Ulster Protestants. "The troubles that broke out in Ulster in 1968," wrote the Ulster unionist Patrick Riddell, "were bad and the Protestant Ulstermen had brought them on themselves through their own short-sightedness and prejudiced folly."<sup>12</sup> The Prime Minister, Terence O'Neill, repeatedly warned his supporters that they could no longer hope to discriminate against Catholics as they had done in the past, that Britain would no longer tolerate it. O'Neill himself tried to implement a program of moderate reforms; but caught, as he was, between the pressure of the civil rights movement on the left and utter resistance to any reforms by the right wing of the Protestant community, he was finally forced from office, and control of the Unionist Party passed to those who seemed to show a stronger opposition to reformist concessions. The pressure from the British, however, and the civil rights forces, proved inexorable, and after it had become apparent that the right wing of the Unionist Party made acceptable democratic rule impossible, the British government abolished the Constitution and assumed direct rule of the state. Half a century of exclusive Unionist government had come to an end, and as it was born amidst a wave

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<sup>12</sup>Patrick Riddell, Fire Over Ulster (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1970), p. 41.

of communal hostility and killing, so also did it die.

How did the Unionists permit themselves to be maneuvered into a position whereby they lost their Constitution and the power they completely monopolized? This stems essentially from the factors already described--the siege mentality and the preoccupation with the existence of the state. But additional forces were involved. The most important of these was the fact that the Unionists created a kind of segregated institutional structure that conditioned Ulster Protestants to look upon themselves as superior to Catholics, to believe that they must always keep the Catholics under control, and that any weakening of this policy, any concession to Catholic demands, would lead in the end to the submergence of Northern Ireland in the Irish Republic. The creation of such an attitude virtually precluded the possibility of reform. It locked the Unionists into a system from which they could not escape if the necessity to do so should ever occur, as it did during the 1960s. They had created a structure from which they could not free themselves. To look at the shape of that structure will help elucidate the nature of Unionist rule.

It should be remembered that the political boundaries of the Northern Ireland state have no historical roots. The construction of a political barrier around the six northeastern counties was a novel event in Irish history. During their opposition to Home Rule the Unionists had demanded separate treatment for Ulster. But Ulster comprised nine counties, not six; and it was an historic province. It

should also be remembered that in demanding separate treatment for Ulster the Unionists really hoped to defeat Home Rule for all of Ireland. That Ireland would actually be eventually divided into two states had not, at least for a very long time, occurred to them. But in demanding special consideration for Ulster the Unionists blurred the fact that almost half the population of that province was native Irish, Catholic, and nationalist. Indeed the thirty-five M.P.s which Ulster sent to Westminster were as evenly divided between the Unionists and Nationalists as was possible, with the Unionists usually holding eighteen seats and the Nationalists seventeen. In fact, during the period 1912-1914, when the Unionists were waging their greatest battle for exclusion of Ulster from Home Rule, the Nationalists actually held eighteen of Ulster's thirty-five seats. Of Ulster's nine counties, five of them had Catholic majorities, while only four (Antrim, Armagh, Down, and Londonderry) had Protestant, or Unionist, majorities.

From the Buckingham Palace conference in 1914 until the final boundary agreement in 1925 a bitter debate ensued as to where Ireland should be partitioned. Since it was obvious that the loss of the complete province was not acceptable to the Nationalists, there was no alternative but to partition Ulster as well as Ireland. Nor indeed did the Unionists really want the entire province, for therein the population would have been so evenly divided between the two communities that it might have been difficult to maintain a

Unionist majority. Since the Protestants had a majority in only four counties it would seem that, in accordance with the principles of self-determination, or majority decision, the boundary of the Northern Ireland state should have been drawn around these four counties. But the Unionists would not accept this. They felt that this would have been an unacceptable act of disloyalty to their fellow-unionists who would have been abandoned to their fate under a Dublin government. They insisted therefore that they must be given the two counties of Tyrone and Fermanagh which possessed Nationalist, or Catholic, majorities. Since the statesmen who governed England after World War I were not deterred, at least as far as Ireland was concerned, by the violation of democratic principles, they proceeded to place the two counties of Tyrone and Fermanagh under Northern Ireland rule while resolving to set up a boundary commission to make a final decision on the issue.

The Irish representatives that negotiated the "Treaty" in London in 1921 were given to understand that the boundary of Northern Ireland would be so reduced that that state would be unable to exist because of its economic unviability and would be forced to reunite with the rest of Ireland.<sup>13</sup> The Northern Ireland state therefore began its career under threat of being whittled out of existence. The defensive or

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<sup>13</sup>Report of the Irish Boundary Commission, 1925  
Introd. by Geoffrey Hand (Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1969), pp. xii-xiii.

siege mentality which has marked the behavior of Ulster Unionists throughout the history of Northern Ireland was given justification for existence at the very founding of the state. Ulster Unionists therefore resolved to maintain a careful and constant vigilance to insure that they would never be forced under a Dublin government. They determined that they must retain control of as many levers of power as possible, that they must exclude the Catholic minority from power in any meaningful form wherever they could in order that the Northern Ireland state and civil and religious liberties, as Ulster Protestants understood them, would continue to exist.

