

The descent into violence 1967–1969

Headings	Notes
THE START OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS CAMPAIGN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About the time O'Neill came to power, the attitude of younger nationalists to Northern Ireland was changing.
NEW NATIONALIST ATTITUDES TO NORTHERN IRELAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They still wished for a united Ireland but knew it was unlikely to come because a million unionists were opposed to it. • Many of them were well educated, thanks to the Welfare State, and they knew they would not have had such a good education in the poorer South.
WHAT THE CATHOLICS COMPLAINED ABOUT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • But there were a number of things about Northern Ireland that left Catholics with a sense of injustice. • Because of gerrymandering, and the household franchise, 12 local councils west of the Bann were controlled by the Unionist Party even though the majority of the people living in them were Catholics. • Derry was a particularly clear example of this. Sixty per cent of the population was Catholic but because of the way election boundaries were gerrymandered, 7,500 Protestant voters elected 12 local councillors while 10,000 Catholics only elected 8. • Derry and other unionist-controlled councils discriminated against Catholics by giving almost all important and well-paid jobs to Protestants. • They were also reluctant to give council houses to Catholics, even when they lived in very bad conditions. This was because the household franchise meant that when a person got a house he/she also got a vote and too many new Catholic voters might undermine unionist control of some of these councils. • The Stormont government also discriminated against Catholics. There were no Catholics in the Unionist Party and the government did not appoint Catholics to any of the top jobs in the civil service, the police or the law. • There were few Catholics in the police (RUC) and none in the paramilitary 'B Specials' who patrolled country areas and harassed Catholics. • The government also kept the Special Powers Act and used it mainly against nationalists.
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FAITH IN O'NEILL UNDERMINED	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Younger nationalists thought that neither the passive attitude of the Nationalist party nor the violence of the IRA had improved the situation.• They put their hopes in O'Neill. If he could get the unionists to treat them fairly, they would settle down and work within Northern Ireland.• John Hume was typical of this new attitude. Thanks to the educational opportunities of the Welfare State, he had become a teacher in Derry and was a leader of the University for Derry Committee.• But O'Neill's decision about the university undermined the hope of people like him. They came to believe that only direct action would make the Unionist government give justice to the Catholic minority.• The civil rights movement grew out of this feeling.
JOHN HUME (1937–2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Derry-born John Hume came from a poor family but the Welfare State enabled him to get a good education and become a teacher.• He joined the campaign to get a university for Derry and in January 1965 became chairman of the University for Derry Committee which opposed the Lockwood Committee's report.• This experience convinced Hume that only direct action would make the Unionist government give justice to the Catholic minority and he became involved in the civil rights movement.• After the violence that followed a civil rights march on 5 October 1968, he was elected on to the Derry Citizens' Action Committee and tried to ensure that later protests were peaceful.• In 1969 he was elected to the Stormont parliament. In 1970 he worked with other anti-unionist MPs to create a new party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) of which he was Deputy Leader.• He was one of the first people to suggest peace would only come when a way was found for nationalists to share power with unionists.• He was one of the SDLP delegates in the negotiations leading to the Sunningdale Agreement in December 1973. In the Executive he was Minister of Commerce, dealing with the economic problems caused by the Loyalist workers' strike.
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JOHN HUME (1937–2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The failure of Sunningdale convinced Hume that any settlement in Northern Ireland must involve political leaders from the United States and Europe as well as from Northern Ireland, the republic and Britain. • In 1979 Hume replaced Gerry Fitt as leader of the SDLP. He was also elected to the European Parliament and in 1983 to Westminster. These positions allowed him to meet foreign leaders and try to persuade them to support his ideas. • He refused to get involved in attempts by the British government to find an internal solution to Northern Ireland's problems but he played an active part in Garret FitzGerald's New Ireland Forum in Dublin in 1983–1984. • The 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement was the first sign that his ideas might be influencing developments. But this had only a limited impact while the Provisionals continued to bomb and kill. • Hoping to persuade them to consider an alternative to violence, Hume secretly talked to Gerry Adams and other republicans. At the time the talks were heavily criticised but they laid the basis for the IRA ceasefire in 1994.
