Heritage, History & Memory Project
(Workshop 3)

The Outbreak and Development of 'the Troubles'

A presentation by

Professor **John Barry**

followed by a general discussion

compiled by

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Introduction

The Fellowship of Messines Association was formed in May 2002 by a diverse group of individuals from Loyalist, Republican and other backgrounds, united in their realisation of the need to confront sectarianism in our society as a necessary means of realistic peace-building. The project also engages young people and new citizens on themes of citizenship and cultural and political identity.

In 2018 the Association initiated its **Heritage, History & Memory Project**. For the inaugural launch of this project it was decided to focus on the period of the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement, and the early stages of the 'Troubles'. To accomplish this, it was agreed to host a series of six workshops, looking at different aspects of that period, with each workshop developing on from the previous one.

The format for each workshop would comprise a presentation by a respected commentator/historian, which would then be followed by a general discussion involving people from diverse political backgrounds, who would be encouraged to share not only their thoughts on the presentation, but their own experiences and memories of the period under discussion.

This pamphlet details the *third* of those workshops. The guest speaker was **John Barry**, Professor of Green Political Economy, School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics, Queen's University, Belfast.

Professor Barry's PowerPoint presentation can be downloaded at:
https://www.academia.edu/38366665/The_origins_and_development_of_the_Troubles

The event was held at Queen's University, Belfast. The general discussion which followed was facilitated by **Deirdre Mac Bride**.

Immediately after Professor Barry's presentation a wide-ranging discussion ensued, the participants in this discussion themselves reflecting a wide variety of backgrounds. While Professor Barry's presentation is recorded here in full, of necessity the general discussion had to be edited to fit into the available space.

Harry Donaghy *Co-ordinator*, The Fellowship of Messines Association

The outbreak and development of 'the Troubles'

Professor **John Barry**

1: By way of introduction

If you look at Wikipedia, this is what you read about the origin of the Troubles:

> The conflict began during a campaign to end discrimination against the Catholic/nationalist minority by the Protestant/unionist government and police force. The authorities attempted to suppress this protest campaign and were accused of police brutality; it was also met with violence from loyalists, who alleged it was a republican front. Increasing inter-communal violence, and conflict between nationalist youths and police, eventually led to riots in August 1969 and the deployment of British troops. Some Catholics initially welcomed the army as a more neutral force, but it soon came to be seen as hostile and biased. The emergence of armed paramilitary organisations led to subsequent warfare over the next three decades.

I should say that what I am offering you here today is not the definitive truth. I will be asking you more questions than giving answers, although I do have some lines of enquiry around how the Troubles started, what the impacts were, whether they could have been prevented... and so on. But the Wikipedia entry is the standard, dominant narrative, which may or may not be the case for the people in the audience today.

My presentation could be entitled 'Troubling the Troubles', in the sense that in my analysis I may be shaking up some of the received wisdom which underpins the dominant narratives of the origins of the Troubles.

Instead of simply sign-pointing when things happened, I am interested in *why* it happened *then*, and why it took the particular form that it did. I feel it is important to have a pluralism in our understanding of the development of the Troubles.

So, why and how should we reflect on this period? What is at stake in looking at the origins and development of the Troubles? *Some suggestions:*

   (1) To have an 'accurate' historical record of events?

(2) To have accurate and agreed reasons for why, and the way, events unfolded?

(3) To have a comprehensive record/account – that is, to consider marginal, overlooked events, issues, organisations and people?

(4) To learn the lessons of history so we don't repeat the mistakes of the past?

(5) To (re)interpret the past to justify some actors, actions, justifications or particular historical narratives?

(6) Or reading the past for current political motives or purposes?

You have probably seen this quote from William Faulkner: "The past is never dead. It's not even past."

Now, some (dis)orientation questions to begin with:

How did a (relatively) modern European society descend into a bloody civil war?

Why is this period called 'the Troubles'? (To me such a term is a way of minimising the enormity of what happened.)

Was it a 'sectarian war/conflict'?

A civil war? And, indeed, a just/justified war? (There is a long-standing Catholic/nationalist tradition of 'just' war.)

Or was it criminality and illegality on a large scale, which is how some people describe it?

Or organised disorder and 'hooliganism', as some state force perspectives put it?

What is hidden and obscured when we describe this period as 'the Troubles'? We can't agree what we even call this place, yet there seems to be general agreement on the term 'the Troubles'.

Could they have been avoided?

Given the reality of discrimination, etc., why did it take so long, why didn't it erupt earlier?

I don't think there can be 'one truth' about the past, or the cause of the conflict. And we do have a tendency in Northern Ireland to 'march confidently into the future looking backwards', in terms of our obsession with the past.

So, I am not offering you 'the truth'; I think there is far too much of this dogmatic assertion of the imposition of one narrative, to the exclusion of pluralism and variety.

2: A chronology of events

The large-scale, macro-political and indeed economic aspect of the origins of the Troubles for me is O'Neill's liberal/reformist Unionism, from 1963 to '69. There was a new Labour government in Britain and it was a period of economic reform and modernisation. Also, the Northern Ireland Labour Party had become quite strong electorally, so you could say that O'Neill's reforms were a way of winning back the loyalist working class to the Ulster Unionist Party. And under O'Neill there was a pragmatic co-operation with the Republic of Ireland and Taoiseach Sean Lemass. But it wasn't as if O'Neill was leading a *united* Ulster Unionist Party. He was constantly being undermined from within: by William Craig, the Orange Order and James Kilfedder.

A series of meetings are happening in the sixties. The public meetings between Lemass and O'Neill, opposed by Rev Ian Paisley. But also there were secret meetings going on as well, in terms of the reactivation of the UVF [Ulster Volunteer Force], particularly with Gusty Spence. And again this is contested, but one of the interpretations is that elements within the Ulster Unionists contact Gusty Spence and ask him to reform the UVF because of fears of an incipient rebellion by the IRA. 1966 is the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising and there will be commemorations across the island. But it was also connected to anti-reform/liberal Unionism of the time. As I said, this is contested, so people here may disagree.

In 1967 we have the founding of the Civil Rights Association. And then, if we look west, to Derry, we have the Derry Housing Action Committee focusing on housing in the city. Derry had some of the worst housing and unemployment in Europe and its provision was a classic case of gerrymandering. Even though we have a majority Catholic city, Londonderry Corporation returns a predominantly unionist complement. (14,429 Catholic voters returned 8 nationalist councillors, while 8,781 Protestant voters returned 12 councillors.) And there are also issues around the location of Northern Ireland's second

> **"I can't possibly say that I knew the ins and outs of the political machinations in the background because I didn't. I was approached to join the UVF. The way the story was put to me was that there was incipient rebellion and I had taken an oath to Her Majesty to defend her – it seems grandiose – against her enemies foreign and domestic. I saw my service in the UVF as a continuation of my British Army service."**
> *Gusty Spence, 1981*

university at Coleraine rather than Derry, and, to add insult to injury, the Lockwood Report by the Stormont government recommends the closure of Derry's third-level institution, Magee College.