One of the first important acts which the leaders of the new state were called upon to perform was the appointment of a delegate to represent Northern Ireland on the Boundary Commission. The Commission was to be composed of three members, one of whom was to be appointed by Northern Ireland, one by the Irish Free State, and one by the British government. Northern Ireland, fearing a diminution of its territory, steadfastly refused to appoint a delegate to the Commission. After this issue had dragged on for a number of years the British government undertook to appoint the Northern Ireland representative, and proceeded to do so. The Ulster Protestants, however, need not have feared the work of the Boundary Commission, for the South African judge, Richard Feetham, originally an Englishman, whom the British government appointed chairman of the Commission, assumed

from the start that there was to be no major transfer of territory from Northern Ireland to the Free State.<sup>14</sup> Feetham in fact rejected the principle of self-determination, stating that the will of a majority of the people in a given region was not sufficient to warrant the transfer of such region to the Free State. Northern Ireland, he argued, was to remain economically viable, and in addition was to remain essentially the same geographic entity as was created by the Government of Ireland Act of 1920. It is hardly surprising that the Commission came to a stormy end, with the Free State representative resigning. The final consequence was that no transfer of territory was made and Northern Ireland remained territorially the same, being composed of two counties and several other large border regions where the Catholics held a majority.

It would seem that such a situation would create the conditions whereby the Catholics would gain control of local government units in various areas. If it was true that Catholics could never, as long as voting took place along communal lines, gain control of the provincial government, this was certainly not true with respect to local government. Unless some method could be found to prevent it, the Catholics, whom Protestants considered disloyal, would gain control of two county councils, the council of the city of Londonderry, the second largest city in the state, and a

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. xii-xv.

number of urban district and rural district councils. The loss of governmental control of the city of Londonderry would be especially painful to Protestants because this city was the source of much Protestant tradition going all the way back to 1690 when it was besieged by the Catholics in support of James II, and when it made a heroic stand to hold out until relieved by the forces of William of Orange. But the Protestants did not intend to see it fall to Catholic control; they were not so unimaginative and so un-inventive that they could not find a way to circumvent the principles of majority rule. What they proceeded to do in Londonderry, and in other local government areas, in order to exclude Catholics from power has been the source of one of the deepest and most rancorous of Catholic grievances, and at the same time has laid the Protestant majority open to charges of blatant discrimination against the Catholic minority. A description of how the Protestants obtained control of the city of Londonderry, even though the Catholics held a distinct majority there, will serve as an example of what happened in other areas.

The Protestants resorted to a number of devices to gain control of the city. The first, and perhaps most important, was their decision to divide it into a number of constituencies or wards. The division of a city into wards is not in itself an undemocratic act, but when those wards were drawn in such a way that the minority, with a population comprising less than forty per cent of the total, would

perennially retain a majority of the seats on the council, the case for gerrymandering was very strong. This is precisely what happened in Londonderry. The city was divided into three wards--two small ones with Protestant majorities, and one extremely large one with an overwhelming Catholic majority. The two small, Protestant-dominated wards were allotted a total of twelve council members; the one large Catholic-controlled constituency was granted eight representatives. The result therefore was that the Protestants had a majority of twelve to eight on the city council. The process of lumping most of the Catholics into one large ward and allotting them two-fifths of the total council representatives achieved and insured the desired goal of Protestant control.

This pattern was followed wherever necessary and possible throughout Northern Ireland to attain Protestant control of local government bodies. In some areas the Catholic majority was so overwhelming that it was simply impossible to wrest control from them. However, such instances were not numerous, for the desire to exclude Catholics from positions of power and influence was very strong. Where the gerrymandering of political boundaries did not suffice, Protestants adopted other techniques. Since 1918, elections in Ireland had been held on the basis of proportional representation. The British government had established this system in Ireland in 1918 on an experimental basis prior to its adoption or rejection for the entire

United Kingdom. In 1922, however, the Northern Ireland government abolished the practice of proportional representation in local elections. In addition it instituted a third measure which caused even deeper and enduring hostility between the two communities. It completely abolished the principle of universal adult suffrage and resorted to the old nineteenth century British practice of household suffrage. In order to qualify to vote in local elections the individual had to be the owner or tenant of a dwelling-house. Such owner's or tenant's spouse was also given the franchise, but any adult sons or daughters residing in the house were disqualified. Since Catholics generally had larger families than Protestants, the intent and actuality of this measure was to disfranchise a proportionately large number of Catholics. In addition the owner or tenant of land or business premises with an annual valuation of at least £10 was also permitted to vote in the area in which such property was located. A further multiple franchise was awarded to corporations. For each £10 of evaluation, up to a maximum of £60, they were given one vote. Since in general Protestants were wealthier than Catholics, the effect of these various devices was to disfranchise a large number of Catholic citizens and to increase the electoral power of Protestants. The magnitude of this multiple enfranchisement of non-property-owners and non-renters is revealed by the following figures. They are a comparison of the 1967 lists of electors for the Northern Ireland House of Commons and local government.

