

John Hume: The Achievement and Limitations of a Man in War

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I have not read all the tributes that have been made to John Hume since his death in 2020, but I doubt if many—perhaps any—of them have got to the heart of his real achievement, which was twofold. On the one hand, he prevented a settlement of Northern Ireland's constitutional status that seemed to be a real possibility in the late seventies and early eighties on what might have been called 'Unionist' principles (though it could have resulted in the end, or radical decline, of 'Unionism' as a force in Northern Ireland politics). On the other hand, along with Gerry Adams, Charles Haughey, and Father Alec Reid of the Clonard monastery in Belfast, he found a means by which the IRA could lay down its arms without the appearance of having been defeated—an appearance of defeat that would have had very damaging consequences for the cultural and political coherence of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland.

It needs to be said straightaway that the IRA were not defeated. Their achievement in maintaining the war and driving their enemies—the British army, with all the resources, both overt and covert, it possessed, together with the array of Ulster Protestant paramilitary forces—to a stalemate is very impressive. Pat Walsh, in *Resurgence*, his remarkable study of the resurgence of the Catholic community starting in the 1960s, suggests that, even as early as the late 1970s, elements in the IRA leadership had recognised that they could not 'win', if 'winning' meant 'securing a united Ireland'.¹ But by that time

so much energy, skill, and determination had been invested in the campaign that it had become the emblem of Catholic—especially Catholic working-class—resolve never to return to the near-50 years of humiliation they had suffered since the Westminster government imposed a separate, necessarily Protestant-dominated, government on them. An appearance of defeat would have had a severely demoralising effect on the community as a whole, the more so because so many young people were joining (with all the dangers—and excitement—that that implied), not because of any great longing for a united Ireland, but simply out of outrage at the presence of army soldiers in their streets and army helicopters in their skies.

A disruptive system of government

In the early 1980s, it was possible to believe (I certainly believed) that Northern Ireland was headed, on autopilot so to speak, towards what could have been a stable and permanent settlement. In principle, the political problem had been solved in 1972, with the 'suspension' of Stormont. Precisely because of the Catholic/Protestant division, Northern Ireland was the part of the United Kingdom least suitable for the establishment of a devolved government. In Northern Ireland, devolved government could only mean a permanent Unionist (Protestant) majority lording it over a permanent Nationalist (Catholic) minority. This was obviously not what the Catholic minority wanted. But the Catholic position wasn't a simple matter of Republican sentiment. Catholic Ulster had been a redoubt of the old Home Rule movement against the new, determinedly separatist, Sinn Féin. The leading Ulster Catholic politician, Joseph Devlin, was

did not facilitate an ending of the War on reasonable terms, it would undoubtedly have to be prolonged until it did, and it would have to be enhanced with politics to make up for the declining military position.'

¹ Pat Walsh, *Catastrophe and Resurgence: The Catholic Predicament in Northern Ireland*, vol 2 (*Resurgence, 1969–2016*, Belfast Historical and Educational Society 2016) 287. 'In 1977 Jimmy Drumm dropped a bombshell at Bodinstown when he gave formal recognition that the war was not being won by the Provos ... There was little doubt that the Army Council had countenanced the Bodinstown Address and it had fundamental consequences for the War. From then on the problem was how to end the war in a functional settlement. If the British Government

well connected in Westminster and particularly well placed with regard to the emergence after the First World War of the Labour Party. He had been very much looking forward to continuing his Westminster career under the new circumstances that would have been created by Home Rule (a relatively minor devolution of power analogous to the present arrangements for Scotland and Wales). Even after partition, if Northern Ireland had continued to be governed directly by Westminster he would have made a formidable tribune for the Ulster Catholics. As it was, with effective power in the hands of his lifelong enemies, and all the political parties in Westminster washing their hands of responsibility for the place, it was as if he had the legs cut out from under him.

