Edexcel GCSE History Controlled Assessment

CA9 Northern Ireland, c1968-99

John Wright

This document has been written to provide additional support for students studying the CA9 Northern Ireland c1968-99 Controlled Assessment topic.

The first section gives background information about the history of Northern Ireland to provide some historical context and aid understanding of the events of 1968-99.

Sections 2 to 5 cover the four bullet points in the specification. The Part A enquiry will focus on one or more of these bullet points and will change each year.

Section 6 covers the Part B representation focus for this topic: How important were paramilitary organisations in preventing a peace settlement in Northern Ireland? This remains the Part B focus each year.

The document ends with a glossary of key terms used.

1	The context: Background to 1968	2
2	Northern Ireland in the 1960s: Catholic grievances and Protestant fears	13
3	Protest and violence: the role of paramilitary organisations, the police and the army	21
4	Failed attempts at conciliation and agreement	28
5	The Good Friday Agreement	31
6	How important were paramilitary organisations in preventing a peace?	35
	Glossary	42

1 The context: Background to 1968

The early involvement of England, 1169-1649

The first English invasion of Ireland came in 1169 on the orders of King Henry II, who had been given permission by Pope Adrian IV. Pope Adrian (who was English) was concerned about the way in which the Irish were developing their own form of Roman Catholicism and he wanted religious uniformity in the Catholic Church. The invasion was not completely successful and Henry's forces were only able to secure control around Dublin, in an area known as The Pale. Nevertheless, King Henry gave himself the title of Lord of Ireland in 1175.

Thus, by this time, two elements had emerged in Ireland:

- religion *and*
- attempts by England to impose control.

Ireland became a focus of attention again under the Tudors. Henry VII began to limit the power of the Irish nobles and his son, Henry VIII, created serious problems. Henry VIII angered Irish landowners by forcing them to accept his authority and then his quarrel with the Pope created tremendous tension with Irish Catholics. In 1534, Henry broke away from the Catholic Church and a Protestant Church was established in England. Large numbers of Irish people did not wish to follow the new Church and remained loyal to the Roman Catholic Church. Henry made himself King of Ireland in 1541. Politics and religion were once again dominating relations between England and Ireland.

Henry's successors, Edward VI and Elizabeth I, tried to persuade the Irish to accept the new English Church but they remained staunchly loyal to the Roman Catholic Church. The religious changes in England had led to fears that its Catholic enemies in Europe might try to ally with the Irish Catholics in order to overthrow Protestantism in England. There were several rebellions in Ireland against the English and Queen Elizabeth was firm in her handling of the situation. She confiscated land from the rebellious Irish nobles and then gave it to her Protestant supporters. This rewarding of land became known as Plantation and it was extended by James I after 1609, following the Earl of Tyrone's rebellion (90 leading Ulster Catholic landowners fled the country in 1607).

The failure of Tyrone's rebellion allowed King James to 'plant' large numbers of his supporters in Ireland, most of whom were English or Scottish Protestants. The supporters had to swear an oath of allegiance to James which stated that they were loyal to him, and not the Pope, and would 'conform themselves in religion according to his majesty's laws'. From this time onwards, the Protestants in Ulster began to increase their grip on land and economic power.

Oliver Cromwell

When England was plunged into civil war in 1641, the Irish Catholics saw an opportunity to break free from English rule. About 12,000 Protestants were killed in the subsequent rebellion (out of a population of about 40,000!) and it was not until 1649 that the rebellion was put down by the English. The civil war in England ended in 1649 and the new leader of the country, Oliver Cromwell, led an army to Ireland to end the rebellion and seek revenge for the murder of so many Protestants. During the nine-month campaign, Cromwell notoriously attacked the Irish towns of Drogheda and Wexford. About 3,500 Irish were killed in Drogheda and another 3,500 in Wexford as the towns were sacked. By 1652, the conquest of Ireland was complete.

Cromwell justified his actions in a letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons:

I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgement of God on these barbarous wretches, who have imbrued their hands with so much innocent blood; and that it will tend to prevent the effusion of blood for the future, which are satisfactory grounds for such actions which cannot otherwise but work remorse and regret.

He confiscated the land of the rebels and drove them to the west of the country, where there was poor farm land. Cromwell gave about 4.4 million hectares to his supporters and, by 1688, Protestants owned almost 80 per cent of the land in Ireland. (The Protestants numbered only about 18 per cent of the population.) Over 12,000 troops had been given land in lieu of their wages, of which almost two-thirds remained in Ireland.

Politics, land and religion were now becoming the recurring themes of Ireland's problems.

William of Orange and the Protestant Ascendancy

In 1688, King James II of England was deposed because he wanted to return the country to Roman Catholicism. James sought support from France and Ireland, and war broke out. James' army in Ireland besieged the city of Londonderry for over 100 days and thousands of its Protestant inhabitants died. Ships from the British navy had to sail up the River Foyle to end the siege. The new Protestant King of England, **William of Orange**, took his army to Ireland to end the threat from James and his Catholic forces, and won major victories at the **Battle of the Boyne** in 1690 and at Aughrim the following year. These two battles ended James' realistic hopes of regaining the throne. After the battles, the Protestant rulers were intent on securing and maintaining their hold on Ireland. This was completed by the passing of the **Penal Laws** (1697-1727). These laws are crucial in understanding how the divisions in Irish society became entrenched.

The Penal Laws stated that previous rebellions in Ireland had been 'contrived by Popish clergy', thus the laws were meant to restrict the power and lives of the Catholics in the country and, at the same time, place Protestants in positions of power (**Protestant ascendancy**). The laws stated that Catholics could not:

- become MPs, town councillors, solicitors, lawyers or civil servants
- go into Higher Education
- pass their land to one son – it had to be divided amongst all their sons
- buy land or lease it for a period of longer than 31 years
- join the army or navy
- keep guns (they could be whipped if found in possession of one).

What also began to develop in the eighteenth century was the issue of 'absentee landlords'. Many of the Protestant landowners in Ireland preferred to live in England or Scotland and simply make money from their tenants. The Irish Catholics owned the poorest land (only 7 per cent of farming land by 1714) but the law about buying and leasing land changed in 1782, following changes in the way in which Ireland was governed. However, the changes resulted in violence between some Protestants and Catholics because the former feared any increase in the power of their opponents. In 1795, these Protestants formed the **Orange Society** (named after King William of Orange) and swore they would 'to the utmost of [their] power, support and defend the King (of England) and his heirs as long as he or they support the Protestant ascendancy.' The Society was later re-named the **Orange Order**.

At the same time that the Orange Society was being formed, there were many Catholics and even some Protestants who wanted to secure their independence from England. They had seen the American colonies break away from English rule and had also seen the revolution in France, which had resulted in the removal of the monarchy. In 1791, the **Society of United Irishmen** was formed.

As Wolfe Tone, one of its founders, said:

My aim was to break the connection with England and win independence. To do this we had to forget past differences and replace the words 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' with the one name of 'Irishman'.

Tone led a rebellion against the English in 1798, but the forces of the United Irishmen were defeated at the Battle of Vinegar Hill. It is thought that about 20-30,000 Irish were killed during the rebellion. Tone was captured and he committed suicide in captivity.

The 1798 rebellion made the English government realise that it was unwise to allow Ireland to have its own parliament and, in 1800, the **Act of Union** was passed which formally united Ireland with Britain. It meant that Ireland would be governed by the parliament in Westminster. However, Irish Catholics could not become MPs at Westminster. They could vote if they owned or rented land which was of a certain value, but it was impossible for them to vote for a candidate in an election who would stand up for their rights. This was because voting in the early nineteenth century was carried out in public - it was not a secret ballot. If a Catholic tenant voted against the candidate that their landlord preferred (on occasions this might be the landlord himself), then that tenant would be evicted.

There was a tremendous struggle in the 1820s to allow Irish Catholics to become MPs. It was led by Daniel O'Connell, who formed the Catholic Association. O'Connell stood as an MP, even though this was not permitted, and won the by-election in County Clare. The government at Westminster feared that, if O'Connell was not allowed to take up his seat, there would once more be rebellion in Ireland. Consequently, in 1829, the **Catholic Emancipation Act** was passed, allowing Catholics to become MPs.

At the height of the struggle for the right to become an MP, O'Connell said:

You English are unable to govern Ireland even to your own satisfaction... you have ruled her, not by powers of the law, but by undisguised force... In the name of Ireland, I call upon you to restore her national independence.

The Great Famine

After 1829, there were demands from O'Connell and his supporters that the Act of Union be repealed, but in the mid-1840s political issues were overshadowed by what has become known as the Great Famine. By 1845, the population of Ireland was about 8.5 million and about one third existed on a diet of potatoes and little else. In the autumn of 1845, half of the potato crop failed and there was severe hardship for large numbers of the population. Worse was to come when the whole potato crop failed the following year. This time, huge numbers faced starvation. It has been estimated that one million people died of starvation during the famine. Moreover, 1.5 million left Ireland and emigrated to England, the USA or Canada. Many Irish people blamed the government at Westminster for not doing enough to help those who suffered in the famine. Some were angry enough to consider challenging and ending British rule.

The growth of Irish Nationalism

At the same time that O'Connell was demanding the repeal of the Act of Union, a movement called Young Ireland emerged. One of its leaders, John Mitchel, founded his own newspaper, *The United Irishman*, and he used it to put forward his ideas about creating an independent Ireland.

