

"The task of Irish patriotism should be spilling sweat rather than blood, so that we can build a country together."

Since 1969, the latest chapter in the melancholy history of Northern Ireland has been one of partisan murder, senseless bombings, suppression of basic civil rights of minorities, and appalling bigotry by some religious and political leaders, who too often serve in both church and state.

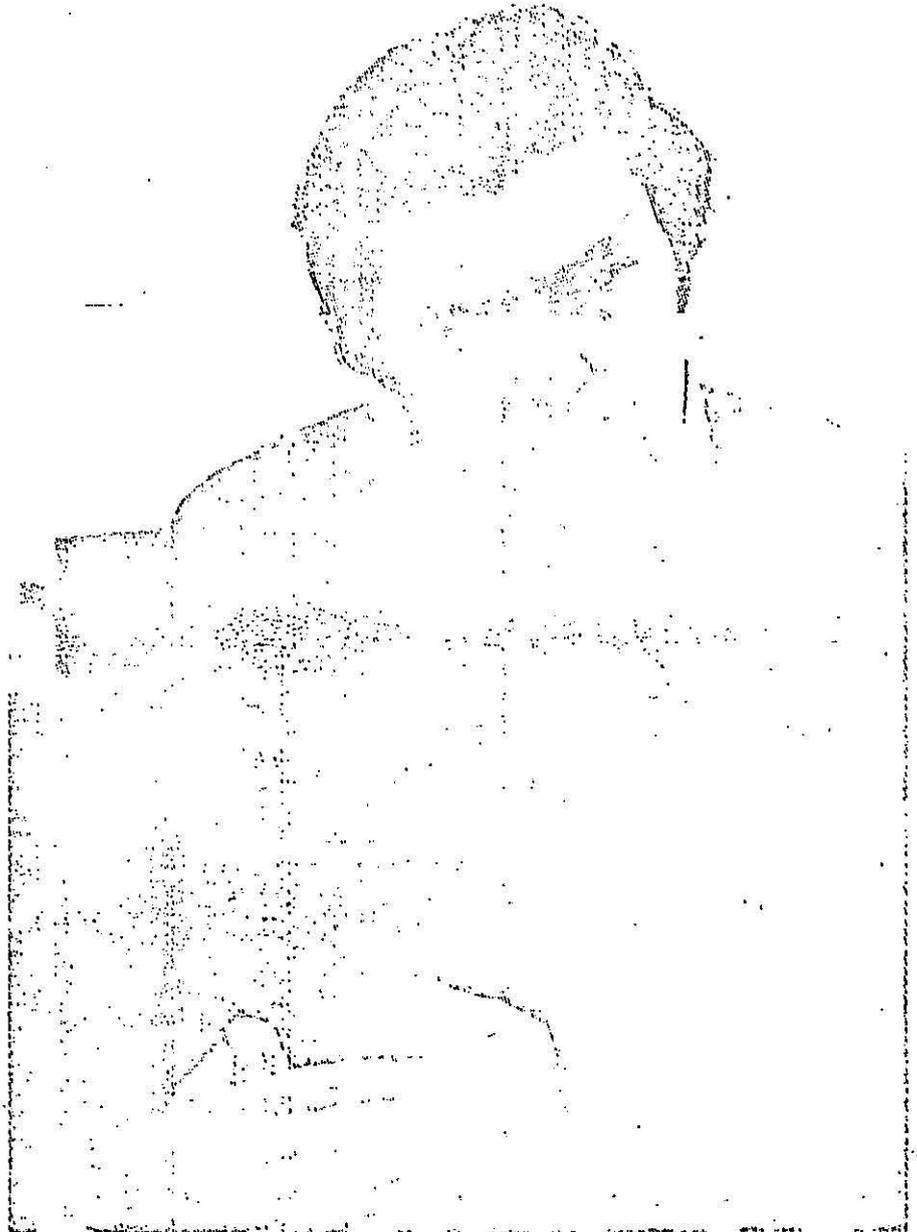
Throughout this period, a voice of reason, calling for partnership between Protestant and Catholic, has been that of John Hume. Now deputy leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (S.D.L.P.), of which he was a founder in 1970, Hume, a 39-year-old Catholic, was a member of the parliament of Northern Ireland at Stormont from 1969 until it was dissolved by Britain in 1972. In 1974 he was minister of industry and commerce in the ill-fated Power-Sharing Executive, brought down after only five months by a strike of Protestant workers.

