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## Trabajo Fin de Grado

# History of Ireland: Since the 12<sup>th</sup> Century to the Process of Peace

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## Index of contents

Summary.....	p.3
Introduction.....	p.4
Origins: Since the First invasions to William of Orange.....	p. 4
First Nationalists.....	p.7
Great Irish Famine.....	p.8
Two Currents in Nationalism: Democratic Nationalism and Violent Nationalism....	p.8
The Easter Rising (1916).....	p. 11
Anglo-Irish War (1918-21).....	p.12
Government of Ireland act (1920).....	p.13
Consequences of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.....	p.14
The Creation of Stormont Parliament and the beginning of The Troubles.....	p.15
Bloody Sunday and the Collapse of Stormont.....	p.17
Direct Rule.....	p.18
Sunningdale Agreement.....	p.22
Second Decade of Direct Rule.....	p.25
Third Decade of Direct Rule.....	p.28
Ceasefire of 1997.....	p.31
Belfast Agreement.....	p.31
Interview.....	p.32
Conclusion.....	p.34
Bibliography.....	p.35

## **Summary**

This essay's aim is to give an account as detailed as possible of the Irish history. It trades back to the first invasions of the British to the peace process that dates back to the 90s. This paper gives not only an objective account of history and the division of the communities living in Ireland but also a personal approach to the historical events described as it includes two personal testimonies of people living in Belfast, the epicenter of the Irish conflict.

Key words: #Ireland; #History; #Irish Conflict; #Irish Culture; #Peace Process

## 0. Introduction

This paper will deal with the history of Ireland. To be honest, my initial aim was to speak about Irish literature and culture; however, to properly speak about these subjects, it is essential to be conscious about their historical background. I felt so interested by the complexity of the history of this country that I decided to focus my research basically in the chronicle of how Ireland became part of the British Empire, since the first invasions to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. This essay also make an account of how differences among two societies grew bigger throughout the years until the Irish society became totally divided within an atmosphere of violence that never seemed to come to an end. The final part of the paper is a short interview of two people, a Londoner converted to Catholicism and an Irish Catholic living in Belfast, both giving a brief and personal account of the facts on which I made my research.

### 1. Origins: Since the First invasions to William of Orange

The Anglo- Irish struggle is probably one of the most violent, cruel as well as complicated conflict in contemporary history. In order to understand the most recent confrontations, that is, the War of Independence (1919-1921) and its consequences as well as the division found within Irish society, still happening nowadays, it is important to explain the beginning of the conflict, which dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the first colonizers arrived in the island.

During these centuries, we may not speak about an actual colonization progress, as these first visitants, of Norman origin, were not sent by the government or worked in the favour of the crown. They were just searching their own benefit and wealth. It was in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Century when the English settlements became of some importance in Ireland. However, the colonization of the island became tough since the very beginning, as long as Gaelic resistance stopped the expansion in many different areas. Yet despite this courageous defence and the numerous victories, England had an established and centralized government, while in Ireland they were unable to find a national leader to

coordinate their military movements. This was maybe the major reason why England achieved their purpose and invaded the most of the island.

As it tends to happen, some English men started to marry with natives and the mixture of races began. Many Anglo-Normans started to adopt Irish costumes and ways of life, some of them even adopted the language. As consequence first laws of segregation were established. The Statutes of Kilkenny were approved in 1366, which punished any relationship with the natives or their culture. This gives an account of how different both cultures were, despite their proximity. These great contrasts are due to various facts, perhaps the most remarkable one is that Romanization did never took place in Ireland so they preserved their culture unspoiled. It also worth mentioning the Christianization that Saint Patrick accomplished. These dichotomies added to the view that Englishmen had about natives in the island. According to Art Cosgrove, Irish were considered just as “*heretic and pagans*” and violence and disrespect for the law that they showed was “*their more prominent and wicked characteristic of Irish nature.*” (Cosgrove, 2008:159) This confrontation would only become more and more intricate as centuries went by.

English settlements in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries were scarce, in such manner that they were organized in reduced groups in some points of the coast and they were referred as “pale”. Meanwhile, the rest of the population of the island was divided into Anglo-Irish, term which refers to eldest English settlers, and Gaelic people. It was not only in the population but also the culture, language and way of living where it can be appreciated that natives of the island were more numerous.

During the 15<sup>th</sup> century and after some expeditions, the king was informed about the fact that in order to conquest the island it would be necessary a great effort not only in an economical sense but also in contingents of men to carry out the colonization progress. Furthermore, during the reign of Henry VIII, the conquest turned to be a necessity to maintain the hegemony of England in a Catholic Europe. At those times, the Pope, who was the supreme authority in Catholic Church, was considered by many native and religious people the “king” of Ireland.

So 1533, when Henry VIII finally decided to separate England from the Catholic Commonwealth, became a turning point in the relationship with Ireland, being this one of the major points of national identity of the land, during more than five centuries.

Apart from this major reason, we find also the question of the location of Ireland, which was very useful, strategically speaking, for any foe in case they wanted to attack England. That is why in the 16<sup>th</sup> century England started a violent and cruel campaign in order to

finally subdue Ireland under their rule, after a long and brave resistance. Henry VIII proclaimed himself King of Ireland and expropriated countless lands from Gaelic landlords. At first, the King tried to keep a peaceful path to achieve his goal, but any kind of rebellion or disobedience was punished with a violence and brutality which had been never seen before.

In barely 50 years, most of the island had already been conquered. The only active resistance was situated in the North-East, in a territory known as Ulster. This territory was under the rule of the Gaelic chief Shane O'Neill, but after nine year of fierce opposition, he was defeated in the battle of Kinsale (1603). Afterward they signed a treaty known as The Treaty of Mellifont. From that moment on and during more than three centuries, Ireland will be under English rule.

The conquest of the remaining Irish territory in the North was even more violent since this was the very last territory handled by natives. Catholics were dispossessed of their lands, losing their main source of wealth. These territories were given to Protestants colonizers and new institutions were established and new laws were imposed. Catholics felt like foreigners in their own country, they were obliged to adopt costumes not belonging to their culture and a very scarce part of the population was actually loyal to the English crown. These are the main reason for a new rebellion which would break out in 1641, in the North of the island but would be extended over almost the whole territory. Although the uprising was quite violent, the repression on the part of England was even worse. This repression was leaded by Oliver Cromwell, who assumed the power in England after the execution of Charles I, in 1649. Cromwell is described by several scholars as a "*religious fanatic*" full of "*lust of power*", and his notorious cruelty against Catholics made the division within Irish society even more evident.

It was not till 1685, when Jacob II, a Catholic king took the rule of the country, that a new Parliament in Ireland with a Catholic majority was established. However, it will not last. As soon as Protestants in England realised that their supremacy was threatened, members of the Parliament offered their support to William of Orange, Protestant who would finally defeated the actual king in the Battle of Boyne (1690). After the importance that Protestantism had acquired for British national identity, the Bill of Rights was created. It prevented any Catholic person from getting the British crown. When William of Orange got the power, Irish Parliament became to be under Protestant rule. Penal Laws were created then, they forbade any Catholic practise. Furthermore, in 1720, British Parliament assumed the right to rule England.

