

Tape Label: Paul Arthur Politics of the Troubles 1.mov

(This the same tape as the one labeled Paul Arthur 2005 Politics of the Troubles I; however, this tape was actually shot 5/23/03)

Talk Title from the Program Schedule: History of the Troubles from 1970 to the Present.

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This lecture took place Monday, May 27, 2002, in the Council Chamber, Main Building, Magee College, University of Ulster, Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland. The lecture session began at 9:00 am and ran until to 11:00 am. This is the second part of that lecture. The first part is a tape running 32 minutes. The third part of the lecture takes place the following day. We have technical problems with the fourth part of the lecture. We intend to find a lecture by Professor Arthur from a later year that covers the substance of that fourth part of the lecture.

Paul Arthur: This is the first tape in a four part series. Paul starts the lecture while sitting at the front of a classroom. He sets the foundation for the political culture in Northern Ireland, by putting events in context of the social and political development of the country. The tape has background noises that can sometimes interfere with the clarity of the sound.

Keywords: Intimidatory; fragmentary; under developed (politics); demotic; demos; wild birds protection act 1931; revenge of the cradle; manifest destiny; direct rule; Sir James Craig; U.S. Navy; Lough Foyle; Irish question; John F. Kennedy; Richard Crossman; psychological withdrawal (Britain from Northern Ireland); Stormont; Orange Order; Rosemary Harris; west Ulster; 1916 Declaration.

00:00 Paul is sitting at the end of a table in a classroom setting. Paul: "The first thing I want to do is rather than simply give you a chronological of events since 1970, I want to put it in some sort of context, and the context I want to put it in is, the political culture which has dominated the politics of Northern Ireland ever since was established in 1928, the political culture which the agreement of 1998 is trying to alter. I use four words to sum-up the political culture in Northern Ireland: it is intimidatory, it is intimidatory it is fragmented, it is under developed, it is- I always forget the fourth- (long pause) it will come to me lets just deal these and let me begin with the third one under developed."

01:24 Paul stands up. "And this is the place Northern Ireland gets its geographical space as much as anything else. Northern Ireland was created by the British government because it knew

no other solution. In 1920, after centuries of a very uneasy relationship with Ireland, the British decided it wanted out of Ireland and it was through militarily, politically, and psychologically where it's clear the government of Ireland lack in 1920. Now the Government of Ireland Act did allow northern part with Northern Ireland. But it also allowed that need not necessarily need to be permanent. The Government of Ireland Act could have foreseen the day when all the people of Ireland would come together. One of the things it established was the Council of Ireland. Which was to allow good relationships between government and parliament in Northern Ireland and government and parliament in Southern Ireland.”

02:35 Paul: “ It did not result from Northern Ireland part for a number of reasons. One was in the 20th century, that Ireland strategically was very important to Britain as one of the great empires of the world. Strategically Ireland was there to protect England's western flank. There are people who have described Northern Ireland as Britain's Cuba. That just as you have this off shore island off the United States, which has seen as an ideology which runs contrary to American stature, and there is a threat to American security. Ireland had to remain to some extent inside British sphere of control because if not it would be used by Britain's enemies to attack Britain. And that had been the case in the 17th and 18th centuries. Britain's traditional enemies were in particular the French and the Spanish, and both had tried to use Ireland as launch pad for the attacks on Britain.”

03:57 Question: “Was that where the Spanish Armada happened?”

03:59 Paul: “The Spanish Armada precisely and French revolutionary as well, were involve in precisely these exercises in the 1798 uprising the French sent over huge troop reinforcement. So Britain was always conscious of you know, all it had on its flank was this island which could be use against it. But secondly, Ireland was geographically placed where it could act as a bulwark for the free world. Both the British and the Americans recognized the geographic significance of Ireland. And one of the things that was built into the union of Britain and Ireland in 1920, was that that even though Britain withdrew militarily from the island of Ireland, it had control over Northern Ireland and it also had control over three ports in southern Ireland. That was very very important because it meant that the Atlantic could be protected. If you were to bother to go across the river there is a hotel just outside Derry called the Beeches House Hotel and that hotel, during the 2nd World War, was the headquarters of the American military presences in western Europe because there was recognition that U-boats could do very serious damage once the Americans entered the war.

