

# NORTHERN IRELAND

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**T**HE hope that direct rule would solve the problems of Northern Ireland was doomed from the start. In place of a unionist administration, based on almost total repression of political opponents, there came into being an administration which promised no fundamental changes and only succeeded in antagonising the minority and majority alike. Efforts were made to win over the 'moderates' in the Unionist and anti-Unionist camps; to isolate the 'terrorists' (with tongue in cheek it was said 'on both sides'); and to behead the leadership of the struggle for civil rights.

As Seamus Twomey, IRA Provisional leader in the North, at a press conference held in Belfast on July 12 said: 'Whitelaw has promised everything to everybody and he has now come to the end of the line and he has no promises left.' The resumption of the abortive cease fire is seen as a distant prospect by Mr Paddy Devlin MP (Social Democratic and Labour Party) '... unless Whitelaw moves, reverses the attitude of the British Army towards the minority and provides protection for Catholics in "mixed areas" and releases all the internees.' Mr Devlin expressed strong reservations about meeting Whitelaw again whilst the policy of appeasement towards the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) continued.

Whitelaw called for an end to the 'no-go' areas in Derry, and allowed such areas to be created by the UDA in Protestant working class areas in Belfast. He castigated the IRA and permitted a 'loyalist' paramilitary force, now estimated to number 43,000, to be created which has challenged the right of the British Army to enter any area under their 'control'. Whitelaw promised protection to 'all the people', and allowed the troops and police to stand by whilst hundreds of Catholic families were forced from their homes and were driven from their small businesses by hooded and armed thugs.

For the minority and the progressive forces, direct rule has meant no change in the policies being carried out. No attempt has been made to remove reactionary legislation, implement the meagre reform programme, release all the internees or speed up the democratic process. The loss of life continues in sectarian killings, and the numbers killed since the pogrom of August 1969, including British troops, begins to approach the 500 mark.

The unionists, who enjoyed uninterrupted rule for so long, also see no hope from Whitelaw rule. Their demand for the return of a

'strengthened Stormont' conflicts with British Tory and Labour policy, and the Unionist ultras embarked on a campaign to bring about the downfall of Whitelaw and, if necessary, form their own 'independent' administration by force of arms. It would be, of course, British! The official Unionist Party and its leaders are totally discredited and in its and their place has arisen the Vanguard movement led by William Craig MP, the UDA led by anonymous and hooded men, and the Loyalist Association of Workers led by William Hull, member of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, the UDA and Vanguard. The old emblems of unity with Britain have been discarded. The Union Jack has been replaced by the so-called 'Ulster' flag—the new version of which is minus the cross of St George. (British politicians and saints have fallen alike in the eyes of the Unionists.) The myth that the Orange Order was a religious organisation was completely dispelled on July 12, 1972, when from its platforms were uttered demands for the resignation of Whitelaw, a rejection of Westminster and all its works, and for the use of arms to 'advance the loyalist cause and meet all eventualities.'

The Rev Martin Smyth, top Belfast Orangeman, asked his July 12 audience if they could 'trust Westminster' and the answer was a resounding 'No'. William Craig told his listeners that there was 'no alternative but to mobilise the strength of our people and there are no lengths to which we are not entitled to go to restore our democratic [Unionist] Government.' Sir Knox Cunningham, former Westminster MP for South Antrim, said that 'loyalists should be like the peoples of Israel and Rhodesia—prepared to use arms for the restoration of Stormont.' Mr John D. Taylor MP, former Secretary of State at the Ministry of Home Affairs, told his audience that there was not one political party in Britain which supported the Unionists and that, for the first time in 150 years, the Union Jack had been rejected by the 'loyalists' of 'Ulster' in favour of the 'Ulster flag'. Thus do the imperialists make rebels of us all!

The former supporters of Unionism have rejected their former leaders, find no succour in their links with the British Conservatives (outside of men like Deedes and Powell) and reflect the political confusion of a people who have lived in a fool's paradise for over 50 years. Only now are they realising the hard way that they were not 'masters', and the realisation is not a pleasant one. A commander of the UDA on the Shankill Road in Belfast is reported in a local evening paper as saying that if Stormont ever came back 'I hope there will be more labour men there.' He denied that the UDA was run by middle class elements and asserted that it was a 'working class'

organisation. When queried about his attitude to Roman Catholics he said that no one expected that Stormont would 'return in the way that it was before.' He admitted that mistakes had been made in the past and thought that if the gun and bomb were taken out of politics 'we think that Protestants and Catholics could work it out together.' This affords the hope that, given peaceful conditions and the passage of time, the working class could indeed 'work it out together'. But there are other forces who do not want to see such a coming together. They see their future in a further polarisation of the working class and are willing to risk a sectarian civil war if they think it will be necessary to safeguard their political and financial interests.