In March 1968 the Derry Housing Action Committee disrupt a meeting of Londonderry Corporation. In April 1968 the Civil Rights association hold a protest at the banning of Easter parades in republican areas, and in May there is another protest action by Derry Housing Action Committee at the Guildhall. Then we have the first Civil Rights march, from Coalisland to Dungannon.

On 5 October we have that major event – the Civil Rights march in Derry where marchers were batoned by the RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary] – and soon afterwards we see the formation of the People's Democracy, largely, but not completely, based at Queen's University. Then the formation of the Derry Citizen's Action Committee, with Ivan Cooper and John Hume as chair and vice-chair.

The demands of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association were: 'One man, one vote'; an end to gerrymandering (such as was seen in Derry); an end to discrimination on housing allocation, but also in public sector employment; repeal of the Special Powers Act; and the disbanding of the 'B-Specials' (as they were viewed by the Catholic/nationalist community as a sectarian force).

And, of course, there is a connection with what is going on in America with the Civil Rights campaign led by Martin Luther King Jr., with the struggle of African Americans seeking their civil rights being connected with both Catholics *and* Protestants here. The *perceived* narrative is that the Civil Rights movement was promoting Catholic rights, but significant actors in the Civil Rights movement, particularly People's Democracy, saw civil rights in terms of Protestants *and* Catholics.

On 22 November 1968 Terence O'Neill announced a reform package:

(1) A 'Development Commission' to take over the powers of Londonderry Corporation;
(2) An Ombudsman to investigate complaints against government departments;
(3) The allocation of houses by local authorities to be based on need;
(4) The Special Powers Act to be abolished when deemed safe to do so; and
(5) Some reform of the local government franchise (the end of the company votes).

Then, 9 December, we have O'Neill making his famous 'At the Crossroads' broadcast, in response to the growing agitation on the ground. The speech gains

some public support. Derry Citizens Action Committee calls for a halt to all marches and protests for a period of one month.

However, 40 members of People's Democracy march from Belfast to Derry in January 1969, and are ambushed at Burntollet. In a way, this is *the* moment in which we see the emergence of an assertive civil society meeting violence from the state. There is an organised attack against the marchers about seven miles outside Derry. It was planned in advance, and some off-duty police officers took part in it. TV images were beamed around the world, showing the state's coercive response to the fairly modest demands of the Civil Rights movement. And that might be partly why some people lost faith in the capacity of the system to reform: if they can't even give in to these modest reforms what about larger reforms which may be required?

But at the same time there were other discussions going on. You had Cathal Goulding – the IRA's chief of staff – saying that if the Civil Rights movement fails, we'll go back to war. That was the omnipresent, dual strategy, if you like: if Civil Rights don't work, well then, we have this other option, and constitutional methods will go overboard.

In February 1969 there was a Stormont election and we get, as we often see in Unionist politics, the fragmentation of Unionism under pressure: you get 'Official' versus 'Unofficial Unionists'. You also have violence on the ground, in this case the UVF planting bombs against power and water installations and blaming the IRA.

Bernadette Devlin gets elected on 22 April, and makes her maiden speech in the House of Commons. In the speech she makes it clear that her understanding of the Civil Rights movement is for the oppressed "ordinary people, Catholic

"the hon. Gentleman [Chichester-Clarke] has no understanding of my people, because Catholics and Protestants are the ordinary people, the oppressed people from whom I come and whom I represent. ... We came to the situation in Derry when the people had had enough. Since 5th October, it has been the unashamed and deliberate policy of the Unionist Government to try to force an image on the civil rights movement that it was nothing more than a Catholic uprising. The people in the movement have struggled desperately to overcome that image, but it is impossible when the ruling minority are the Government and control not only political matters but the so-called impartial forces of law and order. It is impossible then for us to state quite fairly where we stand."

Bernadette Devlin, House of Commons, April 1969

and Protestant", not just Catholics. But she is aware that the Unionist government is trying to ferment the view of Civil Rights as nothing more than a Catholic uprising.

In April 1969 the Unionist Parliamentary Party vote narrowly to introduce universal adult suffrage in local government elections in Northern Ireland. But Chichester-Clarke resigns in protest and this soon leads to O'Neill being replaced by Chichester-Clark. O'Neill, released from the burden of power, gives an extraordinary interview to the *Belfast Telegraph*, in which he says "If you treat Roman Catholics with due consideration and kindness they will live like Protestants in spite of the authoritative nature of their Church." And remember O'Neill is the liberal reformist unionist.

And then we have another signal event in the early birth of the Troubles: the Battle of the Bogside. The Apprentice Boys of Derry march on the 12 August leads to large-scale violence over a number of days and nights in Derry and then Belfast. Ten people are shot dead, 154 wounded, there is mass sectarian rioting, hundreds are burned from their homes in Belfast, and the RUC becomes the first police force in the UK to use CS gas on a civilian population.

The British government sends in troops on the 15 August. On 10 October the Hunt Report recommends that the RUC should become an unarmed force and that the Ulster Special Constabulary (the 'B-Specials') should be disbanded.

Events are also taking place down South. Charles Haughey and Neil Blaney, two ministers of the Fianna Fáil government, were accused of a plot to import arms for the IRA. You could say, although it is disputed, that this is not a rogue element, and that Jack Lynch, who was the Taoiseach, did know about this, although he claimed he didn't. Lynch had said that if the nationalist population in Northern Ireland were attacked the Irish state would 'not stand idly by'. But against that, you have the opposite view, from an IRA volunteer, Jack Kelly, saying that because the Irish state *didn't* intervene this then created the conditions for community self-defence and the revival of the IRA as an organisation to defend Catholic/nationalist areas against attack.

> **"It is frightfully hard to explain to Protestants that if you give Roman Catholics a good job and a good house, they will live like Protestants ... they will refuse to have 18 children.... If you treat Roman Catholics with due consideration and kindness, they will live like Protestants in spite of the authoritative nature of their church."**
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> *Terence O'Neill, interview in Belfast Telegraph, 10 May 1969*

We have the famous phrase from Brendan Behan: "The first item on the republican agenda – the split." We have the split in the republican movement, between the Officials and the Provisionals. Both organisations embark on violence but with a military strategy from the Provisionals, while the Officials pursue a Marxist, class-based one.

Then at the Sinn Féin Árd Fheis on 10 January 1970, Seán Mac Stíofáin pledges allegiance to the Provisional Army Council and leads a walkout of those who would become Provisional Sinn Féin.

You could say that this is the beginning of the entrenching of the norm of violence as a legitimate option from a certain perspective, and why class-politics – the Official IRA position – was not going to get what was needed in terms of the protection of the Catholic population.

On the other side, in terms of loyalism, we get the development of the UDA [Ulster Defence Association] within the Protestant working class, a populist movement for community self-protection, with quite significant numbers – between 40-50,000 men and women members. (As an example of its power, in one particular stand-off the UDA establish a no-go area between the Shankill and Springfield Roads, and the British Army basically have to negotiate with them. The UDA is able to assemble 8,000 men in 90 minutes.)