05:27 Paul: “And if you would read the history of the 2nd World War you will find from the likes of general Eisenhower and all the rest of them, you will find, a recognition that by this same time when the ports of southern Ireland had been handed back, that Northern Ireland, and particularly this port of Derry/Londonderry, played a major role in protecting the west. The U.S. Navy was based very, very strongly in Lough Foyle (the river that runs through the middle of Derry/Londonderry). So I start this simple geographic fact of where we were and how significantly we were strategically, to the Allied cause. But Britain did withdraw psychologically, and militarily, and politically from what is known as the Republic of Ireland. I note that she

withdrew psychologically from Northern Ireland. You have to remember that Britain had for centuries been trying to control this small part of territory. In the 19th century, one British trade paper said, “We’re at peace with 9 tenths of the world yet two thirds of our troops are in Northern Ireland trying to keep the peace.” Always the realization that Ireland was above bare and during the 20th century, particularly during the 1st World War, when huge pressure was put on Woodrow Wilson before the Americans entered the war huge pressure was put on Wilson to try and bring about Irish unity. Because Irish Americans were opposed to the United States entering the war unless Irish unity could be guaranteed.

07:15 Paul: “So the Irish question is something that played farther afield to explain and I will deal with it in some detail a little later on when I talk about the peace process. In 1920, Northern Ireland was established with the proviso, that if its people want to join the rest of Ireland it could happen. In 1923, at Westminster—where Northern Ireland sends at that time 13 MPs, it’s now 18 MPs—a convention was established that Northern Ireland matters should not be discussed on the floor of the house of commons. You know, it is as if in your House of Representative the affairs of Alabama could not be discussed in the House in any shape or form. But that was convention and what it meant in practice was a huge degree of ignorance on the part of British politicians about what was happening in Northern Ireland. An amazing amount of ignorance. Again I don’t want to get to the details, but let me put it to you this way when the Troubles broke out in 1968, British politicians had no conception of what was happening in Northern Ireland.”

08:36 Paul: “There was one cabinet minister, a man called Richard Crossman dwelled on the written word, he published three volumes, and he described the total ah apprehension, bewilderment when trouble broke out in Northern Ireland. And he says, after the most serious trouble which was in August of 1969, he writes in his diary he says, “its dirty, dirty Protestant boys and girls are flinging stones and rocks at dirty Catholic boys and girls. This is August 1969, he says, “It must be St. Patrick’s Day.” This is a prejudice. For those of you who don’t know, St. Patrick’s Day is the 17th of March. The prejudice is that the Irish like nothing more than having a good fight, getting drunk and having a good fight and this is precisely what they’re doing in this case (referring to the people British people holding the prejudiced view).”

09:37 Paul: “And in the end he goes on to say (referring to Mr. Crossman), when the troops move into Northern Ireland he had this to say, (short pause) he has this to say, this is something we can hardly mismanage and it has deflected attention away from the pound. What he was saying was the British currency was, yet again under great threat, particularly from the dollar and the International Monetary Fund had been brought in to try and rescue the British exchequer. But there was this nasty little civil war happening in Northern Ireland and so (this is the British government’s thinking), this is one we can clean up, maybe not today or tomorrow, we can clean up. We can go through this and people will forget that we have bigger problems such as the state of our currency. And that was the mind set in Britain in the beginning of the Troubles.”

10:34 Paul: “Now one of the outcomes of this psychological withdrawal from Northern Ireland was that unionist governments in Northern Ireland recognized that they could get a great deal

out of the British government in London. Because the last thing the British government wanted to do was to intervene again in Irish affairs. And if you look at the records from the 1920s onwards you will find succession of prime ministers from Northern Ireland going across to London and saying, this is our shopping list we expect you to meet it, and pretty much that's basically what it was and the British government did meet the shopping list. Because it was cheaper to do that, than to have to take control of Northern Ireland. And that's what I mean, in the first instance, by under development. There was no proper politics in this part of the world, oh by the way the fourth one I remember is "demotic", the market is under developed."