But nor did the Ulster Unionists want a devolved government for their part of Ireland. When, in May 1920, the Government of Ireland Act came to the House of Lords, the Unionist leader, Sir Edward Carson, abstained and protested powerfully, saying:

It has been said over and over again, 'you want to oppress the Catholic minority, you want to get a Protestant Ascendancy over there'. We have never asked to govern any Catholic. We are perfectly satisfied that all of them, Protestant and Catholic, should be governed from this Parliament and we have always said that it was the fact that this Parliament was aloof entirely from these racial distinctions and religious distinctions, which was the strongest foundation for the Government of Ulster.²

Alas, though, it is one of the properties of power that once one has possessed it one is very reluctant to renounce it. The Unionists were outraged at the suspension of Stormont and desperately anxious to get it back again. In fact, had they possessed rather more political intelligence than they did, they might have noticed that, as a result of the suspension of Stormont (and the conviction that it would never be restored on a simple majority rule basis) something was happening that was very much in their interests—or at least in the interest of the 'Union' they claimed they wanted to preserve.

So long as Northern Ireland continued under the domination of the Stormont government, Catholics were largely (not entirely) absent from its administrative structures. The extent to which this was a product of Protestant discrimination or of Catholic boycott might be a matter of controversy but the fact was certain. Catholics found it very difficult, if not impossible, to work under the direction of people they had long experienced as being deeply anti-Catholic. It is enough in this context to mention the power of the Orange Order. Even if they were opposed in principle to rule by Westminster, however, their feelings about it were very different. It wasn't by definition an anti-Catholic government. Catholics began in large numbers to enter the civil service and other administrative structures. In the nature of things they began in the lower ranks but as time progressed they began increasingly to assume positions of responsibility. They were developing an interest in the wellbeing of Northern Ireland as a political entity. The Protestants, lacking political wisdom, looked on this development with bitterness. But they should have welcomed it.

A stable system of government?

So the Catholic 'resurgence' took two apparently contradictory forms. On the one hand they were advancing in positions of power and responsibility within Northern Ireland. On the other hand

they were successfully defying a professional army that boasted (justifiably or not, that is another matter) of being among the most capable military forces in the world. One could see in this a division of class—middle-class 'careerism', working-class militancy. And one could see it reflected in the two main political parties—middle-class SDLP, more working-class Sinn Féin. But it is more accurate and useful to see it as two sides of a single movement, a single resurgence.

It may have been the genius of John Hume that, despite being the leader of the SDLP, whose political representatives for the most part genuinely hated the IRA, he knew that the two sides of the resurgence were complementary, not contradictory. But he was faced with a problem. Left to its own devices the Northern Ireland problem risked finding a resolution that would certainly suit the 'careerist' side of the equation but would not solve the problem posed by the military side.

I must stress that I am not using the word 'careerist' in a derogatory sense. It was a merit of direct rule that career paths were opening for Catholics which had previously been closed. And this raised the question as to whether or not there was any need for a devolved legislature in Northern Ireland. A poll conducted in 1978 (the 'Northern Ireland attitude survey' by EP Moxon Browne and B Boyle) found that 96.6% of Protestants and 92.2% of Catholics felt that 'Northern Ireland should have the same laws as the rest of the United Kingdom.' A series of National Opinion Poll surveys conducted between 1974 and 1982 had posed the question of whether 'integration'—direct rule from Westminster as a stable and permanent constitutional settlement—was an acceptable option. Large majorities of Protestants, fluctuating between 78% (1974) and 91% (1981) found it acceptable. That might seem unsurprising given that this was obviously the most 'Unionist' option, but we should bear in mind that it would have meant renouncing for good all the power and patronage that went with their most favoured option: majority rule devolution.

The figure among Catholics fluctuated between the lowest at 35% (1981) to the highest, 55% (1976). The figure in 1982 was 45%. Although of course much lower than the Protestant percentages, these figures are still remarkable given that this was the most 'Unionist' option and that all sections of the Catholic political establishment regarded it with the deepest hostility. Had equivalent percentages among the Protestant population regarded a united Ireland as an acceptable option the figures would have been recognised as significant.

What would have been necessary to bring it about? When Stormont was suspended, Northern Ireland was in the middle of a radical reorganisation of local government. According to an obituary for Sir Patrick Macrory, the architect of this reorganisation:

Under the report, urban district, rural district and county councils were all abolished, their responsibilities for health care, education and planning transferred to Stormont and their remaining powers over things like dustbins and burial of the dead vested in 26 district councils. The removal of Stormont, never envisaged under the report, produced the famous Macrory Gap, eventually filled with largely nominated quangos to handle those important local government functions administered by councils in the rest of the UK.³

² Quoted in Walsh (n 1) 126–27.