He earned the B.A. degree with honors in French and history in 1958 and the M.A. in 1964 from the National University of Ireland. In the decade before 1969, he taught at St. Columb's College, Derry. Active in community and social work, he helped start cooperatives among the people, was a founder and former president of the Credit Union League of Ireland, and is perhaps best known abroad as a leader of the civil-rights movement that brought international attention to Northern Ireland in the late Sixties.

With his wife and five children, he lives in the Bogside section of Derry, where he was born and grew up.

In October-November of this year, he was an associate fellow at Harvard's Center for International Affairs, where his research was concentrated on conflict resolution and abatement.

The interviewer is John A. Dromey,



John Hume: "Those of us involved in political leadership have a duty to go on and on and on until we get agreement."



After the explosion of a booby-trapped car in the streets of Derry in 1974, firefighters start the cleanup. Over 1,500 people have been killed in Northern Ireland since such "troubles" began in 1969, with 103 victims slain within a half-mile of John Hume's home, in the Bogside section of Derry.

editorial-staff member of Harvard Magazine and editor of Harvard Today.

What is daily life in Northern Ireland like in terms that Americans, removed from the arena and not always fully aware of what is going on, can understand?

Life is difficult for everyone in Northern Ireland. Normality disappeared in 1969, when the troubles started to turn into violence. My children are fifteen, thirteen, twelve, seven, and four, which means that all they have known for most of their lives has been a violent situation. In practice, that means in our city that it's soldiers who patrol the streets, not policemen, armed soldiers with automatic rifles. It means that they patrol the streets in very heavy vehicles, not quite the tanks used in warfare, but very, very heavy vehicles known as Saracens.

People going out to shop are continually passing through checkpoints, having

their shopping bags searched by British soldiers or civilians appointed in the past year or so to relieve British soldiers of that task. There is of course the other side of it, the reason why this goes on, the fact that centers of cities are being bombed. People often find themselves in a store when a warning is given that a bomb will go off in ten minutes, and they have to turn and run—and this sort of thing has been going on for quite some time. In other words, a fairly unnatural situation.

Many innocent people have been murdered in Northern Ireland because of a campaign of sectarian murder, a tit-for-tat campaign—and not too much is known of it in America. First, say, the I.R.A., the Irish Republican Army, shoot a member of the police force or of the Ulster Defense Regiment. Then the Loyalist paramilitary organization shoots an innocent Catholic. This tit-for-tat thing goes on quite a bit.

What has this done to your children?

People tend to get used to situations. My children have grown up with it, as have most children in the city.

Do you live right in the city?

I live in the Bogside, one of the most troubled areas in Derry. Of course, being in public life, one gets quite a number of threats on the telephone and by letter, and one also gets quite an amount of abuse walking in the streets, but, again, one gets used to that sort of thing. That's the situation in which we find ourselves, and it's my job and that of people like me to try to find our way out of it.

Before we go into that, perhaps you can give us a historical look at Ireland, the land of saints, scholars, and troubles. Did it all begin with the invasion by Strongbow in 1170?

If one wants to understand the Irish problem, one can go back as far as one likes, but what is required is clear understanding. Ireland was colonized by Britain in the seventeenth century. The colonizers, the settlers of that day—I

When you consider that Northern Ireland is about the size of Connecticut and that 1,500 people have been killed, the equivalent figure for the United States would be 215,000.

won't describe them as settlers now; having been there three hundred years, they've as much right to be there as I have—were different by religion from the native Irish-Catholic. And the colonization being in the post-Reformation period meant that religion then was a very divisive factor. In that sense, religion is a factor today; it is a badge of difference coinciding with what is in fact the primary difference: the sense of identity or nationality, where the Protestant people who *settled* there always felt themselves British, and the Irish people who were there always felt themselves Irish. So you have the two divides coinciding, the Protestant-Catholic one and the British-Irish one. So Protestant-Catholic is ordinarily talked of as a badge of basic national difference and not of theological difference.