## 2. First Nationalists

Within this circumstances, around 1775, the feeling for the first time emerged that Ireland needed more independence, institutionally speaking, although they shared the tradition and the Crown. This new movement was led by Henry Grattan. He asked equality for both communities living in Ireland. Yet, it was Theobald Wolfe Tone the person who started what would be in the future, the Republican movement. He led the group called United Irishmen who believed in a total rupture with the Empire. Consequently, with the aid of the French army, they began a rebellion which was fiercely repressed by the British. Wolfe Tone, was captured and condemned to die. He killed himself before this happened. As a consequence he became a kind of martyr, and one of the most important figures in the Republican tradition.

Although it did not succeed, the uprising made it clear that Ireland could become a problem for the stability of the British Empire. This is the major reason why William Pitt, Prime Minister at the time made a proposal: the union of the Irish and the British Parliaments. This proposal was approved in 1800. Ireland became a part of the United Kingdom by the so called "Act of Union". This new fused government did not solve any of the major problems which afflicted Ireland. Furthermore, Irish representatives in the Parliament were the minority that is to say, their power was considerably reduced.

At the same time, in Ireland, the Catholic question, as well as the laws on property were a main concern for the population in the island, nevertheless, none of these issues were neither solved nor improved by the new government. The Catholic association and Daniel O'Connell created the "Catholic Emancipation Act". This law was approved in 1829, giving more civil rights to Catholic people. However they still suffered some restrictions: for example, they would not have the opportunity to occupy any position within the government. Afterwards the "Repeal Association" appeared. Its main goal was to revoke the Act of Union and to have their own Parliament, and so, their own rule again. The aggrupation "Young Ireland" also became relevant. While the former wanted a peaceful agreement, the latter acquired a more aggressive tone following the pattern of "United Irishmen" and Wolfe Tone.

## 3. The great Irish Famine

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (1845-1850), Ireland suffered what has been known in history as The Great Irish Famine or The Potato Famine. The basic element of the Irish diet, the potato, was infected by a fungus plague (*Phytophthora Infestans*) and the harvest was almost completely lost. Irish population descended radically as more than one million people starved to death and many other became ill. At the same time, as a consequence of the situation a huge migratory movement took place and 250,000 people left the country.

The situation was used as a political tool by nationalists. England was accused to be the major responsible of the situation in the island. Although popular opinion considered the famine a natural catastrophe cast by God, many had the feeling that England did nothing to help them. All along history this issue has provoked continuous debates on whether England could be blamed for the disaster. Nationalist currents insist on the fact that the English government took no measures, especially after a change in the government, from liberal to conservative, to improve the situation. In order to properly face this question, we must take into account the fact that more than a half of the population depended on agricultural activities to survive. The great Irish Famine reduced the population from 8, 5 million people to 6 million people approximately and the scars of its consequences are still present in Irish society. As James Donnelly puts it *“It was above all the poverty of such a large segment of the Irish Population that made the Great Famine So destructive of human life.”* (James S, 2008:11)

#### 4. Two Currents in Nationalism: Democratic Nationalism and Violent Nationalism

After the great famine the dichotomies between Ireland and England became deeper and nationalist groups became more radical in their discourse, stating that the only way to recover their independence was through violent means. It was in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that pro-independence groups appeared, again following Wolfe Tone's legacy. That is how the Irish Republican Brotherhood, also known as Fenian Movement, was founded. This movement and their uprising became a tough issue for the government which in 1870 approved the Land Act to improve the situation of Irish tenants.

Another important nationalist movement known as Home Rule Movement pursued the same as the former group, the independence, yet they did not consider violent means to

pursue it. So we are going to find two differentiated forms of nationalism, two different paths towards independence: the constitutional and the violent.

However these dichotomies did not last as these two previously mentioned groups and some other nationalist organizations became one in 1878 with the foundation of the “Irish National Land league”. In which violent and constitutional nationalists worked together for their purposes.

During these years a tough period was taking place in the lands again. Vindications seemed to be pointless, so violence was considered the only way to get equality in the partition of the land. This period is known as ‘Agrarian War’ and once again, the suffering of the farmers made the opposition against Britain to be even more evident.

In order to confront the situation the British government proclaimed some “Agrarian Laws”, giving more privileges to tenants; however these laws were thought mainly to ease the nationalist movement which had grown stronger as they were convinced of the fact that if tenants’ situation improved the relationship with Ireland would improve too (as low classes were the main source of troubles.)

Furthermore, industry in the country had not been developed except in the North, especially in Belfast, running with Protestant investment basically.

Here it is possible to appreciate the division which would consolidate throughout the time: in the industrialized north we would find the majority of Protestant, fighting for the union opposing the agrarian south, where most inhabitants would be Catholics as well as nationalist.

In 1885, the Irish Parliamentary Party or Home Rule Party, with Parnell as its leader, won the elections in Ireland. This fact made it clear for the British Government, especially for its Prime Minister Gladstone, the necessity of searching for a solution to content a whole community that did not want to be part of the United Kingdom. Mainly for this reason, the so called Home Rule Bill was created. The aim of this Bill was to give Ireland certain autonomy to legislate. However, it would be a real struggle to get this Bill approved. It was rejected several times by the Parliament in Britain and political parties took their side in the question and opposed each other. We have to highlight the fact that this question was intricate, to say the least. It had endless points to take into account before facing a situation which at the same time needed to be solved as soon as possible.

But, surprisingly, the major obstacle Irish nationalist would find, would be within Ireland itself. The division in Irish society had grown worse during decades. In the Ulster, the unionists represented a great majority of the population. This political division was reinforced by the religious dichotomies. Violence between Catholics and Protestants was a reality in the whole area, particularly in Belfast, where we find the epicenter of the clash. The Order of Orange was created. It was born precisely in Belfast to protect Protestants interests, especially those having to do with agrarian reasons.

Apart from the religious and political disputes, we find another fundamental factor: the economy. As is has been mentioned above, the Northern part of the country possessed most of the industry within the whole country and the vast majority of these factories were ruled by unionist and Protestant citizens. Regarding this, we can affirm that becoming part of the British Empire would be very positive in terms of international trade. All these reasons lay at the heart of why, when in 1912 a Third Home Rule Bill was proposed, the Protestant population in the Ulster showed a fierce opposition against this new attempt towards independence. This opposition was supported by the Conservative and Unionist Party in Britain, giving the strength needed by the Unionist in Ireland.

That is how The Ulster Covenant was conceived. It was an agreement supported by almost half million Irish people, among them many Protestant Church's authorities as well as well-known Unionist leaders.

Later, in 1913 a huge, well organized armed group was created, the so-called "Ulster Volunteer Force". It gathered around 100,000 unionist willing to use violence if it was required to stop the process of independence, which seemed to be imminent.