³ *The Independent* (London, 13 May 1993).

In the early 1980s, the Unionist Party, under the leadership of James Molyneux, argued for the reestablishment of Stormont, without legislative powers, as a top tier of local government that would fill the 'Macrory gap'. To satisfy the natural devolutionist desires of almost all professional politicians in Northern Ireland the policy was called 'administrative devolution', but it would have provided Northern Ireland with a perfectly adequate and democratic system of government. Arrangements could have been made for a division of responsibilities among the different parties, Catholic and Protestant and, given the engagement of all parties, including Sinn Féin, in the still available lower level of local government, it would have been difficult to refuse engagement in the exercise of the more substantial powers (over education, health, and planning) that would have been available in the upper tier. This could easily have evolved into a legislature at some future date if that was thought to be desirable.

Interestingly, such a closing of the Macrory gap had been envisaged in the Conservative Party's 1979 manifesto, which read: 'In the absence of devolved government, we will seek to establish one or more elected regional councils with a wide range of powers over local services.' It was widely believed that this apparently modest suggestion had been included on the initiative of Airey Neave, the Tory Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and a close friend and associate of Margaret Thatcher's. He had been killed by a bomb fixed under his car only a couple of days after the vote of no confidence that brought down the Labour government and brought Margaret Thatcher into power. His Northern Ireland policy was almost immediately abandoned. When, in 1982, James Prior, as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, established yet another powerless Northern Ireland assembly as part of a process he called 'rolling devolution', the possibility of it becoming an upper tier of local government was deliberately excluded. The devolution to be rolled out could only be legislative devolution, granted when suitable agreement could be found (it never was) department by department.

Two sovereign governments

I have elaborated on this possibility of 'administrative devolution' at some length because I think it helps us to understand the enormity of John Hume's achievement in bringing about the 'Anglo-Irish Agreement' of 1985. It would be difficult to argue that this did anything to improve the conditions of life for Catholics or to bring the war to an end. In driving the Unionists into a state of near madness it had the opposite effect. The level of violence, which had been on the decline prior to the Agreement, rose again. But in effectively giving the Republic's government a veto over legislative proposals for Northern Ireland it put an end to the possibility of establishing constitutional stability on the basis of direct rule.

For John Hume, the advance or otherwise of Catholic interests in Northern Ireland was not the primary issue. The primary issue was sovereignty. The partition of 1920 had been a wrong done to the Irish people as a whole. The only eventual solution was Irish unity. But this could not be achieved straightaway. What was required therefore was an interim arrangement that would contain within it an impetus towards Irish unity. That impetus would be provided in the first instance by 'an immediate declaration by Britain that she believes that it would be in the best interest of all sections of the Communities in both Islands, if Ireland were to become united on terms which would be acceptable to all the people of Ireland and that she will positively encourage the prosecution of this view point.'

The interim arrangement would have to reflect the two national allegiances existing in Northern Ireland, giving them each an equal value:

In the absence of a settlement which they will regard as better than their present position Protestant loyalty in general will remain partly to Britain, partly to themselves as a people, to their way of life and to a British link as a safeguard of that way of life. On the other hand Catholics in general will continue to give their loyalty to Ireland. Immediate unity therefore means defeat of Protestants and victory for Catholics, and the continuation of the present constitutional relationship with Britain means victory for Protestants and defeat for Catholics. Either would mean the continued existence of political violence by dissident minorities.

These quotations are from *Towards a New Ireland*, the proposals submitted by the SDLP in 1972 to the negotiations that eventually produced the Sunningdale Agreement of 1974.⁴ The practical proposals were for a legislative assembly in which the position of minority parties would be enhanced through proportional representation, both in the elections to the assembly and in the election by the assembly of an executive committee. Any legislation passed in the assembly would require the signature of two 'commissioners', one appointed by the British sovereign government, the other by the Irish sovereign government. The sovereign governments between themselves would have responsibility for security. Flags of both sovereign states would have equal status. The people of Northern Ireland would not send representatives either to Westminster or to the Dail.