For the House of Commons the number of electors was 933,724; for local government the number was 694,483. This shows a differential of more than one-third.

The reason why property should play a paramount role in local elections was never, as far as the Catholic community was concerned, satisfactorily explained. The Unionists stated straightforwardly that these property qualifications were adopted simply because they did not believe that the mere counting of heads was a sufficient basis for the selection of governments and that a basic determining factor ought to be, to some extent, the quantity of one's property. Since the possession of property was not a necessary factor in the qualification for the Westminster or Northern Ireland Parliamentary franchise, the Unionists were obviously caught in a logical difficulty. The wise policy would have been to equalize the franchise qualifications for all levels of government. This would have removed the inconsistency between them. But the Unionists would not consider abolishing the complex property qualifications on which the local government franchise was based, because this would have given Catholics control of local governments in a number of areas. On the other hand there was no necessity to apply these extreme conditions to the Northern Ireland Parliamentary franchise because this would have given the Unionists an even greater majority in a House where they usually held at least forty out of a total of fifty-two seats.<sup>15</sup> The

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<sup>15</sup>The Northern Ireland government possessed no jurisdiction over the Westminster franchise.

Unionists, however, did abolish the system of proportional representation in the elections to the Northern Ireland House of Commons and they gave an additional vote to businesses with a minimum annual rentable value of £10, with the proviso that any elector could cast only one vote in a given constituency. Having done this, they felt assured that they would be able to retain control of government at the provincial level, and that the existence of the state could not be jeopardized from this source. There was no need therefore to apply the excessively complex local government franchise qualifications to provincial elections.

The principal force motivating the Unionists in all these intricate processes was, as has already been pointed out, the fear that Catholics might somehow gain sufficient power to threaten the continued existence of Northern Ireland as a part of the United Kingdom. The prime minister of Northern Ireland, James Craig, made this clear when he abolished proportional representation for the Northern Ireland Parliamentary elections. "At election times," he stated,

the people do not really understand what danger may result if they make a mistake when it comes to third, fourth, fifth or sixth preferences. By an actual mistake, they might wake up to find Northern Ireland in the perilous position of being submerged in a Dublin Parliament. What I hold is, if the Ulster people are ever going--and I pray they may not--into a Dublin Parliament, they should . . . not be led by any trick of a complicated electoral system. . . .<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>St. John Ervine, Craigavon: Ulsterman (London: Allen and Unwin, 1949), pp. 516-17.

At both the provincial and local government levels the Unionists took steps to insure that they would retain control. There was every possibility that they would succeed in this as long as the Protestant community clung together. But the unfortunate result of such practice was to accentuate the importance of communal consciousness. It strengthened and perpetuated the old fear of subversion of the state by the Catholic minority. Protestants felt a constant urge to maintain a steady vigilance, and since such vigilance was necessarily directed against Catholics, it was unavoidable that the latter would be perpetuated as an enemy group. Contact and communication between the two communities were pared down to a minimum, and understanding and conciliation were made correspondingly difficult. These and other factors led throughout much of the province to a withdrawal of each community into separate ghettos, each feeling itself to be the victim or potential victim of the objectives and practices of the other. Under such circumstances little effort was made by either community to attain a real understanding of the motives and grievances of the other. Convinced that Catholics aimed to subvert the state, Protestants took every precaution to prevent the realization of this objective. In so doing the antipathy between the two communities was further intensified and society became increasingly segregated.

An excellent example of this can be seen in the growth of segregated rural and urban communities. In the

rural areas of Ireland there had been some degree of segregation since the seventeenth century, with Protestants occupying the more fertile lowland areas while Catholics were pushed generally toward the less productive hilltops. In the hostile society that existed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was probably a tendency for each community to consolidate in specific regions simply to insure some degree of security and self-defense. Such rural segregation has continued in the twentieth century, produced by a kind of unspoken tradition which requires that Protestants do not sell land to Catholics and vice versa. The object of this is to maintain the solidity of each community and to insure that the political or electoral balance will not be upset. With the rapid expansion of public housing in the twentieth century the various local governments of Northern Ireland have created a situation in which the towns and cities are almost completely segregated. By the simple process of building public dwellings in specially selected areas, and by allocating them on the basis of religion, local governments have carried the residential segregation of the two communities almost as far as it can possibly go. This was done in part to maintain the political balance in the various constituencies, but the result has been to increase the barriers to intercommunal understanding.