August 1970 sees the formation of the SDLP [Social Democratic and Labour Party] led by Gerry Fitt, John Hume, Paddy Devlin and Austin Curry.

In February 1971 the first British soldier is shot dead by the IRA.

In March 1971 Chichester-Clark is replaced by Brian Faulkner.

In July the SDLP resign from Stormont.

Then, on 9 August, we have Internment, a signal event in terms of mobilising Catholic nationalist anger; the policy leads to widespread violence with 17 people losing their lives within 48 hours (including the Ballymurphy Massacre). There is more widespread intimidation of people out of their homes.

In September the Rev. Ian Paisley announces the formation of the DUP [Democratic Unionist Party].

In December 15 Catholics are killed by a UVF bomb at McGurk's Bar, and a week later four Protestants, including two children, are killed by an IRA bomb on the Shankill Road.

And then, at the end of January 1972, we have yet another traumatic and signal event: Bloody Sunday, with 13 people shot dead by British paratropers. In Dublin a crowd marches to the British embassy and burns it down.

Things now begin to spiral out of control, Stormont falls and Direct Rule is imposed by Westminster on 24 March 1972. And the reason is *not* that London came in and insisted on abolishing Stormont; the British government asserted that it was going to take back policing and security powers, and this was refused by Faulkner, who then resigned and Direct Rule is imposed. This then means the end of years of Unionist misrule in Northern Ireland. Yet, despite the fall of Stormont, Northern Ireland will see decades of further violence.

3: Analysis of the period

We are going to move away now from the minutiae, the detail, of the events and look at some of the analyses, reasons, as to why it happened. I came across this interesting article, it's quite old: 'How public opinion polls were used in support of the Northern Ireland Peace Process'. [Colin Irwin, *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 1 No. 1, September 2001]

The authors ask the question: 'The Troubles – Who was to blame?'

So, here's what the Protestants respondents said lay at the root of the Troubles:

• The IRA and their use of violence **87%** (For Catholics, while it's still not a majority, **45%** agree)

• *All* paramilitary groups and their use of violence **67%** (Catholics are not a million miles away on **56%**)

• Failure of government/security forces to deal with terrorism **56%** (Catholics **34%**)

• The Republic's territorial claim on Northern Ireland **53%** (Catholics **21%**)

• Loyalist paramilitaries and their use of violence **53%** (Interestingly this is where Catholics, on **57%**, and Protestants are almost equal in agreement)

• The Republic's involvement in Northern Ireland **42%** (Catholics **16%**)

We then look at the Catholic perspective:

• The lack of equality and continued discrimination **71%** (Protestants **21%**)

• The sectarian division of Northern Ireland politics **66%** (Protestants **30%**)

• Failure to provide a police service acceptable to all **62%** (Protestants **9%**)

• The failures of Northern Ireland politicians **59%** (Protestants **31%**)

• Lack of respect for people of the 'other' tradition **57%** (Protestants **30%**)

• Loyalist paramilitary groups and their use of violence **57%** (Protestants **53%**)

• *All* paramilitary groups and their use of violence **56%** (Protestants **67%**)

• Unaccountable and secretive government *52%* (Protestants **31%)**

• Continued British presence in Ireland **51%** (Protestants **17%**)

This is quite an old survey, and you would wonder, if it was run again, if you would get a similar perspective. But essentially the headline is that, for Protestants, the Troubles are caused by the IRA, whereas for Catholics the Troubles are the result of the discrimination of the Stormont regime.

And at the bottom of the Catholic perception is continued British presence.

Now, some of the reasons that I can offer – in terms of an invitation to discussion – for the Troubles: *Why* did it start?

• Long simmering tensions within society ever since Partition in 1921.

• Again, we can be provocative and say that Stormont was essentially an apartheid state, in terms of a large section of the community feeling like second-class citizens.

• Multiple injustices, inequality, gerrymandering, and the failure to follow post-war Labour government local government reforms. If they had been put in place would the Troubles have been prevented or markedly reduced in their intensity?

• And there is an impact of the actual form of the Unionist state, felt particularly in Catholic working-class communities, but also felt among the Protestant working class, in terms of 'Big House Unionism', using Loyalist working-class communities in their own interests.

• And it is a one-party state. It is a complete anomaly in European terms to have one political party dominating a state for almost 50 years.

• And particularly there was a decision made by the Stormont regime in 1922 to abolish proportional representation, and you could say that it was partly using the electoral system on a macro scale to gerrymander the Province, to ensure that areas, particularly west of the Bann, that didn't have an overwhelming Unionist majority, could stay part of a Northern Ireland state.

I think we have to realise that people didn't wake up in 1969 and suddenly decide to engage in war and support armed conflict. There was discrimination, in jobs, housing, votes; the Special Powers Act was anti-democratic. Even if the amount of discrimination was perhaps exaggerated, *perception is reality*. We often underestimate the importance of perception, and stories, that we have around

issues like injustice and discrimination. And there was a constant minority within the Catholic/nationalist/republican community who wanted a United Ireland. You could also say that Northern Ireland was a 'failed state' – and that is a common description – and it is shown to the world as unreformable.

I also think we underestimate the importance of the media, especially the impact on the British government, who had practiced decades of benign neglect, but now the violence, the mayhem, was being beamed around the world.

And there is also the shift when Civil Rights agitation – basically looking for British rights for British citizens – is quickly overtaken by 'Brits Out!' So reform within Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom is replaced by revolution, of wanting to create a United Ireland and to challenge the British presence.

David Trimble gave a very interesting speech when he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1988. And this is perhaps the first senior Unionist to recognise that under the Stormont regime "it was a cold house for Catholics", and you could say that was some recognition of what the Civil Rights movement was talking about in terms of discrimination. But he also goes on, and I think

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"The majority of the people of Ireland are Catholic and we believe in Catholic principles. And as the majority are Catholics, it is right and natural that the principles to be applied by us will be principles consistent with Catholicity."
Eamon De Valera, 1931

"I am an Orangeman first and a politician ... afterwards. In the South they boasted of a Catholic state. They still boast of Southern Ireland being a Catholic state. All I boast is that we are a Protestant Parliament and a Protestant state."
Sir James Craig, 1934

"Ulster Unionists, fearful of being isolated on the island, built a solid house, but it was a cold house for Catholics. And northern nationalists. although they had a roof over their heads, seemed to us as if they meant to burn the house down. ... None of us are entirely innocent. But thanks to our strong sense of civil society, thanks to our religious recognition that none of us are perfect, thanks to the thousands of people from both sides who made countless acts of good authority, thanks to a tradition of parliamentary democracy which meant that paramilitarism never displaced politics, thanks to all these specific, concrete circumstances we, Thank God, stopped short of that abyss that engulfed Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia and Rwanda."
David Trimble, Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, 10 December 1998

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this is what makes Northern Ireland an interesting conflict to study, is that unlike Rwanda, Kosovo and Somalia, we never moved in the conflict to all-out genocide. In terms of fatalities, Northern Ireland is quite small in terms of ethno-nationalist conflicts.