Facing this opposition, British government started to consider the possibility of excluding the Ulster from the Home Rule Bill, as "*el noroeste de Irlanda como una entidad diferenciada del resto de la isla.*" In fact since the first Home Rule Bill, this reality was taken into account by Gladstone. "*Se han propuesto varios esquemas en beneficio del Ulster. Uno de ellos, o posiblemente, con más sentido, una porción del Ulster, podía ser excluida del proyecto de ley.*" (Alonso R., 2001:100)

At the beginning the possibility of dividing Ireland to apply the Home Rule was rejected by the British Prime minister, in 1914, after a meeting in Buckingham Palace; however, conservatives and liberal leaders were unable to reach an agreement.

Within this atmosphere The First World war broke out. At the same time, in Ireland, a civil war seems to be impending. Finally, the bill became law and it was supposed to become a reality in 1914 which the Great War made it impossible though. Once again Irish nationalist were expected to wait patiently until the end of the conflict.

Opposing the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), the nationalist movement “Irish Volunteers” was created. Yet it was not the only nationalist group brought into being during those years: all along several decades different members of the Irish community made a great effort in order to praise and promote national and traditional Irish culture. One of the most important is the “Irish Literary Revival”, of great importance. Its main representative, internationally speaking, is the great William Butler Yeats. Some other relevant organizations are also worth mentioning: “Gaelic Athletic Association” fostering national sports, mainly hurling and rugby. We also find the so called “Gaelic League” promoting Irish Gaelic as national language. Besides, in 1907, republican political party, the Sinn Fein (translated into English as “Ourselves”), led by Arthur Griffith was born. It encouraged Irish people to abstain from participating in the British Parliament as they wanted *“to establish in Ireland's capital a national legislature endowed with the moral authority of the Irish nation”* (Griffith A., 1918:61)

##### 5. The Easter Rising (1916)

The Easter Rebellion, better known as Easter rising was one of the most important episodes in the history of Ireland.

A group of Irish rebels took advantage of the engagement of the British army in the war which was taking place in whole Europe. Some important personalities of the main nationalist associations, proclaimed Ireland independent from the United Kingdom.

The uprising occurred in Dublin, although there were also some minor revolts all over the country.

Although the mutiny itself did not succeeded, the legacy of the rebellion and its terrible consequences besides, became very significant for future nationalist movements. The violent repression on the part of the British army, which was superior not only in number but also in armament as well as the imprisonment and execution of several republican personalities, reinforced the view of the Kingdom as the enemy.

For many nationalist leaders, especially those who were related to cultural movements the independent nationalist enterprise adopted a quasi-Romantic sense. People who died for this cause were considered as martyrs and their contribution on the birth of the new nation worth the sacrifice.

As Patrick Pearse, one of the main representatives of Irish Revival, poses it, blood is cleansing and sanctifying, and the nation that regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood, *“there are many things more horrible than bloodshed and slavery is one of them.”*(Pearse P., 2012:99)

This belief was the main reasoning used by the terrorist group IRA to justify in some way the use of violence. In a simplified way, they believed that the fact of being willing to die for independence gave them the right to kill those opposing it, just for the same reason.

#### 6. Anglo Irish war: (1918-21)

After these years the radical and violent movement in Ireland was restructured and became the IRA (Irish Republican Army) led by Michael Collins.

The Government in Ireland, was unable to stop them and were afraid even to try, so they finally had no option left and accepted, or at least did not condemn the IRA, nor its attacks. At the same time, this organization, judged the government arguing that it was impossible to win with words or theories and it was necessary to play an active role to pursue their goals. The IRA justified violence in order to achieve these ends.

However, once again, it would be the response given by the British Government, the major reason why these two currents of the same nationalism did not divide totally. This response consisted on the following: on the one hand, Sinn Fein was outlawed and, on the other hand, London created two new and quite violent squads called “Black Tans” and “Auxiliaries” to fight against the IRA, mainly because the IRA had made several attempts on members of “Royal Irish Constabulary”, the former security squad sent by Britain.

#### 7. Government of Ireland Act 1920

It was in 1920, with the creation of Government of Ireland Act, the first time we find a legal distinction in terminology among Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland, that is to say, the island was officially divided. Although Northern Ireland represented a minority both territories were given the same degree of power furthermore the Parliament in Westminster still represented the main authority and Irish Parliament was still depending on its approval. This division has been criticized due to the fact that it was totally arbitrary and three counties, namely, Donegal, Monaghan and Coven were left out of the “Northern area” in order to assure the Protestant and unionist majority in this zone.

Within the complexity of this Irish question, it is also worth mentioning the tough situation of minorities. These minorities were embodied by Catholics in the Northern territory as well by Protestants in the South. Besides, every inch of the country was surrounded by a violent atmosphere and growing tensions in an unbridgeable society.

This tension was even more evident in the North of the country, where the IRA was very active and had assassinated various Protestants Irish people who were believed to collaborate with the British Empire. Furthermore, the Southern area blockaded the trade with the Northern part of the Island, especially Belfast, and it led to economic difficulties. At the same time the Northern population blamed the Catholic Church for the violence they were suffering as well as the discrimination imposed only in terms of religion.

One year later, in 1921, the Anglo-Irish Treaty was born. Ireland was about to get the label of “Dominium status” which was a firm step towards their total independence. In this treaty Northern Ireland was given two options: they could remain bound to the rest of the Irish territory or they could choose to be excluded from this new legislation:

*(...) a Commission consisting of three persons, one to be appointed by the Government of the Irish Free State, one to be appointed by the Government of Northern Ireland, and one who shall be Chairman to be appointed by the British Government shall determine in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants, so far as may be compatible with economic and geographic conditions the boundaries between Northern Ireland and the rest of Ireland, and for the purposes of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, and of this instrument, the boundary of Northern Ireland shall be such as may be determined by such Commission. <sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland, 6<sup>th</sup> December 1921

Obviously, the British Government as well as the different parts of Ireland were aware of the possible troubles caused by this partition, but Northern Ireland represented by the Prime Minister James Craig decided not to be part of the Government of Ireland Act, and so to officially divide the territory.

Finally it was in 1925, the Parliament in London, Dublin and Belfast agreed to maintain the division proposed in the law of 1920; the ultimate consequence of this agreement, the division of Ireland, seemed to have become irredeemable.

#### 8. Consequences of the Anglo-Irish Treaty

The Anglo-Irish treaty reduced, somehow, the hostility towards Britain, at least at the beginning. However, consequences in the Irish society would be disastrous. A civil war broke out in Ireland among those who were in favour of the Government Act, represented by Collins and those opposed to it, led by De Valera. The latter was finally defeated.

Those who rejected the treaty still followed the Sinn Fein, until it split because of discordances in the abstentionism policy. In such wise, in 1926 a new party led by De Valera, the so-called Fiánna Fail or Republican Party, was created.