Amongst other things, Mitchel said:

Let the man amongst you who has no gun, sell his garment and buy one. The Irish people should fight to set up a republic completely cut off from Britain. Speeches or resolutions never will do one bit of good unless we all have arms and are ready to turn out.

The members of Young Ireland organised a rebellion in 1848, but it was easily put down and most of its leaders were transported to Tasmania. However, one of its members, James Stephens, established the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) in 1858. The IRB members were nicknamed Fenians after the army of the legendary Irish hero, Finn MacCool. Stephens was assisted by fellow rebel John O'Mahony, who had formed the Fenian Brotherhood of America whilst in exile and promised to supply the IRB with the means to rebel against British rule.

Stephens planned a rebellion which began in 1867, sparked by the arrests of four IRB leaders. There were many incidents that year, which resulted in several deaths and executions, but the IRB was unsuccessful and the movement slowly lost importance. However, the links with the USA were established and were to become important during the latter part of the twentieth century.

Home Rule

Parliament at Westminster did introduce some reforms in favour of the Irish after 1869.

- The Church in Ireland was disestablished - this meant that the Roman Catholic Church was on an equal footing with the Protestant Church.
- The Land Act of 1870 protected tenants who were unjustly evicted.
- The Land Acts of 1881 and 1885 fixed fair rents and gave tenants some help to buy their land.

Despite these major changes, there was still a call for Ireland to have a greater say in the way it was governed. The formation of the Home Rule League in 1873 gave voice to those who wanted Westminster to give up some of its powers in Ireland.

At its first conference in Dublin, the Home Rule League declared:

- the right of domestic legislation on all Irish affairs should be restored to Ireland
- the right to have a parliament in Ireland
- that no laws should be passed which would establish any religious ascendancy in Ireland
- that its demands should be obtained by peaceable and constitutional means.

In the 1874 General Election, the Home Rule League won 59 seats and this increased to 61 in the 1880 election, rising to 86 in 1885. The election result in 1885 meant that the Irish MPs (sometimes called the Irish Parliamentary Party or the Irish Nationalist Party) were a powerful group at Westminster. The Irish **Nationalist** MPs pressed for Home Rule but, in so doing, they created fear in the minds of the Ulster MPs who expected Home Rule to lead to Ireland's complete independence.

In the hope of solving problems over Ireland, the Liberal governments introduced **Home Rule Bills** (1886 and 1893) but both failed. With the new century came the formation of a new party in 1905 - *Sinn Fein* (translated from the Gaelic it means '*We ourselves*'). There was also a resurgence of interest in the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

After the December 1910 election, the Liberal government introduced a third Home Rule Bill and it was scheduled to become law in 1914. However, just as there were many Irish in the South who sought Home Rule, there were also large numbers in the North (Protestants who did not want to end the Union, hence they were called **Unionists**) who wanted nothing to do with it. They had formed the Ulster Unionist Council in 1905 to protect the welfare of the Protestants in Ulster and they viewed the new Home Rule Bill as leading to the domination of Ireland by Catholics. There was a huge demonstration against the Home Rule Bill of 200,000 Ulster people in Belfast, in early 1912 and, in September of that year, 500,000 Ulster people signed the **Solemn League and Covenant** against the Bill. In 1913, the **Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)** was formed as a paramilitary group to protect Ulster. The UVF soon had a large membership (90,000 by mid-1914) and had ample funds. (One of the financial contributors was the writer, Rudyard Kipling.) It bought rifles and several million rounds of ammunition in April 1914 in anticipation of civil war.

Just as the North began to arm itself, so too did the South. The IRB set up the **Irish Volunteers** and the **Irish Citizen Army** was formed by the Transport and General Workers Union. Both these groups began to arm themselves. Civil war looked certain, but then events in Europe came to the fore and Britain entered the Great War in August 1914. The British government decided to suspend the Home Rule Bill until the end of hostilities. Many Irishmen then volunteered for the British army. The leader of the Unionists, solicitor-general Edward Carson, used his influence and power to persuade the British government to allow the Ulster Volunteers to become a part of the British army. It became known as the 36th Ulster Division. Similarly, the leader of the Irish Nationalists, John Redmond, encouraged the Irish Volunteers to join the British army. The Irish Volunteers were given the name the 10th Irish Division. The Ulster Division was kept separate from the Irish Division.

The Easter Rising, 1916

There were those in the South who did not wish to be involved in the war and they saw their chance to use the war as a means of pushing Ireland towards independence.

Arthur Griffiths, the founder of *Sinn Fein*, said of the war:

Ireland is not at war with Germany. Our duty is in no doubt. We are Irish Nationalists and the only duty we can have is to stand for Ireland's interests.

Some of the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Irish Citizen Army, led by Patrick Pearse and James Connolly, began to plan an uprising against the British. Easter 1916 was decided upon, and on 24 April the rebels seized the Post Office building in central Dublin and announced that Ireland was no longer ruled by Britain and was an independent country.
The Irish flag was flown from the Post Office. The rising only lasted a few days and the rebels were soon defeated. Initially, the people of Dublin were horrified by the uprising and gave little support to the rebels. However, the British lost popular support almost immediately afterwards. First, they executed the rebel leaders over a period of nine days in May and then introduced martial law. In addition, leading nationalists were imprisoned.

During the next two years, the growth of *Sinn Fein* was tremendous and it won 73 seats in the December 1918 election, whereas the nationalists won only seven. There were 25 Ulster MPs. It was clear that the people of Ireland had spoken and the vast majority wanted the independence of Ireland. The *Sinn Fein* MPs refused to sit in the Westminster parliament and established a parliament in Dublin – the ***Dáil Éireann***. The *Dáil* wrote its Declaration of Independence and even began to collect taxes. The British government banned the *Dáil* but faced growing challenges from those who sought Irish independence.

It was in 1919 when those who sought independence began military action against the British. The republicans named the conflict the 'War of Independence'. Firstly, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), led by Michael Collins, was formed from the Irish Citizen Army and the Irish Volunteers. The IRA made frequent attacks on the police and British armed forces, killing more than 200 in 1920. The British government recruited extra volunteers to fight the IRA - these were the Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries. Both these groups acquired a reputation for violence.

Violence worsened during 1920 and culminated in what became known as 'Bloody Sunday' on 21 November. On that day, 31 people were killed – 14 British, 14 Irish civilians and three republican prisoners. The British who were killed were secret servicemen and the Irish who died were civilians who were shot at a Gaelic football match. The situation looked hopeless and therefore the British government decided the only way to stop the fighting was to partition Ireland temporarily. This was done under the Government of Ireland Act, 1920. Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland were created. There would be a Council of Ireland which would work to restore a united Ireland. The Nationalists in the South continued their fight to have one united Ireland and the conflict escalated. In the continued fighting, more than 700 members of the IRA were killed and more than 600 British were killed. After more than a year's fighting, some of the Nationalist leaders accepted the British government's offer of peace. A compromise was eventually reached in December 1921, when the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed. The **Irish Free State (IFS)** was created. However, the terms of the treaty still bound the IFS to Britain.

Key terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty 1921

The key terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty were:

- The Irish Free State was to be a member of the British Commonwealth.
- The British army would be withdrawn from the IFS.
- A boundary Commission would draw the borders between Ulster and the IFS.
- The British monarch would be the head of state of the Irish Free State and would be represented by a Governor General.
- Britain was to have three naval bases in the IFS.

The Treaty was disliked by many Irish because it still bound the IFS to Britain. Two groups emerged, those pro-treaty led by Michael Collins and those anti-treaty led by Eamon de Valera. There followed a bloody civil war in the IFS (1922-23), which saw terrible fighting, executions and huge numbers of imprisonments. Michael Collins himself was killed in an ambush in 1922. When the civil war ended, the pro-treaty group was victorious, and de Valera and his defeated followers vowed to amend the Anglo-Irish Treaty and unite the whole of Ireland. In 1926, de Valera set up his own political party – *Fianna Fáil.*

Ireland after partition, 1922

Fig 1: The border and capitals of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, 1922

There were amendments to the treaty in 1937 when the IFS was re-named **Eire**. That year, a new Constitution was drawn up which did not recognise Northern Ireland. The IRA began terrorist activities again by blowing up customs posts on the border with Northern Ireland. (The IRA had been outlawed by the Irish government in 1936 because it had committed several civilian murders.) The IRA then decided to attack mainland Britain in what it called the 'Sabotage Campaign'. There was a series of bomb attacks and the sabotaging of communications throughout 1939 and the most serious incident came in August, when a bomb attack in Coventry killed five and injured 70.The final figures resulting from the campaign were around 300 explosions, seven deaths and 96 injuries.

After the end of the Second World War, the IRA was seen to be a spent force. It had little in the way of funds and some of its leaders had been imprisoned. However, the IRA began a further campaign in 1956, codenamed Operation Harvest, which finally ended in 1962. It was seen as a failure by the leaders of the IRA and cost the lives of eight IRA men, four republican supporters and six Royal Ulster Constabulary officers. There was little or no support for the IRA in Northern Ireland.

By the early 1960s, it seemed that Eire and Northern Ireland would co-exist peacefully for the foreseeable future. However, trouble erupted in 1968 and it did so in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland after 1922

There was relief among the Protestants in Northern Ireland that they had remained part of the Union. However, during the 1920s and 1930s, the economy of the province suffered greatly. Unemployment was often as high as 25 per cent and discrimination against Catholics was rife. After the end of the Second World War, which brought greater prosperity to the province, there was little change in the status of the Catholics. There were huge disparities in employment, income and housing, and there seemed little hope that there would be any change. However, Northern Ireland had a new Unionist Prime Minster in 1963, Terence O'Neill, and he promised reforms. For a short period there was some optimism. He focused on houses and promised 12,000 new houses a year by 1970. Yet progress was slow and the demand for further change began to grow. The demands focused on civil rights within the province, not on the unity of Ireland.

