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Case Study

## **The Irish Troubles Since 1916**

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On Monday, April 24, 1916, during the midst of what would later become World War I, Irish nationalists—the Irish Volunteers, directed by the clandestine Irish Republican Brotherhood, or IRB—rose in rebellion against the British. In Dublin, the Irish Volunteers proclaimed a Republic for all Ireland with Patrick Pearse as president. The 1916 Easter Rising represented Irish aspirations and assumptions that had ancient roots. Irish republicans had emerged under the leadership of Wolfe Tone during the French revolution, taking on a nonsectarian, radical, and persistent character. Even before the radical revolt of 1798, there had been resistance to English rule based on centuries of specific grievances: discrimination against Catholics, against dissenters and radical Protestants, humiliation, religious and ethnic oppression, absentee landlords, restricted civil rights, and the exploitation of the whole island for English interests. Many blamed the 1845–1850 famine that destroyed Gaelic Ireland on the English; many blamed the English, as did Tone, for all Irish ills. In 1916, however, few on the island imagined that a resort to violence could repair the past or open a novel future. Yet Irish nationalism had emerged in the early twentieth century as an enormously powerful cultural movement. The Irish literary renaissance of John Butler Yeats, James Joyce, Sean O’Casey, and the Abbey Theater coupled with efforts to encourage the Irish language had a major impact far beyond the island. In Ireland there was a revival of Gaelic sports, renewed interest in Irish history, and sympathy for national movements elsewhere. For their part, the republicans had

persisted in deploying physical force, rising with other European national movements in 1848, adopting the present Irish tricolor as their banner, and then organizing Fenian campaigns under the leadership of the IRB in England, Ireland, and the United States. The Fenians used dynamite bombs and assassins, and became heroes for many—martyrs, prisoners, ancient veterans. Force, however, did not prevail. The British made concessions and retained control; the United Kingdom was still united.

There remained, however, a constituency that believed Ireland should be a nation once again, even if Ireland never *had* been free, united, and Gaelic in the past. Among these nationalists were those who accepted violence as a necessary element of their struggle. They did not want concessions, but a country. For the generation after the Fenian violence tapered away in 1870, there had been peace on the island. Nationalism might flourish in various forms, but not in that of republican action.

Thus, in the late nineteenth century in Ireland, there existed a potent blend of the historical experience of nightriders and Fenian bombers legitimized by the ideals of the Age of Reason. The Irish Volunteers embodied both ideals and grievances. They had emerged first as a response to the unionist threat to use force to prevent Home Rule and, under the IRB, the idealists sought an opportunity to deploy physical force in a just war. The involvement of the United Kingdom in the European war presented just such an opportunity, a chance to create a republic that could be established everywhere save in the hearts of all the Irish. In the spring of 1916, most of the Irish people seemingly had no stomach for republicanism. They opposed violence in their name; after all Home Rule had been promised after the war. So those who favored constitutional means, the Anglo-Irish, the moderates, those who sought a closer union with Great Britain, almost all Protestants, seemingly most Catholics, and the everyday people were all appalled at the outbreak of rebellion in Dublin. The British saw the Easter Rising as a betrayal in the midst of war, moved troops into Dublin, and crushed the rising in a week.

The rebellion had been a clumsy and uncertain venture. The IRB had relied on help from Germany that did not materialize. Confusion caused by secrecy had prevented a national rising. There had been no war, just a week of bitter fighting and the destruction of central Dublin. The

prisoners were hissed on their way to their prison camp in Wales. There had been no need for violence. The British had already made concessions to Irish grievances—religious freedom, control of the land, participation in politics—and offered prosperity and imperial advantage. A future for Ireland within the United Kingdom seemed certain and acceptable.

The Rising had been treason in the midst of war, and so the commanders were tried, condemned, and executed. President Patrick Pearse had been shot, and his brother, the leader of the small socialist Irish Citizen's Army, James Connolly, who was wounded during the fighting, was shot while tied to a chair. Sir Roger Casement, who had arranged the German connection, was condemned and hanged in England. All the Dublin commanders were soon dead and buried, with the exception of Eamon DeValera, who had been born in America. The British establishment assumed that the Irish problem would have come to an end, with the traitors punished and the rebels imprisoned in Wales. As had often been the case, London misjudged the Irish; as Yeats noted, "A terrible beauty was born."

The executions, coupled with the bravery of the Irish Volunteers, had transformed the apparently stable political culture. By 1917, the Irish largely withdrew their consent to be governed by the British crown. The Irish nationalist population—largely Catholic—identified with the rebels. They resented the perceived English arrogance in executing those, however foolish but certainly brave, who had gone to war in uniform under an Irish flag. Sympathy, however, had not translated into action, and the infrastructure of national resistance had been revealed and destroyed.

What remained was an expanding pool of those who knew the answers to the three great revolutionary questions: What is wrong? The British. What is wanted? An Irish Republic. And what should be done? Armed struggle. Thus, the ideals of the republicans, the habits and experiences of the past, the skills of conspiracy, and the resentments and special grievances of various groups produced a constituency for rebellion. Most would be content to merely observe events, but this would allow the newly organized Irish Republican Army to act for them. Toleration was all a guerrilla force needed.

The rebels met opposition not only from the British but also from many in Ireland. The Unionists, who were especially strong in the northeast, and many in the Anglo-Irish establishment feared Irish nationalism and Irish Catholicism, and especially feared and opposed Home Rule. It was, however, increasingly apparent that loyalty to the crown was a minority pursuit. Arthur Griffith's Sinn Fein movement—"Ourselves Alone"—ran candidates in the 1918 British elections. In November 1918, a large majority voted overwhelmingly for Sinn Fein parliamentary candidates who then took seats not at Westminster but in an Irish parliament, the Dail. They declared their loyalty to the Republic of 1916. A new legitimacy existed, and had as its defender the rapidly re-organized IRA.