11:43 Question: "Demotic?"

11:44 Paul: "Demotic I will explain that in a few minutes, yeah. So under developed, you have the, have you visited the parliament...Stormont...at all? You will? Its an amazing building. First of all where it's actually sited, most parliament in virtually every country in the world, any country I know the parliament is in the center of the city. You go to D.C., there you have the House and the Senate up there with the Supreme Court opposite it. You go to Belfast and you have to drive 7 miles outside the city to see this magnificent palladian building on the hill, and it was build deliberately that way because if you were going to storm that build you had to be really fit because you would have go up a gradient between one and three for at least a mile. And that was deliberately done, in the suburbs,so that it wasn't easy, the realization by the people who had that built for us, you had to have a parliament that could not be easily physically overturned."

12:56 Paul: "So you have this magnificent building and you'd go look at it you would say, "Gee these guys must have, they must have like to work!" It is very very imposing. And up there, from the 1920s onwards, you have one party in actual control. The nationalist party, where the party rule was what was known as intermittent abstentionists. Sinn Fein stood for for a couple of elections with them but then gave up. Nationalist contested seats and won seats and would go to Stormont basically to complain. In all the period between 1921 and 1972 when Stormont was paroled, Nationalists succeeded in passing only one act of parliament, only one, and that was 1931, and symbolically it was the single act they could pass. It was the Wild Birds Protection Act and here was one "endangered species" taking care of another endangered species and it was literally the only act of parliament they could manage to get through."

14:05 Paul: "So that Parliament or Congress is suppose to be a place where political negotiation political dialogue takes place, give and take, it never happened. It literally never happened. You had one party in control, you had another party which realized that there was never any possibility it could take control. So in any political culture, in any political system in any political activity, the first activity that is important is the skill to negotiate. We never had to learn that in Northern Ireland. Never. Literally never had to learn that. Because there was no negotiations, I have it, you don't have it, you're not going to get it. So in one side there was this notion that they would rule in perpetuity. On the other side, that was on the nationalist side, there were two views about how to get Irish unity."

15:09 Paul: “ One was what was known as the revenge of the cradle. We will outbreed them. And Catholics traditionally did have much larger families than Protestants, I mean I came from a family where there were ten of us that was not unusual that is no longer the case though. Certainly that would have been one of the highest birth rates, the Bogside had a birth rate which you now find in developing world, incredibly bad. But what happened was we didn't have jobs. See I was in a family of ten. One guy very very young (talking about himself) ... of the other nine I was the only one living in Northern Ireland until recent years. Scattered, as most families will tell you, scattered all over the place because there was no work for us and I was fortunate, working in academic life. So you have this position where, nationalist said we will out breed them or eventually they will, whereas republicans said we will outgun them. And somewhere in between there was this notion of manifest destiny in the Catholic side and manifest destiny was that God had created an island of Ireland. It was never meant to be divided and someday it would be re-united.”

16:35 Paul: “ And so nationalists looked to Dublin to look after their interests and unionists looked to London to look after their interests. In that sense you have a political culture which was under developed. The two warring parties did not have to deal with each other. And so much of that in Northern Ireland ... there is a very very good book written by a social anthropologist, and she wrote it before the Troubles were bad, called, *Prejudice and Tolerance In Ireland*, Rosemary Harris. Rosemary Harris came to Northern Ireland in the 1960s before The Troubles broke out and she did her field research in a border village. And what she discovered very early on this is a society totally without empathy. I don't have any understanding of my Protestant neighbor, my protestant neighbor has no understanding of me. And she gives example after example. In a poor rural community she said, there were times when Protestant and Catholic farmers had to work together. Bringing in the harvest, or whatever, They only had a limited amount of machinery and so they had to help each other out for their mutual benefit.”