This was broadly the framework that determined Hume's whole political career, at least prior to his involvement in the 'peace process' which, I shall argue, had quite different roots. The power-sharing devolved government established through the Sunningdale agreement fell, as we know, through a massive strike by the Protestant working class which, among much else, had control of the country's electricity supply. But this strike was not, at least at first, directed against the principle of power sharing. It was a protest against the 'Council of Ireland' which was to be set up as part of the Sunningdale arrangements. The success of the agreement depended massively on the personal popularity of Brian Faulkner, leader of the Unionist Party at the time of the negotiations. But Faulkner had lost the leadership of the Unionist Party. His position as head of the executive was extremely fragile. The Council of Ireland gave the Republic's government a consultative role in the government of Northern Ireland. Faulkner had agreed to this on the understanding that the Republic's government had renounced its claim to rightful sovereignty over Northern Ireland. But that claim was built into the Republic's constitution. When the renunciation of sovereignty was challenged in the courts the government said in its defence that its recognition of Northern Ireland was a mere acknowledgement of existing political realities and in no way binding on future Irish governments. In those circumstances the strikers demanded that the Council of Ireland be abandoned. Faulkner and many others appealed to the SDLP to renounce the Council of Ireland at least temporarily but they refused. For them the involvement of the Republic in the government of Northern Ireland was an essential principle. Indeed, in the few months of the executive's existence they had made it clear that they regarded Dublin, not Westminster, as their own sovereign government. As a result of this—and of the insistence

⁴ The submissions of all the parties are given in Northern Ireland Office, *The Future of Northern Ireland: A Paper for Discussion* (HMSO 1972) 72–82.

of both the SDLP and the Westminster government on treating the strikers as if they were engaged in a Fascist putsch—support for the strike grew massively and the whole promising power sharing experiment came to an end.

It was of course very fragile and might have come to an end anyway but that cannot be known for certain. What is certain is that, in that moment of truth, the SDLP regarded the principle of Irish government involvement in the governance of Northern Ireland as more important than the maintenance of power sharing.

Charles Haughey and the dangers for the Southern government

Looked at from the point of view of the Southern government, however, this was a very dangerous principle. *Towards a New Ireland* had recognised the right of the Ulster Protestants to maintain the link with Britain ‘in the absence of a settlement which they will regard as better than their present position.’ It had argued that the Catholic sectarian nature of the Republic was a product of the fact that the Protestant element had been abstracted from it by partition. The Republic of Ireland would have been a very different country, culturally and economically, had the Ulster Protestants been a part of it. This was putting a responsibility on the Republic to change in such a way as to satisfy the desires of a people—the Ulster Protestants—traditionally hostile to its Catholic and Gaelic culture. It implied a considerable infringement of the right of the people of the Republic to order their own affairs. It would also—had the full SDLP programme been implemented—have implicated their government in the messy business of maintaining order in Northern Ireland—‘the provision of a firm basis for concerted governmental and community action against terrorist organisations’, to quote the document prepared by the British government to introduce the Sunningdale principles.⁵

The person who seems to have understood this most clearly was Charles Haughey. Haughey could hardly be accused of indifference to the wellbeing of the Northern Catholics. At the time when the IRA had lost its military capacity, having committed itself fully to the civil rights struggle as the way forward, Haughey was instrumental in the then-Irish government policy of helping the Catholic community arm itself against the intense and murderous assault it was enduring at the hands of the Protestants. His political career was nearly ruined when the government of Jack Lynch backtracked and tried to pretend that this was an individual and illegal initiative on the part of the ministers and army personnel involved.⁶ But Haughey never supported Hume’s idea that the Irish government should share responsibility with the British government for running Northern Ireland. Nor that the Republic, having fought hard to secure its independence, should bend its own culture and mores into a shape designed to attract the population of Northern Ireland that considered itself to be British.

Haughey’s disagreement with Hume was evident in the 1980s when Hume persuaded the government of Garret FitzGerald (who had been Irish Foreign Secretary at the time of the Sunningdale Agreement)

to launch the ‘New Ireland Forum’. The Forum’s report published in May 1984 bears a marked resemblance to the SDLP’s document of 1972, *Towards a New Ireland*. It amounts to an argument for what it calls ‘joint authority’, joint rule by the two sovereign governments in which the role of a devolved assembly is more marginal than it is in *Towards a New Ireland*: ‘Joint authority would involve shared rule by the British and Irish governments. Although this could be exercised directly, there would be enabling provision for the exercise of major powers by a locally-elected Assembly and Executive.’ In other words, it could operate quite happily in the absence of any locally elected assembly, given the apparent impossibility at the time of bringing one into existence. Nothing was said about the Macrory gap and the simple objective need for a reform of local government structures. Nor was anything said for or against Northern Ireland sending representatives to Westminster or the Dail.