The Irish republicans created the first real national liberation movement [Author: Mexico and about half the countries in South America, along with the Philippines, might disagree with you here], a combination of paramilitary initiatives, political institutions, and ideological offerings that, as intended, attracted commitment on the island and support from abroad. The rebels pursued a dual and interrelated strategy. The IRA would resist British rule by recourse to physical force through guerrilla warfare. The Irish would call it the Tan War, after a repressive special British police force dressed in black and tan uniforms. Just as important (if not as visible) as the guerrilla war was the structuring of an alternative legitimacy. Sinn Fein would create a secret republican government: parliament, courts, and ambassadors, offering respectability and responsibility. The great asset for both movements was the nationalist faith. [Author: if you mean some other faith, e.g., Catholic, please specify which one.] This faith generated enormous energy within the committed, and it gave all involved the will to persist, to suffer, to win. All assumed that the power of their will would in time allow an Irish triumph over the manifest strengths of the British Empire.

And just as the cultural renaissance had unexpectedly produced a group of world-class artists, so did the Rising and the Tan War reveal a generation of military and political talent: Griffith and DeValera, many within the new Dail and those who became advisors and ambassadors, and both field commanders like Commandant Tom Barry in Cork and strategists like Michael Collins and the IRA GHQ staff. On a small island on the edge of events, the Irish

had proved enormously creative; they had offered a means into the future for the marginalized and oppressed. The result was a classical struggle that offered a means for radical change that was far more attractive to many than the civil disobedience offered by Gandhi or the revolutionary communism of Mao. There would be those in the Third World and elsewhere who would read not Joyce and Yeats but Connolly and Tom Barry, and would parse the IRA as model.

So with a stable constituency, an inventive and flexible leadership, a novel strategy, and a historic enemy exhausted by a great war, the nationalists persisted, opposing their will to British power. The Irish Dail operated secretly. The Irish Republic was only visible for a few moments here and there, during an ambush and through agents and delegations sent abroad. Dail documents might have had to be printed secretly in the basement, but increasingly the British authorities found that visibility did not mean control. The result was a conflict between the British, who claimed legitimacy and rule by right, by responsibility, by general acceptance, and long practice, and those who spoke for a hidden Ireland organized as a republic.

As the conflict grew increasingly bitter, it became apparent to the British government under Prime Minister Lloyd George that this underground Ireland was not amenable to coercion on the scale for which the political will existed in Britain. Ireland could be ruled only by terror and repression, which were too costly in various ways. At least the "Sinn Feiners" had in place real, if unrecognized, political institutions. They could speak for the IRA gunmen. So Lloyd George offered a cease-fire that would lead to negotiations seeking an accommodation. The Irish republican government accepted. The Tan War ended with a truce in June 1921.

The peace negotiators sought to balance Irish aspirations for freedom with the security, economic, and political requirements of Britain, which included responsibility for the unionist Protestants. To this end, the British sought to address Irish grievances rather than Irish ideals. There was no compromise possible if the Irish Republic was actually established and recognized. In the past, the British had always managed to find a compromise with Irish grievances: economic and social reforms, accepting the Catholic Church, land reforms and imperial opportunities, and even an effective response to Irish nationalism with the passage of Home Rule

in 1914. And so in London in 1921, a treaty was shaped to integrate the shadow Republic into reality. The Westminster parliament had already passed legislation to create two provincial assemblies, one in Dublin and one in Belfast. And beyond partition, there was the prospect of renewed war. Thus, Lloyd George assumed that accommodation need not compromise vital British interests.

In any armed struggle, the most dedicated and most faithful see no necessity for compromise. In Ireland, the struggle, the killing, and the sacrifice had been to assure recognition of the Irish Republic of 1916, not to secure some form of Home Rule or an enhanced role within the United Kingdom. The militants opposed much that the British felt to be vital. They wanted no oath to the crown, no British bases, no annuities paid to absentee land-owners, no governor-general, and no special Northern parliament for the unionists. They would not compromise the Republic. Some, like Eamon DeValera, felt that more could be attained with further negotiations. Others, like Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, felt that the British negotiators were offering enough so that progress to full independence was possible: the freedom to be free, in time.

On their part, the Irish unionists felt that the proposed two parliaments with devolved powers would abandon all those Protestants in the twenty-six southern counties to a Catholic-nationalist administration, yet they were relatively powerless. In fact, the Northern unionists increasingly saw an Ireland divided as their only hope, since most unionists, and most Protestants, were included in the six counties of province Ulster. Thus the unionists of the twenty-six counties were abandoned and the new Northern Ireland parliament was opened at Stormont in Belfast. The Protestants, unionist and loyalist, created a British Ulster open only to their own; the Catholic-nationalist minority was irrelevant, isolated and repressed.

In the South, these Northern events were largely ignored. All political opinion was focused not on partition—no one, certainly not the British, assumed such a division would last for long—but on adjusting the ideal Republic to what was on offer in the Treaty. In Dublin, after bitter debate in the Dail, the Treaty passed on January 7, 1922, by 64 votes to 57. The war could not really begin again, and the Treaty in time could be adjusted. In the meantime, twenty-six counties would be declared an Irish Free State with the potential to erode British control.

The practical, the prudent, the respectable, assumed that the new Free State was the best arrangement possible. Some of the idealists, including DeValera, refused to accept the Treaty vote. The people had no right to do wrong. The Irish Free State was not the Republic, not free, not even in control of all Ireland, not a state but a British creation. They would resist with arms if need be.

