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THE IRISH QUESTION AND BRITISH POLITICS, 1868–1996

SECOND EDITION

D. G. BOYCE

Published in Great Britain by
MACMILLAN PRESS LTD
 Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS
 and London
 Companies and representatives
 throughout the world

A catalogue record for this book is available
 from the British Library.

First edition 1988
 Reprinted 1990, 1993, 1995
 Second edition 1996

ISBN 978-0-333-66530-5 ISBN 978-1-349-24928-2 (eBook)
 DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-24928-2

First published in the United States of America 1996 by
ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, INC.,
 Scholarly and Reference Division,
 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010

ISBN 0-312-16109-9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
 Boyce, David George, 1942–

The Irish question and British politics, 1868–1996 / D. G. Boyce. –
 – 2nd ed.

p. cm. — (British history in perspective)
 Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-312-16109-9

1. Ireland—Politics and government—20th century. 2. Ireland—
 –Politics and government—1837–1901. 3. Northern Ireland—Politics
 and government—1969–1994. 4. Great Britain—Politics and
 government—20th century. 5. Great Britain—Politics and
 government—1837–1901. 6. Great Britain—Foreign relations—
 Ireland. 7. Ireland—Foreign relations—Great Britain. 8. Irish
 question. I. Title. II. Series.

DA959.B69 1996

941.508—dc20

96-11513
 CIP

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 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98

What then is the duty of an English Minister? To effect by his policy all those changes which a revolution would effect by force.

(Benjamin Disraeli)

Much difference of opinion prevails as to . . . what the people of England could be brought to consent, and what the people of Ireland would be content to receive.

(Charles Greville)

Ireland under the Act of Union represented the government of one people through the public opinion of another.

(T. P. O'Connor)

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PREFACE

This is not yet another book about the ‘Irish Question’. If it were it would (depending on the point of view) be much longer, and concerned with timeless verities like morality, justice and possibly original sin. Or shorter, since most of life in Ireland since life began there is not, contrary to popular opinion, concerned with ‘Questions’ – or even questions. This book is concerned with a theme that is at once wider and narrower than the Irish experience. It traces the role of Irish political affairs in British politics, and the response of British politicians to these as they impinged upon their world. It offers no model, colonial, quasi-colonial, neo, post or any other colonial. It avoids discussions of abstractions which owe more to the current state of Irish political conflict than to the realities of the Anglo-Irish relationship. Nevertheless, like all history, it is influenced by the time and conditions in which it is written. Historians are becoming aware of the need to redefine and reconsider what often passes for British (in reality English or even southern English) history and it is hoped that this book will make a small contribution to that large, and long overdue, exercise.

D. G. BOYCE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Mrs Pat Yates, Mrs Judith Gilbody and Mrs Phyllis Hancock for typing and retyping the manuscript, to Mr Chris Ince for designing and drawing the maps and to my family for their support. This book is for Patrick Buckland to thank him, however insufficiently, for his help and inspiration in Irish studies over some twenty years.

September 1987

D. G. BOYCE

IRELAND & GREAT BRITAIN

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION IN ULSTER, 1911