

**FROM POLITICAL VIOLENCE TO
NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT:
THE WINDING PATH TO PEACE IN
TWENTIETH CENTURY IRELAND**

**CONFERENCE, UCD,
23 MARCH 2001**

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**CONFERENCE
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN
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PROGRAMME

**Institute for British-Irish Studies
University College Dublin**

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THEME

The remarkable inter-party agreement reached on Good Friday 1998 and the peace process that has been associated with it were made possible by a striking strategic shift on the part of both loyalist and republican militants. In both cases, political violence was foresworn in favour of a new strategy of inter-group bargaining and compromise. The new climate ushered in by this shift permitted the negotiation of a complex, multi-faceted constitutional and political settlement that gained the assent of an extremely wide range of political groups.

The experience of the Good Friday agreement, as of similar accords in other parts of the world, illustrates once again that agreement on a blueprint, however detailed, may not even be half the battle: difficulties of implementation in the context of deep ethnic divisions are likely to be formidable. Efforts to implement the Good Friday agreement have confronted in turn a range of highly sensitive political issues, usually successfully. One of the most intractable issues has been that of the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons.

The dilemma may be summarised in a few words. For many, particularly but not exclusively on the unionist side, the peace process and the various verbal formulas that appear to entail a permanent and irrevocable commitment to a non-violent path are not enough: paramilitaries must demonstrate their sincerity by “decommissioning” their weapons. For the major paramilitary groups, but in varying degrees, voluntary dumping of arms and placing them beyond use is the ultimate political gesture; surrender of arms smacks of surrender of principle, causes unnecessary internal political problems and risks leaving communities defenceless in a “doomsday” scenario. These perspectives are not merely alternative interpretations of the current political position: committed adherents of these perspectives are so numerous that the Good Friday agreement itself has come under threat.

Although the dilemma may easily be described, the parameters for a solution are not easy to mark out. It is not the objective of the present conference to try to delimit these parameters explicitly. Rather, it is our intention to explore the profound historical roots that underlie attitudes to political violence in Ireland and, by illustrating the complexity of the problem, to point to the need for a rather complex answer.

PAPERS

The conference begins with a keynote address by General John de Chastelain, chair of the Arms Decommissioning Body. This looks at the background to the recent efforts to break the decommissioning log-jam, setting these in the broader political context of the Northern Ireland peace process and the Good Friday agreement. This is followed by an outline by Paul Bew of developments in the critical period before independence, and at the views of constitutional nationalist leaders of the time, caught between the extremes of militant nationalism and radical unionism.

Although the partitioning of the island and the creation of two new states in 1921-22 represented a far-reaching attempt to tackle fundamental issues in the government of the United Kingdom and of Ireland, these constitutional innovations did not result in the burial of unconventional forms of political action. Indeed, as Ronan Fanning shows, the legacy of the failure of parliamentary in the 1912-14 period provided a vital boost to supporters of extra-parliamentary action. This period thus had great significance for nationalists and unionists alike, and, as Alvin Jackson argues, later generations of unionists could use this as a reference point in defending attempts to overturn decisions legitimated by the contemporary constitutional context.

It is, of course, on the nationalist side that the use of paramilitary violence has been most obvious. Michael Laffan explores the origins of this process in the early decades of the century, focussing on the evolution of the parallel strategies of electoral competition and guerrilla warfare. Eunan O'Halpin looks at more recent manifestations of republican militancy, and examines the interplay between the domestic political context and attempts to mobilise external support.

Finally, we turn to the contemporary period. Joseph Ruane explores the tensions within the republican movement in the context of pressures arising from changed political circumstances. Paul Dixon traces a similar process within the unionist community, where the orthodox distinction between “constitutional” and “unconstitutional” parties has been clouded by tendencies within the former to consider the use of unconventional political methods.