The newly organized Free State Army soon became engaged in an internal war against an IRA that lacked general support and a coherent strategic approach. Many in the Free State Army had learned all the proper lessons from the Tan War; the IRA was harried and pursued. The war went on for a year. Friends killed each other, and families were divided. The Dublin government deployed terror and judicial murder. Griffith died on August 12, 1922, and ten days later Collins was killed in an ambush. The IRA burned the country houses of the Anglo-Irish, cut rail lines, and ambushed Free State patrols. The war came to Northern Ireland, as did pogroms and riots. Business could not operate, unemployment was massive, and crime was on the rise. The center barely held.

Both in Belfast and Dublin, the new governments had to rally support, pursue a guerrilla war, and try to govern. For two years the island was in chaos as the Free State that came into existence formally on December 6, 1922, imposed order on the countryside, drove the IRA underground, and tried and executed their former colleagues. In the North, the Unionist party in control of the provincial parliament relied on the new paramilitary police—the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)—and the army to counter republican resistance and intimidate the Catholic population. In time in the Free State, orthodoxy, the exhaustion of the people, effective force, and the flaws of the republicans (“the irregulars”) allowed the government to imposed order.

Once again the Irish offered to observers and analysts a model of the prospects and dangers of revolutionary war. In less than ten years, there had been an insurrection in 1916, the Tan War of liberation, and then the Troubles, when the idealist dream clashed with Irish reality.

In April 1923, when hope seemed lost, Eamon DeValera, President of the Irish Republic, announced that the IRA would dump their arms—the struggle was not over, only postponed—and disperse. The Troubles dribbled away with thousands in detention camps, the

country ravaged, a long roll of martyrs, and limited prospects for the future. Ireland was ruined. The enormously bitter civil war would divide families and friends for generations. Irish politics for fifty years would be shaped not by economic or social issues, class interests, regional concerns, or any of the factors found in politics elsewhere, but by the position taken on the Treaty. One voted as had one's parents and, with time, as had one's grandparents. In a sense, each citizen in every election voted on the national issue made most painfully manifest by the visible result of the Treaty: Northern Ireland.

The irreconcilable republicans, those who stayed in Ireland, had gone underground in 1923. Their goal was first to reverse the loss of the war to the Free State and then to force the British to withdraw, in particular from Northern Ireland. The IRA, however, simply lacked the capacity to do so. The Free State was increasingly secure. The winners focused on creating a nation. Stormont, supported by the British, was well defended by a Protestant establishment created out of the Unionist Party, the Protestant Masonic orders, the Orange societies, the police, and the comfortable classes. The British were, once again, untroubled by an Irish problem.

Everywhere in Ireland, the secret army was under pressure. The IRA lacked a viable mission, and soon lacked any real capacity. In the Free State, the Sinn Fein Party had shrinking support in part because their elected members would not take seats in "puppet parliaments." The faithful grew fewer in number. Many nationalists, even many republicans, accepted reality. The time for physical force had passed. DeValera abandoned Sinn Fein and formed his own party, Fianna Fail. In 1927, they took seats in the Dail and in 1932, after elections, peacefully formed a government—a remarkable testament to the power of democracy given the residual hatred of the civil war. Britain, along with fashions and branch offices of London companies, had also left democracy and an honest civil service.

Ireland, isolated or not, at peace or not, soon, like everyone else in the West, suffered from the impact of the global economic depression and the failure of government economic policies. In response to the changing circumstances, the underground republican movement split. The radicals, a minority, chose revolutionary politics and soon discovered that the Irish people remained conservative, voted for convention, and found no charm in class struggle. The majority



in the IRA continued to favor military over political means. For many, physical force had evolved into a principle rather than a tactic. For them, “politics” was merely a means of accepting less than the Republic and so was countenanced only as a means of acquiring popular support for a future campaign. Politics had corrupted the Free State, corrupted DeValera, and would prove futile for the radicals.

Politics, however, did work in Ireland, however slowly. In a changing world, the concessions of the Treaty were gradually eroded: the Treaty Ports returned to Dublin, the governor-general grew isolated, and the old British privileges were negotiated away. Ireland was in the League of Nations and, as Éire-Ireland, had a new electric grid, a new turf industry, a real army, programs to revive the language, and a new constitution. Only Stormont remained. Those republicans who had not lost the faith had dwindled in number. Sinn Fein shrunk to a few fanatics, isolated and ignored. The IRA as a secret army without a viable mission eroded in numbers and influence. There had been assassinations and incidents, but there was only one serious IRA campaign, which began with attacks in the North in 1938. The Army Council had great hopes. The IRA had contacts with the Germans, England’s enemy, but the outbreak of war in 1939 complicated the campaign. The bombing campaign in England in 1939–1940 outraged British opinion while doing limited damage.

The outbreak of war encouraged London, Belfast, and Dublin to shut down all republican activity. The British police arrested most of the IRA bombers. DeValera, determined to remain neutral as a sign of Irish independence, interned hundreds of republican suspects. Stormont put republicans into prison ships for the duration. In England, the bombing dwindled away as the arrests continued, and in Ireland, so did the IRA. By the end of the war in 1945, almost no IRA volunteer was active.

After the war, in 1948, the Irish government declared a republic: not the Republic of 1916, but one seemingly sufficient for most of the nationalist population in the twenty-six Southern counties. The defiant residue of the IRA—aging, largely working class, and irrelevant—reorganized. Then, gradually, there were new recruits to the old slogan: “Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.” In 1954, the revitalized IRA undertook a guerrilla campaign in

Northern Ireland. Arms raids and ambushes did not greatly trouble either Stormont or the Irish Republic. For most on the island, the border campaign was an exercise in nostalgia, worthy of patriot ballads but largely irrelevant, it went and almost unnoticed when the IRA dumped arms—again—in 1962.