2 Northern Ireland in the 1960s: Catholic grievances and Protestant fears

Catholic grievances

When considering grievances in Northern Ireland, it is crucial that the two tables below are constantly referred to. The tables show the overall rise in the population of Northern Ireland and the relative growth of the various religious groups in the province.

Population of Northern Ireland since 1921	
1921	1,272,000
1941	1,288,000
1961	1,427,000
1981	1,543,000
2001	1,689,000

Main religious groupings in Northern Ireland 1961-2001 as percentage of population			
Religion	*1961*	*1991*	*2001*
Roman Catholic	34.9%	38.4%	40.3%
Presbyterian (Protestant)	29.0%	21.3%	20.7%
Church of Ireland (Protestant)	24.2%	17.7%	15.3%

The police

When the Northern Ireland parliament opened in 1921, its **Unionist MPs** wanted to ensure that their control over the six counties would be permanent and could not be challenged. The police force was central to this and the Royal Ulster Constabulary took in an influx of ex-UVF men to assist in the creation of the new province. These new recruits were the **B Specials**. The vast majority of the RUC and B Specials were Protestant. They came to be feared and hated by the Catholic people of the North, who constantly claimed they could not rely on a service which was supposed to be there to protect them.

Politics

The majority of the population of Northern Ireland has been Protestant since 1921 and this has meant that, in a general election, the majority of MPs in **Stormont** would be Unionist. Similarly, the majority of MPs who were elected to Westminster would be Unionist. Hence the Catholics, represented by nationalists, felt that they would never be able to change anything.

In local elections, Unionists (Protestants) were able to secure control of councils because the vote was restricted to householders and landowners. This also meant that lodgers and adults living with parents could not vote. There were about 25,000 people unable to vote because of these restrictions but the vast majority of them were Catholic. In many places where there were Catholic majorities, boundaries were redrawn so that Unionist (Protestant) candidates could be elected. This re-drawing was known as '**gerrymandering**'.

A good example of this process is given below:

In Londonderry in 1966, the voting population was 30,376, of which 20,102 were Catholic and 10,274 were Protestant. The city was divided into three wards for local council elections and, in 1966, the election result was:

Ward	No. voters	No. Catholics	No. Protestants	Councillors elected
North Ward	6,476	2,530	3,946	8 Protestant
South Ward	11,185	10,047	1,138	8 Catholic
Waterside Ward	5,549	1,852	3,697	8 Protestant

The result of Protestant control of local councils meant that, in such areas as council housing, Protestants were always favoured over Catholics. Another result was the employment of Protestants before Catholics. Political dominance also led to economic dominance and Catholics were more likely to be unemployed or to have inferior jobs, even in the private sphere.

Education

Education was always segregated in Northern Ireland. The Unionist Government's view was that Catholic education 'might lead to the destruction of Northern Ireland as a political entity' and therefore they gave only the teachers' salaries and 65 per cent of the Catholic schools' running costs. After the 1947 Education Act, the Catholic community contributed over £20 million (in 1968 currency) towards the building and maintenance of their schools – besides contributing to Protestant schools out of their rates. Only 27 per cent of the children at grammar schools were Catholic by the end of the 1960s. By the mid to late 1960s, teaching facilities for Catholic students, including the number of schools and the student-teacher ratio, were rapidly approaching the quality of the Protestant-dominated state educational system.

Yet, as comprehensive schools were built in the later 1960s, it merely meant segregated comprehensive schools next to each other, as in Craigavon. University education was unsegregated (as at Queen's in Belfast), but teacher training was segregated between the state-controlled Stranmillis College and St. Mary, and St. Josephs for Catholics.

Housing

Many Catholics felt that, if houses did not go to Protestants, they simply would not be built. Without a house, the Catholics would go away – move to Eire, to mainland Britain or leave the British Isles altogether. If Catholics were given a house, then they would stay and put the gerrymandered districts at threat. In addition, Catholics pointed to the quality of their housing. The 1971 census showed that 30 per cent of homes in Northern Ireland still lacked basic amenities, including hot water, a fixed bath and an indoor toilet. The figures for homes lacking amenities also show that Catholics were worse off than Protestants, although poor housing conditions were widespread in both communities. 36 per cent of Catholic homes lacked these basic amenities, compared with 31 per cent for Church of Ireland members and 27 per cent for other Protestants.

In 1963, the Homeless Citizens' League was formed in Dungannon, County Tyrone. The formation of the League was a clear indication of the extent of discrimination against the Catholic communities. The League aimed to shame the council into giving more houses to Catholic families and proved to be successful. The League then developed into the Campaign for Social Justice. Reforms were promised in the early 1960s, but they were slow to come and, as a result, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association was formed (NICRA) in 1967. It was hoped that this body would bring faster change. (See the section on NICRA on page 17.)

Employment

Catholic employment tended towards the lower end of the job market and they were employed mainly in unskilled and lower-paying jobs, such as clothing manufacture and textiles. Protestants were employed in the relatively higher-paid areas of shipbuilding and engineering. The more an industry paid, and the more regular the work, the fewer Catholics it tended to employ; while the lower-paid and less regular positions, such as seasonal building work, employed Catholics at a rate close to their population proportion. There was thus a higher proportion of Catholics living in poverty, indicating that employment and access to wealth were key areas of discrimination.

Some particular examples are given below.

- In Derry in 1966, the council had 177 salaried employees: 145 Protestants and 32 Catholics. The Protestants earned on average 30 per cent more than their Catholic counterparts.
- In Belfast in 1966, there were 10,000 employees at the Harland and Wolff shipyard. There were only 400 Catholics.
- In the late 1960s, in County Fermanagh, only 32 out of 370 council posts were held by Catholics and there were none in senior positions. In the same county, only 7 out of 75 school bus drivers were Catholic.
- Despite attempts to change employment policy in the 1960s, by the end of the decade only 12 per cent of local government staff were Catholic.
- In the late 1960s, the Civil Service of Northern Ireland, with over 8,000 permanent and temporary staff, was 94 per cent Protestant. There were no Catholics in the Ministries of Home Affairs or Labour with the rank of Principal or higher.
- Catholics of professional status were denied any effective influence in the machinery of the administration. The table below shows the composition of certain public boards in Northern Ireland in 1969:

	Membership	Catholics
Electricity Board	5	0
Housing Trust	7	1
Economic Council	18	2
Hospitals Authority	22	5
General Health Services Board	24	2
Agricultural Wages Board	15	2
Youth Employment Services Board	18	3
Industrial Court	22	1
Lowry Commission to Redistribute University Parliamentary Seats	5	0
1969 Commission to Overhaul Parliamentary Boundaries	3	1

Catholics pointed out that, if they had such minimal involvement in important bodies, then they could not help shape the future of the province.

Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association

In early 1967, inspired by the civil rights movements in the United States and elsewhere, groups of Catholics and liberal Protestants gathered together to form the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA). NICRA set out to right wrongs through the dissemination of information, street protests and, later, the use of civil disobedience campaigns. NICRA aimed to change the discriminatory practices and policies of the Unionist government. It focused on equalising the political and economic gulf between Catholics and Protestants. Thus demands for changes and reform in Northern Ireland were centred on the issue of civil rights and not with issues about uniting with Eire. NICRA maintained that it was non-**sectarian** and was concerned only with obtaining reforms by peaceful and non-violent means.

NICRA organised a peaceful march in August 1968, after which the Derry Housing Action Committee (formed in November 1967) invited it to hold a march in the city in October. About 2,000 people took part. The march ended in violence and the marchers suffered at the hands of the RUC. Importantly, the violence was seen on national television and this won more support for NICRA.

After the march, NICRA made its aims clear in order to show its peaceful philosophy:

- full adult suffrage in local elections
- removal of gerrymandered boundaries
- laws against discrimination by local government and the provision of machinery to deal with complaints
- allocation of council housing on a points system
- repeal of the Special Powers Acts (these were introduced in 1922 and gave the government of Northern Ireland unlimited powers in an emergency)
- disbanding of the B Specials.

Following the civil rights march in Derry, the People's Democracy group was formed by students at the Queen's University of Belfast. Bernadette Devlin and Michael Farrell were two of the most prominent figures. The impact of the civil rights movement in the USA and the student demonstrations across the world in 1968 clearly influenced these people who were seeking change and reform in Northern Ireland.

People's Democracy organised a march from Belfast to Derry for January 1969. When the march took place, People's Democracy marchers were attacked by supporters of the Reverend Ian Paisley (a staunch Unionist) at Burntollet Bridge, on the outskirts of Derry.
The RUC and the B Specials did little to protect the marchers and even attacked many of them.

The subsequent government report (Cameron Report) into the violence stated:

...a number of policemen were guilty of misconduct which involved assault and battery, malicious damage to property in streets in the predominantly Catholic Bogside area... and the use of provocative sectarian and political slogans.

Catholics in Derry no longer felt that the police would protect them and built barricades to prevent their entry into the Bogside area of the city.

From this point on, it became difficult to stop the problems escalating.

