SCRAPS OF EMPIRE

Time did nothing to make the notion of uniting Ulster and Eire one whit more attractive to the Protestants of Ulster.

Comparatively speaking, the Irish Republic was an economic flop.

All the way up to 1970, it had the highest jobless rate in western Europe.

Its GNP grew slower over the long term than any other country in Europe.

Its income per head was the fourth lowest in Europe in the 1960s ...

its house-building rate the lowest by far. ¹

Ulster wasn’t exactly the Taiwan of the western world itself.

It took a Depression to teach it the prime lesson:

diversify.

You stick to the linen trade, and when the demand for linen goes down, the whole economy tumbles into a heap.

But after World War II, Ulster coaxed light and heavy industry into the province.

They offered financial grants and giveaways and tax advantages.

By the end of the ‘60s, Ulster led the world in making man-made fibers.
It was one of the great centers for the textile industry.

You could find all the great firms that made synthetics with their factories in Ulster...

Imperial Chemical Industries
Courtaulds
Du Pont
Monsanto
British Enkalon
Hoechst

The biggest single shipbuilding yard was in Ulster.

... the biggest graving-dock in the world, too.2

It wasn’t all smoking chimneys, granted.

The Ulstermen made themselves into the best livestock farmers in the United Kingdom.

All the same, Ulster employed just one worker in ten;
in the Republic, it stayed at one in three.3

2 Patrick Riddell, Fire Over Ulster (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1970), 203. The not entirely convincing reply of the Irish Republicans is that Ulster’s wealth was artificial: it came from big British subsidies. To which the answers could be:

– but Ulster paid a much higher income tax than Ireland did; it paid the UK income tax.

– the subsidies were the same you could find in any other part of the UK – they were nothing special

– Ulster’s economy was less dependent on England’s good will than Ireland’s was. Ireland would be ruined if cut off from England.

In 1968, the Irish Free State’s trade with the world was worth 822 million pounds; and Ulster’s was worth 1.25 billion.

Why should a place so important to the United Kingdom and the world sink and take a back seat in a backward Irish Republic ...

outvoted
and treated like a kid brother?

It was a matter of pounds and pence, not just pride.

Personal income per head was one third higher in Ulster than in Ireland.

And their kids were twice as likely to go to high school or college.

For every benefit – from unemployment compensation to the widow’s pension –
to the maternity grant –
to children’s allowances –

Ulster paid much more than the Irish Republic did.

To keep the same benefits, a united Ireland would have to raise its taxes generously... or cut the benefits that Ulster got from being part of the United Kingdom.4

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Crisis in Northern Ireland

That prosperity was part of the problem.

A spanking new economy ran head-on into a snarling old bigotry.

Because some things had never changed.

The Unionists ran a one-party state.

They picked the issues, and the one big issue was religion.

Maternity Grant – 4 pounds in Ireland, 22 pounds in Ulster.
Children’s allowance – 2 shillings six pence per week for the first child, in Ireland, 7 shillings sixpence for the second, ten shillings for the third, and in Ulster nothing for the first child, but 18 shillings for the second and a pound a week for the third child and each child after that.
Widow’s pension – 3 pounds, five shillings a week in the Irish Republic, and 4 pounds, ten shillings a week in Ulster.
All these numbers can be found in the Financial Times, August 29, 1969.
Packing the caucuses and decreeing the MP’s, who sat in the big, grey Parliament at Stormont, was the most bigoted fraction of Ulster’s Protestants, the members of the Orangemen Society.

who would expel any member of their order who so much as set foot in a Catholic church.

and who delighted in noisy parades on July 12th in honor of the Battle of the Boyne, when Prince William of Orange beat the Catholics.

... parades that deliberately picked Catholic neighborhoods to march through.

After all, what good are cries about “the Taigs” and “the Antichrist in the Vatican” if the people you’re insulting aren’t close by to hear you?

Extremists in groups like the Ulster Protestant Action yelled for laws to make sure that loyalists got first pick, when it came to hiring down at the docks or in the mills.

The worst of them belonged to private armies, like the Ulster Volunteer Force.5

5 Nationalists would say that these groups were simply gloves on the hand of the respectable Unionist leadership, the ones who thought that O’Neill was too soft on Catholics and wanted to be rid of him. And some UVF members boast this, too. But in twenty five years since the first killings by the UVF (in 1966), not a single specific name has come up and not a shred of evidence to prove any of it. The most thorough and unbiased investigator of the charge concluded that there was no elite unionist conspiracy behind the UVF. It was a working class movement, self-recruiting; there was no Mr. Big.