While the national issue thus continued to trouble Ireland, and as it shaped a repressive and sectarian state in Belfast and eroded the legitimacy of the government in Dublin, the major focus of Irish politics was on finding an end to poverty and, therefore, to emigration. Much was done, but the country was poor, without industry, and restricted in its efforts at self-sufficiency—in short, a rural backwater. The Republic was dominated by a conservative Catholic church and a narrow political establishment, and Northern Ireland by a bigoted Orange establishment. Ireland was run by a small, very conventional middle class, suspicious of change and dissent. The Republic was a static society without ideas or (beyond the national issue) ideals. In the North, where prosperity was just as elusive, the government remained arrogant, united with the Protestant population behind the necessity of Protestant rule to defend British Ulster from Roman Catholic domination. Stability in the North depended upon British imperial funds and RUC capacity.

Ireland might have been green and pleasant, an island of soft rains and kindly people where time ran more slowly than elsewhere, but misery and denial had been institutionalized. Ireland remained poor, the people isolated, all the economic indicators static. The working class had no work. Agricultural practice was antiquated and unproductive. The cities were shabby and dirty, beautiful Georgian buildings without plumbing, cut up into mean rooms. Scenery did not keep the emigrants home, inspire creativity, moderate unionist fears, or calm the frantic hearts of the faithful republicans.

In the sixties, for a time, there seemed to be movement to everyone's advantage, and the economy improved. In 1963, the new prime minister of Northern Ireland, Terence O'Neill, met with his Dublin counterpart Sean Lemass, who had been named the new leader of Fianna Fail after DeValera had been elected President of the Republic in 1959. Both hoped to help along an economy that gave tentative signs of expansion. Foreign investment was encouraged. New

factories opened. Television came to the pubs if not the homes. Out of sight, however, two currents ran against this tide of congratulation and hope.

For the IRA, all politicians were considered puppets of the system. The only viable future option still seemed to be physical force. No matter that there were few volunteers; those remaining must be more faithful still. The IRA idealists were not the only ones dedicated to systemic change; a new generation of young radicals, nearly all Catholics and mainly in the North, had emerged from the universities. These Northern radicals had been inspired by the American civil rights movement, and they adopted civil disobedience as a means to address the injustices of the Stormont system. Both the IRA and the radicals were tiny groups, but both had deep roots, general sympathy, and addressed real grievances. Most people paid little attention to the IRA, which was still engaged in a quarrel over the best means for achieving change—radical politics or physical force—and otherwise simply was exhibiting traditional republican patience. The Northern students were a different matter. In 1967, they wanted immediate change. They demonstrated for fair housing allotments, an end to inequalities in voting, and the awarding of jobs based on seniority and talent, not simply on loyalist credentials. In 1968 the radicals, especially students like Bernadette Devlin, began a series of marches that, as partially intended, provoked the Orange establishment. The authorities announced that these students were merely “republicans” under false flags. In point of fact, their example convinced a majority within the IRA that politics offered prospects for change; after all, in time Bernadette Devlin was elected to the parliament in Westminster as a socialist and a radical nationalist. Others in the secret army had no use for politics, for taking seats in puppet parliaments, for marching and demonstrating, for pursuing the amelioration of grievances. They were physical force republicans, idealists unwilling to compromise.

In Northern Ireland, the Royal Ulster Constabulary obviously had no sympathy with the civil rights people, suspected them to be IRA pawns, and used force against them. The establishment thus sought to end the demonstrations through threat and intimidation, recourse to harsh laws, and aggressive policing. To defend their heritage, the most militant loyalists resorted to violence and arson. Orange society found accommodation difficult to imagine. The result was

photogenic violence for the media. Thus the Unionists embarrassed the Westminster government and alienated the British public, who had no sympathy for the Irish in any case. There was almost no understanding in Britain of the Stormont establishment—a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people. British Ulster apparently could be maintained only by the paramilitary police force. So the government in London, which had enjoyed the relative lack of an Irish problem for decades, was once again responsible for looking after a violent and visibly divided society.

By 1969, the establishment in Northern Ireland felt itself to be under siege. The unionist population, the politicians, the preachers, and the general run of decent people feared an expansive Roman Catholic Church. Most assumed that Civil Rights was a disguise for Irish nationalism, which was, in fact, simply a stalking horse for the Catholic Church. The tiny IRA was imagined as the Pope's secret army, even if the members claimed to be nonsectarian, even if the Church had opposed rebel force for fifty years. Across the whole spectrum of Protestant opinion, from the rabid sermons of Reverend Ian Paisley to the polite prejudice of Captain O'Neill, there was uniformity on the nature of the threat: Irish Catholic nationalism and, thus, the IRA.

The fear and anguish of the loyalists—those unionists who advocated the use of force to defend Protestant interests—resulted in attacks on Catholics, and any Catholic would do, since all were by definition enemies of British Ulster. Catholics who lived in Protestant communities or in border communities were endangered. The RUC continued to attack the demonstrators. The tipping point came in Derry in August 1969, when the police responding to perceived provocation attempted to break into the Catholic Bogside district. Day after day, the nationalist radicals and students—the Catholics, in the unionist perception—denied them entry, throwing up barricades and using stones and petrol bombs. Rioting spread across the province. In Belfast, loyalists began burning out Catholic streets. The RUC lost control, and the province was filled with riots, assaults, and chaos. Stormont could no longer rely on force to impose order; it was a police state with insufficient police. The British government took over security and sent in the army.