Protestant fears

Many Protestants in Northern Ireland felt that the Roman Catholic Church – directed from Rome - played too great a role in the lives of the people in Eire. The Protestant activists, such as Reverend Paisley, were concerned that, if there were steps to unity in Ireland, the Catholic Church would control education, censorship and even influence society on issues such as contraception and abortion. One great fear that Protestants in Northern Ireland had was the eventual increase in the Catholic population, which would lead to them being outnumbered. Many Protestants felt that any challenge by Catholics to the status quo could mean an eventual loss of their own dominance in Northern Irish society.

Paisley objected to the visit of Sean Lemass, the Leader of Eire, to Stormont in 1965 and felt that links between the two parts of Ireland were becoming too close. Many Protestants felt that, if the government of Northern Ireland gave too much to the Catholics and became too close to Eire, then calls for Home Rule would re-start. This was something the hard-line Protestants could not face.

Paisley set up his own newspaper in 1966 to warn Protestants of the Catholic threat. He continued to keep the pressure on Prime Minister O'Neill (see page 12) by forming the Ulster Constitution Defence Committee and warning people against the reforms that O'Neill was seeking to make.

Paisley further pressured O'Neill's government when he demanded that any parades in Northern Ireland to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising be banned. He was disappointed when O'Neill allowed the parades. More pressure from Paisley came in the summer of 1966 when he objected to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church discussing unity between the Catholic and Protestant Churches. Paisley led a march and fights ensued – he was arrested and jailed for his part in this. Following the trouble, the Ulster

Volunteer Force was created, naming itself after the group set up before the First Word War. The UVF was banned almost as soon as it had started, following some shootings in Belfast, however, it continued to operate in secret and re-emerged openly after 1969.

In July 1966, the summer marches of the Orange Order had greater significance and served to show the breadth of support the Protestants had in the province.

When NICRA was formed, Paisley and other Protestants claimed that it was a cover for the IRA. Some claimed that the IRA would eventually take it over. Protestant activists, such as Paisley, did not like the development of such groups as People's Democracy and ensured that Orange Order marches took place in the summer of 1969. The marches in July to commemorate the Battle of the Boyne (see page 3) caused riots across the province. However, the Protestant march planned for August in Londonderry - to remember the siege of the city (see page 3) - caused problems for the government of Northern Ireland. Catholics in Derry objected to the planned march because the Orange Order had decided to send large numbers of its members across the province to participate. Requests for the march to be banned were ignored.

When the march went ahead, the parade went through the Catholic Bogside area and the Orangemen were attacked. There was retaliation and the ensuing riot lasted for 48 hours, becoming known as 'The Battle of the Bogside'. The trouble spread to Belfast and the police were unable to keep order.

In all, during the initial riots of 1969, ten people were killed and hundreds were injured. Catholics accused the RUC of favouring the Protestant demonstrators.

- On 14 August 1969, the British army was sent to restore law and order in Belfast and Derry.

- On 19 August 1969, in the Downing Street Declaration, the government in Westminster announced:

> *...in all legislation and executive decisions of Government, every citizen of Northern Ireland is entitled to the same equality of treatment and freedom from discrimination as obtains in the rest of the United Kingdom, irrespective of political views or religion.*

The British government set up the Hunt Report to look into the RUC and its findings in October that year were quickly implemented. The B Specials were disbanded and a new, locally recruited, part-time force was established under the control of the British army. This force was to become the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR). Importantly, the Report stated that the RUC should in future be an unarmed force.

British troops were, at first, welcomed by the Catholic population because they were being given protection from Protestant extremists but, by late 1970, the welcome turned to mistrust because there had been no significant changes in politics - the Protestants still controlled the key areas in politics and society. The Catholics felt they had no one to turn to. Out of this emerged a new force - the Provisional IRA.

3 Protest and violence: the role of paramilitary organisations, the police and the army

The Troubles

1969-72

When the Catholics came under attack in 1969, the IRA was conspicuous by its absence. In fact, some people painted the slogan 'IRA – I Ran Away' on walls in Belfast. Those IRA members in the North blamed the IRA council in Dublin for the lack of action and support. At the December 1969 IRA Convention, a splinter group calling itself the Provisional IRA emerged (they became known as the **Provos**). They wanted to support the Catholics in the North. PIRA began to recruit from the North and put forward the traditional views about Ireland – that the British were the enemy and that the British army should be pushed out of the province.

However, there were many nationalists who opposed the violence of the Provos and they set up a new political party. In 1970, the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) was formed and it became the largest political party representing the nationalist community. It sought to campaign for civil rights for Catholics and a united Ireland, by peaceful, constitutional means.

As 1971 went on, the Provisional IRA began to disrupt life in Northern Ireland through a bombing campaign and targeting police and army posts, shops, hotels and pubs. In the summer of 1971, the Northern Ireland Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner, introduced **internment** without trial and rounded up all known suspected IRA members. (The suspects were sent to Long Kesh internment camp and kept in cells called 'H-blocks'.) By December, 1,576 people had been interned. The Catholics had by this time lost faith in the British army because it was seen as supporting the Protestant government. Catholics were frequently in conflict on the streets with the police and the army.

In September 1971, just as the Provisional IRA was growing in power, the Protestants formed another paramilitary group – the **Ulster Defence Association (UDA)** (see page 25).

At the end of January 1972, there was a huge civil rights march in Derry against the policy of internment. About 10,000 people took part. Violence erupted and the British army shot dead 13 unarmed civilians. It became known as Bloody Sunday. As the crisis grew, the British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, suspended parliament in Northern Ireland and imposed **direct rule from Westminster**. The IRA extended its bombing campaign to mainland Britain shortly after.

By the mid 1970s, there were about 30,000 British troops in the province.

The role of paramilitary organisations

Statistics about the numbers killed during The Troubles can be found on the Sutton database website: http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/chron/ch94.htm.

NATIONALIST PARAMILITARY ORGANISATIONS

Official IRA

When The Troubles began, there were disputes within the IRA and a splinter group emerged – the Provisional IRA (PIRA or Provos). Those who remained then called themselves the Official IRA (OIRA). The Official IRA carried out military activities against British forces until 1973 and then stopped. For most of the time, OIRA tried to follow a non-violent policy in order to bring the two communities together. The disagreement with the Provos led to a bitter feud.

OIRA was responsible for 52 killings. 23 of its victims were civilians, 17 were members of the security forces, 11 were members of republican paramilitaries (including three of its own members), and one was a member of a **loyalist** group.

The Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA/Provos)

The emergence of the Provisional IRA came about because Catholics felt that the army did not fully protect them. More importantly, when stories about ill-treatment of the internees began to seep through, Catholics felt they had been let down again. After Bloody Sunday, the PIRA leadership took the opportunity to launch an offensive, believing that they could force a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland by inflicting severe casualties; they would undermine public support in Britain for its continued presence.

Even in prison, PIRA members were able to keep pressure on the British government. Between 1976 and 1981, they demanded to be treated as political prisoners and refused to wear prison clothes. They ended up using blankets in what became known as the 'blanket protest'. They also began the 'dirty protest' - smearing their cell walls with their own excrement. These two protests were publicised across the world. They were then followed by hunger strikes in 1980 and 1981, in the latter of which ten men starved themselves to death. At the end of 1981, the British government relented and allowed the protesters to wear their own clothes and treated them as political prisoners.

In 1981, *Sinn Fein*, the political wing of the IRA, said it would begin to campaign in local and general elections. A spokesperson for them said '*Sinn Fein* will campaign with a ballot paper in one hand and an Armalite in the other.' (An Armalite is an assault rifle.) Gerry Adams became *Sinn Fein's* MP for West Belfast and, by 1983, the party had 59 local councillors in the province.

PIRA's campaign continued throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s, and its determination did not waver. On 31 August 1994, PIRA called a unilateral ceasefire - with the aim of having their associated political party, *Sinn Fein*, admitted into the peace process. The organisation broke its ceasefire in February 1996, but declared another in July 1997. PIRA accepted the terms of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 as a negotiated end to the Northern Ireland conflict.

The following were some of the events of the PIRA campaign:

July 1972	22 bombs in Belfast killed two British soldiers, a UDA member and six civilians, and injured 130 others.
August 1972	A bomb prematurely exploded at a customs post in Newry, killing nine people, including three PIRA volunteers.
March 1973	The first operation in Britain - two bombs killed one person and injured 180 others.
August 1973	Stores in London firebombed, including Harrods.
February 1974	A coach bomb on the M62 killed 11 people.
October 1974	The Guildford pub bomb killed five people and injured more than 50.
November 1974	The Birmingham pub bombings killed 21 people and injured 182.
September 1976	The Blanket Protest began.
August 1979	Earl Mountbatten, a member of the British royal family, was killed in a boat bomb. 18 soldiers were killed in the Warrenpoint ambush.
March 1981	Second round of hunger strikes began in Maze Prison.
May 1981	Bobby Sands died after 66 days on hunger strike. His death caused riots in many parts of Northern Ireland and also in the Republic of Ireland. An estimated 100,000 people attended his funeral.
July 1982	11 soldiers were killed in Hyde Park and Regent's Park, London.
November 1982	Lenny Murphy, a UDA leader, was killed.
December 1983	Six were killed and 90 injured in a bomb explosion outside Harrods, London.
October 1984	Five were killed in the bombing at the Conservative Party Conference, Brighton.
August 1985	Weapons from Libya were landed in Ireland.
March 1987	31 people were injured in a car bomb attack at a British army base in West Germany.
August 1988	The Ballygawley bus bombing killed eight British soldiers and wounded 28 in a landmine attack.
September 1989	11 British Royal Marines were killed and 22 other soldiers injured at Deal Barracks, Kent.
July 1990	The London Stock Exchange was bombed. Ian Gow, MP, was killed when a booby trap device exploded under his car.
February 1991	Mortar attack on the British Cabinet in 10 Downing Street. Fortunately, there were no injuries.
August 1994	A ceasefire was declared.
June 1996	PIRA detonated a 1,400 kg bomb in Manchester, injuring over 200 people and causing damage valued at several hundred million pounds.
July 1997	PIRA declared a second ceasefire.
September 2005	International weapons inspectors issue a statement confirming the full de-commissioning of PIRA's weaponry.