There’s another extremely convenient myth about the paramilitaries: that they are really Fascists (just as the northern Ireland state is seen as Fascism). But the evidence is terribly feeble for this view. The ties with European right wing groups is very slight. Usually the attempt to link hands comes from the racist right, not from the paramilitaries, and the alliance rarely lasts.
One reason is that many of the Prods were army veterans, some from World War II. You try glorifying Hitler and the Nazis, and they wouldn’t touch you with a water moccasin. The truth is, in Europe, most far right movements are much more closely tied to Catholicism than to Protestantism.

One example of discovering linkage: “The links between the UDA and NF [National Front] were even stronger. NF/UDA involvement has been shown in a number of court cases, e.g., when two men were gaoled in Preston in 1975, nine gaoled in Lancashire in 1974, three convicted in Winchester in 1974, all on military-type charges.”

It sounds dramatic. But notice the lack of names or particulars. Notice that the defendants aren’t Irish at all. The cases are all in England. At best, it’s the conviction of English sympathizers with the UDA, who have NF ties—and that isn’t the same as being in the UDA itself.

What were the “military-type charges”? The Lancashire nine were found guilty of having firearms—not many—and of drilling. Nothing in the court record showed or hinted that they were in the NF. The three Winchester cases were men involved in supplying guns to Belfast from Canada. One of the three had NF ties; another was a right wing Tory; a third had no known political leanings.

Put that together: does that show the active partnership that the words “NF/UDA involvement” implies?

Well, can we find anyone we can cite by name? Nationalists love to mention Stephen Brady, who says he was in the UVF, and later left Belfast for Britain and joined a Fascist organization there. There’s only a few problems. The only evidence we have that Brady ever was in the UVF is his word. Since he was a Catholic, and since even being married to a Catholic is grounds for exclusion from the UVF, it doesn’t seem very convincing. Brady did—after joining Fascist groups—write to the UDA leaders to suggest that they open contacts; but that only shows that Brady was trying to get the UDA interested—not that the UDA was interested or made overtures. And nothing came of it.

According to trial testimony in 1980, the UVF did attend a neo-Nazi convention in Belgium, to see if they could buy weapons and chemicals. But the Nazis made sales conditional on attacks on Jewish targets in Belfast. The UVF wouldn’t agree, and left empty-handed.

It’s worth noting too that Fascism and neo-Naziism can pretty easily be detected, by how it deals with Jews. The UVF and the UDA have no interest in the Jews, and no known anti-semitic ideas. See Steve Bruce, The Red Hand: Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 150-53.
Working-class Orangemen were perfectly willing to shoot a Catholic, if they found him out in the open, drunk and singing Republican songs.

Or Catholics heading home from the pub late.\textsuperscript{6}

There weren’t many incidents like that.

And Northern Ireland’s government moved fast to arrest, convict and jail those responsible.

But it was a sign of what to expect if the Catholics asked for more than they had –

kind of like a hornet or two hovering around the mouth of a hornet’s nest.

You know there’s PLENTY MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM. Just take a stick and find out!

The two faiths had their own schools and traditions.

Catholics in northern Ireland got toleration – and precious little of that.

It was like two societies – or maybe one society, with a pockets, enclaves of foreigners scattered inside it.

Not all of this was the Orangemen’s fault.

Sober-minded Protestant leaders worried that the schools had become nurseries for religious bigotry.

They tried to set up a school system where people of all faiths could sit side by side, from the time they were five years old on.

To know each other better might be the best way to care more about each other.

It was the Catholic clergy that wouldn’t hear of any such change.

In fact, the cardinal made very clear that no good Catholic should attend any school but a Catholic school.

And those schools, we ought to add, weren’t paid for just by Catholic church money. They were paid for by the Protestant government, and paid for generously.\footnote{Patrick Riddell, \textit{Fire Over Ulster} (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1970), 192-93.}

It was very true, too, that Catholics had deliberately slammed the door, to shut themselves out.

From the start of the Ulster government, they had been invited to choose
a Catholic priest as chaplain for the Parliament.

The offer was never taken up.

Catholics were invited to attend state functions....
and refused.

When the British national anthem was played at meetings, they
would walk out.

They refused to accept the government as legal.
It wasn’t Ulster; it was “the British-occupied Six Counties,”
as if the people of Ulster were foreigners or prisoners.