It's more a difference between two tribes?

That's right. Early in this century when Ireland sought independence from Britain and democratically voted for that independence, the northern part of the country, where the Protestant population was most heavily settled, resisted and wanted to retain the link with Britain. So, to solve the problem, Britain simply drew a line around the northeast and created Northern Ireland, which remained in the United Kingdom but had its own parliament, and the rest of Ireland was given its freedom. Unfortunately, within Northern Ireland was left a 35-percent minority of Irish Catholics, who did not feel part of the state from the very beginning.

Fearful of being absorbed into a united Catholic Ireland, the Protestants have since ruled the North, an exclusive Protestant rule, in which no Catholic was ever in government or ever had the opportunity of being in government. The Protestants ruled with very serious discrimination against the minority in voting rights, in allocation of housing, and in the distribution of jobs. If you look at Northern Ireland today, you will find that the over-all unemployment figure is 10 percent, but in Catholic Derry it is 20 percent, in Catholic Strabane it is 37 percent, and in Catholic West Belfast it is over 40 percent—this is male unemployment.

So this feeling of grievance developed over the years and finally erupted. The minority population consistently tried to solve its problems through normal political channels until, failing in that, they joined the civil-rights movement.

Which began in 1968?

Yes. The civil-rights movement sought

simple justice and equality, and changes in voting rights, housing allocation, and job distribution. This movement brought a right-wing backlash from the Protestant side and repression against the people involved in civil rights.

What terms did the repression take?

They were banned from holding their demonstrations. They were beaten off the streets by the police force. Then in 1969, nine people were killed by the police. Those were the first deaths. And that led to the emergence of the violent grouping on the Catholic side, the Provisional I.R.A., who were not in existence before then. It is often thought that they were always there; they were not before then. Initially, they presented themselves just as defenders of the Catholic community. But, as we pointed out at the time, there is a very thin line between suggesting you are a defender and being an attacker. It wasn't very long until the I.R.A. was on the offensive with its campaign of bombings and shootings.

Does the genesis of the present troubles go back to the Treaty of 1921, when the country was split, with the six counties in the North being separated from the 26 counties in the South?

That's right. And that has led to today's problem: How does one find one's way out of this mess? We have very clear views on it.

When you say "we," you mean your party?

Yes, the Social Democratic and Labour Party, of which I am deputy leader. We have got a fairly consistent mandate for our point of view. We believe that in a divided society there can be no solution based on victory for either side. The problem in Ireland is basically a division between two traditions. The line on the map, which is the Irish border, is not the real divide; it only represents the real divide, which is a mental division between two traditions, the Catholic-Irish tradition and the Protestant-British tradition. The way to solve what is in the end a human division is not by conquest of one by the other, but by partnership between both.

We therefore believe that the right way forward is for both sections of the community in Northern Ireland to agree on a system of government which ensures that both sections are always represented in government.

There should also be a similar agreement between the two parts of the entire island so that both the Republic and Northern Ireland work together on mat-



French photographer Gilles Caron, covering Catholic-Protestant street riots in Belfast, recorded this bloody scene when the man next to him was killed instantly by a single bullet. Bystanders vainly administer first aid.

ters of common concern in economic development of border areas, energy, tourism, and the like. We believe that this working together would, over the years, build understanding and confidence, and gradually erode the prejudices and fears that at present separate the people. Out of this cooperation would emerge an entirely new Ireland, where decisions would be based on what was politically right for people and not on outdated prejudice.

Within half a mile of your house in Derry, a large number of people have been, to use your word, murdered. Are they from both sides, or are they all Catholics?

The last count when I left home was 103. They are from both sides. Young members of the I.R.A. have been killed, young British soldiers have been killed, innocent people on the streets have been killed. It's a terrible tragedy.

When you consider that Northern

Ireland is about the size of Connecticut and that already a total of over 1,500 people have been killed there, the equivalent figure on a percentage basis for the United States would be 215,000 people.

Which is four times as many as we lost in Vietnam.