THE CAMPAIGN FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE (CSJ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The civil rights movement started with protests about housing in Dungannon, Co. Tyrone. In fifteen years the council built 194 houses but gave most of them to Protestants even though there were several hundred poor Catholic families living in crowded slums. • Inspired by the civil rights movement in America, local women formed the Homeless Citizens League and began to picket council meetings. • They were joined by Patricia McCluskey who, with her husband Conn, a local doctor, set up the Campaign for Social Justice (CSJ) in 1964. They collected facts about injustices to Catholics which they published in a pamphlet, <i>Northern Ireland: The Plain Truth</i>, and presented to British politicians. • They argued that if Northern Catholics were part of the United Kingdom they were entitled to the same rights as other UK citizens.
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PATRICIA AND CONN MCCLUSKEY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Patricia McShane worked as a social worker in Glasgow before returning to Northern Ireland to marry Conn McCluskey, a medical doctor, in Dungannon, Co. Tyrone.• Disturbed by the refusal of the unionist-controlled town council to give council houses to Catholics, even when they were living in very bad conditions, she helped to found the Homeless Citizens League in 1963.• To put pressure on local councils and the Unionist government to give justice to Catholics, the McCluskeys helped to found the Campaign for Social Justice (CSJ) in 1964. Unlike earlier Catholic groups, their aim was not Irish unity but civil rights. They argued that if they lived in the United Kingdom they were entitled to the same rights as other citizens of the UK.• To support their case they systematically collected data about gerrymandering and discrimination in employment, housing and public appointments. In 1964 they published their findings in a pamphlet called <i>Northern Ireland: The Plain Truth</i>.• The CSJ presented this to prominent politicians in Westminster where MPs set up a Campaign for Democracy in Ulster but the British and Northern Ireland governments took no effective action at this time.• The McCluskeys were members of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) when it was founded in 1967 but withdrew from public life after its aims were achieved and violence erupted in 1970.
IAN PAISLEY AND THE 'O'NEILL MUST GO' CAMPAIGN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• But O'Neill was powerless to deal with Catholic complaints. Even his little gestures towards angered many unionists. Ian Paisley began an '<i>O'Neill must go</i>' campaign.• The violent language he used encouraged a group of extreme unionists, calling themselves the Ulster Volunteer Force, to murder three innocent Catholics.• Paisley denounced the murders but his '<i>O'Neill must go</i>' campaign still won the backing of a large part of the Unionist Party and of the Orange Order.
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IAN PAISLEY (1926–2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A fundamentalist Protestant who believed the Bible to be the word of God, Ian Paisley founded the Free Presbyterian Church of which he was Moderator (head) in 1951.• He first attracted public notice with attacks on the ecumenical movement for encouraging contacts between Protestants and Catholics. He saw O'Neill's meeting with Lemass in 1965 as betraying unionists and launched an '<i>O'Neill must go</i>' campaign.• More unionists supported him after the civil rights movement began. His Ulster Protestant Volunteers held counter-demonstrations to coincide with civil rights marches. Although he always denied any link to loyalist paramilitaries, some of them supported him and claimed to be acting in his name.• In 1968 Paisley founded the Protestant Unionist Party. In the 1969 he fatally undermined by almost defeating him in the Stormont general election. O'Neill resigned soon after and Paisley then won his Stormont seat. In 1970 he was elected to the Westminster parliament as the MP for North Antrim.• In September 1971 Paisley founded Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). Many members also belonged to his Free Presbyterian Church and gave unquestioning loyalty to the leader.• The DUP opposed the reforms that Chichester-Clark and Brian Faulkner introduced in response to pressure from Britain.• After direct rule was imposed in March 1972, the DUP worked for the restoration of Stormont. They opposed power-sharing but took their seats in the Northern Ireland Assembly elected in 1973. Although Paisley played little part in the Ulster Workers' Council strike that destroyed the Sunningdale Agreement, he got much of the credit.