For years, the Irish Nationalist Party in the Ulster House of Commons
was the second-biggest political party.

But it refused to be called the Official Opposition.

Because that would suggest that it was part of a legal government.

And that would mean accepting the Queen as a legitimate
authority.\(^8\)

All that’s history. But by the 1960s, current events were what counted.

And those current events was a lot more Catholics, richer and with
a better chance at college education than ever before...

and still the jobs were closed off to them.

They could vote; but still the offices were closed off to them, by legal tricks.

A civil rights movement got under way in Ulster, to give full rights of citizenship to Catholics, and to end the Unionist Protestant ascendancy’s machinery....

— no more B special police reserve

– repeal the Special Powers Act

– create an impartial system to hand out local government housing

If they took to the streets in Londonderry, they had special cause there.

The Unionists had rigged the election districts shamelessly.

Londonderry had more Catholics than Protestants.

But 15,000 Catholic voters hadn’t a chance of winning more than 8 council seats to the 12 that a mere 9,000 Protestants carried.⁹

As Catholics organized, Orangemen roused all the old demons.

They wanted no compromise – not even the mild kind that Ulster’s Prime Minister favored.

Their voice was the Rev. Ian Paisley, Presbyterian pastor

an enormous man, with “a voice like a trumpeting elephant”\textsuperscript{10}

fundamentalist Free Presbyterian church

\textsuperscript{10} In the words of Patrick Riddell, \textit{Fire Over Ulster} (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1970), 174.
ferociously anti-Catholic.

(In defense of Paisley’s church, the Free Presbyterians are closer to the Baptists... which his father happened to be.

Paisley was ordained by his father.

The official Presbyterian Church in Ireland believed that the ordaining wasn’t legal, and pointed out that there are certain minimum requirements for ordination ... which Paisley never met.)

The Prime Minister was hounded out of office by his own MP’s.

And, what’s more, he lost his own seat in Parliament to Ian Paisley himself.

Protest marches in Londonderry and Belfast were ambushed and fired on.

Among the attackers were members of the B Special police – in plain clothes.

When there were riots, the Royal Ulster Constabulary rushed in cracking heads ... Catholic heads.

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11 But even Bob Jones was ashamed of him ... or anyway Dr. Bob Jones II, who protested that Paisley never did any studies there and didn’t study by correspondence course, because the University didn’t have a correspondence school. See Patrick Riddell, Fire Over Ulster (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1970), 176.
When Catholics paraded in Armagh, Paisley’s followers were on hand with cudgels, some of them with nails stuck through them, to bring about conversions.

They were a little embarrassed about being seen worldwide, trying to kill the marchers.

So they set upon the tv crews and reporters and clubbed them with lead-filled batons.¹²

In Londonderry, they stuck to the much more Biblically-approved weapon of stones.

It makes Antrim sound like Alabama.

And that’s a long way from true.

From the start, the Catholic marchers were gunning for a fight.

They carried sharpened pennies, to slash open the faces of policemen and paper bags full of pepper to blind them with.

The banners they carried on poles that had been sharpened for impaling their enemies.

They chose the routes of their marches to go through the most Protestant areas, knowing there’d be violence, and trying to bring it out.

It was then that the authorities in London made a fateful decision.

The Protestant police and security forces would be disbanded or pushed into the background.

They had shown, plainly enough, that they cared more about hunting Catholics down, than about a fair administering of law and order.

From now on, the Ulster government would have to keep the peace using British soldiers – people with no vested interest in keeping the Catholics down.

It made sense; and at first it seemed to work. The Catholic population welcomed them.

But Northern Ireland’s solution couldn’t be military alone.

It had to be political.

Unless the troops were accompanied by steps to settle the grievances of Catholics, those soldiers, all too soon, would be seen as simply an army of occupation.

The more it looked as if the Government saw the fight as simply a matter of murderers and terrorists, and had no longer view than bringing peace, there would be no peace.

Nor was there. Every incident made the troubles worse.

13 dead in 1969
21 killed in 1970

... and then, in 1971, 174 deaths

Four years, 857 deaths.

Most of them weren’t cops or troopers, the symbols of Northern Ireland’s oppression.

They were civilians.

And most of the people killed weren’t Catholics. They were Protestants.

That was because the IRA “Provisionals” had joined the war.

They didn’t get involved till late – not till 1970.

It became the unofficial army and police for Catholic neighborhoods.

Any Protestant coming in was fair game.