PROGRAMME

Session 1, 9h30-11h00**Chair: Noel Dorr, Chair, IBIS**

- Dr Art Cosgrove, President, University College Dublin: address of welcome
- General John de Chastelain, Arms Decommissioning Body: The Northern Ireland peace process and the impact of decommissioning
- Professor Paul Bew, Queen's University, Belfast: Unionism, nationalism and the challenge to parliamentary politics, 1912-1923

Session 2, 11h15-12h45**Chair: Professor Mary Daly, University College Dublin**

- Professor Ronan Fanning, University College Dublin: The legacy of the home rule conflict: the nationalist tradition
- Professor Alvin Jackson, Queen's University, Belfast: The legacy of the home rule conflict: the unionist tradition

Session 3, 14h15-15h45**Chair: Dr Jennifer Todd, University College Dublin**

- Dr Michael Laffan, University College Dublin: The rise of militant republicanism
- Professor Eunan O'Halpin, Trinity College Dublin: The diplomacy of militarism: republicanism and the wider world since 1922

Session 4, 16h00-17h30**Chair: Senator Maurice Manning, University College Dublin**

- Dr Joe Ruane, UCC: Contemporary republicanism and the strategy of the armed struggle
- Dr Paul Dixon, UU: Contemporary unionism and the strategy of resistance

ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS

**The Northern Ireland peace process and the impact of decommissioning—
*General John de Chastelain, Arms Decommissioning Body***

This paper examines the impact that the decommissioning of paramilitary arms has had, and continues to have, on the Northern Ireland peace process. It selects the beginning of the paramilitary group cease-fires in 1994 as the beginning of that process, and examines how decommissioning has affected progress in it up to the present date. It looks at the involvement of the Independent Body, the International Chairmen and the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning throughout the whole period. It notes why the unionist community seeks the decommissioning of paramilitary arms as fundamental to democratic government, and why unionists regard it as the principal issue currently preventing the full implementation of the Good Friday or Belfast Agreement. It looks at why the nationalist and republican community regards as equally or more important, the installation of a police force attractive to all elements of the community, and the removal of those military structures and installations which are offensive to nationalist feelings and deemed unnecessary while the guns of the main paramilitary groups remain silent. The paper assesses that a satisfactory conclusion to decommissioning, and to the issues of policing and demilitarisation, are fundamental to the future of an inclusive government with devolved powers in Northern Ireland, with all that that implies for an end to violence and for participatory relations North and South and East and West.

**Unionism, nationalism and the challenge to parliamentary politics, 1912-1923 —
*Paul Bew, School of Politics, Queen's University Belfast***

This paper uses the writings of constitutional nationalists to illustrate the views of Irish parliamentarians marginalised by the emergence of Sinn Fein as the dominant force in Irish political life after 1918. Stephen Gwynn, in particular, claimed that republican violence exacerbated the damage done by the failure of the constitutional nationalists to grasp the need for compromise over Ulster. Indeed, Gwynn argued that the violence of the Collins era—which has been justified on counter intelligence and broader political grounds—played a major role in shaping the sectarian institutions of the Northern Irish state. Gwynn's reflections on the self-defeating aspects of the Collins strategy are linked to a wider consideration of the role of the British government. This article attempts to qualify a scholarly orthodoxy—that British policy in 1920-2, undoubtedly subject to fluctuations, was incoherent and essentially reactive; instead, it argues that from spring 1920 Britain evolved a strategy, dependent on a considerable degree of intelligence success, involving the application of a carrot and stick policy designed to lead precisely to the Treaty compromise of 1921, but available much earlier to any Sinn Fein leadership willing to take it.

The legacy of the home rule conflict: the nationalist tradition—*Ronan Fanning, Department of Modern History, University College Dublin*

British parliamentary democracy had failed in Ireland and the scene had been set for the defeat and displacement of Ireland's constitutional nationalists before the Great War began. Despite the vehemence of the conflict over the third home rule bill, Asquith and other leading Liberal ministers shared racial and religious assumptions with the Tory opposition, which meant that they were privately persuaded that the bill to which they were publicly committed could never be implemented. The terms of the Parliament Act of 1911 denied the government control of the parliamentary agenda and corroded parliamentary democracy by turning the 1912 and 1913 debates on the bill into a meaningless charade, and created a climate in which what happened in parliament was less important than what happened on the streets of Ulster. The Curragh crisis and the spate of gun-running in 1914 reaffirmed the failure of parliamentary democracy and the primacy of extra-parliamentary action.