London thus created the conditions long sought by those in the IRA who advocated the use of physical violence. The secret army had finally split with the temporary majority of Sinn Fein that had been supported by the IRA, known as the Officials, who had voted to take seats won in election, demonstrating their reliance on the primacy of politics. This violated IRA tradition and regulations. So in January 1970, those who advocated abstention set up their own provisional command structure and thus became the Provisional IRA, or the Provos, who were dedicated to abstention and the validity of armed force. They began at ground zero, with the residue of the IRA faithful who had been so thin on the ground in Belfast that the walls had been painted with graffiti reading “IRA—I Ran Away.” The Catholics, like the Protestants, imagined a huge secret army, armed and trained, ready for war, not seven men sitting in a cold kitchen in a house near the border preparing to take on an empire.

With the British army in the streets of Belfast and Derry, the Provisional IRA’s ruling Army Council on that day in January decided on a three step strategy: the defense of the threatened nationalist community in the North that would assure support throughout the island; IRA provocation that would erode British army “neutrality” and increase the need for the secret army; open pursuit of armed struggle. The strategy was shaped most strongly by reality rather than by wishful thinking, innocence, and the habits of the governments involved, or by the prospects of radical politics in a society focused on more compelling issues. So the Provos became first the defenders, as planned, then provoked the security forces into action as promised. By 1971, with their campaign based on national ideals, and with Catholic grievances now defined as the result of the British presence, the Provisional IRA offered a historical agenda, ideals, and action, and continued to benefit from the blunders of government.

In January 1972, British paratroopers shot and killed demonstrators in Derry, an event that came to be known as Bloody Sunday. Nationalist opinion was swept up in anger, and support for the Provos grew. The international media arrived with cameras and open minds. There were more volunteers than the IRA could absorb or arm. In the Republic, arms and money were flowing into IRA hands. Some of this support came from abroad, especially America, but for a time also from Irish nationalists in the Republic. There was a scandal in Dublin about arms

being imported by cabinet ministers to give to the IRA, which was an illegal organization, to protect Northern nationalists.

The IRA flourished. The volunteers controlled “no-go” zones in Belfast and Derry. The nationalist rural areas became bandit zones for the security forces. The level of violence increased; bombs went off in all the cities all the time. Television producers could stand at the windows of the Europa Hotel in Belfast and watch the bomb flashes and hear the crack of rifles, witnessing firsthand an urban war in the midst of a postindustrial democratic society.

The IRA leadership felt that British withdrawal was possible. London closed down Stormont in March 1972 and took over direct rule, and the Provisionals took the credit. In July the IRA leadership met in London with a British cabinet minister to explore an accommodation. The British government was intent on establishing a devolved government to replace Stormont, but the IRA had come to negotiate a withdrawal. The British establishment was appalled at such arrogance from felons, gunmen, and unknown fanatics without education or understanding of actual conditions. Few British politicians, then or later, could imagine, and none could support, a withdrawal. The IRA delegation was flown back to Northern Ireland, as promised, and there again took up their armed struggle, under the notion that persistence would pay, and escalation was possible.

The British policy from July 1972 was to make further IRA escalation too costly, to reduce the IRA’s violence to an acceptable level while establishing a viable devolved government. There was thus a simultaneous expansion of anti-insurgency skills, tactics, and equipment and a series of constitutional proposals. With remarkable ingenuity, the British gradually developed modern anti-insurgency tactics, a mix of intelligence, technology, field tactics, brutality and cunning, and high morale, as well as a long agenda of political initiatives. London proposed conventions, basic laws, the involvement of Dublin, the exclusion of Dublin, referendums, assemblies, concessions, secret meetings, bilateral treaties, elections, overtures to the IRA, to the constitutional nationalists, to world opinion. London contended that the IRA volunteers were terrorists, sectarian, antidemocratic—in short, criminals. The British

establishment's approach essentially did not change for over twenty years: limit IRA capacity and encourage devolved government, criminalize the IRA, and Ulsterize politics.

The unionists and loyalists, deprived of their assembly and fearful of Catholic nationalism, had to rely on British promises. They proved inventive in seeking to defend British Ulster. They sponsored protests, petitions, interventions at Westminster, parades, special elections, riots, and intimidation. New parties and movements were organized around the old ideals. There was a general strike and opposition to any Anglo-Irish agreement. And from time to time, the secret paramilitary groups like the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defense Force undertook sectarian murder campaigns. A paramilitary vocation attracted idealists along with the bigoted "hard men" of violence. When the tide seemed to favor the nationalists, the loyalists murdered Catholics and so, like IRA volunteers, often ended up in prison. In fact, the prisons of Ireland were often battle-fields—scene of riots and demonstrations, revolutionary seminars, murders, parades and training, hunger strikes, provocation, and repression.

What the Protestants and unionists wanted was a return to a past where their rule was unchallenged and their future domination was secure, and since this was unlikely, many spent twenty years fearful of betrayal by London. They were fearful of the power of Irish nationalism, and of the Roman Catholic Church. They were fearful of the capacity of the IRA, so much more effective and disciplined than the loyalist paramilitaries, who were always unsavory and at times unbalanced and often engaged in exploiting their organizations for criminal purposes. Little organization, however, was needed to run a murder campaign against the pan-Irish front of republicans, nationalists, and Catholics.