Continuity IRA (CIRA)

The group started operations in 1994, after PIRA began a ceasefire. It carried out a series of bomb attacks, shootings, bomb hoaxes and kidnappings.

The Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA)

The group carried out a series of bomb, mortar and rocket attacks, and shootings.

August 1998	RIRA detonated a 240 kg car bomb in Omagh. The bomb killed 29 civilians and wounded 220 others.
March 2009	RIRA shot dead two British army soldiers at the Massereene Army Barracks, County Tyrone.

Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP)

An offshoot of the Official IRA, some of its members formed a military wing called the **Irish National Liberation Army (INLA)** in December 1974.

The following were some of the events of the INLA campaign:

March 1979	Airey Neave, Conservative spokesman on Northern Ireland, was killed by a car bomb at the House of Commons.
March 1981	INLA members joined PIRA hunger strike in Maze Prison.
November 1982	An incendiary parcel bomb exploded in the offices of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher at 10 Downing Street. An official who opened the letter was burned.
December 1982	17 (11 were British soldiers) were killed in the Ballykelly bomb explosion.
1983-1998	Continued series of bomb attacks and shootings.
August 1998	After a 24-year campaign, INLA declared a ceasefire.
February 2010	It was announced that INLA had put its weapons out of commission.

INLA was responsible for 113 killings between 1974 and 2001 – 46 were British security forces and 39 were civilians.

Irish People's Liberation Organisation (IPLO)

This was formed in 1986 and was an off-shoot of INLA. Both groups were at war with each other for some time. Frequently, each killed members of the opposing group. In October 1992, PIRA attacked IPLO and forcibly disbanded the Belfast section.

IPLO was responsible for 22 killings. Among the victims were 12 civilians, six INLA members, two loyalist paramilitaries and two members of the British security forces.

LOYALIST PARAMILITARY ORGANISATIONS

Ulster Defence Association (UDA)

The UDA was formed in 1971 and used the name Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) whenever it claimed responsibility for any attack. This permitted the UDA to avoid being banned by the British government.

Its stated aims were to protect the Protestant people of Northern Ireland and challenge the threat of republicanism in the province. Throughout its campaign, it tended to target individual civilians as retaliation for the actions of the nationalist groups. Research shows that the UDA was responsible for 259 killings, 209 of whom were civilians. Several *Sinn Fein* members were killed, as well as 37 loyalist paramilitaries, 11 republican paramilitaries and three members of the security forces.

One infamous UDA attack was at Milltown Cemetery on 16 March 1988. During the funeral of three PIRA volunteers, Michael Stone of the UDA attacked the crowd with grenades and pistols, killing three and wounding at least 50.

Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)

The UVF was formed in 1966, and its aims were to protect Protestants from republican paramilitaries and challenge the threat of re-uniting with Eire. It killed 481 people during The Troubles. (The UVF also used the names Protestant Action Force and Protestant Action Group.)

The following were some of the events of the UVF campaign:

December 1971	A UVF bomb exploded in Belfast, killing 15 people.
May 1974	Car bombings in Dublin and Monaghan killed 33 civilians and wounded almost 260.
December1975	A car bomb exploded without warning at Kay's Tavern in Dundalk, Eire. Two civilians were killed and dozens wounded.
January1976	The UVF shot dead six Catholic civilians.
June 1994	The UVF opened fire on a crowd. Six Catholic civilians were killed and five were wounded.
October 1994	Ceasefire announced.

Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF)

A splinter group from the UVF was formed in 1996. It was responsible for the deaths of 18 people. It called a ceasefire in 1998 but urged people not to support the Good Friday Agreement.

The role of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)

After the initial trouble in the province, the British government looked into the organisation of the RUC. The B Specials were disbanded and the rest of the force was re-structured on the lines of other UK police forces. The RUC was disarmed, though it had to be given arms again because of the extent of the terrorist activities.

As soon as British forces went to Northern Ireland, the RUC was placed under its control. This lasted until 1977. After 1972, there was improved training for the RUC and it was supported by members of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), who were part-time police officers. It was hoped that membership of the RUC and UDR would reflect the religious makeup of Northern Ireland but, by the late 1970s, only ten per cent of the RUC and a very small proportion of the UDR was Catholic. The escalation of the terrorist campaign in the 1970s and 1980s saw the RUC develop to a strength of 13,500. Once the RUC was no longer controlled by the army, military support was given only when necessary.

Like the army, the RUC had to rely on informers and undercover work. In 1982, the RUC was accused of following a **shoot-to-kill policy** when several IRA and INLA members were shot. A report was commissioned to look into this but its findings were never published.

According to the CAIN project at the University of Ulster, 301 active RUC officers and 18 ex-RUC officers were killed in The Troubles.

Following the Good Friday Agreement (see page 31), the RUC was re-named the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in 2001.

The role of the British Army

When the British army went to Northern Ireland, the Catholic community hailed the soldiers as their saviours. They knew they would be protected from the violence of the Protestants which had been seen on television and in the press during the demonstrations of 1968 and 1969. However, following the battle between PIRA and the UVF in June 1970, British soldiers were ordered to search for arms in Catholic houses in Belfast. Locals had a curfew imposed on them (some 34 hours) and much damage was done to Catholic property. Three people were killed in this action, which turned large numbers of Catholics against the British forces. This turned out to be good for recruitment for PIRA. They could show that the British army was no different to the Protestants and, moreover, the message of 'Troops Out' and 'British Out' enhanced the idea of a re-united Ireland.

Bloody Sunday (see page 21) once again served to increase the hatred of the British army and huge numbers were recruited to PIRA directly afterwards. After Bloody Sunday, PIRA orders were to 'kill every British soldier they could'.

The army had to employ special methods to try to stop PIRA attacks. Road-blocks, arms checks, house searches and general patrols were used. There was a reliance on undercover work and informers, and it is known that the SAS worked extensively in Northern Ireland throughout the period. During The Troubles, PIRA claimed that the security forces operated a shoot-to-kill policy rather than arresting suspects. The security forces denied this and pointed out that, in incidents such as the shooting of eight PIRA members in 1987, the people shot were heavily armed. It has been argued that incidents such as the shooting in 1988 of three PIRA members in Gibraltar by the SAS confirmed suspicions among republicans, and in the British and Irish media, of the British shoot-to-kill policy of PIRA suspects.

The table below shows the changing number of British troops in Northern Ireland during the period from internment to the mid-1990s.

Year	Number of troops
1972	21,000
1980	11,000
1985	9,000
1996	17,750

4 Failed attempts at conciliation and agreement

1973: the Northern Ireland Constitution Act and the Sunningdale Agreement

The Northern Ireland Constitution Act aimed to set up power sharing which would give a voice to Catholics in the running of Northern Ireland in an Assembly of elected representatives. The Act also proposed a Council of Ireland which would contain members from Eire as well as the North. It would discuss such issues as regional development, electricity, transport and tourism. Extreme loyalist groups and extreme Catholics rejected the idea. Elections were held in January 1973 and the Executive took over in January 1974, with Prime Minister Faulkner as Chief Executive.

A meeting was held in December 1973, resulting in the Sunningdale Agreement. There were representatives from Northern Ireland, Britain and Eire. It was agreed that Northern Ireland would not lose its attachment to Britain and would only join a united Ireland when a majority of the population voted to do so. However, the Unionist Party rejected Faulkner as leader and a general strike by the Protestant Ulster Workers' Council in April 1974 brought about the collapse of power sharing. The strike showed that power sharing could not work unless it had the support of the majority of the population. However, loyalist paramilitaries forcibly tried to stop many people going to work and to close any businesses that had opened during the strike. Direct Rule was re-established.

The Northern Ireland Convention (a body set up in 1975 which sought agreement on a political settlement for the province) resurrected the idea of power sharing in 1975. Elections left the body weakened from the start because an overall majority had been obtained by those Unionists who opposed power sharing. It was therefore wound up in 1976.

1976: Women's Peace Movement (later known as Community of Peace People)

Founded by Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan in August 1976, the Women's Peace Movement brought some optimism after several years of terror. There was tremendous support for the Movement when it began. Catholic and Protestant women marched through republican and loyalist areas of Belfast. At one August meeting, 20,000 turned out to listen to the founders speak. However, PIRA condemned the movement and issued death threats to the leaders. Reverend Paisley said that the movement was 'priest-inspired'.

By 1980, there was growing popular disillusionment with the movement and there was a rapid decline in membership. The movement had blossomed during a period of political stalemate and, although it offered some optimism in a seemingly insoluble situation, it lacked clear policies to sustain its growth. By 1978, it had lost its appeal. While individuals and organisations continued to work for peace in their local communities, basic political issues had to be addressed before any progress would be possible.

Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977.

1985: Anglo-Irish Agreement (sometimes called the Accord or Hillsborough Agreement)

Talks between the leaders of Eire and the British government began in 1980.