At the same time violence and riots were a growing problem in the Northern part of the island, and obliged the two leaders, Collins (in the South) and Craig (in the North), to sign a double pact. In it, the South guaranteed to stop the trade boycott, previously mentioned and to create an appropriate government body, where questions affecting the whole island would be discussed. Furthermore the IRA was forced to abandon the violence.

Since the official partition the parliament in the North it was totally dominated by Protestant while in the South, the Constitution approved in 1937, favored the Catholic population imposing a state in which religion and censorship were the pillars of its society. Other laws with nationalistic taste were included in the new constitution, for instance, the teaching of the Irish language became compulsory.

#### 9. The creation of Stormont Parliament and the beginning of the Troubles

Since the partition, in Northern Ireland a new parliament was created: The Parliament of Stormont. It was described as a "*Protestant parliament for a protestant state*". This new government had to deal with the IRA's attacks. However, the terrorist group lost a lot of

power when the parliament in Dublin declare the IRA illegal, and facilitated the imprisonment of its members as well as people believed to be cooperating with them in any sense.

This Protestant parliament gave rise to a new sort of discrimination against the Catholic minority. The discrimination suffered by Catholics was especially observed in terms of politics and employment. Besides electoral laws were changed to favor the Protestant majority, being defined by some authors like Whyte as “*not completely democratic*”; as long as the universal suffrage was revoked and the right to vote went according to people’s wealth; These measures are known as “Gerrymandering” and it was especially scandalous in Londonderry County Borough, where we found a larger Catholic population, but still here the unionist got the majority in the elections.

These years of Protestant predominance, gathered Catholics in ghettos, as local authorities were the responsible of the assignation of dwelling.

This discrimination of the Catholics was also appreciated within the police authorities, namely: the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the Ulster Special Constabulary (USC). The latter was divided in 3 sub departments A, B and C specials.

The so called “B specials” worked part time and were feared and hated by the Catholic community as they accomplished denominational violence and murders.

In 1951, Stormont proclaimed the “Public Order Act” whose major aim was to give a total impunity to carry out their task. As a response to all the discrimination, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association was created (NICRA) in 1967 in order to ask for equality in Northern Irish society.

Although the NICRA was mainly pacific and only showed in different pacific demonstrations, the repression on the part of the government and the Protestant population itself would have as its last consequence the outbreak of the famous “*Troubles*”.

October 5<sup>th</sup> 1968 would represent a turning point in the history of Ireland, when a demonstration would give rise to three days of unstoppable violence between the two communities. The nationalist Catholic side intensified its actions. Short time after, in

August of the same year, the Bayside Battle took place. From this moment, the violence would spread in most counties of Northern Ireland. Barricades, known as “no-go areas” were created in different zones, being the most important one “Free-Derry”.

Security Forces were unable to bear with this scale of violence, the Stormont parliament asked the British government to send troops in order to help them to control a situation they were unable to face. However, military forces were not qualified to give an appropriate response to riots, especially in a divided society, as it will be demonstrated when the time passed by.

In order to heal the situation, in 1969, Downing Street Declaration was signed by the Prime ministers of Northern Ireland and Britain. Among the measures gathered in this declaration we find a statement of intention to stop segregation against Catholic population, as well as the suppression of the USC, which would be replaced by the Ulster Defense Regime (UDR) and a Police Authority to supervise the work of these new security forces. These measures seemed to be unsatisfactory and the hostility of the Catholic community towards the British Army increased as it was perceived to defend and favor unionist population.

At the same time in Southern Ireland the Sinn Fein questioned the previous politics of abstention and the party was divided into two different currents: those who supported the participation in the Parliament were the official Sinn Fein and those who carried on with the abstentionism, the Provisional Sinn Fein.

At the same time the PIRA (Provisional Irish Republican Army) appeared, which was one of the most violent organizations of the whole conflict, being one of their main objectives the destruction of the Parliament in Stormont.

The growing evidence and the social troubles led to divisions within the unionist side and the Prime minister in Stormont resigned.

In 1971, due to the growing influence of the IRA, the free internment measure was established again, but this time it would not have the expected results and was hardly criticized because of the brutality of its methods during interrogations. These methods, after being investigated were prohibited in 1972. This cruelty was used as an effective nationalistic propaganda and by the IRA to justify their attacks.

## 10. Bloody Sunday and the Collapse of Stormont Parliament

During these years several demonstrations performed by both communities. But perhaps the most important one in the development of the course of history was the nationalist peaceful parade which took place in Derry on Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> January 1972, a massive protest asking for equality and against the laws of free interment. The British army shot the tumult injuring 26 people and killing 13 plus an aged man who would die sometime later because of the injuries. This episode had a huge impact on the credibility of the British government. Although an inquiry by Lord Widgery was made, it defended British soldiers arguing that the shots were made in self-defense as the civilians were accused of being armed with shotguns and bombs.

*“The Army case is that each of these shots was an aimed shot fired at a civilian holding or using a bomb or firearm. On the other side it was argued that none of the deceased was using a bomb or firearm and that the soldiers fired without justification and either deliberately or recklessly.”* (Widgery L., 1972)

This report of the events caused the outrage of the nationalist community and the division of the Irish society went a step forward and the British public image was deeply damaged. As ultimate consequences of this event we may mention the rise in the interest and recruitment for the Republican cause. Besides, Britain felt that they were unable to stop the situation and realized that they needed to follow a more straight strategy to control the situation in a country where seemed to be no order. This decision, maybe, was finally triggered because of the burning of the British Embassy in Dublin. As a consequence the Parliament in Stormont was dissolved and William Faulkner resigned. Then a new way of rule was established: The Direct Rule.

## 11. Direct Rule

After the establishment of the Direct Rule, the Prime Minister in Northern Ireland made a shift in his policy. Most population was overwhelmed and tired of violence and continuous hostility, so the main goal of this legislation was the unification of a broken country, or at least the alleviation of the differences and tensions of its two communities. After these declarations of tolerance and good intentions on the part of the government, the IRA invited Whitelaw to negotiate in Free Derry. This invitation was rejected at first by the Prime minister. Some weeks later, after some meetings with some moderate

nationalist political parties and collectives, he finally acceded to attend to a meeting with the terrorist group.

On the other hand, the IRA agreed to cease fire if British authorities did. The meeting between the IRA and the government finally took place in London on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1972. The terrorist group knew from the beginning that they were not going to negotiate, nor discuss minor issues. Quite the opposite, they demanded the removal of the British troops immediately as well as the release of every political prisoner. They also declared the right of the whole population in Ireland to decide their future with no interference of the Parliament in London. Obviously, the British government was unable to fulfill these requests so the meeting had no outcome.

In Northern Ireland they chose to continue with this policy of social conciliation; however the denial on the part of the British government to the IRA's requests meant the end of the ceasefire and another violent episode took place. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of July nineteen bombs were exploded in Belfast in one hour period injuring 130 people and killing other nine. This episode would be known as Bloody Friday.