You could also ask what is the Marxist analysis of what happened here? You could say that any war is always a gun with a working-class person at either end, in particular in terms of the intensity of the conflict in working-class areas. The Marxist analysis is that the Troubles were an inevitable outcome of Partition and Imperialism, which divides the working-class in Ireland, geographically North and South, and then into Catholic and Protestant, in the interests of British and 'big house Unionism'. Hadden wrote that the oppressed people were the working class, not the Catholic working class but *Catholic and Protestant* working class. There *was* the possibility of a cross-community working-class potential, that I certainly think the People's Democracy tried to mobilise. According to Hadden, 1968 was "a revolutionary opportunity [but] as in France it was betrayed by the leaders of the workers' organisations." In order words, what were the trade unions doing? Where were the remnants of the Northern Ireland Labour Party, while all of this was happening? Hadden's argument was that it was left to other organisations to lead the mobilisation. The genie had been let out of the bottle and events were led now, not by class interests, but more sectarian ones.

O'Neill's reforms. A former colleague of mine, Lord Paul Bew, in reflecting on this, argues that the Catholic middle class and the Church were quite happy with O'Neill's reforms, and his view is that the People's Democracy Burntollet march was the one which destroyed that. The People's Democracy members were too young, too infected with this anti-imperialist, Marxist stuff, they were pushing too hard, too quickly on O'Neill in terms of what his government could deliver. They should have been more patient. However, the radicalisation of young people in the sixties was a world-wide phenomenon, when young people everywhere were challenging the system and the older generation. And, on top of all that, there is an assertive and confident nationalist working class, born out of conflict particularly after engaging with state forces.

The *promise* of the Civil Rights movement was cross-community, and also cross-class. Bernadette Devlin's speech encapsulates that view of the Civil Rights movement, where she talks about about the Catholic *and* Protestant working class, in terms of social housing, jobs, as the issues that needed to be attended to. But you could say that it wasn't strong enough to withstand the

unionist backlash, particularly in terms of Paisleyism and the development of loyalist paramilitarism and so on.

And there is also this period of momentum, moving back and forwards, not as Hadden says between class and sectarianism, but with the pendulum swinging from high-level politics in Westminster and Stormont and Dublin, to the facts down on the ground, to what is happening on the streets.

And again, and this might be controversial, but neither the national state or the local Stormont state was neutral in this conflict, and that added another layer of complication in this period.

Here is a quote from Alexis de Tocqueville, a French aristocrat: "The most perilous moment for a bad government is one when it seeks to mend its ways." For me, it encapsulates in one sentence the problem that we had in the reforming O'Neill liberal Unionist regime at Stormont. The O'Neill reform package created more risks and threats than it actually provided solutions. For some it was too little, too late, particularly for elements within the Catholic working-class community. And for some Protestant 'big house' unionists or aspects of working-class loyalism, it was too much too soon. It leads to a Protestant/Paisleyite backlash and the common perception that the Civil Rights movement is simply a republican plot.

Then the insecurity of many Protestant unionists in Northern Ireland, this 'siege mentality', particularly when they can't trust London. The Republic of Ireland is seen as a constant threat on its borders, and for some unionists you have to build a 'cold house', as Trimble said, to maintain their autonomy. And even the presence of British troops is not enough to reassure many loyalists or unionists, in terms of the outbreak of loyalist paramilitarism in response to the IRA threat.

And here's a question: Is 'perfidious Albion' a greater threat to Northern Ireland Unionism than to Irish Nationalism, in terms of the contingent connection between the loyalty, the fidelity, that many Protestant unionists feel towards London, but which is not reciprocated? This raises the interesting question: how can you have a 'union' which is asymmetrical?

We then descend into war. And in the case of the unionist community the disarming of the RUC and the replacement of the B-Specials is seen as losses to community protection. And also, because London insists on them, you could say this led then to elements within the unionist community not being able to trust London in terms of the decisions it was making. You get the development

then of loyalist paramilitaries as a way of responding to the IRA threat, not trusting the British Army or, indeed, the RUC, and engaging in their own war against republicans.

And although initially the IRA wasn't very effective it still hadn't gone away. This then changes, particularly in late '69, to community self-defence, with at least the tactic support of elements of the Irish government.

Rosemary Nelson says that we shouldn't see paramilitary organisations as an aberration, in the context of the history of this island, but simply an extreme version of what we have always had – this bubbling underneath, this resort to violence when non-violent means don't work.

But there is also then a more assertive political loyalist working class, arguing for what we would now see as the elements of power-sharing within loyalism: Loyalism challenging 'big house Unionism'.

We also get the shattering of the unionist monolith, the split within unionism. We also get the Alliance Party. The end of the NILP. The emergence of the SDLP. And the split in Irish Republicanism. There are lots of churning, changes going on in movements and organisations.

I think an under-remarked aspect of this, and I thank Adrian Guelke, who pointed out that the *Irish* component of many Unionist/Protestant people's identities was completely robbed of them once the IRA campaign begins. Is there a reassertion of this with this new 'Northern Irish' identity that seems to be growing, particularly among young people?

And again within the unionist loyalist political class, once the IRA campaign begins it confirms their earlier view that what Civil Rights was all about was a republican plot – 'just look how it developed'.

But what happens at this time is that the benign neglect that Her Majesty's government in London had visited upon Northern Ireland for 50 years was now shattered, Britain had to get involved in not allowing the local Stormont regime to run things as they had done. So you have Direct Rule, and literally 'boots on the ground' in terms of sending in the British Army.

And you could say that when you have a military response, this in a way puts off the agenda a more political approach, meaning you get locked into a military strategy as opposed to a political one at the time.

So, to conclude, and then we can have a discussion.

What, if anything, could have prevented the outbreak of the Troubles? What

could the Stormont government, or the British government, have done; what could the Irish government have done or not done, that would have helped things?

And, you also have the British government coming to the conclusion that there is 'an acceptable level of violence': as long as it didn't spill over onto the mainland it could be contained.

And what if the Civil Rights movement had succeeded, not just in regard to O'Neill's modest reforms or even better ones, but in terms of moving arguments on the ground, of a more class-based alliance, looking at housing, jobs, as opposed to a United Ireland or a sectarian perspective on the future of Northern Ireland?

This is a quote from an article in *The Guardian*, in which Sean O'Hagan said

> For many people, particularly in England, the Troubles are understood essentially as a war between the IRA, whose aim was to reunite Ireland, and the British security forces. The short-lived civil rights era of the late 60s and early 70s has been conveniently overlooked, perhaps because it illuminates the fact that the endemic discrimination in Northern Ireland was ignored for decades by successive Westminster governments of every politcal hue.

Now, we can debate about the extent of that discrimination, but it was benign neglect which helped foster resentment, particularly among working-class communities here.

And for me in researching this particular period my head is left spinning by the way so many things are happening so quickly. One minute the focus is on Westminster, then it is on Derry, then Belfast, then on an election, then a unionist split... all these things happening in a very short space of time. And normal politics wasn't able to keep pace with the 'facts on the ground', especially what was happening within working-class communities and what they were demanding.