The legacy of the home rule conflict: the unionist tradition—*Alvin Jackson, School of Modern History, Queen's University Belfast*

Unionist opposition to the third home rule bill was strategically flawed, but was a marked propaganda success. The elaboration (in the inter-war period) of the saga of loyalist resistance provided the Northern Irish state with a foundation myth and later Unionists with a political exemplar. At times of crisis—the O'Neill era, the fall of Stormont, the Anglo-Irish agreement—the militants of 1914 were invoked and their strategic legacy redeployed. The failure of Unionist opposition to the Anglo-Irish agreement has, however, stimulated a revision of the traditional emphases of unionist mythology. The present unionist leadership has discovered the pragmatism of its founding fathers and has embraced Craig before Carson.

The triumph and containment of militarism: republicanism and Irish politics after 1913—*Michael Laffan, Department of Modern Irish History, University College Dublin*

Before and after the formation of the Irish Volunteers in 1913, the vast majority of Irish nationalists were moderate and constitutional in their habits—even though for decades their demands had been rejected by Britain. A series of events, which were partly planned but were largely accidental or contingent, radicalised most nationalists in the course of the next few years. Violence seemed to bring results and politics was discredited. Ultimately, in 1922, the British government conceded to force what it had refused to democratic majorities. But a small group of militants rejected even a favourable compromise settlement; they wanted a symbolic as well as a substantive victory. In the ensuing civil war these militarists were defeated by their own methods, by force. Democracy triumphed—savagely. Henceforth, in both parts of Ireland, violence appealed only to a minority of nationalists—even if a much wider group remained intermittently susceptible to its appeal.

The diplomacy of militarism: republicanism and the wider world since 1922—*Eunan O’Halpin, Department of Modern History, Trinity College Dublin*

This paper explores what might be termed the external relations of the Irish republican movement since the foundation of the Irish state. It reflects on the ways in which republicanism’s various alliances have been analysed by the Irish, British and other states, and the impact of such analyses on state policies and actions. It asks whether “England’s difficulty is Ireland’s opportunity”, rather than a shared sense of suffering amongst oppressed peoples, or attachment to some vaguely transnational political ideology—bolshevism in the 1920s, communism or nazism in the 1930s and 1940s, anticolonialism and socialism in the 1950s and 1960s—remains the best single explanation for Irish republicanism’s eclectic range of ideological bedfellows.

Contemporary republicanism and the strategy of the armed struggle—*Joseph Ruane, Department of Sociology, University College Cork*

It is clear that the most optimistic hopes expressed at the time of the Good Friday agreement will not soon be realised. Implementation problems remain, and relations between the communities are tense. But the parties who initially supported the agreement remain committed to it and appear to be moving towards its full implementation. There are currently two grounds for concern. One is that irreconcilable differences on a core issue (decommissioning, policing) will stop the process of implementation and lead ultimately to a breakdown in the peace process. The other is that the agreement will be fully implemented but on terms that will alienate previous supporters and drive them into the ranks of dissident groups. Dissident republicans already pose a serious security threat. So far their political support appears to be limited. Could it grow? This paper tries to draw some lessons and conclusions from an examination of the phase of the conflict from which we are just emerging.

Contemporary unionism and the strategy of resistance—*Paul Dixon, University of Ulster*

This paper emphasises the importance of the political context for shaping unionist tactics for defending the Union and resisting Irish unity. Some draw a sharp dichotomy between “constitutional” and “unconstitutional” unionism. The Ulster Unionist Party, and perhaps the Democratic Unionist Party, are seen as “constitutional”, while the loyalist parties associated with paramilitary organisations, the Ulster Democratic Party and the Progressive Unionist Party, are seen as “unconstitutional”. Some unionists readily advocate violence while others completely reject any use of violence. The principal unionist parties (UUP, DUP)—it is argued—have operated in the “grey area” between violent and non-violent politics, veering towards one pole or the other depending on the wider political context. In particular, it will be suggested that unionists tend towards “more direct” methods of political action when they fear—often with good reason—that their position within the Union is becoming undermined. When these fears are heightened the room for unionist political elites to contemplate accommodation with nationalists is constrained.