What the unionists –(and at times the British establishment) perceived as the center of Irish nationalism—the Irish Republic—remained ambivalent about the IRA. Few in power had any sympathy with the Provisionals, the Officials, or the splinter groups. Many, however, at the beginning of the Troubles, foresaw—sometime, somehow, at little cost—a united Ireland. Thus the IRA, while defending Northern Catholics, which was felt to be a necessary mission, might bring unity closer. As time passed and the cost of creating one Ireland increased, as the IRA waxed and flourished and persisted, an increasing number in the Irish Republic wanted an end to

the new Troubles. Unity was not worth this cost in cruelty and horror. Gunmen were no longer a matter for patriot songs. The IRA denied the legitimacy of the Dublin government. What the government in Dublin wanted was much the same as what London wanted: peace and quiet, an end to violence even, if need be, in the Irish case, at the cost of traditional aspirations. When the similarity of the Dublin and London positions became apparent to those involved, a variety of joint steps, understandings, and agreements became possible, despite the generations of ideological conflict over the ideals of Irish nationalism. The police cooperated on the ground and the politicians saw a means to end the IRA's armed struggle. Britain's effort to fight a war while insisting it was only combating criminal activity generated incidents, scandals, and the erosion of civil society already at risk in Northern Ireland, which was soon endangered in England as well, where the IRA arrived with bombs and mortars. Wherever possible, Dublin chose to overlook unsavory British anti-insurgency tactics, just as London accepted, however grudgingly, the criticism of the Republic on internal matters, namely the miscarriages of justice in Northern Ireland and then in England. Both wanted peace and quiet, to see the IRA back in the box, the loyalists disarmed, and so an accommodation.

For the IRA—the Provisional IRA, once the Officials declared a truce in the spring of 1972—armed struggle was the answer to everything. Britain was the “never-failing source of Ireland's ills,” according to Wolfe Tone. The Irish Republic that had existed for two centuries in the hearts of the Irish and was declared in 1916 was the goal. And the primary means of achieving it, as always, was physical force. Irish commitment would, in time, it was felt, defeat the tangible assets of the British Empire. And so the IRA sought to impose their convictions, the will supplied by access to the revealed truth, to force a British withdrawal, and to do so by escalating the violence, seeking new targets and new arenas, devising new tactics, finding new friends, and deploying new weapons. The secret army, relying on British arrogance and repression and on the dream of the 1916 Republic, continued to attract recruits—young, idealistic, adventurous, working-class volunteers who learned the gunman's trade on the job. With time and luck they became proficient and cunning, often cruel but always dedicated.



The IRA Army Council had managed to initiate what became one of the century's classical armed struggles, but for twenty years could not escalate the level of violence. The implications of a long war were gradually absorbed: even to persist required great effort. New weapons were devised and constructed, imported from the United States and Europe and in large numbers from Libya. New tactics were introduced and the military structure of the secret army was changed. New leadership appeared, as Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness from the North became the dominant republican figures. Other republican organizations were strengthened. Sinn Fein became more practical, more political, less a clique and more a party, interested in social issues, elections, finances, and in influencing world opinion. Media contacts were expanded and publications were issued, and political contacts were made abroad.

In response, the British improved their counterinsurgency capacity, continued to Ulsterize the struggle in hopes that a devolved government could be established, and insisted all along that there was no war—the IRA volunteers were simple criminals and so were the Protestant paramilitaries. Northern Ireland was at peace, despite emergency laws, special courts, special prisons, the deployment of elite units like the SAS, despite the assassinations and gun battles and the bombs in London and Manchester. In fact, the war could hardly be ignored and dismissed as a mere “criminal” matter. The IRA organized a long series of impressive operations: Lord Mountbatten was assassinated, Downing Street was mortared, bombs did hundreds of millions of pounds of damage in English cities, no road in Northern Ireland was safe, and the Grand Hotel in Brighton was blown down around Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the British Tory government. There was as well the corruption of British justice, first in Northern Ireland and then in England. And there seemed to be no end in sight.

In response to the British effort to criminalize IRA prisoners, hunger strikes attracted global attention; one volunteer after another starving to death for the cause riveted world opinion. Bobby Sands, the first prisoner to die, even after winning a seat at Westminster in a by-election, was soon better known in many parts of the world than Joyce and Yeats. A street in front of the old British embassy in Tehran was named for him, and his name could be found painted on walls in Paris and Mexico City. In exploiting the hunger strike, in seeking and finding

support for a change in prison rules, the republican movement found that there was enormous power available that did not come from the barrel of a gun. Criminalization of the movement helped politicize the movement, which added another asset. The purists opposed this new direction and the prospects of republicans taking seats, and so as a minority resigned from the IRA. A new Northern generation took charge of the movement.

The assumption of the republican leaders was that the IRA could only benefit from a parallel thrust based on political, economic, and social issues, on an accommodation with those in Ireland and elsewhere who had shared goals and on the consideration of factors that had often been of secondary consideration: publicity, international contacts, local policing, and ward politics. All this required adjustment, a new agenda, and the development of talents that had not always been present in the movement. Increasingly the republicans operated above ground, and even opened talks with nationalist politicians on goals and means. The IRA had always been open to truces and talks, but always only in the context of a British withdrawal. With the long war well into its second decade, the optimists hoped that leaders like Gerry Adams from West Belfast and McGuinness from Derry might be more flexible. In fear of what such flexibility might bring, the Protestant paramilitaries renewed their campaign of sectarian murder.

There were talks with various politicians, talks about talks. What gradually emerged was a peace process, which was at first no more than an exchange of statements, secret meetings, and open discussions. In the North, the nationalist John Hume engaged in a long series of meetings with Adams as republican politics became more nuanced, more sophisticated, and more connected to convention rather than merely serving as an adjunct to an armed struggle. Yet simply because that armed struggle had cost everyone so much—the dead and maimed, the corruption of purpose, the cruelty and guilt, the betrayals and misery—that compromise was more difficult. So many had died, so many had been transformed into killers, so many had been innocent victims, so much had been lost that only victory, however defined, seemed capable of validating the past. Thus, despite the changes within the republican movement, the future still appeared to be hostage to the past, to the Irish problem; but this time, unexpectedly, an Irish solution emerged.