And there was a leeching away of support for electoral politics, with communities taking matters into their own hands. In Politics we give our students this definition of 'the state': "The state is that organisation that has a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence." That's from Max Weber, the famous German sociologist. What is happening here is a *democratisation of violence*; that the state doesn't have a monopoly on violence, and communities are taking matters into their own hands through paramilitary organisations, and defence action committees, and so on.

And is it a revolutionary moment, especially in terms of the civil rights movement, where people – in that classic statement from Marx – had "nothing to lose but their chains"? Or is it a political crisis which gets transformed into a military one, which means that politics is so much harder to get back to?

For me, looking at this period, there is the whole litany of violence and bombs and murders and the threat of violence. It is the *threat* of violence not just the violence itself which is the definition of terrorism.

But alongside that there were all sorts of innovative forms of political mobilisation – rent strikes, general strikes, marches, deliberately provoking one's opponents, civil disobedience, people power... the whole range of a repertoire of political mobilisation that isn't simply about voting.

And there are many echoes of contemporary populism, and certainly in 1968 there were elements of a *progressive* populism. But then you could say there was the danger of leaderless mob rule, which we also have evidence of during that period. And you get a sense that that populism mobilises emotions, often hatred, fear, insecurity – which our politics here is well adept at doing. I leave an open question: Were these emotions around anger, hatred and fear, much stronger than around hope, justice and change?

And for me there is also an element of the leadership qualities of actors like Hume, Paisley, Devlin, McCann, Spence and others... in terms of the eloquence, the passion, their organisational capacity and so on. You might disagree with their politics but you cannot doubt their courage in standing up for their convictions.

But, again, we didn't descend into all-out genocide. So what is different about the Northern Ireland conflict which is different from places like Rwanda or Somalia? Is it that we hate each other enough to kill but not enough to eliminate?

And, of course, there is the unavoidable tragedy of it all, and for me it is about how painful it all is.

Any analysis is contested: we are not gong to get agreement on the origins, but at the least we can share our differences on this period.

And, one final question: what would *I* have done? If I had been a young man in Derry or Belfast at that time, what would I have done? 'What if?' is one of the complexities of this whole period?

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4: Question and answer session

[Deirdre Mac Bride *facilitator*] Thank you, John, that was an excellent presentation. I suppose part of what we are trying to do today is to look forward. This society faced huge dilemmas fifty years ago and we still face some of those dilemmas today. And we are in a period of political uncertainty and there are real questions as to how this society tries to shape itself into something different. I will call for comments now.

[Anne Devlin] You talked about the relationship of Unionists with London. What I am interested in is the relationship between the Catholics and London. Historian Mark Mulholland I think wrote that the immediate reaction of the Unionists to the election of Harold Wilson was dismay, and there was a factor in there where they felt it had strengthened the Catholics in Ulster, and there were huge expectations that Wilson would make a great difference to Catholic nationalists here. We sometimes write out of the picture the Irish in England, and I lived in England for thirty years, and it does occur to me that at the resolution of the Belfast Agreement they had been missed out in some way, and yet their expectations of Wilson had been extremely high. John, you asked *why* it happened when it did, and I feel it was partly to do with the election of Harold Wilson and all those raised expectations.

[John Barry] What you had within British politics was the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster, which was an internal British Labour Party organisation. Some Unionists were concerned at such a development. My sense of the Irish community in England at that time, however, is that it was not a major player. I think they become more important after 1972, in terms of the lobbying power of the Irish in Britain, whether it's in the 'Troops Out' movement, but certainly their support for Sunningdale. There are two elements for me: the Irish influence in the Labour Party, and this Campaign – and it did raise expectations. But I always say: be careful of raising expectations that you can't deliver on. There is this issue where the O'Neil reforms were promising too much that Unionism could deliver on, but certainly the Irish voice in Britain comes into play in the seventies rather than in the sixties.

What you had within British politics was the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster, which was an internal British Labour Party organisation. Some Unionists were concerned at such a development.

[Andy Park] I have had my 'boots on the ground', here, and also in Bosnia, Kosovo, the Congo, and I have seen a lot of what we have described here as a consequence. I think that when we look at why the Troubles happened, it becomes an issue of 'cause and effect'. And depending on which pair of glasses you are wearing at the time, one person's effect is the cause of somebody else's effect, and we can take it on back. But surely there is a great value in looking at what happened much later. We managed to stop the violence and that's to our enormous credit, and I do think that *that* could be a safer start point rather than always focusing on what went wrong early on. In other words, we shouldn't just focus *on what went wrong in the beginning* but *how things eventually became right,* and try to learn from the sequence of steps that enabled us to get there.

We shouldn't just focus on what went wrong in the beginning, but how things eventually became right, and try to learn from the sequence of steps that enabled us to get there.

[John Barry] There is a thing called 'path dependency': that *where* you start out from almost inexorably locks you into a particular path; in other words it constrains your choice of options. And I think the military response initially by Britain, and then the military response from within communities, inevitably meant that politics was off the table. The precondition for politics is some degree of stability or at least *non-violent* disagreement. Too often we think democracy is about consensus, about how we can share our differences. But what options were completely removed because of where we started from?

    Also, *perceptions are reality.* I have given talks in East Belfast where I have shown groups that the highest levels of deprivation in this society today are still in predominantly Catholic wards, and the groups I speak to don't believe it. So the statistics are there, the evidence is there, but it is the perceptions which matter. And that's the importace of narratives and stories which dominate our politics today. As I said, I am interested in 'troubling the Troubles' – shaking up the folk myths that you learn from your parents, particularly when we are not exposing ourselves to other perpectives. My fear is that social media is just an echo chamber. And research shows that when you talk with a group of people who agree with you, you end up with a more extreme position than if you had been exposed to an alternative voice. It's not about agreeing with that voice, but can I learn from it? It is about having an openness to multiple understandings of the past.

[Joe Chambers] I was thoroughly enthralled with the presentation. I have been living in Scotland for a long time but when I came back recently it was to find that the politics here hasn't changed. The politicians here are still failing. I just wonder if there is ever going to be a way forward.

[John Barry] Failing politicians are nothing new. The peculiarity in Northern Ireland politics is that fear and insecurity win, at elections in particular. Particularly for the DUP and Sinn Féin, they are able to mobilise those particular emotions. Also about the provisionality for many republicans of the Good Friday Agreement, as a stepping stone to a United Ireland. The failure of political leaderships was akin to what we saw in the sixties. My colleague Richard O'Leary gave me this phrase many years ago: we tend to have extremely 'ungenerous majorities' in this place. We had it under the Stormont regime, and I would also say that the Belfast City Council 'flag' decision was also another example of an ungenerous majority. The flag had been flying for 365 days a year and suddenly they were going to get rid of it completely. Okay, Belfast is no longer a unionist-majority city but the nationalist majority could have shown a greater sense of generosity. It seems to me that there is an endemic failure to be generous when communities become dominant. And indeed, Bernadette Devlin's speech says that: she claimed that where nationalists were in the majority on councils in Northern Ireland there was also discrimination there as well. I think there is a real failure of politics, but I don't think we can just blame our politicians. We vote for them!