‘Joint authority’, however, is only one of three options put forward in the Forum report. There was also a ‘unitary state’ and—apparently on the principle that all good things come in threes—a federal/confederal state—essentially Northern Ireland remaining as a separate state within an Irish confederation, a proposal I think from the Irish Labour Party that was never pursued with any vigour. Effectively there were two proposals: unitary state or joint authority. John Hume had clearly hoped to secure the support of parties representing ‘over 90% of the nationalist population and almost three quarters of the entire population of Ireland’ for joint authority. He was willing to concede unanimous support for any of the three options, including joint authority. But in the event Haughey, as leader of Fianna Fail, then in opposition, insisted that the only proposal that had secured unanimous support was ‘unitary state.’

Although he had initiated discussions with the British government when he was Taoiseach, Haughey was also very reticent with regard to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. To take up Pat Walsh’s account in *Resurgence*:⁷

Haughey opposed the Hillsborough Treaty, despite considerable pressure even from within his own party, on the basis that it was a purely inter-Governmental arrangement that excluded the internal political forces of the North. He pointed out to the Irish negotiators of the Hillsborough Treaty that any recognition made of British sovereignty in the North would be unconstitutional. The Agreement they signed could not override the Constitution. [In the event, in 1998, as part of the Good Friday Agreement, Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution which claimed sovereignty over Northern Ireland, were changed through a referendum.] He described the North as a ‘failed entity’ that should not be meddled with. In this way he made a grand Republican gesture against the Treaty that helped him disengage from the North on the basis that to do so [ie to engage with the North] would be futile and simply create antagonism ... Haughey’s view of the Hillsborough Treaty, and his refusal to fish in troubled waters was proved to be fully justified by the extent of Unionist opposition to the Treaty. Later, taking it to be an established fact, he moved towards lukewarm support of it. And, when he returned as Taoiseach, he kept its apparatus in being, but operated it in the most minimal forms possible in co-operation with Tom King, the new British Secretary of State, who also saw it as an antagonising influence on the North.

⁵ Northern Ireland Office, *Northern Ireland constitutional proposals* (Cmnd 5259, 1973) 30.

⁶ For this understanding of the ‘arms crisis’ see: Angela Clifford, *The Arms Conspiracy Trial, Ireland 1970: The Prosecution of Charles Haughey, Captain Kelly and Others* (A Belfast Magazine 3, Arms Crisis Series 3, 2009); Michael Heney, *The Arms Crisis of 1970: The Plot that Never Was* (Apollo 2020); David Burke, *Deception and Lies: The Hidden History of the Arms Crisis* (Mercier Press 2020).

⁷ Walsh (n 1) 338.

The 'peace process'

Following Walsh's account, the 'peace process' began with discussions between Gerry Adams on behalf of the Republican movement, and the Redemptorist priest Father Alec Reid. Beginning in 1985, Fr Reid began discussions with Haughey. Walsh quotes Kevin Rafter's biography of Martin Mansergh, Haughey's go-between for discussions with Adams, describing a meeting with Reid:

The Fianna Fail leader listened to Reid outline a scenario detailing how the IRA could be persuaded to call a ceasefire ... Reid argued that the Adams-led Republican leadership could be convinced to lay down their arms, but that this could only come about through face-to-face discussion. Talk had to be aimed, in the first instance, at ending the isolation of the Republican movement. Adams and his supporters had to be shown that a broad constitutional and nationalist family existed which they could join to pursue the objective of a united Ireland. But this would only come about when the IRA no longer felt that it was out on its own.⁸

Hume joined the process when he met Adams...

... in January 1988, when hostility toward Republicanism in the aftermath of Enniskillen was at a very high level.⁹ When this was revealed, Haughey made a point of publicly backing the 'integrity and judgement' of Hume in engaging in talks with Sinn Fein, against the SDLP leader's critics, without saying anything about his own earlier initiative. Hume then informed and instructed the SDLP to hold a series of talks with Sinn Fein at Clonard monastery in March 1988.