Already demands have been made for the introduction of martial law. Mr Stokes, British Tory MP and English Catholic, stated on the BBC on July 13 that he wanted Whitelaw removed and someone like General Templar put in control of Northern Ireland. He instanced Templar's 'success' in Malaya and elsewhere and failed to see the irony of his suggestion in that Templar, military butcher that he was, was also removed because he failed to hold the countries that he had terrorised for the greater good of British imperialism. Stokes warned that Northern Ireland had to be taken strongly in hand otherwise urban guerrilla warfare would be exported to English cities, and expressed the opinion that Catholics (in Northern Ireland) had to 'make the best of life' inside the UK.

As the cities and towns of Northern Ireland are split up into 'no-go' areas for Protestant and Catholic working class alike, and the cease fire between the Provisional IRA and the British Army remains broken, there exists the probability of a civil war—Craig has spoken of action to be taken at the 'end of the summer'. The progressive forces have appealed to the Provisional IRA to end their military offensive. The reasons for the ending of the truce were understandable—it is difficult to withstand blatant provocation and to witness one's people being ejected from their homes and refused entry by the British Army to new homes legally allocated by the public housing authority at the behest of members of the UDA. It is very hard to witness the continued appeasement of right-wing Unionism, the open arming of the UDA, the erection of 'no-go' areas in Protestant ghettos with British troops looking on, the sectarian killings by hooded men, and to hear the calls by Craig and Co. for armed rebellion the object of which is to wipe out the Catholic population without any check from the so-called forces of 'law and order'. All this adds up to an apprehension that the British Tory Government would not be averse to civil war breaking out and making the 'croppies lie down'.

In the end, the Tories would hope to pick up the mutilated pieces and proceed to put into action their overall strategy for the whole of Ireland—within the EEC, under British hegemony, and part of Nato, in the interests of British monopoly capitalism. The British Tories have not yet learned that one and one do not always make two.

Nevertheless, the bombing campaign must come to an end so that the political lessons can be learned and political solutions sought. A continuation of the military offensive by the Provisional IRA can only assist those who have a vested interest in further polarisation of the people and the unleashing of the paramilitary forces of reaction.

The task now, for all the progressive forces, is to link them together because, despite the assertion that the Unionists represent the majority of the people of Northern Ireland, the real majority is its working class—Protestant and Catholic—who, for different reasons, at this point in time, are rejecting the policies and links which created that spurious and unreal 'Unionist majority' and prevented a united working class from being able to oppose and defeat their class enemies, the Unionist lackeys and their masters, British imperialism.

Whitelaw has failed. The British Tory Government has failed—in its intentions to 'pacify' the people of Northern Ireland. The latter can only be satisfied when the democratic process begins to take shape and bear fruit. The adulation, 'support, sympathy and understanding' poured out for Whitelaw in the British House of Commons on July 10, by Members of all parties, finds no answering echo from the people here. Whitelaw is seen as another Faulkner or Craig—maybe more smooth and adept, and less inclined at the moment to 'order out the troops'—but these attributes are not of the stuff that will resolve the situation unless policies and political strategy are changed. It is more than time that the Labour Opposition in the British House ended their 'bipartisan policy' and changed their role from that of being lesser imperialists to putting forward a policy that corresponds to the best interests of the British working class whom they claim to lead. The danger exists, for Wilson and Co., that they will also be rejected, as are the British Tories, by the people of Northern Ireland—and the South. British Labour cannot any longer continue to hide behind a phoney sympathy for the lives of British troops—it is Tory policy in Northern Ireland that has put those lives in danger. When that policy is changed, then British and Irish lives will be safe.

The days that lie ahead will prove grim indeed. But not without the hope that is eternal to the working class—that that class will find a way towards unity based on matters of common interest and firmly united against the enemies of the British and Irish people.