We tend to have extremely 'ungenerous majorities' in this place.

I have seen movement from the most unlikely of places: I have seen former loyalist and republican paramilitaries show more generosity, more signs of leadership, because they have been at the sharp end and done terrible things, done time, and they want to commit themselves to more progressive politics, than the armchair generals or the peace-fire soldiers. And it's a pity that the loyalist side hasn't brought their ex-combatants into politics the way republicans have. Unfortunately, it is so much easier to mobilise people over fear than for hope. Fear and insecurity get you votes. When I was a politician for the Green Party I would be on the podium on a husting and when one of the other politicians would say something like '1916' half the room would cheer; when the other person would mention something like '1690' the *other* half would cheer. And I would say that I want to make the transition to a low-carbon future that is going to make the world safe for us all – and there would be silence!

[Joe Bowers] With regards to your comments about Britain's 'benign neglect' of this place, I am interested in examining the role and the interests of the British state in this whole question. In Michael Kennedy's book, *Division and Consensus*, he says that after the T K Whitaker Report in Dublin was adopted by Dáil Éireann Anglo-Irish talks opened in London in 1959. Lord Brookeborough contacted the British Home Secretary Rab Butler and tried to have the talks suspended or postponed because of an IRA attack in Roslea, County Fermanagh. Butler disagreed and said that Britain was fully committed to the talks and suspension could not be justified because of a single incident. Butler's response told Brookeborough that Britain saw the improvement of relations with the Republic of Ireland as very important, and indeed, prominent British politicians expressed frustation with Northern Ireland Unionists. An Anglo-Irish trade agreement was signed in April 1960. Britain and the Republic simultaneously applied to join the Common Market in 1961, and when Britain's application was vetoed by General de Gaulle, the Republic withdrew its application, because its joint economic plan would be upset. The fact is that the British state had an interest in close co-operation with the Republic, and that is central to raising fears among Unionists. So Britain wasn't sitting on the sidelines as a completely disinterested party.

[John Barry] I still say that Britain had an attitude of 'benign neglect' towards Northern Ireland for 50 years. Yes, what O'Neill was delivering on was an economic modernisation strategy which was in the interests of the British state. But otherwise its policy was to leave Northern Ireland to itself, and it was only the violence spiralling out of control which forced them to become more actively involved.

It seems to me that the elephant in the room, when we talk about the Troubles, is the very genesis of this state, the way in which it was created – and it was done on the basis of a sectarian head-count.

[Richard O'Rawe] I am a writer and former republican prisoner. It seems to me that the elephant in the room, when we talk about the Troubles, is the *very genesis* of this state, the way in which it was created – and it was done on the basis of a sectarian head-count. There are nine counties in Ulster but only six of them in Northern Ireland, and that was very deliberate, because it guaranteed a Unionist hegemony for ever, and therein lay the basis for what was to come. Somewhere down the line there was always going to be the perfect storm. And

that perfect storm was added to by the 50 years of discrimination to which you referred. Now, that might not have translated itself into a violent conflict had there been a more positive approach by the Unionists to the nationalist people. Another thing which troubles me is this phrase 'benign neglect' by the British government. The neglect actually fed the sense of discrimination: that is is okay to discriminate because there is no come-back. In my view that is *not* 'benign'; the British government should have stepped in and said you are going to have the same rights as all other citizens in the United Kingdom, and had that been done those who became extreme republicans would have had no vehicle to bring about the struggle that they eventually engineered, and had the conditions not been there. Had the state of Northern Ireland not been a sectarian head-count, where one part of the population was going to be in control forever. We ended up where we did because of those circumstances.

[**John Barry**] I think you are right: you can have *malign* neglect by the British state. Why weren't the welfare reforms of the Attlee government more fulsomely imposed on Northern Ireland in 1945? What we have on this island are two failed nation-state building projects. And you can see this being exemplified by de Valera in the 1930s proclaiming that the Republic is a Catholic state, a confessional state. He gets the bishops to Dublin to help influence the Irish Constitution, and so on. And then we have Northern Ireland as a mirror image of that: it claimed to be a 'Protestant Parliament and a Protestant state'. The Civil Rights movement was not arguing for a United Ireland, it was almost doing the job successive Labour governments should have done. But the extreme reaction exemplify de Tocqueville's quote: When a bad regime is reforming that's when it's at its most dangerous.

What we have on this island are two failed nation-state building projects. Exemplified by de Valera's confessional, Catholic state, mirrored by Northern Ireland's claim to be a 'Protestant Parliament and a Protestant state'.

[**Deirdre Mac Bride**] Where do we go next? We are now back to where we have a different majority how can that majority be generous and not repeat the mistakes of the past? How do we want to go forward?

[**Brian Cassidy**] I feel that the £1-billion deal the DUP made with the Conservatives will come back to haunt them. There is resentment right across the UK. There are towns all over the UK could do with similar injections of

money, so I think the DUP deal is going to have an adverse effect – I think it's going to create anti-Northern Ireland feeling.

[John Barry] I think we could be looking at the break-up of Britain, in terms of what Brexit has unleashed, with both Scotland and Northern Ireland voting to remain. The DUP are cock-of-the-hoop at present with their influence in Westminster, but I think it's going to be very short-lived. If you watch the English press there is almost a sense of horror that the English populace realise who the DUP are – in terms of denying evolution, opposition to same-sex marriage, etc. Northern Ireland is on the British radar for the right or wrong reasons.

There is nothing illegitimate about wanting a United Ireland, or wanting to maintain the Union. But where it gets into issues of legitimacy is whether you are willing to use violence to support your position.

Are we looking at a border poll? In this institution Peter Robinson gave a very interesting speech. He did not say that Unionists should prepare for a United Ireland, but they have to start to prepare to come up with arguments to respond to it. And to see the legitimacy of it. There is nothing illegitimate about wanting a United Ireland, or wanting to maintain the Union. But where it gets into issues of legitimacy is whether you are willing to use violence to support your position. I don't think the conditions we had back then are the same we have now, but there are other tensions. And in particular for the loyalist working class: what has the peace process done for them? You have the lovely shiny Titanic Quarter – which uses non-unionised labour by the way – but which has no organic connection to the communities in East Belfast, not even a walking trail for the men who worked in Harland & Wolff and so on. There are major problems here.

Brexit is a defining issue, it is going to redefine the politics of these islands for decades to come. I ask some of my students: imagine the year is 2050 – what do you think will be the newspaper headlines? Are we going to be talking the same crap that we are still talking about now? What are the visions? My sense is that for a lot of republicans the 1998 Agreement is not the end of the game, it is a stepping stone to a United Ireland. But what that means is that if you are a unionist how committed could you be in government with Sinn Féin who you know just want to get out of this place into something else? As I said, I think 'perfidious Albion' is a greater threat to Unionism than it is to Irish Nationalism, because of the asymmetry. How can you be a

unionist, or have a 'union', which is largely asymmetrical: it's one-way, in terms of loyalty. Loyalism: loyal to what? I think it is often a conditional loyalty, to things like the British monarchy, the Reformed Faith, but not necessarily to the British State.