*News reports in the aftermath of Bloody Friday detailed conflicting numbers of bombs and different times for the explosions. The definitive list has only recently been established.*

<i>Albert Bridge</i>	<i>Discovered at approx. 1.00pm, defused</i>
<i>Limestone Road</i>	<i>Exploded 2.40pm</i>
<i>Botanic Avenue</i>	<i>Exploded 2.45pm</i>
<i>Star Taxis, Crumlin Road</i>	<i>Exploded 2.45pm</i>
<i>Brookvale Avenue</i>	<i>Exploded 2.50pm</i>
<i>Queen Elizabeth Bridge</i>	<i>Exploded 2.55pm</i>
<i>Ormeau Avenue</i>	<i>Exploded 2.57pm</i>
<i>Garmoyle Street</i>	<i>Exploded 2.59pm</i>
<i>Liverpool Ferry Terminal</i>	<i>Exploded 3.02pm</i>
<i>M2 flyover</i>	<i>Discovered 3.02pm, failed to detonate</i>
<i>Oxford Street Bus Station</i>	<i>Exploded 3.02pm</i>
<i>Creighton's Garage, Upper Lisburn Road</i>	<i>Exploded 3.05pm</i>
<i>Stewartstown Road</i>	<i>Exploded 3.05pm</i>
<i>Finaghy Road North Railway Bridge</i>	<i>Exploded 3.05pm</i>

**Comentado [SdI1]:** Year lacking here and below.

<i>Electricity Substation, Salisbury Avenue</i>	<i>Exploded 3.05pm</i>
<i>Tate's Avenue Railway Bridge</i>	<i>Exploded 3.09pm</i>
<i>York Street Station</i>	<i>Exploded 3.10pm</i>
<i>Smithfield Bus Station</i>	<i>Exploded 3.10pm</i>
<i>Eastwood's Motors, Donegall Street</i>	<i>Exploded 3.12pm</i>
<i>Cavehill Road shops</i>	<i>Exploded 3.15pm</i>
<i>Dee Street flyover</i>	<i>Discovered 3.30pm, defused</i>
<i>Great Victoria Street Station</i>	<i>Exploded 4.00pm</i>
<i>NI Carriers, Grosvenor Road</i>	<i>Failed to detonate</i>

2

From that moment onwards, violence rose and the situation in the North of the Island, especially in Belfast, became unbearable. Streets became barricades with incessant shootings. There were patrols, guns and fear in every corner of the city, and the hostility between the two communities grew stronger. In July nationalist groups killed around 50 people while Protestants killed almost 25.

Within this disquieting situation the main parties in the north were unable to reach any kind of agreement which seemed to be useful to heal all these troubles in Ireland.

In order to confront this situation, the British government proposed different solutions to the Irish question, including among them the unification of the territory but only in case the majority of the Northern population acceded. Westminster finally declared that any proposal in order to be accepted had to follow some criteria as they were trying to content the majority of the Irish society. These criteria were not only dealing with union or separatism, but also with the situation of the minority in Northern Ireland and the cease of the segregation against Catholics. These criteria gave birth to Northern Ireland Constitutional proposals. These fundamental criteria were set out in paragraph 79 of the Paper as follows:

*(a) In accordance with the specific pledges given by successive United Kingdom Governments, Northern Ireland must and will remain part of the United*

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<sup>2</sup> BBC UK History, Bloody Friday 2015

*Kingdom for as long as that is the wish of a majority of the people; but that status does not preclude the necessary taking into account of what has been described in this Paper as the 'Irish Dimension'.*

*(b) As long as Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom the sovereignty of the United Kingdom Parliament must be acknowledged, and due provision made for the United Kingdom Government to have an effective and continuing voice in Northern Ireland's affairs, commensurate with the commitment of financial, economic and military resources in the Province.*

*(c) Any division of powers and responsibilities between the national and the regional authorities must be logical, open and clearly understood. Ambiguity in the relationship is a prescription for confusion and misunderstanding. Any necessary checks, balances or controls must be apparent on the face of a new constitutional scheme.*

*(d) The two primary purposes of any new institutions must be first to seek a much wider consensus than has hitherto existed; and second to be such as will work efficiently and will be capable of providing the concrete results of good government: peace and order, physical development, social and economic progress. This is fundamental because Northern Ireland's problems flow not just from a clash of national aspirations or from friction between the communities, but also from social and economic conditions such as inadequate housing and unemployment.*

*(e) Any new institutions must be of a simple and businesslike character, appropriate to the powers and functions of a regional authority.*

*(f) A Northern Ireland assembly or authority must be capable of involving all its members constructively in ways which satisfy them and those they represent that the whole community has a part to play in the government of the Province. As a minimum this would involve assuring minority groups of an effective voice and a real influence; but there are strong arguments that the objective of real participation should be achieved by giving minority interests a share in the exercise of executive power if this can be achieved by means which are not*

*unduly complex or artificial, and which do not represent an obstacle to effective government.*

*(g) There must be an assurance, built into any new structures, that there will be absolute fairness and equality of opportunity for all. The future administration of Northern Ireland must be seen to be completely even-handed both in law and in fact.*

*(h) It is of great importance that future arrangements for security and public order in Northern Ireland must command public confidence, both in Northern Ireland itself, and in the United Kingdom as a whole. If they are to do so they must be seen in practice to be as impartial and effective as possible in restoring and maintaining peace and public order. In any situation such as that which obtains at present, where the Army and the civilian police force are both involved in maintaining law and order and combatting terrorism, it is essential that there should be a single source of direct responsibility. Since Westminster alone can control the Armed Forces of the Crown this unified control must mean Westminster control. For the future any arrangements must ensure that the United Kingdom Government has an effective and a determining voice in relation to any circumstances which involve, or may involve in the future, the commitment of the Armed Forces, the use of emergency powers, or repercussions at international level.<sup>3</sup>*

An assembly was also created, with a proportional representation of both communities. The powers of this assembly were limited, and questions such as National security or elections were subdue to the Parliament in Westminster.

Furthermore, the notion of “Irish Dimension” was taken into account as a necessity, for the first time. The Northern and the Southern part were prompted to collaborate in any future agreement especially in those issues which affected the whole area such as tourism or electricity and transport. All these ideas were embodied in Northern Ireland Constitution Act (1973).

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3

In June of this year, elections for the Assembly in Northern Ireland were celebrated. Although the majority of the assembly was constituted by unionist, negotiations were required to elaborate an executive body integrated by both communities. The final executive body was finally presided over by Brian Faulkner.

## 12. Sunningdale Agreement

As it has been established, in 1973 a tripartite talk between the new Northern Ireland assembly, the Republic of Ireland and the British government, took place.

Its main goal was the Creation of a Council of Ireland which would be made up by a council of Ministers and a consultative assembly. The Council of Minister, 14 members, 7 from the Northern part and 7 from the Republic of Ireland, was to have executive and consultative function.

