the book is the suggestion that archival evidence indicates that T. K. Whitaker was not, in the field of education, the arch-moderniser that official histories seem to take for granted in other areas of social and economic policy. Walsh also notes that the impetus for Irish education reform may have been found outside rather than inside the Republic of Ireland; for example, it was external consultants who were crucial in promoting scientific and technical education (p. 83). Walsh should be commended for stressing the role of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in spurring reform (pp 119–21, 312). In one passing but telling sentence, he observes that the example of polytechnics in the U.K. was an influence on the Higher Education Authority (p. 322).

The best aspects of *The politics of expansion* are related to the wide range of sources considered by Walsh. However, the scope of the book is limited because it is not concerned with developments within industrial and reformatory schools (p. 6). In addition, Walsh's methodological approach means that it is often harder for readers to follow the respective trajectories of primary, secondary and higher education than would have been the case if three thematic chapters had structured the core of the book's argument. If Irish education policy can be said to have 'evolved' – following the biological metaphor Walsh repeatedly uses (pp 216, 313) – then it did so via a punctuated equilibrium: changes came in spurts rather than continually.

Walsh seems, in particular, to be unsure of his footing when discussing the implications of his arguments. His contention that *Economic development* 'underlined that political attitudes towards education were beginning to change' (p. 311) is, for instance, somewhat at variance with his claim that T. K. Whitaker was between 1961 and 1965 still far more interested in the short-run financial costs than the (human capital) benefits that would be gained from reform of education (p. 81). Likewise, his repeated attempt to give credit to Seán Lemass for education reform (pp 161, 324) is equally unconvincing in this reviewer's opinion. Walsh's arguments seem much more plausible when he identifies *Investment in education* as the 'watershed' for the education system (p. 312).

The book's structure and length are unsatisfactory. There was an excellent two-hundred-page book that could have been constructed out of the materials that Walsh used; alas, *The politics of expansion*, with 327 pages of main text, is insufficiently focused. In short, the book is something of a missed opportunity, and it is also a frustrating read. Walsh all too often overloads the reader with administrative details while not simultaneously constructing and developing the kind of consistent, coherent and rigorous arguments that this reviewer had hoped for in a book on such a potentially interesting and important topic.

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1972 and the Ulster Troubles. By Alan Parkinson. Pp 400, illus. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2010. €35.

The year 1972 was the bloodiest of the Troubles: 496 people were killed in violence, including 134 army personnel. Republicans were responsible for 279 of the dead, loyalists for 121, and the security forces for 85. The 'Bloody Sunday' killings – with no whit of legal justification or excuse, as the report of the Saville Inquiry recently confirmed in exhaustive detail – clearly goes some way to explain this sudden escalation and (as it turned out) early peak in Troubles disorder. The Paras, clearly, were a regiment with more striking power than finesse in the conditions of Northern Ireland. Operating out of their base in Corry's timber yard off the Springfield Road in Belfast, for example, they virtually laid siege to the republican strongholds, and residential areas, of Ballymurphy, Whiterock, Westrock and Springhill following the breakdown of the I.R.A. ceasefire in July. That they only killed five people, including a priest, during this period is a wonder. Their heavy-handed operations in

the Protestant, loyalist Shankill Road in September showed that they were at least impartial when it came to the locals.

Still, 1972 was, as Parkinson notes, 'generally regarded as a glorious year for republican paramilitaries and very much one to forget for the army and police' (p. 228). Parkinson qualifies this by noting that following Operation Motorman – the army occupation of the urban 'no-go' areas on 31 July – the capacity of the Provisional I.R.A. to wreak destruction with car bombs was much reduced. Given the disasters of successive civilian-shredding attacks – 'Abercorn' (March), Donegall Street (March), 'Bloody Friday' (July) and Claudy (July) – the I.R.A. paradoxically may have benefited from its capacity for egregious atrocity being limited in that it protected its reputation with its support base.

Parkinson explains the eruption of the loyalist 'second campaign' (as Cardinal Conway christened it) against Catholic civilians as being a response to Bloody Friday. This seems inadequate as an explanation for the sustained campaign of loyalist violence that remained little abated until the end of 1977. More important, surely, was loyalist fear and outrage at the imposition of direct rule from London and a chronic fear of a sell-out encouraged by direct talks between the Provisional I.R.A. and the British in July. Parkinson echoes the orthodoxy and the self-serving memoirs of British politicians that depict the British–I.R.A. negotiations as an anecdotal curiosity: the urbane sophisticates of Westminster trying to din sense into I.R.A. hotheads only to find these urban guerrillas surprisingly committed to their goal of victory. Parkinson suspects that the I.R.A. ceasefire was nothing more than a regrouping exercise, and even approvingly cites Malachi O'Doherty's contention that it was all a cunning republican ruse to renew their 'mandate' for violence: violence for the sake of it. More straightforward is the view that the Provisionals had no intention then of spending any longer fighting this second round of the 'War of Independence' than their forebears had spent fighting the first, and they sincerely hoped for a 'peace process' leading to British disengagement. London, for its part, was surely not so stupid as to agree to negotiations merely out of patrician condescension or pedagogic goodwill. The British government probably hoped to hook the republicans into a general conference of interested political parties in the North, and in due course to take its distance.

In short, the intensity of violence in 1972 can be explained by the I.R.A.'s well-founded belief that it had a viable immediate war aim (to bring down Stormont) and a viable intermediate war aim (to bring the British to negotiation). Its long-term war aim – to force the British to include it in a peace process that would lead to British disengagement – was not, in fact, achievable, but certainly seemed plausible at the time. The intensity of the loyalist murder campaign was to send a message to London: a sell-out of the Constitution would not lead to a peace settlement but a bloodbath.

Parkinson's approach is straightforward, with little analysis as such. Taken month by month, the book is generally narrative in form. The discussion of the I.R.A. attack on Claudy is particularly heart-rending. Political developments are necessarily wrenched out of context. The Darlington conference, for example, can only adequately be appreciated in relation to the later Sunningdale Agreement. Each chapter begins with details of a month's loss of life, though the relevant chapter of David McKittrick et al.'s *Lost lives* (1999) remains indispensable. Despite the narrow focus, this is not an attempt at 'total history'. There is no examination of the economy or the social composition of the community. Government papers are used only lightly, and Martin Dillon and Denis Lehane's landmark *Political murder in Northern Ireland* (1973) not at all. Propaganda sheets produced by paramilitaries have not been utilised. This is a book overwhelmingly constructed from press cuttings, memoirs and interviews. An effective section draws from letters to the author from ordinary people remembering life in Northern Ireland in those dark and extraordinary days.

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