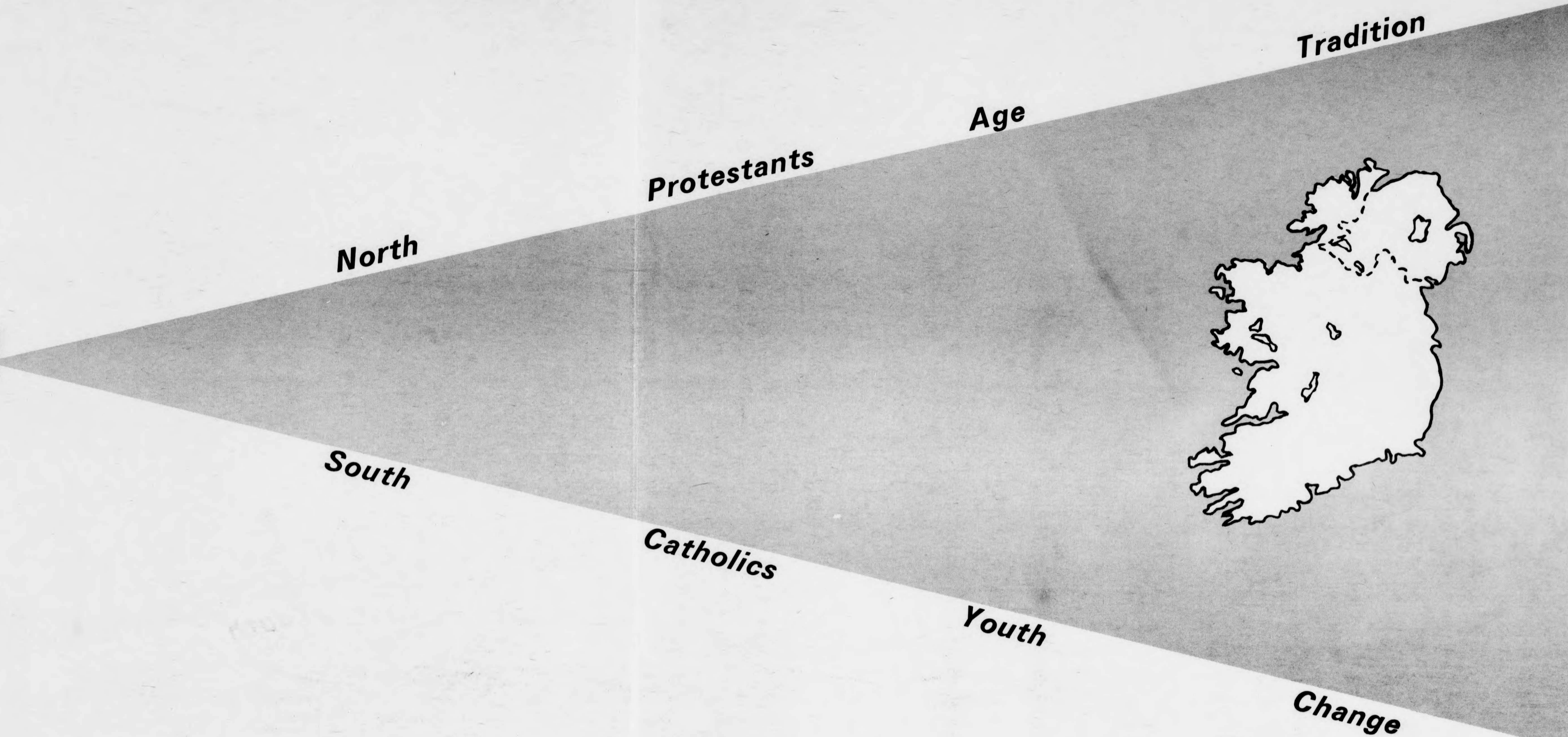


Ireland



THE RAIN THAT FALLS in thick, gentle sweeps across the Irish countryside leaves the fields and hillsides a deep silky green. Along with the rain is the mist that circles and whirls about the island, giving the land a placid, restful feeling; a tranquility which is quite in keeping with the slow pace of the average Irishman's life.

Many acclaim Ireland as the one last peaceful, unspoiled corner of Europe; where it is remote from the hectic vibrations of the 20th century. Malcolm Muggeridge, in his new book, *Muggeridge Through the Microphone*, says wistfully: "Ireland is so poor, its population is declining, they're so indolent and generally scatty, that there's no possibility of the 20th Century being set up there. And that's the place I have in mind to retire to."

And while Ireland is still very much removed from the mainstream of contemporary European life, it has once more become a world 'tension spot' and has been thrust into the agony and turmoil that has come to typify these 'modern times.'

Religious divisions

The bloody eruptions in Northern Ireland this year, the rising to surface level finally of all the ancient hatreds and suspicions that have festered there for so long, were certainly not unexpected by anyone paying the situation much serious attention.

The history of Ireland is grim enough, God knows. Especially in this century with the rebellion against British rule and the bitter civil war that followed. In the Republic of Ireland all has been relatively calm for the past 20 years or so. The responsibility of independence and the task of building up the economy have been the prime concerns of the government. Although the republican government has never relinquished its

claims upon Ulster, the campaign to unite the two nations has taken a back seat to more pressing duties.

Hatred and tension have always existed between the Protestant and Catholic populations of Northern Ireland. The population consists of 30 per cent Catholic and 70 per cent Protestant and the Catholic minority has received foul treatment from the Protestant ruling class.

are in the voting rights, housing and jobs.

These three complaints were the prime motivation for the riots of 1969; for too many years the Catholics have been treated as the Blacks of Ireland.

In an economy that depends greatly upon the vast annual handout from the British government, an economy that suffers a high rate of unemployment, the Catholic population have suffered long enough on the lower rung.