In 1984, the New Ireland Forum was proposed by the Prime Minister of Eire, Garret FitzGerald. *Sinn Fein* was not invited to the talks, and the Unionist parties all declined to attend. Suggestions about the future of Ireland were put forward but were dismissed by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. However, talks between the two governments continued for a further 12 months and the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed in November 1985. The Agreement set up a joint inter-governmental committee, giving the Eire government an advisory role in Northern Ireland's government. The British government said that there would be no change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland unless a majority of its people agreed to join Eire.

The committee would discuss security forces, justice and the law in Northern Ireland, and cross-border co-operation between security forces.

Political parties at Westminster and in Dublin were optimistic that they were nearing a solution. The Ulster Unionists were the only party to reject it in the Westminster parliament.

Both governments were disappointed when the Ulster Unionists rejected the agreement. In addition, the UDA hated the collaboration with Eire and huge demonstrations followed, with the result that the army was sent a further 500 troops to assist in security matters. *Sinn Fein* rejected the Agreement because it said that the government in Dublin had now recognised the existence of Northern Ireland.

The loyalist groups viewed the Agreement as allowing Eire to interfere in Northern Ireland. There was a protest march from Derry to Belfast and some members of the UVF began to put forward the idea of Northern Ireland separating from Britain. All 15 Unionist MPs resigned from the House of Commons in protest at the Agreement. In the subsequent elections, 14 Unionist MPs were re-elected, but it also seemed as if the Catholic voters in Northern Ireland favoured the Agreement and were moving away from *Sinn Fein*. By March, the loyalist groups were accusing the RUC of taking orders from Dublin and were even targeting the RUC itself.

Sectarian violence did not end and, in the first three years of the 1990s, the number of killings was as high as ever. In 1993, the figure was the highest since 1976. The Agreement failed to end the violence, but can be seen as part of the process which led to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

5 The Good Friday Agreement (also called the Belfast Agreement)

Background to the Good Friday Agreement

Secret talks between the British government and PIRA began in 1993 and there were also talks with the leaders of Eire. The Downing Street Declaration was issued in December of that year, following high level discussions between the British and the Irish Prime Ministers (John Major and Albert Reynolds).

PIRA and then the UVF announced ceasefires in late 1994, which paved the way for peace talks. The talks were led by Senator George Mitchell of the USA. Despite continued problems in Ulster, the leaders of the two sides tried to continue the talks with Senator Mitchell. However, the Canary Wharf and Manchester bombings (February and June 1996), together with the violence and riots of the Protestant marches of July and August 1996, caused the talks to stall.

Following the election of Tony Blair and the Labour Party in 1997, talks resumed. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam, indicated that - if PIRA renewed its ceasefire - the issue of de-commissioning PIRA weapons would not be an issue at the start of talks. Discussions began in the early autumn and moved into the winter, despite continued sectarian killings. When it seemed that loyalists would withdraw support for the talks, and thereby destroy any hope of success, Mowlam visited key leaders who were imprisoned in Maze Prison and she was able to win their continued support for the peace process.

Talks continued until early April, when an agreement was made with all major groups except the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), led by Reverend Paisley. He accused the British government of a waning interest in the province and that it showed a readiness to give up the province.

The Agreement

The Agreement was eventually signed on 10 April 1998. It specified that:

- the British government would reduce the numbers of police and armed forces, and remove security installations
- an Independent Commission would be established to determine the future of policing in Northern Ireland
- both sides would decommission and reaffirm the ceasefire, with the stipulation that paramilitary prisoners would be released in two to three years if their organisations kept to the ceasefire
- politicians linked to paramilitaries who refused to hand over weapons would not hold office in a Northern Ireland government. Prime Minister Blair also stated that decommissioning would have to begin immediately after the Assembly came into being.

Regarding constitutional issues, the Agreement acknowledged and recognised that:

- the majority of the people of Northern Ireland at the time wished to remain part of the United Kingdom, and Northern Ireland's present and continuing status as such was a reflection of that wish
- a 'substantial section' of the people of Northern Ireland, and the majority 'of the people of the island of Ireland', wished to bring about a united Ireland
- both views were legitimate
- it was only for the people of Ireland as a whole, by agreement between North and South, 'to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given', to bring about a united Ireland
- any future change in the status of Northern Ireland as a part of the United Kingdom was only to be brought about by the freely exercised choice of 'a majority of the people of Northern Ireland'
- the British and Irish governments were under 'a binding obligation' to implement that choice.

The Agreement had what were called three strands.

1) The first strand dealt with the setting up of a power sharing assembly in Northern Ireland. The Agreement stated that:

- there would be a democratically elected Assembly in Northern Ireland which was inclusive in its membership, capable of exercising executive and legislative authority, and subject to safeguards to protect the rights and interests of all sides of the community
- a **108-member Assembly** would be elected by Proportional Representation from existing Westminster constituencies
- the Assembly would exercise full legislative and executive authority over matters currently within the responsibility of the six Northern Ireland Government Departments, with the possibility of taking on further responsibilities in time
- the Assembly, operating where appropriate on a cross-community basis, would be the prime source of authority in respect of all those areas for which it held responsibility.

2) The second strand of the Agreement stated that a North-South Ministerial Council was to bring together those with executive responsibilities in Northern Ireland and the Irish government to develop consultation, co-operation and action on issues of mutual interest, and provided for the existence of North-South implementation bodies to deal with specific cross-border issues.

3) The third strand of the Agreement established a British-Irish Council 'to promote the harmonious and mutually beneficial development of the totality of relationships among the peoples of these islands' [the British Isles]. In practice, that meant a body with representatives of the British and Irish governments and devolved institutions from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The Agreement affirmed the commitment to the mutual respect, civil rights and religious liberties of everyone in the community. Measures to ensure this included the establishment of a new Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into Northern Ireland law.

The final Agreement was posted to every household in Northern Ireland and put to a referendum on May 22. The result was overwhelmingly in favour of the Agreement:

Turnout	Yes	No	Total
81%	676,966 (71%)	274,879 (29%)	951,845 (100%)

In the end, the Ulster Unionists (SDLP) and *Sinn Fein* welcomed the agreement. But the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) leader, Reverend Paisley, said that it betrayed Northern Ireland more than the Sunningdale Agreement (see page 28), where the UK government established the first power sharing executive. Several Unionist MPs also defected from the party to oppose the Good Friday Agreement.

Elections for the Assembly were held in June 1998 and the results are shown below.

SDLP	177,963 votes	21.97%	24 seats
UUP	172,225 votes	21.25%	28 seats
DUP	146,989 votes	18.14%	20 seats
Sinn Fein	142,858 votes	17.63%	18 seats
Alliance	52,636 votes	6.50%	6 seats
UKUP	36,541 votes	4.51%	5 seats
PUP	20,634 votes	2.55%	2 seats
NIWC	13,019 votes	1.61%	2 seats

Reverend Paisley called Tony Blair a ‘traitor’ and a ‘liar’ when the Agreement was signed. He and his followers continued to hold to the view that the nationalists did not deserve to take part in government.

Unfortunately, despite the political process, the violence continued. In August, an IRA splinter group calling itself the Real IRA committed the worst atrocity in the 30 years of The Troubles. They set off a car bomb in the centre of Omagh, killing 29 people and injuring more than 200. Immediately afterwards, the Real IRA declared a ceasefire.

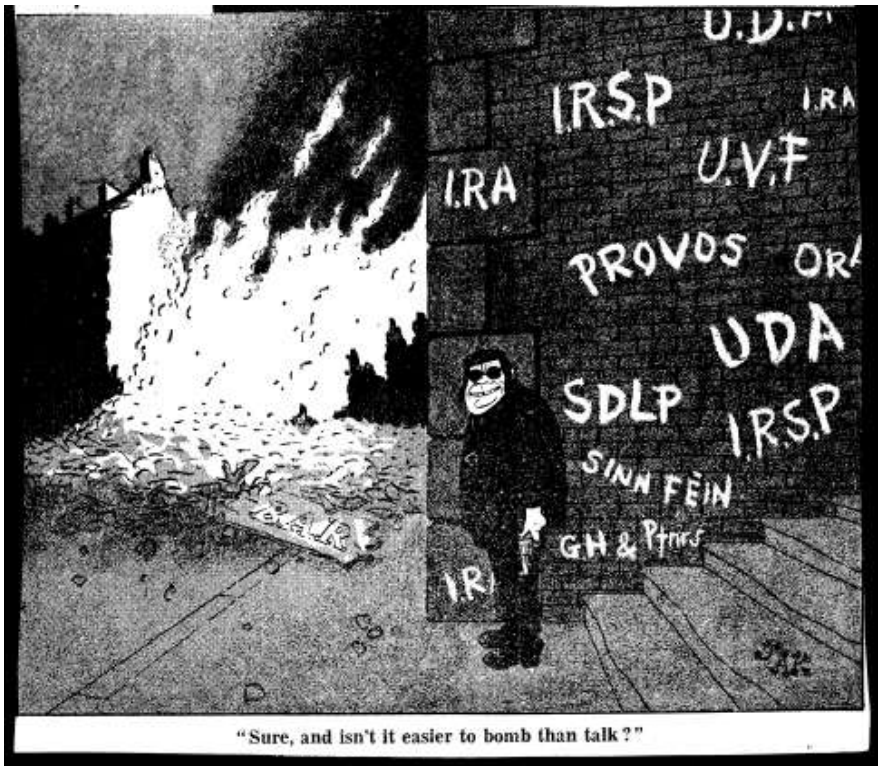
The victims of The Troubles

The table over page shows the total number of people killed during The Troubles. [Statistics about the numbers killed during The Troubles can be found on the Sutton database website http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/chron/ch94.htm.]