Yes. Most people who are killed are innocent bystanders, because in addition to the I.R.A. campaign, there is a Protestant paramilitary campaign of vicious sectarian murder—just simply getting their own back by shooting innocent people.

Is that the U.D.A.?

They operate under three different umbrellas. The U.D.A. is the Ulster Defense Association. The U.V.F. is the Ulster Volunteer Force. And the U.F.F. is the Ulster Freedom Fighters. Nightly, daily, they operate. Here's a clipping my wife just sent me from The Derry Journal.

The headline reads: "Derry man victim of tit-for-tat slaying."

It's an example of the sort of thing that goes on—a young man with a wife and child, with no involvement.

Why was he singled out?

Because he was a Catholic.

For no other reason?

For no other reason and because he lived in a mixed area. This is a tit for tat for the shooting the previous day by the I.R.A. of a member of the Ulster Defense Regiment.

A Catholic killed by Protestants in October 1976. Americans find it difficult not to call this a religious war.

You must understand that the religious values are not about theology. The root of the religious divide coincides with the nationalistic divide. The Protestant tends to assume that every Catholic is on that side.

Are all the Catholics on one side and all the Protestants on the other?

No. First of all, 95 percent of the Catholic population is completely and utterly opposed to the I.R.A., and they've shown it repeatedly, election after election. At every opportunity they get, their political leaders have condemned the I.R.A. outright and without reservation. The church leaders have condemned the I.R.A. outright and without reservation.

Broadly speaking, the political divide coincides with the religious one, but there are crossings. In my own party, our public representatives are mixed, with Protestants amongst them. Our party is not sectarian; we try to get both sections of the community working together. That is the only way forward. Otherwise, we will have a permanent problem.

Some people think that there will

inevitably be a blood bath, an all-out civil war.

Some feel that is a possibility. I tend not to forecast doomsday situations because I think the more you forecast them, the more the thought becomes the father to the deed. At the moment, it is very, very clear that the majority of people on both sides of the community don't want the violence, don't want the slaughter that is going on. But, to stop it, they need to be able to create institutions of government on which they are agreed, including institutions of law and order that can deal with the violence with the full support of both sides of the community. It's the absence of those at the moment that allows gunmen to run free.

Therefore, it's the task of politicians to try to devise an agreement whereby both sides will set up institutions of government in which both can participate and which both can support.

At the moment, the majority—the Unionist Coalition, which broadly represents the Protestant community, with its leaders like the Rev. Ian Paisley—is saying that it wants a complete restoration of the old form of government.

That would be the old government at Stormont with a separate parliament for Northern Ireland, entirely Protestant?

Yes. They want that back and they won't budge from that position. We are saying that we want the responsibility for governing Northern Ireland to be shared by both sections of the community.

Won't the Unionist Coalition have to make some concessions to bring in the Catholic minority?

Most reasonable people across the world would think that, in a society so divided, the only way it can be made to work is with the support of both sections. The alternative is starkly there for all to see. So I would hope that concessions would be made. The great tragedy is of course that the Protestants in the North feel that they are a minority in the whole country, and that, in an Irish situation, they would be somehow dominated by the Catholic Church. The irony is that, if the Protestant people integrated themselves into Ireland as a whole, they would wield enormous influence within the country—such influence, in fact, that nobody could do anything to harm their traditions.

But the reality is that their opposition to unification is pretty implacable. They are concerned about the lack of divorce laws, for example, in the Republic. And our view is that unification should only come about by agreement between both

sides. You can't force unity on a quarter of the population.

What about the role of the Church? Many Irish writers, usually Catholics, seem to have an intense emotional bias against the Catholic Church. Is that deserved?

The Church has taken a very clear, unequivocal stand on violence in Ireland. The Church leaders have done that quite well. They have made it clear time out of number. Of course, a lot of people tend to assume that the Irish take their politics from the Church, but that is never true, in Ireland, or America, or anywhere. The Irish people go to church in large numbers, but they take their politics totally independently of the Church. That has always been the case.

How strong are the Protestant churches in the North?