It is an ironic development that the ghettoization of the two communities should have done more perhaps than any other factor to bring about the collapse of the Northern

Ireland government in 1972, for the consolidation of the Catholic community made it possible for the Irish Republican Army to carry on a successful urban guerrilla war against the government because of the reasonably safe sanctuaries which the Catholic ghettos afforded. It also made possible the construction of barricades by both Catholics and Protestants around their particular ghettos, making the government of these areas by official bodies virtually impossible. The result was that the British government was forced to acknowledge that Stormont had lost the capacity to govern; and in accordance with stipulations laid down in the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 it abolished the Northern Ireland government and assumed direct control of the state.

It should be pointed out, however, that not all of the responsibility for the segregation of society and the lack of intercommunal understanding that flowed from this can be charged to the Protestants. In the early years of the state the Protestant leaders had proposed the establishment of a primary and secondary public school system which would integrate the students of both communities. The leaders of the Catholic Church, however, bent on maintaining schools over which they could exercise control, and in which they could teach the precepts of Catholic theology, utterly refused to accept such integrated schools. Consequently an educational system emerged at the primary and secondary levels which was all but completely apartheid. Catholic teachers taught in Catholic schools; Protestant teachers in

Protestant ones. The one institution which, perhaps more than any other, should have brought enlightenment to a segregated society was itself a victim of prejudice, fear, and lack of understanding. The school system, therefore, rather than contributing to social harmony, intensified communal segregation. Students of the opposing communities received no opportunity to discuss and understand each other's point of view. In the schools intercommunal debate was effectively stifled. If the two communities were to learn mutual understanding, they would do so elsewhere.

The state of communal relations in Northern Ireland of course reveals that Catholics and Protestants failed to solve their differences. If there is little opportunity for intercommunal contact and discussion in the schools, the situation in other aspects of life is not very different. In many cultural, social, and sports activities the two communities are often segregated. Each engages in pursuits which in many cases excludes members of the other. In none of these areas, however, is segregation absolute, so that it is possible to find members of both communities among professional theater groups or in the arts. This is true also of certain sports. But in many other areas segregation is extensive. In amateur dramatic groups for example, there is seldom an intermixing of the two communities. This applies also to many aspects of sports. The most important sports activities for Catholics, as far as the numbers participating or watching are concerned, is Gaelic football

and hurling; yet these are games in which Protestants practically never participate or witness. In addition these games are often played on Sundays while Ulster Protestants categorically refuse either to participate in or watch sports events on the Sabbath. In this respect Protestant ethics have to a large extent been written into the laws of the state, for night clubs and other places of entertainment are severely restricted by law as to the hours they can remain open. These conditions, plus the fact that Catholics generally refuse to attend functions where the British national anthem is played, aggravates communal antipathy. Moreover, since at most Catholic sports and cultural events, the national anthem of the Irish Republic is played rather than that of Britain, and since in addition the flag flown is that of the Republic of Ireland, the Protestant view that Catholics are not really loyal to the state receives strong reinforcement. While, therefore, in cultural, social, and sports activities there is some degree of intercommunal participation, this is on the whole rather small. The overwhelming impact in these areas is to intensify and extend the segregation of the two communities.

One of the most important sources of friction and dissension has stemmed from the area of employment. Except for the years of World War II unemployment in Northern Ireland has historically been extremely high. It has been perennially higher than that of Great Britain. In June 1921, when the Northern Ireland Parliament

first met, unemployment reached a height of more than 25 per cent. It has rarely fallen below 6 per cent; and in 1969 when the unemployment rate for the United Kingdom as a whole was 2.2 per cent that for Northern Ireland was 6.8 per cent. In addition these figures reflect the unemployment rate for the state as a whole and do not reveal the fact that among the Catholic population the rate has usually been much higher. This has caused continual discontent and distrust among the Catholic community, for many feel that these policies have been a deliberate attempt to keep them in a submissive and powerless position; or alternatively to drive them out of the state. The birth rate among Catholics has been consistently higher than that among Protestants, and yet the Catholic proportion of the population as a whole has not significantly increased. This is because the inability of large numbers of Catholics to find employment in Northern Ireland has forced them to migrate to Britain in a constant stream to seek jobs. Many Catholics have felt that this resulted from a calculated policy by the leaders of the Protestant community. They have long believed that their inability to find employment has been the result of job discrimination, of a policy pursued by Protestants to force Catholics to emigrate and thus make possible the maintenance of the Protestant majority in the state. The aim, Catholics believe, has been to insure that Catholics would not, by an increase in population, be able to win control of the legislature. Since Protestants have had control of most

governmental organs and of the civil service, they have been able to insure that most jobs went to members of their own community, and especially that positions of responsibility went to them. When Catholics were employed, they were generally given the less remunerative, less responsible, and less influential positions.