Status of the person killed	Count
British Army	502
British Army Territorial Army	7
British Police	6
Civilian	1786
Civilian Political Activist	56
ex-British Army	5
ex-Irish National Liberation Army	6
ex-Irish Republican Army	14
ex-Official Irish Republican Army	2
ex-Prison Officer	2
ex-Royal Ulster Constabulary	18
ex-Ulster Defence Association	4
ex-Ulster Defence Regiment	40
ex-Ulster Volunteer Force	4
Garda Siochana (Eire police force)	9
Irish Army	1
Irish National Liberation Army	38
Irish People's Liberation Organisation	8
Irish People's Liberation Organisation Belfast Brigade	1
Irish Republican Army	276
Irish Republican Army Youth Section	15
Loyalist Volunteer Force	3
non-specific loyalist group	2
non-specific republican group	2
Official Irish Republican Army	24
Official Irish Republican Army Youth Section	3
People's Liberation Army	1
Prison Officer	24
Real Irish Republican Army	2
Red Hand Commando	4
Royal Air Force	4
Royal Irish Regiment	7
Royal Navy	2
Royal Ulster Constabulary	301
Saor Eire (radical republican group)	3
Ulster Defence Association	89
Ulster Defence Regiment	196
Ulster Volunteer Force	62
TOTAL	3529

6 How important were paramilitary organisations in preventing a peace?

The cartoon below was published in the London *Evening Standard* newspaper, 7 April 1975.



Caption text: "Sure, and isn't it easier to bomb than talk?"

By the time The Troubles began, the people of Northern Ireland and Eire had had a long history of turmoil. For many in Ireland, the religious, political, social and economic differences were ingrained. For some, their way of thinking could not be altered – in many cases it came to the simple issue: either a divided Ireland or a united Ireland.

When The Troubles erupted, the fears of both sides surfaced with a vengeance and Northern Ireland tore itself apart in civil strife. Neither side was willing to conciliate and, as the violence developed, each side reacted with increased ferocity. Despite the intervention of the army, the situation worsened after January 1972 (Bloody Sunday) and recruitment to PIRA increased rapidly. As PIRA activities increased, there then followed an increase in loyalist activities, so much so that daily killings in Northern Ireland became commonplace.

The problems of the province seemed to become more insoluble as a result of the role of the British army, the British government imposing 'Direct Rule' and its frequent attempts to involve the government of Eire. Moreover, it was difficult for the British government to look for solutions when part of the constitution of Eire laid claim to Northern Ireland. (It was this that many Unionists objected to vehemently.)

It can be seen from the sections on the paramilitary organisations above (pages 18-21) that each group was prepared to go to the most extreme lengths to defend and promote its beliefs. Despite the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, there have still been killings of police, British soldiers, a sectarian nature and internal paramilitary members.

The Sutton database website gives figures on how many people were killed by all organisations during The Troubles: http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/chron/ch94.htm. However, it does not indicate the extent of the bombings, intimidation and beatings perpetrated by the paramilitaries. If such websites as http://www.enotes.com/topic/Timeline_of_Irish_National_Liberation_Army_actions (using this as the template for the other paramilitaries) are used, it can be seen how death and destruction became a part of everyday life in Northern Ireland and Britain.

Internment

Internment (see page 21) proved to be an early failure and served only to antagonise the Catholic community and move it further away from the Northern Irish authorities because not one loyalist was arrested on the first day of the policy. One British officer said of internment:

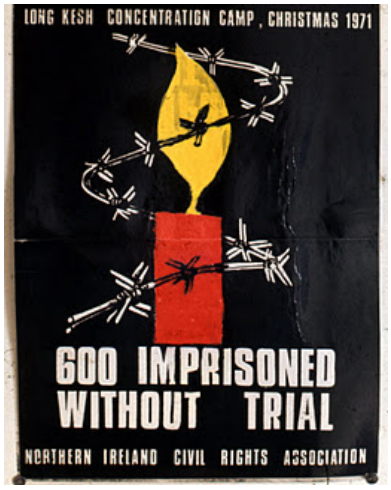
It has, in fact, increased terrorist activity, perhaps boosted IRA recruitment, polarised further the Catholic and Protestant communities and reduced the ranks of the much needed Catholic moderates.

Internment lasted from August 1971 until December 1975, during which period 1,874 nationalists and 107 loyalists were imprisoned. The nationalists claimed the detainees were treated inhumanely and tortured during internment, alleging the following methods.

- Wall-standing: forcing the detainees to remain for periods of some hours in a stress position, described by those who underwent it as being spread-eagled against the wall, with their fingers put high above their head against the wall, their legs spread apart and their feet back, causing them to stand on their toes with the weight of their body mainly on their fingers.
- Hooding: putting a black or navy coloured bag over the detainees' heads and, at least initially, keeping it there all the time except during interrogation.
- Subjection to noise: before their interrogations, holding the detainees in a room where there was a continuous loud and hissing noise.
- Deprivation of sleep: before their interrogations, depriving the detainees of sleep.
- Deprivation of food and drink: subjecting the detainees to a reduced diet during their stay and interrogations.

The government of Eire, on behalf of some nationalist internees, took the British government to the European Court of Human Rights following the allegations about the above five methods. The Irish government did not win the case but, thereafter, the British government said, publicly, it would not use those methods in the future.

Internment failed and the poster to the right was indicative of the strong feelings that it created even in non-sectarian groups.



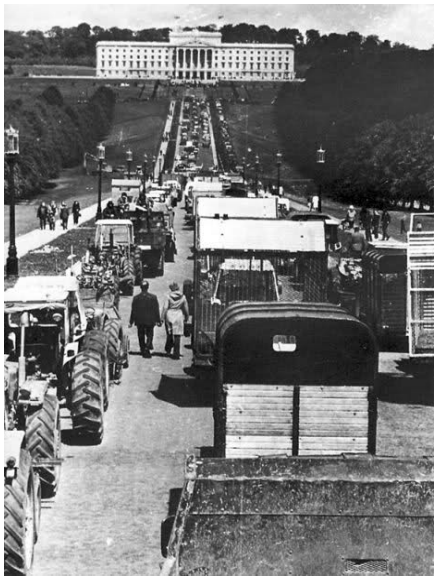
Anti-internment poster published by the Civil Rights Association, Christmas 1971

Sunningdale and the paramilitaries

Some details of this agreement are given above on page 28. The agreement ended as a result of mass action on the part of loyalists (primarily the Ulster Defence Association and Protestant workers, who formed the Ulster Workers' Council). They organised a general strike which brought the province to a standstill. However, there was much intimidation from the loyalist paramilitaries and some people who wished to work were forced to remain at home.

During the strike, there were two huge bombs in Dublin and Monaghan which killed 33 people and wounded almost 300. The UVF claimed responsibility. During the period of Sunningdale, PIRA extended its campaign to the British mainland and carried out several devastating attacks on civilians and military personnel. This ended the peace initiative.

The photograph to the right shows Unionist politicians, paramilitaries and members of the Ulster Workers' Council blockading Stormont, during the 1974 general strike.



The loyalist blockade of Stormont, 1974

The 'dirty protest' and hunger strikes

The failure of the 'dirty protest' (see page 22) pushed PIRA and INLA to begin the hunger strikes in 1980 and 1981 (see page 22). The hunger strikes took place in Maze prison and won PIRA tremendous support, not only in Ireland but also across the world. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said she would not give political status to PIRA and INLA prisoners.

One of the strikers, Bobby Sands, was elected an MP whilst in prison. After 66 days of hunger-strike, he eventually died of starvation. Mairead Corrigan, one of the founders of the Women's Peace Movement (see page 29), said:

If you tried to call a peace rally now, you wouldn't get anybody to come.

There were many marches in support of the hunger strikers and one Catholic priest said:

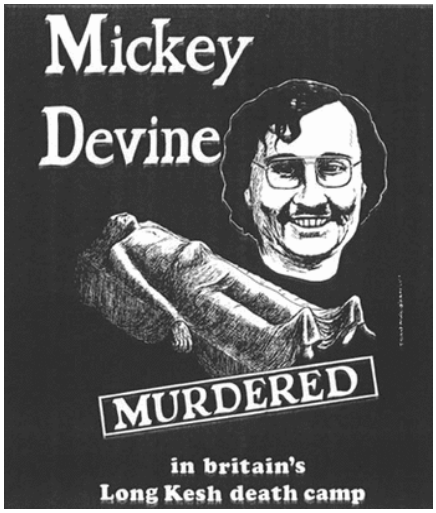
There were people on the marches against the treatment of the hunger strikers who had never been on a march before. Never was there such a determination to have done with the British government.

A *Sinn Fein* member said:

Bobby knows that, if he dies, through his death there will be so much anger stored up in the Irish people that it will fuel the struggle for the next ten years.

By the end of 1981, ten republican prisoners had died as a result of the hunger strikes. The British government relented and allowed those still in jail to be treated as political prisoners. Around 100,000 mourners attended Sands' funeral.

Below are two posters published during the hunger strikes. On the left is Margaret Thatcher and on the right is Mickey Devine, one of the INLA hunger strikers who died during the protest.