Any policeman taking a Catholic area as his beat would need an armored car and a military escort.

Big chunks of Londonderry and Belfast became enclaves of a separate nation.

And always the IRA inspired, agitated, indoctrinated, and added to the sense of grievance.

Every few months, the violence ratcheted up.

And each time, it was the IRA that took the first step ahead.
... shooting soldiers, not in the heat of battle, but in a carefully prepared ambush, and in the back of the head while they were urinating

... targeting the economic fabric of Northern Ireland

– shops
– factories

37 bomb blasts in one month...
47 the next
50 the next –
And every month 200 to 600 pounds of explosives dismantled by the police bomb squads before they could go off.

The range of targets continued to widen...

the bombing of Protestant pubs, for instance started in May 1971

When the bombings happened at about three a day, the Protestant communities didn’t just feel threatened.

They felt helpless, trusting to cops and troops.

The Government couldn’t do its job. Somebody else would have to – and that was what the Protestant paramilitaries would do.\(^{14}\)

\(^{13}\) Steve Bruce, *The Red Hand*, 41-42.

\(^{14}\) Was the help welcome? It’s a constant refrain from the nationalists that the British army was behind the UFF and the UDA and the UFV – that they trained them and made them into assassination squads.

But there’s mighty little reliable evidence of it. In fact, you start to sift the proofs used, and you see how weak they are. Car bombings in Dublin and Monaghan in 1974, for example. R. Murray, in The SAS in Ireland (Cork,
1990), would say that this is UDA and UVF work, but that the gang “had links with an M16 officer through a Royal Ulster Constabulary detective sergeant.” Sounds pretty damaging. And he backs it up with the statement of Colin Wallace that the explosives that killed 19 people in a bombing in Dublin “might have been supplied by British Intelligence.”

The sources all come back to Captain Fred Holroyd, an intelligence officer and Colin Wallace. Unfortunately, Holroyd isn’t a very good source, having been in an army psychiatric hospital for much of his tour of duty, where he was diagnosed as under too much pressure and was transferred out of Ulster, and being wrong on specific details in others of his allegations in his memoir. For this particular charge – the link to an MI6 officer – Holroyd has no evidence to prove his claim; nor does Wallace. In fact, what Holroyd actually said was that giving explosives to loyalists is the sort of thing that you might expect British Intelligence to do. That’s a lot different from saying that somebody in British Intelligence actually ever did it anywhere, or that somebody did it this time – or who did it. Those involved in the bombings have been interviewed in secret, and all of them deny that they had any help from the British forces, either. Steve Bruce, *The Red Hand: Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 207ff.
... the Ulster Volunteer Force
... the Ulster Defence Association

There were maybe 26,000 in the UDA by the end of 1972.

They had their own battalions.\textsuperscript{15}

Now it was that the Orangemen terrorists started getting in their work.

They weren’t just killers.

They were private armies, to guard the Protestant neighborhoods.

Where they were, the bombings stopped.

But bomb blasts started happening in Catholic pubs.

“Stiffing a Taig” was no big deal and took no big planning.

A couple of Protestants would booze it up in a pub.

They’d mull over the latest IRA killing.

Time for payback! You just get yourself a car, some weapons
and go out looking for a Johnny-on-the-Spot.

Easiest hit (and commonest): a taxi driver.
Most taxi-drivers are Catholic.

\textsuperscript{15} On the founding of the UDA, see Steve Bruce, \textit{The Red Hand: Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 49-54
And you can tell for sure, by the cab company’s main location.

They’re out at all hours of the night, so they’re always available.

A victim’s just a phone call away.

Tell ‘em you need a cab.
Don’t tell ‘em what for.\(^{16}\)

Another easy hit: anybody standing on a street corner in a Catholic neighborhood around midnight.

He’s sure to be a Catholic vigilante – probably IRA.

That makes him fair game.

And from a moving car, a sitting duck.

That’s why vigilantes who specialized in this kind of killing were called “duck-shooters.”\(^{17}\)

What’s the difference in the kind of killings, on either side?

The UVF and UDA killed people because they were Catholic.


\(^{17}\) Steve Bruce, \textit{The Red Hand}, 56.
They didn’t worry about whether they were IRA or republican. They didn’t need to know that.

The IRA, on the other hand, claimed that it picked “legitimate” targets.

You know, soldiers for the other side –
  British troopers
  policemen

But in practice, any Protestant was fair game.

They didn’t ask questions before blowing people up in pubs or crowded places.