The Church of Ireland and the Presbyterian Church are the two largest. Of course, they don't wield a lot of political influence as such. Just because you have a figure like the Rev. Ian Paisley...

What denomination is he?

He is a Free Presbyterian, which is a church that he founded himself. He founded his own church, and he founded his own political party.

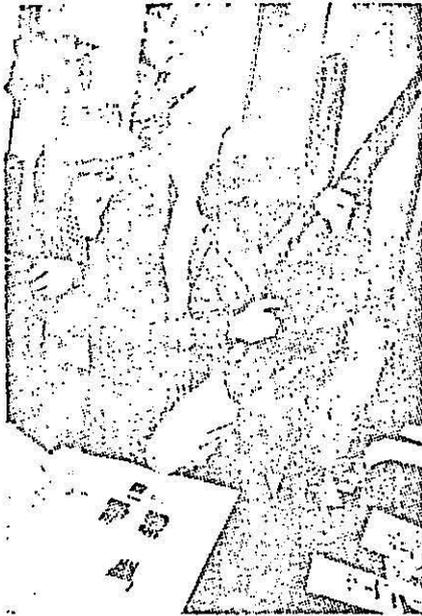
Isn't it alleged that he got his divinity degree by mail order from the United States?

What you say has been alleged. I just don't know whether it's true or not. I'm not terribly interested in whether it's true or not. What I am interested in is the fact that here you have this figure, Paisley, whom I regard as a demagogue and as an extremely bigoted man, opposed to the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church, and the Methodist Church, the three main religions of the Protestant people of Northern Ireland. Yet he is elected with overwhelming votes.

That would tend to indicate that the church leadership, who are very uneasy about Paisley on the religious front, have no influence in stopping him on the political front. But religion and politics are heavily intertwined in the Protestant community. When you look at the number of clerical gentlemen who are elected representatives, it is quite a large proportion.

Are they all members of the Unionist Party?

They are all members of the Unionist Coalition, which includes the Unionist Party, the Democratic Unionist Party, which is Paisley's party, and the United Ulster Unionist Movement, which is another extreme party that wants to



Masked to avoid identification, a combat unit of the Provisional Irish Republican Army prepares for a raid.

shoot its way out of trouble. Its leader's slogan is "It's death or victory."

How are you going to get people from both sides to draw back from such violence?

I don't pretend that it's easy. It's not. It can't be. Those of us involved in political leadership—we've got a duty to keep on and on until we get agreement. There is no substitute for a voluntary, freely arranged agreement between both sections of the community as the basis for a lasting settlement. Therefore, we've got to show that the right way forward for Protestant, Catholic, and dissenter in Ireland is not in conflict, but in partnership.

It's worth pointing out that several leaders on the Protestant side have come to agree with us. One is Brian Faulkner, the former prime minister of Northern Ireland and former Unionist Party leader. Another is William Craig, who for a long time was a very hard-line opponent.

What about Irish-Americans? For the first time ever, some Irish in Ireland speak disparagingly of their American cousins as dupes, pouring money into the I.R.A. to buy bombs.

I think one could get this out of perspective. No doubt some Irish-Americans support violence in Ireland by subscriptions. But there are large numbers of Irish-Americans who, when I meet them, are very much aware of the complexities of the situation in Ireland and the evils of violence, and who do not contribute. That has got to be said and I want to emphasize it.

But the people in America who support the I.R.A. are quite fanatical. They are more Irish than the Irish themselves. That seems to be always the way: the further people go away from home, the more extreme they become.

What do you think about the new women's peace movement in Northern Ireland?

This is a spontaneous movement of women, which started following the deaths of three children who were killed when the army was chasing I.R.A. members in a car chase across Belfast. The army shot the I.R.A. car driver, the car went out of control and killed the three children walking along the street with their mother, who was very seriously injured. There was a spontaneous outburst of feeling by mothers in Belfast, which led to the peace campaign, which has brought thousands of people onto the



John Hume in the Bogside after British water cannon dispersed a peaceful demonstration of civil-rights marchers.

streets and demonstrated more clearly than anything else the total revulsion of the population as a whole with violence. The peace movement can help bring about the end of violence and make political agreement become possible.