• When the British rejected the demand of the Constitutional Convention (1975–1976) to restore Stormont, Paisley led another workers' strike but it was defeated in 1977. In spite of that he topped the poll in the first direct election to the European Parliament in 1979.• The DUP and the Ulster Unionist Party joined together against the 1985 Anglo- Irish Agreement. But Paisley's links to loyalist paramilitaries put off many moderate unionists.• Paisley opposed the 'peace process', especially any talks with the SDLP or the Dublin government. He condemned the Downing Street Declaration of 1993, attacked the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and campaigned for a 'No' vote in the referendum that followed.
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<p>GERRY FITT AND THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In London the Campaign for Social Justice had influenced members of the Labour Party which won the 1964 election. But the Prime Minister Harold Wilson refused to interfere in the North. • This changed in 1966 when Gerry Fitt was elected as a Republican Labour MP for West Belfast. At Westminster, he insisted on asking questions about unionist discrimination against Northern Catholics. • This encouraged Labour MPs to ask why the British taxpayer should subsidise a government responsible for so many injustices.
<p>THE NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL RIGHTS ASSOCIATION (NICRA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1967 frustrated Catholics decided to put pressure on the Unionist government and they set up the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA). • Although most members came from a nationalist background, they had a wide variety of aims: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some were moderate nationalists like John Hume and the McCluskeys, who wanted full civil rights and the end of discrimination. • There were also socialists, communists and militant students like Bernadette Devlin. They hoped for a socialist revolution. • After the IRA's border campaign failed, some of its leaders turned to socialism. They too supported NICRA. • NICRA demanded: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An end to the Special Powers Act and the B Specials. • Council houses to be given on a fair points system, • 'One man, one vote' in local elections and an end to gerrymandering. • Unionists could not accept these demands which would have reduced their power, especially west of the Bann. Instead they claimed that NICRA was a republican and/or communist conspiracy to destroy Northern Ireland.
<p>BERNADETTE DEVLIN (1947-)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bernadette Devlin became involved in the civil rights movement while a student at Queen's University in Belfast in 1968.
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BERNADETTE DEVLIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• After taking part in the early demonstrations organised by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, she joined a radical leftwing student group, the People's Democracy (PD).• In the 1969 Stormont election, she stood against Chichester-Clark. Her youth and energetic way of speaking attracted media attention and she was selected as the 'unity' candidate to oppose the unionists in a by-election to the Westminster Parliament in 1969.• She won the seat, and at 21 became the youngest woman ever elected to the House of Commons. She kept the seat until 1974.• She took part in the 'Battle of the Bogside' in Derry in August 1969 and in 1970 received a six-month jail sentence for her activities. In the House of Commons, after Bloody Sunday (January 1972) she punched the British Home Secretary, Reginald Maudling, when he said that the British army fired in self-defence.• After she lost her Westminster seat she helped to found the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) when it broke away from the Official IRA. But she later left it when it was involved in violence.• In 1979 she stood for election to the European Parliament to publicise the blanket protests by republican prisoners opposed to the British government's policy of treating them as criminals. She got over 38,000 votes. This showed that many nationalists would support republicans if they rejected violence and it helped to encourage Sinn Féin's move towards a political solution.• In 1981 loyalist paramilitaries attacked her and her husband Michael McAliskey, leaving them seriously wounded.• After she recovered she continued to campaign on left-wing issues and criticised Sinn Féin's part in the peace process.
THE BEGINNING OF VIOLENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In Dungannon, the local Nationalist MP, Austin Currie, encouraged Catholic families to squat in council houses. After the RUC evicted them, the unionist- controlled council gave one house to an unmarried Protestant girl.