Well before the Protestants started murdering Catholics because they were Catholics, the IRA was bombing pubs in Protestant areas.

... not police clubs –

... not hang-outs where the army personnel drank

... just ordinary pubs in working-class Protestant areas.\(^{18}\)

How did they get their money?

About half the IRA money came from the United States.

But they had help and training from Khaddafi, the dictator of Libya

\(^{18}\) Steve Bruce, \textit{The Red Hand}, 56-58.
and from the East German government.\textsuperscript{19}

The Protestant terrorists had no government aid to fall back on.

So they robbed post offices and banks.\textsuperscript{20}

And what better money-maker for groups that are protecting the community than selling “protection”?

You shake down storekeepers to contribute to your “security firm.”

Later on – the mid-1980s – they found that you could make good money in two other businesses:

hard drugs


\textsuperscript{20} Steve Bruce, \textit{The Red Hand}, 191-92.
But of course, the same thing was true of the IRA.

Anywhere in West Belfast, shopkeepers were fair game for shakedown money.

No builder could work there without IRA consent.

And IRA consent had a price-tag on it.

In East Belfast, the UDA did the same with builders...

One reason why, if you live in Belfast and you want to see the inside of a bankruptcy court, the best way is to go into the building trade.  

What were the weapons of choice?

– explosives had their backers from early on, but the first bombs were just

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21 Steve Bruce, The Red Hand, 194-95.

22 Steve Bruce, The Red Hand, 192-94.
not very safe.

They were volatile, and odds are, might go off while you were carrying it to its destination, or while you were assembling the elements.

Besides, the authorities found that they could cut down on the blasts by cordoning off a shopping area and searching everybody who came into it.

No, it’s time for old dogs to learn new tricks.

You hijack a car.  
Put a bomb in it; park the car outside the target.

Your only problem here is synchronizing the warning to people that the bomb’s going to go off.

So the latest improvement was radio-activated bombs.

or trip-wires

or “sleeper” bombs that you could plant weeks ahead of time before a prominent person showed up and then just wait till they get there.

The IRA tried one of these with Queen Elizabeth.

A few hours after she visited Coleraine University, one of them went off in 1977.

But weapons come in all kinds, and the Soviet Bloc was glad to sell...
RPG-7 Russian rockets
Kalashnikov and Chinese Simarol rifles

The high-velocity Armalite (English make, by the way)
weighs just seven pounds
a collapsible butt, so you can carry it and no one will
notice.

174 killed in 1971, 467 killed in 1972 ... all in a country with no more
than 1.5 million people.

So who killed the most? For every year that we have good records, that’s an
easy one:

The IRA did most of the murders.

The worst year saw about 100 killed by the Protestants
and about 250 killed by the nationalists...

not counting soldiers

All through the 1980s, the ratio was about ten murders to one.

From 1969 to 1989, the best figures we have are:

Security forces killed 329 people (that’s 11.8% of the total)
Loyalists killed 705 people (that’s 25.31%)
Republicans killed 1,608 (that’s 57.72%) 23

And the other five percent are unclear.

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Killings don’t tell the whole story of the Troubles.
People were wounded, or beaten, or bombed out, as well.

In 1970, security forces listed 213 shootings
153 explosions
17 bombs that didn’t go off

In 1971, there were over a thousand explosions
some two thousand shootings
493 bombs defused
500 major robberies, nearly.

In 1972, there were over ten thousand shootings
1,382 explosions
471 defused bombs
1,931 robberies.\textsuperscript{24}

The new Prime Minister at Stormont wasn’t a hard liner.

He went further to try to settle Catholic grievances than any PM before him.

He tried new means of restoring security.

– all with no effect at all.

By now, the IRA wasn’t protecting Catholics.

It had one aim: to overthrow the state in Northern Ireland.

\textsuperscript{24} Steve Bruce, \textit{The Red Hand}, 79.
Amid the bombings and shootings, the British government made another, terrible decision.

– on the advice of the Northern Ireland authorities, it started to arrest suspects and intern them without trial, on suspicion.

– and wouldn’t you know... the violence came on both sides.

But the PRISONERS were all Catholics and nationalists.

We shouldn’t think that the first days set the pattern.

Internment STARTED with a sweep, looking for IRA men.

As Protestants lined the streets, cheering British soldiers on their way – and threw packets of cigarettes –

one trooper stopped his van and yelled at them:

“Don’t you start, you bastards!
Because it’s your turn next.”