We haven't talked much about the British. Are the British the true villains in all this? Is removal of the British army the answer?

Obviously, I think everyone wants to see the British troops off the streets. Nobody wants soldiers on the streets enforcing the law. Our view is that we want to see them withdrawn in the context of a political settlement which allows for institutions of law and order set up with the people's support and with the troops off the street.

However, the I.R.A. view is that the British should simply get out of Ireland. We think that British withdrawal without an agreement between both sides of the community is very dangerous; it could lead to a blood-bath situation in which the Protestants simply seize power in the North—so that's a very risky approach. To us, the main, permanent element in the Irish problem is the relationship between Catholic and Protestant Ireland. That will be there whatever happens to the British. The British presence is ancillary to that. We would like to see the British presence ended by agreement between Protestants and Catholics, with a peaceful Ireland left behind.

But there isn't much prospect of that at the moment, although there is emerging on the Protestant side now, as well, a strong anti-British feeling—but for different reasons from the Catholic side.

Who are your own personal idols? Mahatma Gandhi?

I have a very strong admiration for Gandhi, for Martin Luther King, and for President Kennedy, who I think inspired tremendous involvement by young people in the Sixties in their communities right across the world. He gave enormous inspiration to people to give public service and to tackle the problems of injustice and inequality.

In your review of Leon Uris's book Trinity, a book that apparently impressed you very much, you cite Uris's conclusion: "In Ireland, there is no future, only the past happening over and over." Is that what's going to continue?

There is a great devotion to the past in Ireland, as anybody who knows anything about Ireland would readily admit. We have the Unionists continuing to march, the Orangemen marching to the sound of drums on every conceivable occasion to commemorate a battle fought three hundred years ago, the Battle of the Boyne, 1690. They continue to draw on the memory. We have our own tradition, continually romanticizing our past, our heroes.

My view of it is simply that each tradition has a right to be maintained, but not at the expense of the other. What we have to learn in Ireland is that a country is rich for having different traditions, just as you in the United States have learned that you are a richer country by weaving all your traditions together, not by any one thing dominating another. That's a simple, very obvious lesson, but it's one that we have to learn in Ireland—that unity in diversity is a much richer ideal than unity by conquest.

We have to learn that the Protestant people want to protect their rights and traditions—and it's right that they should—but the way they have tried to do it is by holding all power in their own hands. That, in the end, is a position which can only lead to conflict. They have to learn that.

Similarly, we in the basic Irish nationalist tradition have to learn that the romantic notions of Ireland that have been handed down to us don't have much basis in reality in Ireland today; that Ireland is not a piece of earth, it's not a flag, it's living people, and that there are a million of them who are Protestants, and we cannot conquer them or drive them into the sea. What we must do is seek a basis of living with them in equity, in peace, and in justice.

The task of Irish patriotism should be spilling sweat rather than blood, so that we can build a country together, and in that way grow and develop a friendship, and a confidence in one another. □

Condemnation of PIRA Violence, IT, 8 March 1977

Never in the long history of Ireland had any organisation claiming to represent basic nationalist aspirations reduced itself to the level of the recent Provisional IRA campaign against a section of the Irish people.

The leadership of the Provisional IRA have decided to murder people purely and simply because of the way they work for their living – because they are in business. Is there no one left in the ranks of the Provisional IRA who have even a spark of idealism and who has the courage to stand up to his colleagues and shout “stop”,

Is there no one who will look back over the past seven years and ask himself: after 1,500 dead and 17,000 injured, after over more than 500 bombs, what has been achieved?

It is no excuse to point to the atrocities of others. The Provisional IRA are responsible for their own actions and for the suffering they have brought on their own people. And what has the leadership of the Provisional IRA given in return to the thousands of young people who have idealistically joined their ranks and who now find themselves in graves or in jail?

In our city anyone who looks back over the past seven troubled years will recognise at once that anything that has been achieved has been achieved by purely non-violent and political means.

Derry Corporation has disappeared and been replaced by a democratically elected council. The last few years have seen a great improvement in Derry's housing situation. On the employment front we have attracted massive new industry. Can anyone doubt but for the violence we would have attracted more?