Even in the private sector of the economy the practice of discrimination was often followed, though in this area it was not quite as complete. Despite the fact that certain Protestant leaders, most notably the one-time prime minister Lord Brookeborough, called upon the Protestant community to employ only Protestants,<sup>17</sup> few Protestant entrepreneurs followed this advice rigidly. While discrimination does exist in the private sector, it is perhaps more often the result of social patterns than of a conscious and calculated policy. Such discrimination is produced by such factors as the ghettoization of society. In Protestant areas businesses tend spontaneously to be staffed by the inhabitants of that region, while in Catholic areas employment follows a similar pattern. In addition since the attainment of employment in factories and various small business is often the result of social friendship or acquaintance with foremen or superintendents, the extensive communal segregation of society tends to insure that Protestants are employed in Protestant businesses and Catholics in Catholic

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<sup>17</sup>De Paor, Divided Ulster, pp. 114-15.

ones. Thus while discrimination is widespread both in the civil service and in private business, in the latter it is often--though not by any means exclusively--caused by segregated residential and communal patterns rather than by a conscious policy on the part of employers.

One of the most conspicuous examples of Protestant domination of employment has been the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the regular police force of Northern Ireland. About 90 per cent of its members have historically been Protestant, a fact which has led to a good deal of suspicion of the police by the Catholic community. Indeed Catholics are largely convinced that the police have been grossly one-sided in their enforcement of the law, and that they welcome any opportunity to baton-charge them or harass them, while Protestant attacks on Catholics and the denial of their civil liberties are ignored. So hostile had relations between the police and the Catholic community become that a recent commission established to investigate police behavior recommended a complete over-haul of the organization.<sup>18</sup> This has now been begun, and the inability of the communities of Northern Ireland to enforce the law impartially is revealed by the fact that an Englishman has been brought in to administer the police force.

Even more anti-Catholic was the Ulster Special Constabulary, a unit of police reserves to be called out only in

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<sup>18</sup>See the Report of Advisory Committee on Police, Cmnd. 535 (Belfast: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1969).

emergencies. It was completely Protestant; it was recruited mostly from unskilled and semi-skilled laborers; and it was bitterly resented by the Catholic community. One of the first reforms which the British government imposed on Northern Ireland in the late 1960s was the abolition of this force. It should be pointed out that many Catholics tended to see these two police bodies as enemy groups, and were thus opposed to joining them. On the other hand, since Protestants were convinced that most Catholics were disloyal to the state, they considered it extremely dangerous to entrust them with the enforcement of the law. Thus in this sphere also the distrust of the Catholic community prevented Protestant officials from making a serious effort to recruit Catholics into these forces.

The preoccupation of Protestants with the existence of the state has been further intensified by the attitudes and objectives of southern Ireland. Since 1921 it has been its stated goal to seek the reunification of the country, a goal which involves either the abolition of the Northern Ireland state or the transfer of its sovereignty from Britain to Dublin. Apart from the fact that this has been the declared policy of the various Dublin governments, it is also the objective of the illegal physical force group, the Irish Republican Army. Threatened by the explicitly stated objectives of these two bodies and by the existence of a large Catholic minority within the state, a minority whose actions often seemed to indicate that its loyalty and

allegiance were directed to Dublin rather than Stormont, Protestants became extremely militant. Any concession to Catholics, or any communication or cooperation with Dublin by Northern Ireland governments, could unleash an inflexible reaction among the Protestant right wing. The existence, vigilance, and intransigence of this force made it practically impossible for enlightened Unionist leaders to pursue a policy of conciliation and cooperation with Dublin. On the other hand the repeated statements by Dublin governments that their aim was the eventual annexation of Northern Ireland merely increased the difficulties in the path of moderate and liberal Unionists. It in fact insured that any attempt to establish normal relations between Stormont and Dublin would not succeed.

The collapse of the political career of Northern Ireland's most enlightened prime minister, Terence O'Neill, offers an excellent example of the difficulties that confronted those who wished to end sectarian animosity and establish better and more cooperative relations between Dublin and Stormont. O'Neill, who was prime minister from 1963 until 1969, made a determined effort to unite the communities of Northern Ireland and to create a policy of cooperation with Dublin. However, these objectives created such turmoil that he was rapidly ousted from office. Relations with Dublin sank back into their traditional quagmire, the two communities in Northern Ireland began killing each other once more, and in the end the British

had to suspend, then completely abolish, the Northern Ireland Constitution.