The well-defined line which exists between Northern Ireland's Protestants and Catholics is symbolized by the partitions that divide the two groups. There is the partition between the republic and the North, then there is the partition between the Catholic slum residents of Derry and the Protestant residents of the city, and the similar partition between the two groups in Belfast.

The riots put the Protestant-controlled government under a great deal of pressure, both from within and from the British government, eventually forcing the cool and seemingly fair Captain Terrence O'Neil to resign.

The government is under constant pressure from the Catholic population and the British government to remedy the discriminatory structure of society, and from the majority of Unionists in Parliament and Protestant voters who interpret any progress as a 'sell-out' to the Catholic demands.

Today the situation rests in stalemate. There is constant tension in the air and rioting could break out at any moment. The government has vowed to take action which would benefit the Catholic population and since the autumn the streets have remained fairly quiet.

A country like Canada with no serious history of religious rivalry can have little conception of the feelings which exist between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. There, suspicion and hatred is rooted in history and is passed on from generation to generation.

This letter in the Irish newsmagazine *Nusight* gives the thoughts of a not untypical Northern Protestant:

Sir:

I have read in your excellent magazine about the Reverend Paisley and the events in the North. Permit me to mention one or two things which I feel need clarification. Page 39: no Methodist church was burnt on the Crumlin Road, one was burnt in Donegall Road. Page 18: the remark that most Roman Catholic houses vacated were owned by their occupants, while Protestant ones were rented, to this may I say that it is a well-known fact that RCs often buy houses in Protestant streets and avenues with, it is rumored, church assistance; never the reverse happens. Protestants never dare to buy or rent houses in RC areas, then when one RC family comes into a Protestant street, in 10 to 15 years, the numbers increase to about 40 per cent of the street, eventually the whole street becomes RC. Witness Hooker Street for one example, and streets around the New Lodge Road, and North Queen Streets, once Protestant streets. May I say that the reverse never happens.

Finally to state that the Reverend Paisley is reputed to be a coward is both a ludicrous and stupid statement, in view of the many different enterprises and protests he has engaged in; one has to admire his courage, in taking on the odds of RC left wing propaganda loaded against him, in the mass media of press, radio and television. Whether the entrenchment of these forces, in the mass media is accidental or deliberate is open to conjecture, but exist it does.
F. White,
Belfast 6.

The situation remains precarious; at any moment the cinders could once more burst into flame. While Ulster struggles to cure its sick situation the unrest has brought to the republic in the South the possibility once more that a united Ireland may not be far off. People in the South often point out that in their nation harmony has existed between the Catholics and Protestants and that there is no discrimination.

But they neglect the fact that in the South the population is 5 per cent Protestant and 95 per cent Catholic and the Protestants in the South are in a much higher economic and social position than are the Catholics in the North. While the Protestant ascendancy of yesterday has faded since independence, they still retain a great proportional percentage of control.

Bernadette Devlin, the 22-year-old Catholic rights leader and Member of Parliament has emerged from the struggles as a venerated figure in the eyes of the Southern Irish.

In a Dublin newspaper poll she was elected Man of the Year for 1969 and her book *The Price of My Soul* is a best-seller. She is seen as the great young hope and champion of the downgraded Catholics in the North and the prison sentence handed to her a few weeks ago is considered as yet another in-

dication of the discrimination rampant against Catholics. While the sentence is being appealed, they wait to see if 'justice will prevail'.

Change, coming slowly

One friend of mine, a student at University College in Dublin explained his attitude to the situation in the North:

"Before the riots everything was changing in the North. All the religious hatred and that was fading away, mainly among young people. They just didn't care like their parents. But now everything has gone back to the way it was 20 years ago. People have had to take sides. The tragedy is that now the Catholics and Protestants hate each other even more."

Did he foresee any possible solution?

"It will take many years. I don't think that there will be one Ireland for many years, maybe not in my lifetime. It will take a long time for the Catholics and Protestants in the North to solve their differences. They could start by giving Paisley the boot."

As Bernadette Devlin is seen by the Catholics in the South as a near Saint, the Reverend Ian Paisley is seen as the demon behind it all. He symbolizes for Catholics the attitudes that prevail among most working class Protestants in the North.

The George Wallace of Ireland, Paisley is a clever, heated public speaker who has the ability to inflame crowds with his anti-Catholic, pro-British harangues. He even uses funeral services to get his message across. The prison sentences Paisley has served have only made more of a martyr out of him for the Protestants.

The situation in the North has convinced many in the South to believe that a united Ireland may not

be as far off as was once thought and politicians are now talking about it in realistic terms.

The Taoiseach (Prime Minister) recently stated that the South may be forced to consider some sort of legalization of divorce to accommodate the 1.5 million Protestants who would become subjects of the republic in a united Ireland (divorce has always been illegal in independent Ireland.)

Holier-than-thou

The troubles in the North have given the Southern Irish a slightly holier-than-thou-attitude. After being convinced for years that the republic was one of the dung heaps of Europe, they can now look to the North and feel slightly better off.

It is in a sense similar to the attitude that existed among some Canadians after the assassinations, riots and turmoil in the United States that allowed Canadians to look upon that tormented nation and feel just a little bit superior.

If such an attitude persists it could easily cover up the serious problems that face the South. There is the question of the Irish language, the economy to look after, and the severe poverty that exists in the South. These are all problems that the government must face before a united Ireland could exist in peaceful well-being.

The ruling party in the Republic of Ireland — Fianna Fail — has dedicated itself to the complete restoration of the Irish language. It is a somewhat peculiar situation and a source of continual controversy in Ireland. A few years ago a Language Freedom Movement was formed to fight against the government's language policy and today the battle rages in the newspapers, on TV and in public

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