The Consultative Assembly was constituted by 60 members. However, main points such as Police Authority or the Irish Dimension remained ambiguous making obvious the lack consensus among the different parts in the new agreement. After this agreement was signed, different unionist groups gathered under the so-called United Ulster Unionist Council, to show their opposition against the agreement and forcing Faulkner to resign. In May 1974, a proposal made by the Unionist within the Assembly against the Council of Ireland and the sharing of power, was rejected. As consequence a new group known as Ulster's workmen Council (ULUC) declared a strike which affected the whole Northern Ireland not offering basic services, closing roads and building barricades. This episode is considered one of the most relevant in contemporary Ireland, as after two week after the strike the new executive shared power between the two communities, which lacked a solid bases and which did not had the support of the Unionist majority, totally collapsed.

Concerning terrorism and violence, which were major problems in Northern Ireland, the Parliament in Westminster passed a series of acts giving emergency powers to police authorities and to military servers to fight against terrorist organizations. Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) –temporary provisions- , included measures which were only acceptable due to the emergency situation in the country. This new law was approved after the massive bombing and injuring of 22 and 100 people in Birmingham by the IRA. Some of the most controversial measures in this act were the celebration of a trial without jury, the power of the police authorities to make forty-eight hours' arrests which if

necessary, could last up to five days, and the right to freely search at airports and harbors. It also included “Excursion Orders” giving the right to the British government to deny the entrance to the UK to any person suspicious of belonging to any terrorist activity. These measures were not welcomed by the nationalist population. On the contrary, they were hardly criticized as being considered unfair, sectarian and repressive.

However, it was always defended by Rees, arguing that the measures were exceptional because the situation required, as it was called at the time, an Emergency Status.

After the collapse of the new executive body, a new approach was taken regarding the conflict as a problem of mere terrorism and public order. The government tried to give more authority and power to the police body in order to reduce their dependence of the British Army to save any kind of situation. This policy was called “Police Primary” This interest on the reinforcement and independence of the Police Authority was perceived by many as a declaration of intentions on the part of the British government of removing their troops from the island.

At the same time the government was holding meetings with the IRA after the organization had declared a ceasefire in December 1974 which would last until 17<sup>th</sup> January. As a response to the intentions of the Government to negotiate, a new cease fire was declared, this one would last from February 9<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> September. However these negotiations were considered a “waste of time” by both parts.

In May 1975 a new convention was proposed, but again there were great discordances in major issues such as the unification and the creation of an organ to share power in the North of the island. Thus it was impossible to reach an agreement. In view of the situation it was decided to continue the Direct Rule from London, which seemed the only provisional solution.

In 1976, the Special Air Service from the British Government was sent to Ireland to fight against terrorism. Many members of the IRA were killed but also some unarmed civilians. These new troops were again criticized and accused to act as a “terror group”, although they were not allowed to shoot unless they were in danger or it was required by the situation, as it was established in their Yellow Cards.

During these years the IRA, was almost destroyed. Nonetheless, they were able to reorganize internally and made an effective propagandistic campaign taking advantage of the criticism thrown on the British Government because of several scandals provoked by the SAS, which were finally retired in 1978.

New attempts were also made by the government to reach an agreement and work for the creation of a shared power in the Irish Parliament. However, the reconciliation was proved to be impossible, once again.

During the 70s the Irish conflict reached the international interest. Some communities in the US, where we can find a huge Irish population, got somehow enrolled in the conflict. A group which was called the four horse-men, directed by famous American personalities, namely Edward Kennedy, Carey, a senator called Moynihan, and Thomas O'Neill, criticized the measures taken by the British government on the Irish conflict and, although they condemned violence and terrorism, they gave their support to nationalists and spoke for the unification of the territory in several public acts.

*"On Friday, the sixth of November, President Ronald Reagan will come to New York. His intended purpose is to receive an award from the posh American-Irish Historical Society. However, the British and particularly Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher have exerted intense pressure to divert this presidential visit towards a different and more sinister end. It is their hope, and their plan, to manipulate our president into assuming the role of British propagandist by attacking the dependents of Irish political prisoners through an attack on Irish Northern Aid"<sup>4</sup>*

Simultaneously, the situation in prisons of republican politic prisoners became tough and several protests were made. The most famous are known as "the blanket protest" and the "no wash protest" by which prisoner were asking for a special status and not to be treated as regular convicts. Finally, after the negative of the part of the British government of giving the nationalist prisoner this "special status" they were asking for, in 1981 some prisoners decided to go on a hunger strike. The outcome of this strike was the death of ten prisoners. This episode was positive for IRA's public image and gave more popularity to the IRA and the Sinn Fein.

### 13. Second Decade of Direct Rule (1981-1994)

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<sup>4</sup> Irish People, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1981

Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister in London, maintained several private talks with the Republican group, trying to put an end to the previously mentioned strike; however, the Parliament in London, was reluctant to confer all the privileges that the Republicans were asking for the prisoners. It was the pressure of the public opinion, after the starvation to death of 10 men, which made the new Prime Minister, Jim Prior, yield to end these hunger strikes. Among these concessions we find the right of not wearing the prison uniform, more visits were allowed and hard labor was lowered.

After this “sacrifice”, as it was seen by many nationalists especially by young generations, the IRA was reinforced and the Sinn Fein abandoned its policy of abstention and took part in Northern Ireland elections gaining numerous supporters. This rise in popularity was also visible in all the Catholic Community which sympathized with the Nationalist cause. It is worth mentioning the case of Bobby Sands, who was one of the main representatives of the IRA prisoners, was elected as representative in the parliament during the hunger strike, and died sometime afterwards. After him some others, such as Paddy Agnew or Kieron Doherty, followed his example, being considered martyrs of the Republican cause. In this atmosphere, as the local authorities and the policy imposed by Great Britain lost credibility, the nationalist cause seemed to become a great and honorable cause for the public opinion despite the attempts of Margaret Thatcher to prove otherwise.

All these elements had as its final consequence the politicization of the Republican side of the society and the intention of the Sinn Fein led by Gerry Adams, to become the main republican force, against the SLDP, whose moderate policy had proved to give no results. So the first time they decided to participate in the general elections for a new Assembly (1982) they got 10% of the votes. This growth in the legitimate representation in the Parliament of the most radical side of nationalism, was perceived as a threat by Great Britain and by unionists in Belfast. The possible resultant situation was also to be feared by the representatives in the Republic of Ireland in the South of the island.

#### a. Anglo-Irish Treaty

In view of the situation, the British government and the government in Dublin, led by Charles Hughley and then by Garret Fitzgerald respectively, decided to cooperate. This was perceived by unionists as a threat for their wish of remaining part of the UK.

So in 1985, they signed the agreement, which was perceived as a great step to the end of the conflict. Although the objectives pursued by the two parts were very different. As we

have previously commented, this agreement was not supported by the unionist in Northern Ireland as they felt they had been excluded in the negotiations and that they saw the possibility of the reunification of the island; several demonstrations in Belfast also showed the opposition of the Protestant public to the new agreement. So the treaty had not the expected outcome as the unionist felt betrayed by the British Government. Some measures such as the resign of 15 unionist representatives in Westminster, demonstrations, and strikes were taken ill by this sector of the population.