It seemed impossible therefore to achieve democratic reforms in Northern Ireland under the customary form of democratic constitution. The emphasis on communal solidarity precluded the development of reform. The two principal political parties were constructed on a communal basis. The Unionist Party represented the Protestants, and the Nationalist Party represented the Catholics. The predominant political issue was the maintenance of the state. Unionists were always sure of control; Catholics felt that they could gain little. The alternation of political parties in office which is ordinarily the basis of democratic political systems did not apply in Northern Ireland. Because of the absence of electoral issues, and the segregation of society, most seats were not even contested. Northern Ireland was in fact in many ways like the American south after the Civil War. Since the Nationalist Party could never hope to form a government, or even to form an effective opposition, Northern Ireland was, for all practical purposes, a one-party state. Nicholas Mansergh's judgment of the 1930s was still applicable in the 1960s: "The task," he stated, of establishing a genuinely popular democratic system of government in the North has proved impossible of fulfillment."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Nicholas Mansergh, The Government of Northern Ireland: A Study in Devolution (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1936), p. 137.

The outbreak of violence which occurred in 1969, and is still continuing, is merely an additional chapter in the long history of violence that has characterized relations between the two communities since the seventeenth century. Since the founding of the Northern Ireland state this violent tradition has been kept alive by periodic eruptions. The new state was in fact established in the midst of civil strife which raged from 1920 to 1923. There were further serious outbreaks in 1935, 1939, 1948, 1955, and 1956-1962. The present conflict exploded into systematic and prolonged violence in 1969, but it had been developing slowly since 1966. In that year Protestant fears had increased because of the various celebrations that occurred throughout Ireland commemorating the Rising of 1916. Protestant extremists, in particular the Ulster Volunteer Force, began to attack Catholics. The Prime Minister, Terence O'Neill, immediately proscribed this organization under terms of the Special Powers Act. This statute gave the government the authority to suspend habeas corpus and arrest and imprison any suspected person without charge or trial. The Special Powers Act had previously been used only against Catholics, and the latter had repeatedly condemned it and called for its repeal. It was fashioned after the old coercion acts by which English statesmen had ruled Ireland in the nineteenth century. The fact that a Protestant prime minister now used it against an extreme Protestant and unionist group reveals his determination to attempt to apply the law equally to all

sections of the community. This does not of course justify the existence of such a law; it does, however, prove that a new era was perhaps dawning in Northern Ireland.

Catholic commemoration of the 1916 Rising was not the only factor in the growth of Protestant fears in 1966. Since his advent to the premiership in 1963 Terence O'Neill had adopted a policy of conciliation toward the Catholic community. Previously, Unionist governments had proceeded on the assumption that the Catholic community would always be disloyal to the state and that consequently they must be excluded from all positions of power or influence. This assumption, and the policies based upon it, posited a perpetual intercommunal conflict in Northern Ireland. The two communities could never unite because Catholics would always seek to subvert the state. In this respect Terence O'Neill proposed to pursue a revolutionary concept. He rejected these ideas completely. He refused to assume that the Catholic population would always be hostile and disloyal. He made the basic and revolutionary assumption that Catholics could be persuaded to accept the state and to develop a loyalty and allegiance toward it. If, O'Neill argued, Catholics were treated equitably, if the state catered to all its citizens equally, if discrimination in all its forms were abolished, Catholics would accept the state and become loyal to it.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Owen Dudley Edwards, The Sins of Our Fathers: Roots of Conflict in Northern Ireland (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1970), p. 73.

O'Neill was aided in these policies by the new attitude of the Republic of Ireland. In July 1963 the Prime Minister of the Republic, Sean Lemass, stated explicitly that Northern Ireland had a legitimate right to exist.<sup>21</sup> Although in a public response to this gesture, O'Neill expressed the desire for a "full constitutional recognition" of this fact, he was nevertheless conciliatory and called for cooperation between the two states on "more immediately relevant issues."<sup>22</sup> The year 1963 therefore marked the beginning of a new era in the relations between the two Irish governments. The next step came in January 1965 when the prime ministers met for the first time since the early 1920s. It was a historic occasion in Irish history. Terence O'Neill's awareness of right wing opposition to his policies was revealed in the communiqué issued after the meeting, which carefully pointed out that the discussions "did not touch upon constitutional or political questions."<sup>23</sup> O'Neill was convinced that the Republic of Ireland accepted the existence of Northern Ireland and would not attempt to subvert it.<sup>24</sup> Sean Lemass's successor, Jack Lynch, reaffirmed his predecessor's policy, stating that "we are not seeking to overthrow by violence the Stormont government or

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<sup>21</sup>O'Neill, Ulster at the Crossroads, p. 156.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

parliament."<sup>25</sup> This in effect meant that the leaders of the Republic of Ireland sought normal and harmonious relations with the state to the north of them, and that while the reunification of Ireland remained as an ideal, it was relegated to a distant future when "a sufficient number of people in the North" would have been persuaded "by peaceful means" to accept it.<sup>26</sup> The leaders of the Republic had not abandoned the quest for reunification. They had merely stated that such reunification could be achieved only by the free consent of the majority in Northern Ireland.