And it was. Over the next five years, many Protestant paramilitaries were arrested without specific charges and tried without juries.

They weren’t just convicted – they were even likelier to get the book thrown at them than Catholics were.

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25 Steve Bruce, The Red Hand, 222.
It was no small number, either: maybe one person in three convicted of terrorism in 1974 was a Protestant loyalist – some 300 in all.

Even that doesn’t count up the full sum; the regular criminal courts were still open, and Prods were a lot likelier to be put on trial there – and convicted, often enough.26

But how could Catholics know that, in the first terrible days of internment?

They ran amok.

Within three days, 22 people had been killed.

Catholics by the thousands had fled Ulster and taken shelter in refugee camps, to escape arrest.

Fires burned down the homes of six thousand people.

The authorities arrested the innocent and the guilty.

They used brutal methods of getting information – torture included.

So the violence didn’t diminish; it grew

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On “Bloody Sunday,” in 1972, British paratroopers opened fire on demonstrators in Derry, and killed 13 unarmed marchers.

17 other people were wounded, and some of them died later.

In Dublin, a furious mob burned down the British embassy.

By now, the crisis was so terrible that England gave up trying to work through the Northern Ireland authorities in Stormont.

If they were going to bring peace to Ulster, they couldn’t be hired guns any more.

They would have to be able to handle the whole business of law and order.

The government of northern Ireland resigned, rather than give up its authority. England didn’t try making a new one. It took charge. From now on, Northern Ireland would be run straight out of London.

Direct rule was meant to last for a few weeks, maybe months.

But it never ended.

On the face of it, you can’t imagine a move that was stupider.

How could it possibly work?
Protestants felt betrayed by Britain.

They could trust Stormont to crack Catholic heads.
   The Brits ... nowhere near so likely.

   People like that might even put through laws ending discrimination in hiring against Catholics.

   (Which is what England did, four years later)

   If their government could be wiped away just like that, Britain could sell them out to the IRA just like that, too.

   If they ever needed the UDA and the UVF, it was now.

   It was time to step up the bombing and shooting in Catholic areas, the way IRA gunmen were in Protestant ones.

As for the IRA, it couldn’t have asked for a nicer present.

   Irishmen killing Irishmen... that had always been a hard sell.

   But Irishmen killing Englishmen – that was different.

   Direct rule only proved what they had said all along:

      Northern Ireland didn’t rule itself.

      England ruled it. It was nothing but a colony.
Get rid of the English, and all Ireland’s problems would be over.

They were the real villains, not Irish Protestants.

Get rid of them, and the Protestants would shut up... or clear out.

They weren’t Irish anyhow – not really.

If they were, they wouldn’t be Protestant.

So now the gloves could come off.

467 people were killed in northern Ireland that year.

And yet, looking back, the move to direct rule paid off.

The killings went on, year after year. But 1972 was by far the worst.

The violence started to taper off.

Shooting incidents dropped by half within the first year, and dropped by more than a third the next year, and by about 40% the year after that.27

27 I can already hear the protests: ah, but the IRA and the paramilitaries may have figured that guns weren’t the way of paying off their victims. They may have just switched tactics... to bombs, say.

Fair enough. Let’s check it out. How about another marker: how about explosions? There, too, you can see that Direct Rule made a safer Ulster:

1972 – 1,382
1973 – 978
1974 – 685
1975 – 399
1976 – 766
1977 – 366
1978 – 455
What about estimated weight of explosives? The same pattern.  
1972 was nearly the worst: 47,462 pounds’ worth actually exploded. In 1973 it was 47,472. But in 1974 the number was down to 46,435.  
Doesn’t sound like much? Wait: in 1975 it had fallen to 13,753 pounds, and in 1976 it was 17,596, and in 1977 to 2,839 pounds. All the way into the 1980s, the largest number would be 11,711 – but most years it was less than 10,000 pounds.
You must be saying, well, sure – but that doesn’t prove anything. Better policing could have found more of the bombs and dismantled more before they blew up.

But the numbers there were falling, too. 1973 was the worst year, with 32,450 pounds neutralized. In 1974, it was 27,094 pounds, in 1975 it was 11,159 pounds, in 1976 it was 16,252 pounds, and in 1977 only 2,188 pounds. It never got to ten thousand pounds again, and most years was between 7000 and 8000 pounds.

Armed robberies, then? In 1972 there were 1,931. That was the peak. The next highest year was 1974 at 1,231. That was still quite a fall.