The only politic section which seemed to be contented with the agreement was the moderate nationalism, i.e., SDLP. The poor results of this ambitious initiative plus a progressive increase of the violence by some unionist groups, made obvious that the agreement had been a failure.

#### b. A Shift in the Strategy

Peter Brooke, became secretary of the state for Northern Ireland. He proposed a new approach to the Irish question. For Brooke the best way of reaching a solution to put an end to the “Direct Rule” status was multipartite talks at three different levels:

1. Between Northern Ireland and Britain.
2. Between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
3. Between Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

This response seemed at the moment to be the best option, due to the possibility of taking into account all the different levels of such a complex situation. At the same time, this new strategy tried, on the one hand, to persuade the IRA to stablish dialogues and abandon the violence to accomplish their goals, since the British government had finally understood that a group as well organized as the IRA, was almost impossible to defeat militarily and, on the other hand, to recover the trust of the unionist population.

So by this policy, despite the doubts and dichotomies, every Democratic Party in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and the British government started to negotiate. Although it appeared to be the beginning of a change, in November 1992, in the face of the slow development of the negotiations and their scarce results the new political strategy collapsed and the talks ceased.

At the same time the government was secretly holding talks with the IRA. This practice had been previously seen, for example, during the hunger strikes or the ceasefire in 1974. However, these talks gave the impression of being improving the violent situation on account of the several ceasefires announced by the terrorist group since 1990.

These talks intensified during the next 3 years, until in 1993, both sides reach a point of no return. Of course, we cannot be sure of what exactly the nature were of these talks, as each side gave its own version. However, it seems that Britain was unwilling to include the Sinn Fein or the PIRA within the Democratic and parliamentary issues, unless they declared a permanent ceasefire and they abandoned violence definitely, and at this point they were unable to agree.

It was the newspaper “The Observer” which, in 1993, revealed this secret channel of communication between the British government and the terrorist and condemned it publically. So, once again, the credibility and public image of the British government was spoiled, forcing Maylew to resign. It is also known that secret talks were also hold by the major representatives of Republicanism with John Hume (SDLP) and the Irish Prime Minister Charles Haughey. However, these talks were also unfruitful.

#### Downing Street Declaration

However, during these talks a sense of a possible change was perceived after a long time. That is the reason why John Hume worked on a joint Declaration for the British and the Irish government, whose aim was to create an appropriate atmosphere and conditions that may help to reach this permanent ceasefire on the part of the IRA. This document was created by Hume and revised by the Irish government in Dublin.

Nonetheless this proposal, known as Hume-Adams, was rejected by J. Major, in the British Parliament, as it was prone to be against loyalist’s will.

The IRA continued with their violent attacks, but the episode on the 23th October was especially scandalous, when a bomb exploded in Shankill road, killing 10 people and the member of the IRA who had to detonate it. At that time Gerry Adams, the main figure of the Sinn Fein, attended this funeral and carried his coffin.

This public demonstration by the politician was considered as an insult and, as a consequence, the Sinn Fein became isolated from any negotiations unless they ended the use of violence definitely.

Meanwhile, violence was reaching a level not seen in ages. Within this situation a new Anglo-Irish agreement was to be born. However, this time the proposers would try to seduce both: unionist and nationalist. With the aid of two religious authorities, Ray Mages and Robin Games, and after going through numerous problems in December of 1993, a Dawning Street Declaration was signed by the British and the Irish governments.

This document was carefully written and reviewed over and over again as it tried to content two opposite visions of a long lasting conflict. So this time they did not try to propose a political structure of solution, but declared the sovereignty of the Irish people and their right to decide. Its main aim was the cease of the violence and the equality of the population no matter neither their political ideas nor their religious position. So if we had to describe the Downing Street Declaration with one word, it would be “neutrality”. This neutrality was also present in the reaction of the Irish people, though. The ambiguity of the text made the main radical groups not to condemn nor approve the Declaration.

#### 14. Third Decade of Direct Rule

The close collaboration of the British and the Irish government in Dublin would be a key attitude during the following years. The Sunningdale agreement, opposing previous attempts of consensus, brought together the main politic groups in Ireland as it did not included the idea of the creation of a street-power assembly.

Although they were aware of the fact that the agreement was more likely to be successful if the Sinn Fein and the radical groups took part in it, their condition was immovable: if Republicans did not abandon violence forever, they would be left out of any negotiation. That is why the IRA finally declared a ceasefire on 1<sup>st</sup> September in 1993. However, they did not specify how long it would last. The government, especially the British and the Unionist parties, wanted to have some guarantee on the part of the IRA and the republicans before they were included in the talks.

It is logical that, after so many years of violence, British were skeptical about an unconditional and apparently permanent ceasefire. This sense of distrust was reinforced by the attitude of the IRA of not making a clear declaration of the duration of the truce. In order to perpetrate this delicate balance some concessions were made to both communities in Northern Ireland.

However, the progress of this new process of peace was once again threatened when the IRA killed Fran Kerr. Although the high commands of the organization denied to have triggered this mission, the government took the determination of not taking up the conversations unless the IRA surrendered their weapons.

During 1994, both groups in Ireland were given these new concessions. One of them, related to the release of politic prisoners, was particularly controversial and new riots rose.

Furthermore, Republican groups, i.e., the Sinn Fein, started to feel that the new process towards peace was not going fast enough and they were tempted to break the ceasefire.

Once again, and because of the request on the part of the government to surrender every weapon, the process was interrupted. Discordance among Ireland and Britain appeared about this issue. In such wise, and with the upcoming visit of Bill Clinton to Ireland, a new strategy was hold, the so called Twin-track Process, which had as its basis the multiparty talks and left the question of the disarmament to be discussed later. The deep distrust among the different parts of the conflict delayed negotiations.

In this context of halt, a new document called “Frameworks for the Future” was presented by the British and Irish government in 1995. At the very beginning, unionist groups felt uneasy again the threat of a possible reunification of the island. However, both governments tried to highlight the fact that still the unification would never happen if the majority of the population did not approve it by referendum.

These “frameworks for the Future” were divided into two different documents: “A Framework for Accountable Government” and “A new Framework for Agreement”.

- 1) The first document was devoted to explain the functions of a new assembly which would give more power to the Northern Ireland population.
- 2) The second one was written by both governments, Irish and British and demanded by the Northern Ireland population.

But again, this document did not specify the status of Northern Ireland. “Al igual que ocurriera en iniciativas precedentes, de nuevo Británicos e Irlandeses evitaban reconocer explícitamente y de manera conjunta el status de Irlanda del Norte como parte integral del Reino Unido.”

This second document of “Agreement” was aimed to create new institutions for both government in Ireland to work together for mutual interests and benefits. On this point a new discussion appeared on where the limitation of power of these new institutions would be.

