

Speech by the Rt. Hon. J. Enoch Powell, MP, to the
Annual Institution Supper of the Dundonald Orange
Lodge, Comber Road, Dundonald, Co. Down.
at 8.30 pm, Thursday, 3rd January 1980

The Union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland is probably in greater danger now than at any time since the disastrous actions of the Heath government in 1972 and 1973. In saying that, I do not at all have in mind the deeds of the Provisional I.R.A.. Appalling though these are in their individual human consequences, the Provisional I.R.A. have done nothing, and can of themselves do nothing, to shake the Union. On balance, over the last ten years they have strengthened it; they have upon the whole alienated British public opinion, while their campaign has resulted indirectly in bringing Northern Ireland more firmly under the Union Parliament and under Her Majesty's Government than at any previous time since 1921.

The danger is from another quarter altogether. It is from the government of the United Kingdom itself. This is the unambiguous significance of the political initiative announced on 24th October, which is to have its first instalment next week at Stormont. The only possible consequence, and therefore the intended consequence, of that action - whose the intention was, I shall consider presently - is to work towards the destruction of the Union. The proof positive is as follows.

The Government says that it wishes to introduce changes in the present arrangements for governing Ulster. Well and good. It goes on, however, to say that it wants the maximum political agreement among the parties to those changes. Whose agreement? Not Unionist agreement - of whatever brand. If the changes are to be such as will evidently maintain and strengthen the Union, Unionist agreement was to be had for the asking - indeed, without even the need to ask. No, the agreement which the Government seeks, and which it has set up a conference in order to show the world that it seeks, is the

agreement of the S.D.L.P. The S.D.L.P. was the indispensable ingredient - all others could at a pinch be done without.

Now, the veriest tyro in Northern Ireland politics knows that the S.D.L.P. cannot, without self-destruction, be seen agreeing to anything which does not visibly tend to promote the dissolution of the Union. That was proved, if it needed proving, by the fate of poor old Gerry Fitt. He understood the Government's game well enough but could not convey the necessary nod-and-a-wink to his followers, who took the Government's white paper at its face value and threw Gerry over unceremoniously. So the object of the conference, and the only object which stands up to examination, is to try to obtain agreement on political changes in the government of Northern Ireland which will weaken the Union.

But what if - not improbably - no such agreement is forthcoming? The Government has told us: it will then be ready to impose a solution. So, what sort of solution? Not one which strengthens the Union. If that were its solution, the last thing it would have done would have been to court open opposition to it by trying to get the S.D.L.P. to agree. The only imposed solution which makes any sense of the Government's behaviour since 24th October is a solution imposed upon the Unionists, a green-edged constitutional set-up like that of 1973, which had to be forced upon the province and which the then Government visibly hoped would promote the euthanasia of the Union.

After what I have said, it will be as plain as a pikestaff - so plain that only the very gullible, like the D.U.P., or the very anti-Union, like the Belfast Telegraph, could fail to see it - that the Ulster Unionist Party could by no means agree to participate in an operation, of which the very basis and meaning was in flat defiance of the first fundamental principle of the Unionist creed. Much more interesting, however, than the question why some of the intended victims fell into the trap is the question: "Who laid the trap?"

It was certainly not the Secretary of State. Whatever other faults or failings Humphry Atkins may have, this one cannot be laid at his door, for the simple reason that he was as much taken aback by it as anybody else. Up to a few days before 24th October, he and his officials were innocent of any such idea - which is why they took no steps to prepare the ground for something which was suddenly thrust upon them against their protests and in face of their reluctance. So where did it come from? The Prime Minister asserted before the general election that her great object for Northern Ireland would be to maintain the Union. I do not believe she was bluffing then, and I do not believe that she would now have devised a devious scheme for doing the opposite to what she had undertaken. Except in the sense that all substantial acts of government are her responsibility, I am ready to acquit her too.

That leaves one source, the source from which an endless stream of hostility to the Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has flowed for years. I refer to that nest of vipers, that nursery of traitors, which is known as the British Foreign Office. To the Foreign Office the fact that five-sixths of the inhabitants of this province are, and intend to remain, integrally citizens of the United Kingdom, is less than nothing. Its thoughts are not of us. Its eyes and its affections are fixed outside the realm - on Dublin, on Brussels, on the Vatican, above all on Washington D.C., for whose favour and delectation this province is to be offered up a sacrifice, if the arts of skulduggery will avail to do the trick. We are reading a lot these days about the C.I.A. One needs to be an innocent to be unaware, after all that has happened, that, so far as Ulster is concerned, the C.I.A. with its clumsiness and its crudities has nothing to teach the Foreign Office. What bribes, what threats, what agents provocateurs, what corruption, what undercover agents can achieve, for that in Ulster you may put your bottom dollar on the Foreign Office.

It will fail. Of that I have no doubt, because in the end all such machinations find themselves wrecked on the granite rock of Ulster's unionist determination. What worries me is the damage and destruction that can be wrought in the meantime. Not only will the Provisional I.R.A. be encouraged to continue its costly though ultimately futile campaign of murder and mayhem by the spectacle of the U.K. government itself playing the game of the U.K.'s enemies. Ulster's victories over those who would tear it out of Britain are victories for which a price has to be paid. Part of that price is the diminution of Ulster's natural loyalty and affection towards Britain as the mother country and the pattern of freedom and parliamentary democracy. Each time a new attempt is made by British politicians to betray Ulster, that indispensable treasury of goodwill is drawn down.

Another part of the price is the destruction of the confidence which ought to exist between the Ulster people and their political leaders. Too many generations of those leaders already have been caught and destroyed in the trap of "co-operation" with U.K. politicians in moves to destroy the Union: the unmourned figures of Moyola and Faulkner are mute memorials of past loss. The strength of the forces to which they succumbed can be gauged by the volume of abuse and disloyalty to which Unionism's present leader, James Molyneaux, has been subjected simply for standing fast and refusing to betray his trust.

Surely it is not asking too much of the U.K. government, and of a Prime Minister who has more than once identified herself with Ulster's cause, to call off without more ado and before more harm is done the fifth-column operation of the Foreign Office, and to stand up, plainly and straightforwardly, for Britain and all its people. What, after all, is Her Majesty's Government for, if not for that?