But after 1975 there were never a thousand a year: only 313 in 1976, and only 591 in 1977, and just 442 in 1978, and 434 in 1979.
And all of a sudden in 1977, it was cut in half.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{28} The Troubles killed 467 people in 1972.
It killed somewhere between 250 and 297 in 1973 and in 1974 and in 1975, and in 1976.
But in 1977, only 112 people were killed. And not much above a hundred people a year from then on till
1984.

Not convinced? Let’s try some other figures on political violence. How about shooting incidents?

10,628 in 1972
5,018 in 1973
3,206 in 1974
1,803 in 1975
1,908 in 1976
... and only 1,081 in 1977.
And in 1978, only 755.
In 1979, just 728
In 1980 there would be 642.
1981 was a throwback: 1,142 shooting incidents. But it proved to be a fluke, because the next year the number was 547 and in 1983 it was 424 and in 1984 it was 334 and in 1985 it was 237.

Under British leadership, security was “Ulsterized” –

more and more of those keeping the peace were local boys, not
scared English soldiers.

In 1972, there were over 17,000 troops in Ulster.
And the numbers went down steadily from then on...

to 13,000 in 1979

to under 10,000 by 1984.

And most of those weren’t in Belfast or Londonderry.

They were patrolling the border to Ireland.

When soldiers went on patrols, they usually were accompanied by a
policeman.

The number of policemen in the RUC went way up.

3000 officers when the Troubles began
4,400 in 1972
over seven thousand in 1979

over ten thousand by 1984.\(^\text{29}\)

Internment was phased out.

\(^{29}\) Steve Bruce, The Red Hand, 135-36.
Now, being arrested is never much fun.

But there’s a lot of difference between being arrested by a soldier — a person you can see as an invader, a foreigner, the symbol of tyranny —

and getting pinched by a Bobby.

Loyalist violence peaked. The Protestant paramilitary organizations either went home or disbanded.

Yes, killings kept running along at a clip of a hundred or so a year.

But that was only a fourth of what they had been — and one could feel a little, just a little safer.

What’s more, it became very clear that — IRA claptrap to the contrary — the British government wasn’t behind the Prods.

On the contrary, when there was a Catholic killed in Ulster the Protestant killers were far more likely to be arrested, convicted, and jailed than when a Protestant was killed by the IRA.\(^\text{30}\)

\(^\text{30}\) The leniency with Protestant terrorists is one of the IRA apologists’ favorite claims, but the numbers don’t bear it out, and the story of the trials in the early 1980s of loyalists is a story of using every procedure in the book, including a fair number of dubious ones, to bring about convictions. Indeed, the evidence in many cases was based on uncorroborated testimony of one defendant who was swapping evidence for immunity from prosecution. See Steve Bruce, *The Red Hand: Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 138-39.
Without a government in Stormont to cater to, England could look for a settlement that might end the killing for good.

It wouldn’t be easy.

Different schemes were tried, only to fail.

The solutions never came – not quite.

But one has the sense that, over the last decade or so, the general shape is a little easier to see.

1. a solution to the problems of northern Ireland that has input from the government of the Irish Republic.

   ... a share in the decision-making in Ulster

2. unification of Ireland, if a majority of people in northern Ireland consent to it

3. a disarmed Sinn Fein, where the IRA doesn’t use its guns, and where the Sinn Fein takes part in politics the way other parties do, and makes its case at the ballot box
By the mid-1990s, the IRA could see that there was no need to kick the British out; they wanted out of Ulster, desperately.

By then, the British had seen that the only way to make talks work was to bring the IRA to the negotiating table.

**Good Friday Agreement, 1998**

The killing and the bargaining went on for years. But a solution came.

--- a legislature for northern Ireland, that has a voice for the Catholics, by setting up proportional representation

And where key decisions need the assent of a majority from both the Protestant and the Catholic communities

[John C. Calhoun’s old “concurrent majorities” plan]

– a council made of representatives from northern and southern Ireland, to exchange information, consult, and deal with things that would go into effect on both sides of the border.

– self-denying ordinances all around

Britain repeals the 1920 Government of Ireland act, where it claims that Westminster has supreme authority in northern Ireland

Ireland amends its constitution so that it no longer claims that northern Ireland belongs to the Republic.
– bygones be bygones

England would release the political prisoners

An independent commission would propose ways to reform the police in northern Ireland

And those were at the heart of the Good Friday agreement in 1998.

It went up to a popular vote.
   It got 94% in the Irish Republic.
   It got 71% in Ulster.