As we have commented, most of the points of the new Framework were based on previous proposals. However, this time something had changed. They had hope on this new project to succeed because of the context, as all the terrorist groups had declared a ceasefire and the situation of “provisional peace” was the ideal to carry on with talks and agreements, or at least it seemed so after long decades of continuous violence.

**Comentado [Sd12]:** Do you mean “and demanded” or “subject to consultation to”

Nonetheless, this balance will not last as negotiations provided by the British government were delayed several times. So in February of 1996, the ceasefire was broken and the IRA exploded a bomb in London and another bomb killed a member of the IRA, also in London, as its mechanism failed.

After this situation, Republicans demanded as a condition for a new ceasefire they determined that a definite decommission will not be a compulsory condition to take part in the negotiation talks.

At the same time, John Major expressed his will for a new end of the violence and for the participation of the Sinn Fein in the talks.

The Sinn Fein did not seem to have the intention of declaring a new ceasefire as Britain still hold the requirement of the seizure of the Republicans to take part in the conversations. Due to the lack of consensus, the multiparty talks began on 10<sup>th</sup> June and the Sinn Fein did not play a part in them. Nevertheless, republicans were invited to join as soon as they had stopped non-democratic practices.

Violence thus continued although it did not reach the level of previous decades.

In July 1996, in the Protestant parade of The Order of Orange, which had been previously re-routed in order to avoid going through the Catholic neighborhood of Garvagh Road, but which was finally allow to go through this zone. Furthermore, participants were protected by a great amount of police authorities, showing once more the lack of equality among both communities.

John Major welcomed main figures of the two main terrorist groups of the unionist side: UUF and UFF.

Criticism about this meeting was immediate and comparisons were made. The nationalist minority felt again that the government was unable to show equality, since these unionist groups were not asked as a requirement decommission to have their place in the process of peace.

So in 1996the process of peace seemed to be about to collapse and to have reached its end. The negotiations were fruitless and, in the situation previously described, it was difficult to think about the possibility of a new ceasefire on the part of the IRA and thus the participation of the Sinn Fein in the negotiations.

#### 15. The Ceasefire of 1997

After many years of conservative parties ruling in Britain, in 1997, the labor party leaded by Tony Blair won the elections.

**Comentado [SdI3]:** Si decides poner Republicans y Unionist con mayúscula (no hace falta) sé consecuente y hazlo en todo el texto.

After the declarations of the British Prime Minister regarding his intentions to fully respect the nation consent to calm the unionist sector of the population, he proposed a process of devolution of powers and the necessity of an Irish dimension. Nonetheless, at the same time, he assured that any negotiation which may be interpreted as a threat by Unionist should not even be considered by the British government.

As short time after, concessions were made to the Republicans, and the British government sent as communiqué giving Republicans the chance to take part in negotiations if they declared a ceasefire. This historical ceasefire would finally take place the 20th of July. As a consequence, the Sinn Fein was admitted in negotiation in September.

#### 16. Belfast Agreement

It was also known as Good Friday Agreement. It is considered the peak of the whole peace progress which had started as such at the beginning of the decade. It has as its basis the multipartite talks at three levels previously mentioned.

The IRA and the UDA, the two most important paramilitaries groups, were again involved in some attacks so their representatives in the parliament, i.e. the Sinn Fein and the Ulster Democratic Party, were excluded from negotiations.

As it has been stated, negotiations were slow so the necessity of a deadline for an agreement was obvious, it was finally set by Mitchell on the midnight 9<sup>th</sup> of April. The final document, and although there still existed some discordance among the different groups, especially in terms of decommission, the agreement was signed on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> of April, 1998 and announced by Mitchel in these terms: *"I am pleased to announce that the two governments and the political parties in Northern Ireland have reached agreement"*. Two referendums were held and widely approved in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. Finally, the agreement became a reality.

The importance of this events was labelled by many important media like the BBC as *"historical"* and after many years of sectarian conflict and brutal violence, Ireland seemed to have found its way to peace, order and coexistence.

#### 17. Interview

Finally, as historical events don't allow much freedom for personal opinion, I decided to make a short research on two people who could speak about these events as they lived

them. Here I present the nine questions of a brief interview and the responses of my two volunteers.

Good morning and thank you for collaborating with me in my final Project about Ireland. Your personal testimony will give a personal bias to my research on the history of your country and all the struggles it has suffered in the last decades.

Questions:

Name (Optional)

Date and place of birth

Religion

1. After the creation of the Stormont Parliament were you (or your parents) allowed to vote?
2. How did you feel about the situation of discrimination by the government?
3. Was the abuse by the police authorities a real issue? Have you ever suffered discrimination/ violence because of your religion or political ideas?
4. Were you or your parents assigned dwelling by the government? If so, did you feel you were gathered like in a ghetto due to some reason?
5. Do you remember the beginning of the so-called “Troubles” (1969)?
6. During those years of “Protestant abuse of power”, what were your opinion about the IRA?
7. Had you ever the feeling that the British Government had any interest on the island – economically or politically?
8. Do you think that the Irish people in the Northern part had lost the hope in the process towards peace?
9. Finally, have you ever felt oppressed by your culture or have you experienced any kind of detachment in your own country?

*Philip Renshaw (29/06/1959) London Catholic, convert (not practicing).*

*Q1 Yes*

*Q2 Discrimination was a day to day reality.*

*Q3 Yes, but I personally have never experienced it.*

*Q4 No*

*Q5 No*

*Q6 I felt ambivalent towards the IRA.*

*Q7 No*

*Q8 No*

*Q9 No*

*Marie Renshaw (20/02/1959) Belfast, Catholic.*

*Q1 Yes*

*Q2 I was used to being discriminated against as a Catholic woman and regarded it as usual.*

*Q3 No. I felt discriminated against, but never a victim of police violence.*

*Q4 No*

*Q5 Yes*

*Q6 I did not approve of them as I am against all paramilitaries.*

*Q7 Yes politically they rules the roost.*

*Q8 No.*

*Q9 Never oppressed, I feel attached to my country.*

## 18. Conclusion

As a final comment and as justification for the interviews I may say that, as I was finishing this work, I became fully aware of the complexity and richness of Irish history and culture. However, a complex history also conveys a complex interpretation by those people who write about it. That is the reason why I searched for information in different sources from British and Irish authors, and I tried to be as objective as possible as there are some events that not even history has been able to clarify. One example could be the nature and contents of the secret talks of the government and the IRA or the events which took place in the event known as Bloody Sunday. In my search for objectiveness I felt that the most suitable element would be a first person testimony to support the facts I read. In my conclusion I should also mention the fact that although this conflict has lasted for many years, it still is not over, as the distrust and the segregation among these two communities sharing a country is too deep. Nonetheless, the situation has improved during the last

years and with the new generations who are not poisoned with hate and violence as an everyday reality, Ireland may finally achieve a peaceful cohabitation of all the members of its different communities.

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