LIST OF PRE-REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS

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| <p>Aichele, Ms Helga—Trinity College Dublin</p> <p>Barriskil, Mr Cain—University College Dublin</p> <p>Berner, Ms Stine—University College Dublin</p> <p>Bew, Professor Paul—Queen's University Belfast</p> <p>Blair, Ms Grainne—University of Warwick</p> <p>Bradley, Professor John—ESRI</p> <p>Brennan, Ms Jean—University College Dublin</p> <p>Bric, Dr Maurice—University College Dublin</p> <p>Browne, Ms Helen—North/South Ministerial Council</p> <p>Brugha, Mrs Máire—Irish Association</p> <p>Brugha, Mr Ruairí—Irish Association</p> <p>Bryson, Ms Anna—Trinity College Dublin</p> <p>Burton, Ms Anne-Marie—Co-operation Ireland</p> <p>Bury, Mr Robin—The Reform Movement</p> <p>Byrne, Mr Matt—Queen's University Belfast</p> <p>Caball, Dr Marc—University College Dublin</p> <p>Callaghan, Ms Marie Hammond—University College Dublin</p> <p>Cane, Mr John—University College Dublin</p> <p>Coakley, Mr John—Director, IBIS</p> <p>Conway, Dr Pádraic—University College Dublin</p> <p>Coogan, Mr Thomond—University College Dublin</p> | <p>Cosgrove, Dr Art—President, UCD</p> <p>Coyle, Ms Carmel—IBIS-UCD</p> <p>Coyne, Mr Colm—University College Dublin</p> <p>Cunnane, Ms Fiona—Co-operation Ireland</p> <p>Dalton, Mr Brian—University College Dublin</p> <p>Daly, Professor Mary—University College Dublin</p> <p>de Chastelain, General John—Arms Decommissioning Body</p> <p>Dennis, Mr R—Dublin</p> <p>Desmond, Mr Barry—University College Dublin</p> <p>Díaz-Rato, Ms Aurora—Spanish Embassy</p> <p>Dixon, Dr Paul—University of Ulster</p> <p>Doolan, Professor Jim—NUI, Galway</p> <p>Dorr, Mr Noel—Chairman, IBIS</p> <p>Doyle, Ms Margaret—The Economist</p> <p>Duffy, Mr Patrick—Department of Foreign Affairs</p> <p>Duggan, Ms Martina—University College Dublin</p> <p>Eager, Ms Paula—University College Dublin</p> <p>Faillettaz, Mr Michel—Swiss Embassy</p> <p>Fanning, Professor Ronan—University College Dublin</p> <p>Farrell, Ms Anne—University College Dublin</p> <p>Feeney, Mr Tom—University College Dublin</p> <p>Ferris, Ms Mary—University College Dublin</p> <p>Ferris, Ms Sarah—University College Dublin</p> |
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Fidler, Ms Laura—Queen's University Belfast
Freeman, Mr Robert—University College Dublin
Ganiel, Ms Gladys—University College Dublin
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Gkotzaridis, Ms Evi—Université de la Sorbonne
Gusen, Mr William—Canadian Embassy
Hallinan, Mr Diarmuid—Department of Foreign Affairs
Hamill, Mr Donal—Department of Foreign Affairs
Hammond, Mr David—Australian Embassy
Handley, Mr Patrick—London
Hanley, Mr Brian—Trinity College Dublin
Harris, Ms Clodagh—University College Cork
Hay, Ms Marnie—Dublin
Honohan, Dr Iseult—University College Dublin
Howard, Mr Kevin—IBIS-UCD
Humphreys, Ms Mary—Irish Association
Hyland, Mr Paul—University College Dublin
Inoue, Ms Keiko—Trinity College Dublin
Jackson, Professor Alvin—Queen's University Belfast
Jez, Ms Malgorzata—Polish Embassy
Kelly, Mr Joe—Co-operation Ireland
Kelly, Dr Patrick N—Dublin
Kelly, Mr Richard—University College Dublin
Kennaway, Rev Brian—Belfast