**Aden**

Aden was at the lip of the Red Sea and the end of the Indian Ocean.

It was a British colony, and long had been.

The one part that the Empire cared about was the port, facing seaward.

But there was more to Aden than that.

Behind it lay a crazy-quilt of local sheikdoms and sultanates that paid
lip service to the Empire, and in return were allowed to do as they
pleased – and fight with each other all they liked.

... which, it seemed most of the time, was ALL they ever liked.

And because their subjects didn’t care much for them, Britain was
Big Brother to every sheik, using the RAF to keep them in
power and the common people subdued.

The sheikdoms were miserable, poor, backward.
But the port wasn’t. It was rich, efficient, spanking new.

And it got even richer in the 1950s when a BP oil refinery was added,
and the facilities for a British base were built.

Aden was crucial to Britain’s clout in the Middle East – and its grip on
Kuwait, after Kuwait declared independence in 1961.

From 1957 on, it was the headquarters of the Middle East Command.

It was to have a naval and military and air base.

In 1961, when the President of Iraq claimed Kuwait, Britain rode to
the rescue – and the expeditionary force, a very big one,
came out of Aden.

Iraq backed down almost at once.
What Britain hadn’t counted on was nationalism, an infection of it
come out of Nasser’s Egypt.

All through the 1960s, the National Liberation Front had other ideas,
and the guns to use them.

Just next door in Yemen, the royalists were fighting republicans.
    Egypt sent guns and planes to the republicans.
    Saudi Arabia helped out the royalists.

    The war spilled over the frontiers into Aden.

    Republicans helped out Aden’s revolutionary underground.

    They printed anti-British leaflets.
    They poured out poison over the air waves.
    They scrounged up guns to arm them with.

After years of fighting, Britain decided that maybe they wouldn’t keep a
base in Aden after all, and that they would withdraw their forces.

On the irrelevance of Empire

The withdrawal from Aden was a symptom of a bigger failure.

Harold Wilson, 1964: “We are a world power and a world influence, or we are
nothing.”

And nothing, it seemed, they were.
When India and Pakistan went to war in 1965, it was Commonwealth state against Commonwealth state.

Britain couldn’t stop the war.

It couldn’t get either side even to listen.

That same fall, Rhodesia declared a Unilateral Declaration of Independence. (UDI)

Britain’s plans for a South Arabian Federation crumbled even before the troops left Aden.

In Nigeria, there was a civil war, and Britain could do nothing to settle it or even to be a major player.

**Falklands War**

A remote island, peopled by hard working folks of British stock

1,800 people – 600,000 sheep.

Threatened by a blustering South American dictator

Put under the heel of his henchman, a renowned torturer of women

It was nowhere near as simple as that.

The Falklands had been Argentine till 1833 when the Empire grabbed
them.

Britain had turned it into a naval base, a coaling station and wireless outpost.

In Imperial days, its closeness to the Plate River made it a must to hold onto.

It was the police-station to enforce Britain’s rights – its investments in Chile, Uruguay and Argentina and to sally forth from there to protect citizens whenever there was a civil disturbance...

which came as regularly as Tuesdays.

But Britain didn’t have a South Atlantic squadron any more.

The islands had no real use.

To the Argentine government, the time couldn’t have seemed riper for a sudden grab.

The military junta was tottering, after six very bloody years of making enemies “disappear.”

What better way to take people’s minds off a crumbling economy than a little foreign adventure?

And besides, England would never fight to hold them. It didn’t need the islands.

Zat so? The invaders landed on April 2, 1982.
A day later, the Empire started to strike back.

Three days, and its armada was steaming southwards.

To the rescue came the men o’war of the Royal Navy...

The Ardent
The Fearless
The Alacrity

It was, when you come to it, a cheap little war.

About a thousand people were killed and 1,800 more wounded.

Why, that’s only a thousand more than the total number of inhabitants of those islands!

And over a third of the dead were done in one neat package deal.

A British sub sank the Argentine warship, the Belgrano.

368 young men lost their lives.

It’s true, this was nowhere near the islands.

The warship wasn’t going towards the Falklands – it was steaming away from it.

The attack was without warning, and at a time when peace negotiations were under way.  

But what a thrilling show of the Empire’s teeth!

Within two months, the Argentine forces were in tatters.

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Their commander surrendered unconditionally.

The junta back home came crashing down.

Margaret Thatcher hadn’t just freed the Falklands.
She had freed all Argentina.