[Deirdre Mac Bride] What is it that we need to do for each other?

[Richard O'Leary] We should be having honest cross-community discussions, and I see an increase of those. It is important because people have different perceptions. However, there has been an increase in residential segregation, and that is worrying.

[John Barry] Integrated education is also important. 94% of our children are still being educated in single-denomination schools. I am not saying that it is the only answer. We know that prejudice is formed around the kitchen table not necessarily the classroom, but it is a reality that there are more peace-walls in Belfast now than there were in 1998, there are more people choosing to live in single-identity communities now. We are not at war, but we still don't trust each other. Where is the campaign to get Stormont up and running? The mass mobilisations that we have had in this society in the past? Like the flag protests. Some people seem content at the impasse. Why don't we see protests at the growth of food banks? Not far from this university there are people who have trouble making ends meet, regarding food and heat. Why isn't there mass anger about all that, in the way people protest about flags and other issues?

[Tim Plum] Speakers have asked what we can do with regards to our future. But who is this 'we'? In this society we don't have that 'we', in the sense of *one* community.

Speakers have asked what we can do with regards to our future. But who is this 'we'? In this society we don't have that 'we', in the sense of one *community.*

[John Barry] I would point to that moment of the Civil Rights movement, which in my opinion was genuinely class-based; it was about bread-and-butter issues, housing and segregation, and it did have an alliance of Catholics and Protestants ... or going back to the 1930s with the Outdoor Relief riots in Belfast which also brought the two communities together. We mustn't forget there is a progressive populism as well. Left-wing populism is about people challenging the elite and I think we had elements of that in the sixties. I think it is much more complex now. There may not be consensus as to the

legitimacy of the state, but can we share our differences as residents of 'this place' while working toward a peaceful outcome? Can we see in these conversations we are having now the recreation of a 'we' which is pluralistic? At the moment, even in our statistics, we have to be Catholic, Protestant or 'other'. When I joined Queens in 1999 the personnel people were frustrated with me because I refused to answer the religious denomination question on the form they kept sending me. But they rang me up one day and said, "Dr Barry, we really need to do this." I still refused, but when they heard my southern accent they said, "Oh, thanks very much" – and they were able to tick the box! So we keep recreating these identities of the past. With our two main political parties it is in their interests to keep on recreating that two-community model, which means we have two 'we's. And I think that's where we're at now. Are these two 'we's content with the vacuum that we have had for the past two years? And I would say that, for some considerable sections in both these communities, they are. As long as we are not seeing any violence, we are content to live with our divisions.

With our two main political parties it is in their interests to keep on recreating that two-community model, which means that we have two 'we's.

[Deirdre Mac Bride] That sense of division is also dangerous, for we have to remember that the people *not* in this room are from the most disadvantaged working-class communities, and they are not having these discussions. There is a huge danger in leaving people far behind with nobody really speaking for them.

[Bernadette O'Rawe] I think that a lot of people in working-class areas don't realise how badly off they are. They think this is the norm, and in groups like this you find a lot of people who have been to university and have had life chances and have the opportunity to be heard. But in those working-class areas they don't get that opportunity. In terms of things like poverty, they feel they just have to get on with it, and accept it. If you took people from the Shankill and the Falls and put them into a room together and let them mingle, most of them would be okay with one another. But they don't get that opportunity; it's the people who are having more life chances who get opportunities to meet and to discuss mending things. The politicians don't want them to know how badly off they are, because that says to them: why are you not sorting this out?

[Deirdre Mac Bride] And also, one group's problems can be blamed on the 'other' group.

[John Barry] The statistics show that the top wards in terms of deprivation in Northern Ireland in 1998 are still the same top wards today. And they are mostly Catholic nationalist. That's the reality. What has Stormont done in terms of delivering actual tangible change for people on the ground: jobs, investment, a new Northern Ireland that delivers for its people? The legislative achievement of our Assembly is pathetic, if you consider all the actual legislation it has passed. If Stormont hasn't actually delivered for communities – we have the highest levels of fuel poverty in Europe, we're crying out for investment in infrastructure and health care – why aren't those communities demanding that Sinn Féin and the DUP should be doing better?

The legislative achievement of our Assembly is pathetic, if you consider all the actual legislation it has passed.

[Bernadette O'Rawe] It the fear thing again: it's 'us' and 'them'. If you don't vote for us, you get them.

[John Barry] There's a piece of research which I think deserves to get a lot more publicity, which a colleague of mine did a few years ago, and really goes to the heart of all this. He took all the manifestos of the major political parties in Northern Ireland – DUP, Sinn Féin, SDLP, UUP, Alliance, TUV, etc. ... and he removed the party banners and any identifying features. So all these anonymous party manifestos were given to groups who were then asked: which party has the policies you would agree with the most? He was forcing people to vote on policies, not personalities or party labels. So, when people were given the option of choosing a party whose policies they liked the most, which party do you think was the most popular?

[•] The Greens?

[John Barry] No.

[•] Alliance?

[John Barry] No.

[•] People Before Profit?

[John Barry] No.

[•] Probably Sinn Féin?

[John Barry] No. You are all wrong. The DUP! The DUP had the policies which most people in this piece of research related to best. What it means is that there were Catholic, nationalist and republican voters who, if they could get away from the 'Oh, I could never vote for the DUP', actually liked their policies. It is but one way of reminding ourselves that we're trapped into prioritising identity and the constitutional question, over other things. So even though we talk about 'bread & butter issues', we still won't vote for parties on the basis of such issues. Indeed, if you're a nationalist you're not going to *even read* the DUP manifesto. Indeed, the DUP don't even campaign in their areas. But it was a fascinating study.

[Martin Connolly] It could be that Northern Ireland is a failed political entity – from the 1920s until now. I voted for the Good Friday Agreement; I am from a republican background myself. I am not against Stormont coming back again, but certainly the way it was it was a total disaster, when you look at RHI and the reasons why it collapsed. And when you look at the blockages which are there for people who are gay, lesbian, etc. I mean, that is disgraceful in this day and age. And the border is always going to present as a difficulty, and it is as difficult today as it was before. It is now preventing movement between the UK and EU, so it is a pan-European issue now.

Everyone has to accept that there are two *communities here, there are* two *traditions,* two *nationalities, call it what you want.*

Someone mentioned earlier about 'generosity'. We are looking at a nationalist majority coming down the line, so what do we do? And as someone from that community, I accept that we have to be generous. Unlike the way I grew up: my parents, my grandparents, we had the Union Jack shoved down our throats. We just had to accept it and that was it. But now everyone has to accept that there are *two* communities here, there are *two* traditions, *two* nationalities, call it what you want. You mentioned earlier about the Union flag at City Hall. There was a compromise there and there are designated days, in what is becoming a 'nationalist' city. So nationalists have, I think, been generous. I think we need to see reciprocation from unionists as well.