Kennedy, Mr Fiachra—Trinity College Dublin
Kennedy, Dr Michael—Royal Irish Academy
King, Dr Carla—St Patrick's College, Drumcondra
Kissane, Dr Bill—London School of Economics
Laffan, Professor Brigid—University College Dublin
Laffan, Dr Michael—University College Dublin
Lang, Ms Karin—IBIS-UCD
Larkin, Mr Felix M—Dublin
Lee, Mr Cathal—University College Dublin
Lonergan, Mr Michael—Department of Foreign Affairs
Lysaght, Mr Charles—Dublin
MacCarthaigh, Mr Muiris—University College Dublin
MacCoille, Mr Cathal—RTE
MacNeice, Ms Sophie—University College Dublin
MacWhite, Mr Stephen—University College Dublin
Maher, Mr PJ—Dublin
Manning, Senator Maurice—University College Dublin
Mannion, Mr Donal—Dublin City University
McClellan, Ms Niamh—University College Dublin
McDonagh, Rev Dr Enda—St Patrick's College, Maynooth
McEvoy, Mr John—University College Dublin
McGeough, Mr Francis—Conference of Univ. Rectors in Ireland
McGettigan, Mr Darren—University College Dublin

McGrath, Dr Ivar—University College Dublin

McLoughlin, Mr Peter-John—Queen's University Belfast

McMenamin, Mr Ray—University College Dublin

McNally, Mr Mark—Queen's University Belfast

McSwiney, Mr Myles—Queen's University Belfast

Meehan, Professor Elizabeth—Queen's University Belfast

Mennell, Professor Stephen—University College Dublin

Michael, Ms Lucy—University College Dublin

Millar, Dr Adrian—University College Dublin

Mills, Mr Michael—University College Dublin

Morrissey, Rev Thomas J, SJ—Dublin

Mulcahy, Dr Aogán—University College Dublin

Mulhall, Ms Margaret—University College Dublin

O'Brien, Mr Alan—University College Dublin

O'Callaghan, Dr Margaret—Queen's University Belfast

O'Ferrall, Dr Fergus—Adelaide Hospital Society

O'Grady, Ms Niamh—University College Dublin

O'Halpin, Professor Eunan—Trinity College Dublin

O'Rourke, Ms Bríd—University College Dublin

Pfister, HE Mr Eric—Swiss Ambassador

Puirseil, Ms Niamh—University College Dublin

Quartin Graça, Mr Luís—Portuguese Embassy

Rankin, Mr Kieran—University College Dublin

Ray, Mr Ashley—British Embassy

Roberts, HE Sir Ivor—British Ambassador

Rosland, Ms Sissel—University of Bergen

Ruane, Dr Joseph—University College Cork

Ryan, Ms Nuala—University College Dublin

Sarma, Mr Kiran—Garda Training College

Scanlon, Ms Sandra—University College Dublin

Schoen, Ms Ricki—University College Dublin

Simpson, Mr Derek—The Reform Movement

Stemmer, Mr Daniel—South African Embassy

Stewart, Mr Terry—Institute of European Affairs

Sullivan, HE Mr Micheal J—American Ambassador

Todd, Dr Jennifer—University College Dublin

Vogelsang, Ms Roísín—University College Dublin

Whelan, Dr Yvonne—University of Ulster

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The conference, which lasts for one working day, Friday 23 March 2001, is being held in **Theatre N** in the John Henry Newman building, University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4.

Coffee/tea will be served at 11h00 and 15h45 in the concourse outside Theatre N.

Lunch (not included in the conference registration fee) will be available at the following venues:

- The *main restaurant* in UCD, which is located in an adjoining building and is sign-posted, offers a choice of full or snack lunches
- *Finnegan's Break Café*, which is located opposite the conference theatre, serves sandwiches, tea, coffee and soft drinks.

The meeting will be followed by a **reception** in B107 (upstairs from Theatre N) at 17h30.

There will be a **book display** by the Campus bookshop outside Theatre N.

Other facilities available nearby include the **Students' Union Shop** and the **Campus bookshop**, both located under the library (across the bridge from Theatre N).