AUGUST 1968: THE NICRA MARCH IN DUNGANNON	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To attract attention to the case, NICRA staged a march from Coalisland to Dungannon in August 1968. Led by Currie and Fitt, the marchers sang the American civil rights anthem, 'We Shall Overcome'.
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AUGUST 1968: THE NICRA MARCH IN DUNGANNON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When Ian Paisley organised a counter-demonstration, the RUC stopped the NICRA marchers from getting to the centre of Dungannon.
OCTOBER 1968: THE CLASH IN DERRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Derry a Housing Action Committee then persuaded NICRA to back its march on 5 October. The Apprentice Boys announced that they planned to march on the same day. The hardline Minister for Home Affairs William Craig then forbade both marches from going to the centre of Derry. Moderates like the McCluskeys and John Hume wanted to postpone the march for a week but local radicals insisted on going ahead. Only 400 people turned up but they included Gerry Fitt and three British Labour MPs who came to watch. The RUC blocked the marchers, then used their batons to beat the peaceful demonstrators, including Fitt. Within hours, images of the violence appeared on TV around the world. In response, reporters and camera men flocked to Northern Ireland to see what was going on. Across the North, Catholics organised demonstrations in sympathy with the Derry marchers. In Belfast radical students led by Michael Farrell set up the Peoples' Democracy. Influenced by Marxist ideas, they hoped to bring about a socialist revolution.
O'NEILL INTRODUCES SOME REFORMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The London government warned O'Neill that they would withhold subsidies to Northern Ireland unless he introduced reforms. Reluctantly O'Neill agreed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce a points system for council housing Review the Special Powers Act Set up a Development Commission to replace Derry city council But he did not include 'one man, one vote'. William Craig and some members of the Unionist Party criticised O'Neill for giving in to London.
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<p>THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY MARCH: JANUARY 1969</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 9 December 1968, O'Neill appeared on TV, asking for support. Warning that '<i>Ulster is at a crossroads</i>', he told unionists that their way of life depended on British subsidies and begged nationalists to give his reforms time to work. • Unionists and nationalists backed O'Neill. NICRA called off marches and he felt strong enough to sack Craig. • But the young radicals in the People's Democracy were opposed to NICRA's moderation. On 1 January they set out to march from Belfast to Derry. • At Burntollet Bridge near Derry, hundreds of extreme unionists, including some off-duty B Specials, attacked them with stones and clubs. Films of the attack showed the RUC did little to protect the marchers. • As they reached Derry there were riots. The RUC followed some rioters into the Catholic Bogside district and used excessive force against them. • This undermined support for moderation among nationalists and Hume announced that NICRA marches would resume.
<p>JANUARY TO MARCH 1969: THE CAMERON REPORT AND THE ELECTION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O'Neill appointed Judge Cameron to enquire into the causes of the violence. (Later he produced the Cameron Report which was critical of unionist rule in Northern Ireland.) • In protest, Brian Faulkner resigned and 12 Unionist MPs called for O'Neill to go. Hoping the public would back him, O'Neill called an election. • But of the 39 unionist MPs elected, only 27 backed O'Neill. Ian Paisley almost defeated him in his own constituency. • On the nationalist side several members of the civil rights campaign, including John Hume, won seats.
<p>O'NEILL'S RESIGNATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the election, O'Neill agreed to accept 'one man, one vote' in local elections but violence increased. • There were riots in Derry and one man, beaten by the RUC, died. A few days later loyalist paramilitaries set off bombs in Belfast's water mains to undermine support for O'Neill.
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O'NEILL'S RESIGNATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More unionist MPs called for O'Neill to go and he resigned on 28 April 1969.• O'Neill had few contacts among ordinary unionist voters and his stiff manner and aloof personality made it hard for him to win their support for the reforms that were essential to preserve unionist rule.
EXAM QUESTIONS	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How effective was the contribution of Terence O'Neill to the affairs of Northern Ireland? (HL 2012)2. Who was the more effective leader of Northern Ireland, Brookeborough or O'Neill? Argue your case by referring to both. (HL 2009)3. Why did the Civil Rights movement emerge in Northern Ireland and how successful was it? (HL 2008)
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Background