[Deirdre Mac Bride] When I made that point about generosity, it wasn't generous of nationalists to push it that hard at that point of time.

[Martin Connolly] If you go round City Hall it's all Unionist statues, British military statues, and so on.

[Deirdre Mac Bride] In the way that the flag decision played out between all the parties involved it only served to widen rather than diminish division. It was a very difficult situation and it became a confrontation between political parties rather than an effective compromise.

[Martin Connolly] There is a Union Jack flies above Stormont, the other flag doesn't.

[John Barry] We should fear nothing from debate. It strikes me as bizarre that the DUP don't want a hard border down the Irish Sea but they're quite happy *not* to have the same rights that you get in England and Scotland, around equal marriage, for example. They are picking and choosing in terms of their integration into the British state.

It strikes me as bizarre that the DUP don't want a hard border down the Irish Sea but they're quite happy not to have the same rights that you get in England and Scotland, around equal marriage, for example.

The Battle of the Boyne was a time when this island was at the centre of politics in Europe. The Pope backed King Billy, because of a bigger geo-political issue [the thwarting of Louis XIV's attempts at European domination]. The border is our modern 'Battle of the Boyne' – it is where the centre of European geo-politics now is.

Can there be a reformed Good Friday Agreement Part II? Where is our Civic Forum? If the politicians can't sort it out, can the people? Perhaps through a Citizens Assembly? Not to go back to a situation where we had power-sharing which simply resulted in power being *shared out*. Where a five-party Assembly was reduced to a duopoly, between Sinn Féin and the DUP, with the consent of the people. What would a transformed Northern Ireland look like in the context of Brexit, or are the forces unleashed by Brexit too great to be contained within a Northern Ireland as it is currently constructed? Like a closer link to Scotland – is there an opportunity there? But I am not seeing much new thinking going on. We are in turbulent times but in a situation of fear we do not think imaginatively.

[Joe Bowers] I am not comfortable with this idea of nationalists 'making concessions', or unionists 'making concessions' ... The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association was the result of an initiative by the trade union movement, and the Belfast Trades Council called a conference in Belfast which was attended by all and sundry – and that was in 1965. The NICRA was formed in 1967, and the first chair was a shop steward. And there were many trade unionists prominent, many of whom were from what is perceived to be the unionist section of our people. The demands of the CRA was also for jobs and housing, and therefore those who perceived the NICRA 'asking a Prod to give a Taig a job' was a nonsense, because it was *more* jobs we were looking for – *for everyone in the working class*. There were also Young Unionists involved in the Civil Rights. We have to get back to the idea of demanding rights, not only social and political, but also economic rights.

And in my view we also need to challenge the *new* sectarianism, because it seems to have overtaken the religious sectarianism – and that is this Brexit. Hilary Clinton defined a whole section of the US population as 'deplorables'. I mean, all Brexiteers are not deplorables, they are not all racists, they are not all sectarian. Many people are not against Europe, but they do desire a *reformed* Europe. But, for example, what facility is there for the democratically-elected parliament in Europe to amend a European treaty? Jean-Claude Junker gave the blunt answer to that question to the Greeks: there can be *no* democratic opposition to a European Treaty. How do we democratise that set-up over there? My belief is that it is impossible, but I hope I could be proved wrong. People say the DUP need to think about their relationship with 'perfidious Albion', but nationalists also need to think about their relationship with the European Union. It wasn't long ago, when the Scottish nationalists were talking about seeking independence for Scotland, that they were threatened by the European Union. What are the Catalonians getting from Europe in terms of *their* nationalist aspirations? I feel the whole Brexit debate has created another form of sectarianism: Remainers

I feel the whole Brexit debate has created another form of sectarianism. Remainers look at Leave voters as 'deplorables', who if we give them a vote and they take the 'wrong' decision, well then, we will just get them to vote all over again.

look at Leave voters as 'deplorables', who if we give them a vote and they take the wrong decision, well then, we will just get them to vote all over again.

[Richard O'Rawe] You asked a powerful question: why are people not out on the street demonstrating? Last year my wife and I attended an 'anti-punishment shooting' rally at the City Hall. There were only fifteen people there. We are the only place in the Western hemisphere where people are shot in the legs. And why aren't we standing up for people who are sleeping in hallways? Why aren't people out protesting for the reinstatement of the institutions? The reason is this: because those who could bring them out *aren't* bringing them out. The people who bring the people out onto the streets are the Shinners and the DUP, and to a lesser degree the loyalist paramilitaries. They are not bringing them out, as they're not too focused on all these peripheral issues.

Certainly the Shinners are quite content at where they are, and even in terms of the Brexit debate I would contend that the Shinners do not want a smooth Brexit. I think in their hearts, and I think secretly behind closed doors, they are praying for a hard Brexit, for a hard Brexit pushes people to the extremes. They have analysed it as follows: the demographics are virtually 50:50; however there is a burgeoning middle-class community who will follow the money. And logic would tell you that, in terms of money, it is best to stay in the EU, especially if you are to get tariff-free conditions for your goods. My view is that the Shinners would be over the moon with a no-deal Brexit, and I think the DUP are so blinkered, so myopic, that they can't see that they are walking right into a perfectly-laid trap.

[John Barry] I agree with you. I was hammered in a public meeting some months ago by saying that the people who want a hard Brexit are Sinn Féin. It serves their interests the best. Of course, they are not publicly saying that, but it's that classic maxim: England's peril is Ireland's opportunity.

In terms of punishment beatings, we are in a post-ceasefire, not a post-conflict society. Take that harrowing TV documentary: 'A woman brings her son to be shot', about dissident republicans in Derry visiting violence on young people.

In terms of the big issues around Brexit, yes, there are honourable left-wing reasons for wanting to leave the EU – 'Lexit'. Do I think everybody who voted for Brexit is a racist? No. Absolutely. But do I think that every racist

voted for Brexit? Yes. Absolutely. It has empowered a right-wing populism, but crises are also opportunities for radical change. The state has to be challenged. I was pilloried for defending the loyalist flag protesters: in my view so long as people are non-violent they have every democratic right to engage in protest. I agree with strike action by workers so why wouldn't I agree with other forms of contestation? I may not agree with the reasons why, but I defend their right to do so.

If you want to reform Europe, you have to change Germany. Germany has been the driving force behind neo-liberalism in the European Union, along with France. It was German bankers who squeezed Greece; and German and French bankers who squeezed the Republic of Ireland, where for a couple of years that country lost its economic sovereignty. This moment is pregnant with opportunity but also danger. Sinn Féin is using this to destabilise and show this as a failed state. But if there is one lesson we can take from the sixties we must stay within the confines of non-violence.

But if there is one lesson we can take from the sixties we must stay within the confines of non-violence.

[Deirdre Mac Bride] Could I thank Professor Barry again for his excellent presentation. A 'thank you' also to all those who came today to listen and participate. And, finally, a special thank you to Harry Donaghy and the Fellowship of Messines Association for putting this series of workshops together.