18:03 Paul: “And she said at times like this it becomes difficult when you're working with your neighbor not to talk about politics, but there was a rule that you didn't talk about local politics because if you talk about politics you are going to disagree, fall out, and you wouldn't be able to use your neighbor's machinery...whatever. So they would talk about world politics and these were people who were not sophisticated and the only part of the world they would have known anything about was the United States. So they talked about politics it would be about what was going on in America. A lot of them would have had people who emigrated to America and America, through Hollywood and everything, would have been as close them as anything else. But once John F Kennedy was elected President of the United States they couldn't talk about American politics because you had a mick in the White House, to use their own expression, you had a Catholic in the White House, which meant Catholics in Northern Ireland felt pretty good about this and protestants felt pretty bad. And this is what I mean by a society without empathy. No understanding, this is what I mean by under developed political culture We don't deal with politics as politics is understood. So that's the first point that you have to realize when dealing with our politics.”

19:26 Paul: “The second point, fragmented I already alluded to this. This means that the INTRA-ethnic was very important. That the divisions inside protestantism and the divisions inside catholicism were very important for a number of reasons. Let me begin with protestantism because it was the one with the biggest problems. Catholics were commonly much more self confident than protestants. Up until 1960s Catholics at least attended to their religious duties by going to mass every Sunday or whatever, over 90% were doing so. Catholics were united around the one church, and a hierarchical church at that. And Catholics also were united in their sense of victimhood. So there weren’t the same class differences in Catholicism that there were in Protestantism. So whether you were a rocket scientist or a road sweeper, if you were a Catholic you had something in common.”

20:43 Paul: “The big division in Catholicism, was again as I mentioned, how do we bring about Irish unity? Do you do it by by constitutionalism or in the physical force tradition, which has been in Irish politics for centuries.

21:05 Protestantism, much more complex. One of the reasons why you have an order known as the Orange Order Northern Ireland was that the Orange Order had as one of its rules charter had as one of its rules a social and political emollient for all the different protestant denominations. There are serious differences between Episcopalians and Presbyterians or have been historically. We have Episcopalians and Presbyterians in Northern Ireland. And Northern Ireland has a whole gamut of small churches, there are always the 57 varieties (playing on the slogan of the Heinz ketchup company) and so Protestants were not united along religious dimensions and the Orange Order had to fill that particular gap.”

21:55 Paul: “ Protestants also were also divided geographically. By that I mean those protestants that were in the border counties and particularly in the west where there was a Catholic majority felt a degree of threat. Virtually until the 1960s, 90% of all industry was in the greater Belfast area and so it meant that the Protestants in the west tended to be small farmers and they certainly weren’t involved in industry in any way. Secondly, if you look at the actual delineation of the border between Northern Ireland in the Republic of Ireland, it is a crazy crazy border. It cannot be defended. It’s over 300 miles long and one of the reasons the IRA had such success was that it was so porous you could get through at any stage.”

23:03 Paul: “ And the reason for that was that in 1920, the unionists had to make a decision whether they wanted to run a country called Northern Ireland or a Province called Ulster. If they had taken Ulster they would have controlled 9 counties of the 32 counties in Ireland. If they went for Northern Ireland, they were saying to Protestants in the three border counties of Cavan, Monaghan, and Donegal; they were saying to them you are on your own. And they went for 6 rather than 9 counties because while they still would have a majority in the 9 counties the majority would have been that much smaller (Paul makes a gesture with his hands to indicate smaller) and there was danger that they could be bullied into a united Ireland and they were always worried about that. And the result was that those Protestants living in counties like Fermanagh and this county, Derry/Londonderry, were now in the front lines for IRA attacks.

And for this reason, historically, there was a difference with the Protestants of west Ulster and the Protestants of the greater Belfast area.”

24:12 Paul: “So that’s basically what I mean by fragmentation. Now should we worry about fragmentation the answer quite clearly... if you were a British secretary of state who arrived in Northern Ireland 1972 once direct rule was imposed, and you were looking for a solution to the problem, to get a solution you have to have people who can sell a solution, and what they found, particularly in the Protestant community, was that there was no one there strong enough to speak for the Protestant community. So there was no one political leader strong enough. So that presented particular problems. So fragmentation became part of the problem.