The leaders of both Irish states had shown a willingness to break with the policies of the past and to attempt to inaugurate a new era. In correlation with O'Neill's wishes for cooperation between the two governments, he had also taken the first cautious steps toward the development of cooperation and harmony between the two communities in Northern Ireland. In this, the exigencies of politics demanded that he proceed extremely carefully in order to avoid arousing among his Protestant supporters the traditional fear and resistance to cooperation or concessions to the Catholic community. As the cautiousness and piecemeal nature of his reform policies reveal, O'Neill was aware of the rigid opposition which might develop. He stated at a

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<sup>25</sup>Martin Wallace, Northern Ireland: 50 Years of Self-Government (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971), p. 176.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

later date that "any leader who wants to follow a course of change can only go so far. For inevitably one builds up a barrier of resentment and resistance which can make further progress impossible."<sup>27</sup>

It was one of the ironies of the situation that the period in which O'Neill undertook to reconcile the two communities and to grant a greater measure of justice to the Catholic minority was also a time when minorities in various countries, but most particularly in the United States, were demanding various rights. Spearheaded by members of the university and intellectual community in Northern Ireland, an activist civil rights movement emerged using many of the techniques of American civil rights groups. This movement refused to accept the gradualism which characterized O'Neill's reform policies. They demanded an immediate end to the various political and civil injustices which existed. In particular they sought the prompt institution of universal adult suffrage in all elections, plus an end to plural voting, the allocation of public housing on a non-sectarian basis, new measures to solve the chronic problem of unemployment, and the repeal of the Special Powers Act.

In opposition to the movement for civil and political rights, whose leaders had hoped to make it nonsectarian, but which in fact became largely Catholic, there developed a number of determined right wing opposition groups among the

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<sup>27</sup>O'Neill, Ulster at the Crossroads, p. 199.

Protestant community. Inspired for the most part by the fundamentalist preacher, the Reverend Ian Paisley, these groups opposed any concession whatever to the Catholic community or to the cause of civil or political rights. Pre-occupied with a concern for Protestant domination of the state, these people saw any adjustment of the status quo as a serious threat. They continually denounced the prime minister for his policy of reforms, his attempts to harmonize the two communities, and his friendly relations with the Republic of Ireland. They viewed any concession to the Catholic community as a weakening of the Protestant position. These extreme groups had been expressing their fears ever since the ecumenical movement began, and they tended to link this movement and the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland as part of a broad Catholic conspiracy which endangered the existence of Protestantism. Two examples of right wing Ulster Protestant attitudes toward the ecumenical movement will reveal the extent of this fear. In November 1964 the General Secretary of the Christian Fellowship Centre and Irish Emancipation Crusade denounced the proposed visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Pope. "We desire to place on record," he stated,

our deep dismay and sorrow at the proposed visit to the Pope by his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury. This is indeed a grievous blow to our evangelical position, and a step which will inevitably draw the judgment of God on Church and State. We would call upon Christian people in all our Churches to devote themselves increasingly to prayer. We need delude ourselves no longer. The die is cast--the step has been taken. The most we can do now is to pray for

courage and faith, that we might be true to the simplicity of the gospel in this dark hour and in the darker days that lie before us.

We respectfully suggest that in those Churches and Mission Halls where evangelical truth is still cherished, the national anthem should be sung as a prayer next Sunday, with congregation and minister kneeling in the attitude of prayer.<sup>28</sup>

In 1969 a Catholic priest was invited to attend, as an observer, the annual General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The Reverend Ian Paisley was extremely disturbed by this act. He was further distraught by the fact that the Queen was also scheduled to be in attendance while this Catholic representative was in the assembly. He therefore launched a vigorous protest. "Your subjects," he declared in a plea to the Queen, "fear the result of the proposed welcome to this Mass-mongering representative of the Papal antichrist."<sup>29</sup>

Caught between those who demanded the immediate removal of all civil and political inequities and those who opposed any reform whatever, Terence O'Neill found himself in a political impasse. To go forward would rouse strong opposition from the right wing of his own Party and the Protestant community; to refuse reforms would elicit further condemnation and demonstrations from the civil rights forces, demonstrations which usually led to Protestant counter-demonstrations and to outbreaks of violence. Since

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<sup>28</sup>Quoted in R. S. P. Elliot and John Hickie, Ulster: A Case Study in Conflict Theory (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971), pp. 39-40.