The British had regularly encouraged negotiations. In March 1992, the Northern Secretary announced publicly that the British had no strategic, economic, or political interest in staying in Northern Ireland if the citizens did not want their continued presence. The British were shifting the focus toward a Northern Ireland accommodation that would address historic nationalist grievances but leave the door open to a united Ireland, if the citizens of the six counties desired unity. After all, the Protestants were Irish, and could Ireland be united if they were compelled into a union they abhorred?

The leadership of the republican movement, men like Adams and McGuinness, had spent their entire lives in active service, engaged in an armed struggle that generated endless funerals, sacrifices, violence, and corruption, but no prospect of victory. The Irish people, Catholic and Protestant, had repudiated them. The power of Britain opposed them. If the dream of the Republic of 1916 was still valid, it was also costly and impractical. All that would be guaranteed was more sacrifice, more funerals.

The IRA could not be defeated, nor could it win the armed struggle. All it could do was persist in its struggle, only offering more violence. Before the hunger strikes, the major thrust had been military, and after the death of Sands and the other strikers' political means emerged as a joint-strategy, but neither had brought the Republic of 1916 closer. So the leadership generation decided to see if an accommodation were possible that would keep open the road to the republic through political means and that in the meantime would offer tangible gains. What the British had done was transfer republican interest from the ideals of Irish nationalism—the mythical Republic—to the specific grievances arising from the divided society of Northern Ireland.

Adams, McGuinness, and the others were aware that every generation of republicans had split the IRA over a choice between politics or war, and so were determined that there would be no split but instead that there would be talks. The IRA would have both an armed and an unarmed strategy, holding the ballot in one hand and the Armalite in the other. And those in Sinn Fein, who were often members of the IRA, were willing to talk about such matters with others. Thus the long, formal peace process began, became public, produced a cease fire that was broken by

the IRA, and then renewed when the IRA realized that the constituency for an armed struggle had vanished.

The Dublin Fianna Fail government under Albert Reynolds was eager to shape an accommodation, to reach out to the IRA. And the Americans, who were always eager to find a solution to Ireland's ills, at last found a role. President Bill Clinton played a persuasive part, making Adams and McGuinness respectable and the peace process popular. The formal negotiations were overseen by former United States Senator George Mitchell, who finally imposed a deadline and thus arrived at the Good Friday Agreement on April 10, 1998 that included all the political parties. There would be a Northern Ireland Assembly, and all those in jail, no matter how horrid their crimes—the IRA volunteers, the UVF and UDA gunmen, the splinter group killers—would be released. The Northern Ireland system would be reformed, and the door to a united Ireland would be kept open. The British were more than content with a devolved government and an end to IRA violence, which were their great twin goals. Dublin could look forward to peace and quiet. The Americans had bet on peace with terror and won. John Hume and his Unionist counterpart David Trimble would win the Nobel Peace Prize.

The IRA still existed, their arms not yet discarded, but their future was in the hands of those who had chosen politics not war. After the Good Friday Agreement, only the most faithful republicans persisted. Some, the idealists who had left the movement in 1986, were organized as Republican Sinn Fein under a former Chief of Staff Ruairí O Braídh, and supported a small and ineffectual secret army. Others, descendants of the border nightriders, set up the Real IRA when it became clear that there was to be no military role for the IRA. Their no-warning bomb in Omagh in August 1999 that killed 29 innocent people destroyed the last vestiges of support for any sort of secret army.

The visible Irish peace process had focused on a formal Assembly, new laws, easing the inequalities of a divided society, the establishment of a new Northern Ireland police force, reforms, investment—in short, on tangible outcomes. More important was the process as evidence of peace, of the shift in attitudes, the gradual erosion of revealed certainties, the slow sea change in assumptions not only by the republicans but by everyone—the unionists and

loyalists, the Northern Catholics, the Irish nationalists, even the British establishment in London. The political culture of Ireland changed. The new generation in the Irish Republic had known only prosperity and had little interest in the national issue and no nostalgia for the past. The remaining Irish nationalists, like the IRA, could hope that politics would in time produce a unified island, could still believe that Ireland divided would never be at peace but yet not choose war. The unionists were sure that they had a veto over such a future. The loyalists still had no love of Catholics, but felt no need to murder them. In fact, everyone in the North found the returns of peace so enormous that none but a few fanatics wanted a return to violence.

The divided society was still divided, as had been the case for four centuries. There were confrontations, an occasional murder or riot, children were stoned and “criminals” knee-capped, but no one wanted to reintroduce the gun into politics. The cost was recognized as too great, and the immediate returns of peace were too appealing. In Belfast one could shop without fear, drive to the cinema without danger, live without valium, and in the countryside one knew that the roads were not mined nor was the British army sitting in ambush. The great H-Block prison is empty and closed. The long war is over for now, perhaps for good. Although the IRA has regularly emerged from the dustbin of Irish history to pursue Wolfe Tone’s republic, this time may have been the last time.

The great triumph of the British, supported by the Irish establishment and the Clinton administration, had been to shape a response to real grievances that did not entirely deny the ideals of the republicans. And it had been the republicans—their vision and capacity—that had generated the Troubles. The loyalist paramilitaries had responded to feared changes and challenges, and the British authorities had sought to impose law and order. The IRA, on the other hand, had been dedicated to destroying the old order, and after the Good Friday agreement the reformed order was relatively safe from violence, so there was no mission for the IRA, who reluctantly put their arms beyond use—not surrendering them, but not dumping them for the next time.