24:52 Intimidatory, a culture based on political intimidation. There was not a generation nor for that matter a decade where there was not a form of political violence from the 1920s onwards. And one of the outcomes of all this was, uh, Richard Rose who was a very distinguished American political scientist who worked in British colonial settings all of his life, Richard Rose compared political activity here to a Latin American banana republic. We don’t like the politics so we’ll take up the gun. And in some Latin American republics the army is always ready to step in because politicians are mistrusted. It was the same in Northern Ireland.

25:52 Paul: “If you take the two iconic documents of the republicans and loyalists. For republicans it is the 1916 Declaration. And in the 1916 declaration the republicans say they will use all means necessary to get what they want. Those three words are very important. All means necessary. Precisely the same words are used by loyalists when they stood against the British in 1912. All means necessary. So an intimidatory culture is one where violence doesn’t have to be overt. People realize that is just beneath the surface. And you would see this in the summer months with the Orange Marches and the protest against the Orange marches, not everywhere very few places but it will be there and it is part of our culture.”

27:00 Paul: “ One result of this notion of intimidatory culture is that many good people did not feel the urge to go into politics. Many of the people in political life were, to put it mildly, mediocre. But secondly, an intimidatory culture demeans politics, no great emphasis is put on the political process because there always this other way forward. And again when it came to looking for a solution it became very very difficult to get people to accept that a political process could work. And this is a difficulty we are facing now that again I will talk about later.

27:52 The fourth category I use to describe the political culture is what I call the demotic, and here I am borrowing from the greek word *demos*, *demos* meaning the crowd. And since what I mean...politics here was from the bottom up, it was bottom up rather than top down.”

28:14 Paul: “The Orange Order is one of the reasons you have bottom up politics. The very first prime minister of Northern Ireland, a man called Sir James Craig, who became Lord Craigavon, had a policy which he described, to use his own words, a policy of “distributing bones.” He realize that he needed to keep his rank and file happy. So he’d go to the treasury in London and demand money for his various schemes and then he’d come back and deliver it to

the people. The politicians listen very closely to what their grassroots told them. You have this to some extent in the United States where the power of lobbyists is incredibly high. I have studied American politics in relation to the Irish question and I've seen what a lobbyist can do. In our system, particularly inside the unionist community because unionist leaders were always very afraid of fragmentation, they listen very closely to what the grassroots were telling them. And the people at the grassroots who speak tended to be the zealots, the people with the strongest opinions. And they created a participatory sort of politics."

29:34 Paul: "I'm just going to give you one example taken from a social science survey taken in the 1960s, a questionnaire which was conducted in Belfast, wanted to look at relations between elected politicians in Belfast and their constituents. The survey was taken when relations Catholics and Protestants were beginning to diminish. Richard Rose called it the year of good feelings, when community relations were improving. So the surveyors wanted to know, you know, what the constituents felt about the work their political leaders were doing. And they came up at the end of all the work with a very belated, circular argument. What they discovered was that the constituents for the most part were moderates, that they wanted things to continue without any violence and they wanted to see better community relations. But their political leaders didn't realize there was that moderation around. So the political leaders to get elected were making immoderate statements, they were working in fear, they were working in paranoia inside the communities."

31:07 Paul: "And by making these immoderate statements, the constituents were hearing these horrible remarks and so therefore they assumed that things were much worse than they imagine. And because they assumed that things were much worse than they imagine they would then seek the political leaders to make even more immoderate statements, it's a vicious circle of perception, misperceived perception; hardened by extremist, the only way they're going to elect us is if we make extreme noises, we make extreme noises, and our moderates hear those extreme noises and people think things are really bad and they move on to another cycle. And that is the demotic culture. For so long, political leaders listened to the noises at the grassroots, ruckus noises, and for that reason they were not prepared to make any form of compromise."

Tape ends at 32:16