In 1989, my namesake, Peter Brooke, arrived in Northern Ireland as Secretary of State. I myself had left for France in 1987. Without wishing to follow the course of the 'peace process' in detail, Hume's principal intellectual contribution was his argument that any settlement had to take account of the 'totality of the relationships'—again, a matter of good things coming in threes. There were the relations between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, and between the Irish Republic and Britain as a whole. This provided the basis for the 'three strands' of the final Good Friday Agreement. 'Strand One' covered Democratic institutions in Northern Ireland (relations between Catholics and Protestants); 'Strand Two' covered North/South ministerial council (relations between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic); and 'Strand Three' covered the British-Irish Council/British-Irish intergovernmental conference (relations between the Irish Republic and Britain as a whole).

There was, however, one relationship that was missing from this analysis—the relationship between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, meaning the relationship between the people of Northern Ireland and what, despite everything, is still their sovereign government in Westminster. It was not much to the credit of the Unionists that they somehow failed to notice this. But whether they noticed it or not, it remains much more crucial to any understanding

of the present condition of Northern Ireland than the arrangements for either North/South or British/Irish Republic cooperation.

Although on paper the Good Friday Agreement was a triumph for John Hume, looked at from his original perspective of 'joint sovereignty' it could indeed be seen as a failure. Hume saw the Irish government as the legitimate sovereign government of Catholics in Northern Ireland, and the British government as the perhaps somewhat less legitimate sovereign government of the Protestants in Northern Ireland. In fact it is doubtful if either side felt any particular confidence in their respective sovereign governments.¹⁰ The normal process by which legitimacy is established in a democratic society is through elections. Owing to the refusal of the British and Irish political parties to organise and contest elections in Northern Ireland neither Protestant nor Catholic could actually vote for a party capable of forming their sovereign government. It is extremely doubtful if many Catholics ever felt any great sense of national solidarity with the government in Dublin. It is only recently that Sinn Fein, the principal beneficiary of the Good Friday Agreement, have recognised the Dail even as the legitimate government of the Republic, never mind the North. The principal achievement of the Good Friday Agreement has probably been to reconcile Sinn Fein to the continued existence of Northern Ireland, which was most certainly not John Hume's original project.

I earlier outlined two sides to the Catholic 'resurgence' in Northern Ireland since the end of Unionist majority rule in 1972—a side I called, with no derogatory intention, 'careerist', and a military side, an assertion of the dignity of a people who had suffered 50 years of systematic humiliation on account of the system of government imposed on Northern Ireland since 1920. I have seen devolution, not partition as such, as the root of the problem. It may be that had James Molyneux succeeded in his project of establishing an upper tier of local government, closing the Macrory gap, Northern Ireland would have acquired a perfectly adequate system of government that would not have had the effect any devolved legislature (including the present one) would have had, of exacerbating Catholic/Protestant tensions. This may well have suited the careerist side of the equation, but it would have left the military side unsatisfied. To that extent perhaps the skill that John Hume showed in preventing such a settlement served a useful purpose in enabling the Catholic community as a whole to rejoice in the achievement of its military wing and enabling Sinn Fein, with all the political energy it had mobilised, to assume the role of guardian and promoter of the advance of the Catholic community within the Northern Ireland framework. But Northern Ireland still lacks a stable, democratic system of government. Given the difficulties of maintaining a devolved legislature in which the roles are divided between Sinn Fein and the DUP, Stormont is continually going into suspension. If this does not produce chaos it is because the functions of government continue to be exercised—by Westminster. Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland, while continually winning seats and refusing to take them up in Westminster, do not seem to be unduly upset by this. But it leaves one feeling that the problem—the basic problem of finding a stable system of governance—is still very far from having been solved.

⁸ Kevin Rafter, *Martin Mansergh: A Biography* (New Island Books 2002) 182 (as cited in Walsh (n 1) 339–40). Walsh incorrectly gives Mansergh's first name as 'Nicholas'.

⁹ A bomb set off by the IRA at a Remembrance Day event in Enniskillen in 1987 killed 11 people.

¹⁰ This statement must be modified since the Conservative Party does now take members and contest elections though without putting into it the effort one would expect of a party that believed it had something radically important to contribute to a resolution of our problems. Sinn Fein of course is organised on an all-Ireland basis, though with the interesting twist that it is capable of forming a government in Northern Ireland but not yet in the Republic.