Hunger strike posters

The bombing campaigns in Britain

When the nationalist bombing campaigns began on mainland Britain, the government was horrified. They became a feature of life on the British mainland throughout the last three decades of the twentieth century. The murder of Lord Mountbatten, uncle of Queen Elizabeth II, in 1979 and the bombing of the Conservative Party Conference in 1984 by PIRA only served to harden the British government's attitude. Prime Minister Thatcher tried to deny PIRA and other groups access to the media. She said that she had no wish to give them the 'oxygen of publicity'. Yet activities continued and the media found ways round the restrictions. The government's mantra of not giving in to acts of terrorism did not stop continued acts by PIRA and other groups.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement and the paramilitaries

Page 29 discusses the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Politicians in Britain and Eire were hopeful that the Anglo-Irish Agreement would work. Once again, the hopes of the British and Irish governments were dashed, this time mainly by Unionist politicians and also by the UDA and UFF. The reaction within the Unionist community was shock and a feeling of betrayal. From its point of view, the idea that its own government could give a foreign country the right to a say in Northern Ireland's affairs without consulting the Northern Ireland MPs was beyond belief. The Unionist politicians began a campaign to have the Agreement abolished using the slogan 'Ulster Says No'. Banners soon appeared on local government buildings all over Northern Ireland, including a huge one on Belfast City Hall. There were many mass demonstrations, some of which were led by Reverend Paisley of the Democratic Unionist Party. After the Agreement, loyalist paramilitaries stepped up their indiscriminate attacks on Catholics. Eventually, or so it was reasoned, this would drive Catholics to put pressure on PIRA to stop its own terrorist activities.

Margaret Thatcher was taken aback by the ferocity of the Unionist response and, in her memoirs, she said their reaction was 'worse than anyone had predicted to me'. Nevertheless, Thatcher stood firm and eventually most Unionist politicians quietly began to concede that their campaign to derail the Agreement had failed and once again began to cooperate with government ministers.

During the setting up of the Agreement and opposition to it (1984-87), violence continued, with almost 300 murders by all terrorist groups. Some of the worst atrocities are detailed below:

- On 16 March 1987, loyalist gunman Michael Stone (UDA) killed three mourners at the funerals of three PIRA members who had been shot by the SAS in Gibraltar.
- On 19 March 1987, two British soldiers accidentally drove into the vicinity of the funeral cortege of a PIRA member. Those in the procession thought the car belonged to loyalists and expected another attack like Stone's (see above). The two soldiers were mobbed, dragged out of their car and brutally murdered. The presence of television cameras meant that the murders were recorded and broadcast across the world.
- On 8 November 1987, PIRA detonated a bomb at the war memorial in Enniskillen as crowds of civilians gathered to watch a Remembrance Day parade. 11 people were killed (a twelfth person died in 2000 after being in a coma for 13 years) and 63 were injured.

A large section of the republican leadership did not want to be associated with the Enniskillen bombing. It was a turning point, emphasising the move away from military activity, and was a decisive milestone on the road to a ceasefire. Within weeks of the attack, Gerry Adams commented:

There is no military solution, none whatsoever. Military solutions by either of the two main protagonists only mean more tragedies. There can only be a political solution.

Such a statement was earth-shattering. Yet it was a further decade before the real breakthrough was made.

The Good Friday Agreement, 1998

Pages 31-33 discuss the Good Friday Agreement.

Following the 1994 paramilitary ceasefires (their endings and renewals), together with the change in government in Britain in 1997, there was a greater willingness to seek a solution to the problems of Northern Ireland. Yet, during 1996 and 1997, there was still much civil unrest and the marching seasons brought much violence. The various groups negotiated with the British government for several months and reached an agreement in April 1998. The major issue left unsolved was the decommissioning of arms and this had caused problems since 1994.

At the time the Agreement was being negotiated, a number of dissident republican groups who were opposed to it began a new wave of terrorist attacks. One such group, the 'Real' IRA, began bombing town centres and carried out the bomb attack in Omagh on 15 August 1998, which killed 29 civilians. This showed these groups were a major threat. The Omagh bombing provided the impetus needed to push the various sides together and, within weeks, the signatories of Good Friday began cooperating with the decommissioning body. Thus, in this instance, a devastating bomb attack had brought opponents together and the final obstacles were removed.

The Nobel Peace Prize of 1998 was awarded jointly to John Hume of the Social Democratic and Labour Party and David Trimble of the Ulster Unionist Party ‘for their efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland’.

However, the dissident nationalist groups have continued to carry out terrorist attacks since 1998.

Glossary

Act of Union	The Act of 1800 which formally united Ireland with Britain. It meant that Ireland would be governed by the parliament in Westminster.
B Specials	Members of the part-time, largely Protestant, police force, set up in 1920.
Battle of the Boyne	Protestant William of Orange defeated Catholic King James II here in1690.
Catholic Emancipation Act	The Act of 1829 which allowed Catholics to become MPs.
Dáil Éireann	Parliament in Eire, first established in 1919.
Direct rule from Westminster	In 1972, the Westminster Parliament decided to suspend the Northern Ireland government at Stormont and assumed all responsibility for Northern Ireland's affairs.
Eire	The Irish Republic.
Gerrymandering	Arranging electoral boundaries to enable one party to gain an advantage in local and general elections.
Home Rule Bills	The three attempts in the British parliament to give Ireland its own parliament and government elected in Ireland.
Internment	The arrest and imprisonment, without trial, of those suspected of involvement in terrorist activities.
Irish Citizen Army	This was a small group of trained trade union volunteers established in Dublin for the defence of worker's demonstrations from the police.
Irish Free State	The name of the state created following the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921.
Irish National Liberation Army	Formed in 1974, it was the military wing of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP).
Irish Volunteers	A paramilitary organisation established in 1913 by Irish Nationalists in response to the formation of the UVF.
Loyalist	One who supports the Union between Britain and Northern Ireland and is loyal to the British monarch.
Nationalist	One who believes that Ireland should be a united nation independent of the UK.
Orange Order	The re-named Orange Society.
Orange Society	Protestant group set up in 1795 to defend the Protestant Ascendancy.

Penal Laws	Laws passed in the seventeenth and eighteenth century to keep the Catholic majority in Ireland in a state of subjection.
Protestant Ascendancy	The period after William of Orange's victory at the Battle of the Boyne until c1800 when the Protestant minority was in undisputed control of Ireland as a result of the Penal Laws.
Provisional IRA	A splinter group which emerged from the IRA at the beginning of The Troubles.
Provos	Members of the Provisional IRA.
Royal Ulster Constabulary	The Northern Ireland police force set up in 1922.
Sectarian	Based on religious differences.
Shoot-to-kill policy	Policy operated under which suspects were alleged to have been deliberately killed without any attempt to arrest them.
Society of United Irishmen	Society set up with the objective of ending British rule over Ireland and founding a republic.
Solemn League and Covenant	The document which set out objections to Home Rule.
Stormont	Northern Ireland's parliament.
Ulster Defence Association	Loyalist paramilitary organisation formed in 1971 to defend Protestant areas from attacks by the IRA.
Ulster Volunteer Force	A paramilitary group to protect Ulster and block Home Rule.
Ulster Volunteers	Members of the Ulster Volunteers Force who became a part of the British army in 1914.
Unionist	One who wishes to keep the links between Ireland and Great Britain.
Unionist MPs	Members of the Stormont parliament who represented the Ulster Unionist Party.
William of Orange	Protestant descendant of King James I, asked by parliament in 1688 to rule in place of the Catholic James II.
108-member Assembly	The assembly (parliament) which would be established in Northern Ireland following the Good Friday Agreement.

Acknowledgments

Text quotes reproduced from the following copyright materials:
P2 Oath in H. Macdonald, *The Irish Question*, S. Thornes.
P3 Cromwell's letter in John Morril, "The Drogheda Massacre in Cromwellian Context", in Edwards, Lenihan, eds, *The Age of Atrocity*.
P4 Oath in Holmes Macdougall, "The Irish Question", in Andrew Boyd, *Holy War in Belfast*, Anvil Books, 1971; Tone's quote in T. McAleavy, *Conflict in Ireland*, Collins.
P5 O'Connell's quote in J. Wright and T. Rea, *Ireland, A Divided Island*, OUP.
P5/7 United Irishman and Arthur Griffith in T. Gray, *Nationalist and Unionist Ireland before the Treaty*, Blackie.
P13-14 Table in Paul Gerhardt, "The Six Counties: A Factual Survey From International Socialism", No 51 April-June1972.
P15/16 Cameron Report and government declaration in Wright and Rea, *Ireland a Divided Island*, OUP.
P18 *Sinn Fein* spokesman from News.bbc.co.uk website.
P27 tables adapted from ark.ac.uk/elections.
P28 table from CAIN (cain.ulster.ac.uk).
P30 internment quote in D. Hamill, *Pig in the middle: The Army in Northern Ireland*, London, Methuen, 1985.
P32 Statement quotes from News.bbc.co.uk website; Danny Morrison speaking in T. McAleavy, *Conflict in Ireland*, Collins.
P33 Thatcher's quote in *Margaret Thatcher: The Downing Street Years*, Harper Collins.
P34 Adams' quote from www.socialistalternative.org/literature/tdnp/ch2.html.

The following copyright images have been reproduced from:
P29 London Evening Standard cartoon, 7 April 1975.
P31 poster from CAIN (cain.ulster.ac.uk); photo from www.anphoblacht.com.
P32 posters sourced from Antigonex.wordpress.com and http://www.padraigmor.net/ultimatesacrifice.htm.

Every effort has been made to trace the copyright holders and we apologise in advance for any unintentional omissions. We would be pleased to insert the appropriate acknowledgement in any subsequent edition of this document.