<sup>29</sup>Riddell, Fire over Ulster, p. 175.

the British government was also pressing for the enactment of reforms, O'Neill had little choice but to go forward. He tried to persuade the Protestant community that this was the only course acceptable to the British government, that timely reforms could still save the government, legislature, and Constitution from extinction. But many Unionists refused to accept this. O'Neill gradually lost support in his own Party and was forced to resign. Two more prime ministers followed him into and out of office in quick succession. The demonstrations and violence continued. The police were unable to contain the situation. More and more British troops were poured into the province. In the end the British became convinced that the political system in Northern Ireland could not cater to the legitimate aspirations of the Catholic community. The forms of democracy were insufficient to insure justice and equity in the deeply divided and hostile nature of Northern Ireland society. Only a sincere willingness on the part of the inhabitants to develop a democratic and non-discriminatory society could have achieved this. Such a spirit did not exist in Northern Ireland. If discrimination and injustice were to be abolished, and a just and equitable society created, it would have to be attained through some other medium. Such being the case the Northern Ireland Constitution could serve no further acceptable function. Thus in March 1972, after half a century of existence, it was unceremoniously abolished.

This was a severe blow to the Protestant community.

The fact that the British government had felt it necessary to abolish the Northern Ireland Constitution and to assume direct rule of the state was a strong indictment of the Unionist Party which had ruled at Stormont for over fifty years. It is true that the Unionists had been confronted with a large, potentially disloyal minority, but their policies, until the premiership of Terence O'Neill in 1963, had been designed to exclude that minority from any influential office in politics, government service, or in the private sector of the economy. They antagonized rather than conciliated the Catholics. Their aim was to keep them in a subordinate and menial position, or alternatively to force them to migrate to Britain in search of employment. Practically no attempt was made to win their support and loyalty. No Catholics were members of the Unionist Party, or of the various Unionist governments, and no Catholic was welcome. The Orange Order, which had a large degree of control over the Unionist Party, was opposed to Catholic membership. In fact it existed largely to oppose Catholicism.

With such sectarian animosity it was impossible for the ordinary forms of democratic institutions to operate equitably in Northern Ireland. If democracy were to be established it would have to be imposed from outside. This in fact is exactly what the British government has undertaken. It has devised a new system, a new experiment in government, based on the principle of power-sharing. In this system each party will share power in the legislature

and the executive in accordance with the proportion of the population it represents. No longer will one party be able to control the state. The heads of the various government departments will be selected from the various political parties in such a way as to be representative of the two communities. Catholics will be given the administration of a proportionate number of departments. A Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with a seat in the British Cabinet, will insure that power is shared by both communities in an equitable way. He will thus retain extensive powers, so that the new assembly and executive will have much less power than their predecessors. In addition a good deal of responsibility has now been assumed by the British government. It alone will retain legislative authority and control over important areas of taxation, the suspension of habeas corpus, the enactment of special powers, elections, the franchise, and the appointment of judges and magistrates.<sup>30</sup> In addition the British government will retain "for the present" legislative control over "certain matters of law and order, including the criminal law, the courts, penal institutions, and the establishment and organization of the police."<sup>31</sup>

The retention of these powers by the British government

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<sup>30</sup>Northern Ireland Constitutional Proposals, Cmd. 5259, par. 560.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., par. 560.

has been generally applauded by the Catholic community, but they have caused a bitter reaction among many Protestants. Thus in the assembly elections of June 30, 1973, the Protestant community was decisively split for the first time since 1921, and this split was reflected in a breakup of the Unionist Party. Those Protestants who oppose the new constitution and the concept of power-sharing have broken away from the Unionist Party and formed the Loyalist Coalition. At the recent elections they emerged as the largest party, electing twenty-seven members. They have vowed to "wreck" the new constitution, though they have not yet spelled out their methods.<sup>32</sup> The second largest party in the new assembly will be the rump of the old Unionist Party, which elected twenty-five members. The Catholic community is represented largely by the Social Democratic and Labor Party with a total of nineteen members.

Whether the new system can survive in the face of such strong opposition from the right wing of the Protestant community remains to be seen. This group fears that its position within the United Kingdom may be weakened. Not only is it highly skeptical about the proposed Council of Ireland which is to be established jointly by Britain, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland, it is also opposed to a Northern Ireland executive which includes

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<sup>32</sup>Robert Fisk, "Bewildering Array of Issues and Party Labels in Ulster Poll Today Make Prediction of Result Rash," The Times, June 23, 1973, p. 2.

members of the Catholic community. It seems in fact that it wants to return to something like the old system. This of course is impossible. Westminster is attempting to impose democracy and intercommunal harmony in Northern Ireland. Whether it can succeed without a long period of violence remains to be seen. The old prejudices which caused Lord Randolph Churchill to assert in 1886 that "Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right" are apparently as strong today as they were then. The fears and hatreds which English Unionists so carefully exploited in order to prevent the enactment of Home Rule still survive as the legacy of a former age. Englishmen are now trying to conjure them out of existence. Whether they will be able to do so in the immediate future remains to be seen. The principle of power-sharing and the habit of Protestants and Catholics sitting side by side in the new Northern Ireland executive could lead to a degree of tolerance and mutual respect which has thus far been a rare commodity in Ulster history. If this should occur, the deep-seated sectarian and ethnic prejudice which permeates Northern Ireland society might finally have received its first important exorcistic blow.

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