1. **Jan. 1962** – Stormont officials meet the University Grants Committee to discuss the establishment of a second university in Northern Ireland
2. Coleraine and Armagh begin to lobby to host the second university
3. **May 1963** – Stormont establishes a committee under Sir John Lockwood to investigate higher education
4. The Lockwood committee comprises 8 members, 4 from England and no Catholics
5. Lockwood Committee meets. Decides to meet fifteen times at three/four week intervals.
6. Terms of reference should cover academic, social and other factors relating to a suitable location and the choice of a specific site should be left to the government

Main Criteria

1. **Jan. 1964** – Lockwood Committee visits Queens University and confirms need for second university
2. **Feb 1964** – University Grants Committee warns main cost is building of halls of residence (accommodation for students). It advises main criteria be:
 - (a) Existence of higher technical institutions that are potential universities
 - (b) Regional planning needs
 - (c) Availability of sites of over 200 acres with room for further expansion
 - (d) The proximity of a town with reasonable facilities

Magee College, Derry

1. **Feb 1964** – Lockwood Committee visits Magee College and members are unimpressed. They report “lack of dynamism” among college community who have no “clear idea about how the college should develop”
2. **May 1964** – Senior official from Department of Commerce, Labour and National Insurance tells Lockwood Committee that industrialists think Derry “too remote”.
3. **June 1964** – Lockwood Committee draws up its shortlist – Magee College is not included.
4. **Dec 1964** – Stormont cabinet recognises backlash of “killing Magee” and O'Neill aware of the support for Magee College

Derry being sidelined

1. **Jan 1965** – Basil McFarland, former mayor of Derry, says he doubts Lockwood report will “do Derry much good” leading to foundation of University for Derry Committee (also known as Action Committee).
2. **8th Feb 1965** – Large protest meeting held at the Guildhall in Derry.
3. **10th Feb 1965** – Lockwood Report published recommending Coleraine as site for new university and Magee College to be closed down. Caused surprise and anger

Protests in Derry

1. **18th Feb 1965** – Two-minute silence in Derry with many shops and businesses closed in protest. Opposition is cross-community. 2,000 vehicle motorcade to Stormont led by Derry's Unionist Mayor and Nationalist MP.
2. **19th Feb 1965** – O'Neill secretly meets ‘faceless men’ – leading Unionists in Derry
3. **Mar 1965** – Lockwood shocked at bitter reaction to his decision and at length of parliamentary debate (three days). Despite heated discussion and defection of two Unionists, O'Neill's government wins the vote 27:19.
3. **May 1965** – Magee College trustees agree to compromise – the college will become part of Coleraine University, with full degree courses – broken promises

Faceless Men

1. **May 1965** – Unionist MP Robert Nixon makes his “faceless men” allegation, backed up by Nationalist MP Patrick Gormley – that hardline Unionists had advised O'Neill against any future development for Derry
2. Hardline Unionists wanted to ensure there would be no increase in Catholic voters and Unionist control of Derry would not end.
3. Nixon expelled from UPP
4. A petition of 15,000 names fails to move the government to investigate the matter.
5. **1969** – Magee College absorbed into new University of Ulster.

Why was Coleraine Chosen?

1. Most people in Derry felt that O'Neill's government had influenced Lockwood in choosing Coleraine. Lockwood denied that this has happened
2. Sectarian tensions in Derry did not make it suitable for a university
3. Derry was 70% Catholic and Unionists were afraid any increase in Catholic numbers because of a university would upset their control of the city
4. Certain leading unionists (faceless men) influenced O'Neill against choosing Derry
O'Neill shared the view of Derry Unionists. He asked ‘If Derry industrialised, how is it possible to insure against a radical increase in R.C. papas?’
5. Magee College was too small, in need of repair and no new site was offered.