For the peace process to persist, the republicans must continue to feel for some time that politics will secure not only tangible benefits, which is obvious, but will also bring closer a

united Ireland, which is a matter of perception. Those who would still use the gun must, as has been the case, be pursued by the authorities and denied by their own people. The loyalists and unionists may remain uneasy at any signs of a united Ireland, the ultimate ambition of the pan-nationalist front, but they must be unwilling to resort to organized violence to protect British Ulster. Everyone tried to ignore the irreconcilable loyalists, who were often sociopaths and unamenable to logic or the direction of events yet who still found a small constituency of their own. And the Irish and British governments must continue to balance justice, legitimacy, the law, and their own prejudices with the need to accommodate old gunmen and sectarian killers. Just as Ireland had offered observers an example of a classical armed struggle, so too did the Irish, in finding a remarkable accommodation to twenty years of war with roots two centuries old, offer a case study in peaceful accommodation.

The Irish Troubles attracted enormous interest for a small war in a small country that had little significance in global politics. The overflow of violence was marginal—a few gunmen in Europe, arms shipments from Libya, money from the American diaspora. Yet the Irish Troubles offered the spectacular and often the novel, made a wonderful case study, offering examples and lessons. Ireland became a stop on the global media's terrorism tour, and soon provided inspiration for thousands of books, ten thousand articles, theories, explanations, analyses, novels, and films.

The specialists examined every aspect of the Troubles: small group dynamics, the wall paintings of Belfast, traumatic knee surgery, the technical construction of IRA explosive devices, the dynamics of the black-market economy, psychological profiles of those involved, the reform of security legislation, and the basics of antiterrorist architecture. No academic discipline failed to offer analysis, books, articles, seminars, conferences, and courses. Every political persuasion in the struggle has had advocates in print. Italian communists have visited Ireland, as have fundamentalist pastors from South Carolina. Thus a small partitioned island isolated on the edge of Europe with no great strategic or economic value became and remained for thirty years a focus of world concern.

There was no consensus as to the nature of the Troubles, whether they were the product of religious war, class struggle, the violence of a divided society, or the last stage of imperialism. It was possible to deploy almost any explanatory model, and each worked but was not exclusively successful; neo-Marxism explained much, but so did those who saw Ireland as a society riven by deep divisions. Some explanations were simple—the Pope as first cause, the Masons or the communists or the Irish-Americans being at fault. And each analysis implied a particular accommodation. The end of religious war required certain approaches and initiatives different from those necessary to ease a class struggle. To define the problem meant to control the solution.

What has been devised is an accommodation, no matter what the cause of violence was, that offers various futures and present peace. Ireland in the past, even when filled with grievances and the politics of despair, has mostly been at peace. For the two previous centuries, the British, under pressure and out of justice, made vital concessions, offered imperial advantage, even conceded a Free State. Violence was sporadic but accepted as a legitimate means; an IRA volunteer was not a criminal, treated in special (if different) ways in Ireland, the North, and Great Britain. In the Republic, patriot ballads, nostalgia for the glory days of the Tan War, the example of 1916, and the avowed aims of the state created sentiment for the republican movement. And that movement created not criminals but subversives and rebels who endangered Stormont control and British society. There had been a clash of legitimacies, between cruelty and greed rationalized as politics, corruption and idealism, and the evolution of old ideas and new realities.

The cost of the recent Troubles proved so great that shifts in these basic attitudes and ideals began to occur. No one liked to recognize that repeating a principle for years does not make it true. No one likes change, since everyone can blame the past. Yet history is learned, not inherited. The past is always prologue, but it remains open to interpretation, and is not a necessary means to go back to the future. Everyone gets the past they create, and therefore the future they deserve. The Irish gradually, with grudging British complicity, chose to change. And

so the Irish Troubles have sporadically come to an uncertain end, offering peace to the Irish, problems to those responsible for the violence, and uncertain lessons to all.

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Any crisis takes place within a historical context, within a special culture, shaped by a long prelude as well as by the pressing events of the moment. For two centuries in Ireland the use of violence to achieve an Irish republic had been a constant. Time after time, conspiracies had failed, leading to massacres and repression, guerrilla wars and terror campaigns. The republican ideal persisted even as the specific grievances eroded over time. The IRA did not win or lose but continued an old tradition within an ancient underground. The IRA remains, even in its attenuated and splintered form, the world's oldest unsuccessful revolutionary movement. And over the generations, that secret army has offered models and lessons, if not to the Irish then to others.

Each secret army is different, existing within its own culture and time, responding to particular conditions, subject to the contingent and unforeseen the play of personality. And each is alike, like the IRA. The loyalists resented that their secret armies—the UVF, the Red Hand Commandos, the UDF—were not more like the IRA, more structured and more effective. And the IRA is unique, as is the Ulster Volunteer Force, Hamas in Palestine, or the FARC guerrillas of Colombia. The IRA, for example, offers a rare example of an underground run by working-class leadership, an underground that has deployed two hundred years of experience. In fact, the IRA is a special covert society that has institutionalized the aspiration for change into a secret army.

The Irish arena for that secret army is unique, a society split by religion and conviction, filled with those who have divided loyalties and who adjust experience to advantage. Modern Irish history offers all sorts of lessons to analysts and observers. In April 1916 there was no support for an armed struggle, and by May the nationalist population was alienated. In 1921, the power of a dream all but destroyed Ireland; in 1932, less than ten years after a vicious and bitter civil war, the winners accepted the loser's right to home rule, and so DeValera came to power.



The IRA, split again and again over the validity of politics, offered observers a rare continuity in organization—an underground established by the Fenians still present in the twenty-first century. The present Troubles have been filled not simply with dramatic events, terror, and conviction, but in a small way with insights into the dynamics of revolutionary politics, ideological politics, everyday politics, and most of all the implications of lethal politics: how unconventional wars are fought, persist, escalate, and end. .

In Ireland, perception has always been vital, as has history—learned, not inherited. Grievances have been presented as ideals, and ideals have been defended with cruelty and terror. And there has been an end to terror because perceptions changed. Ideals were adjusted. A new meaning has been given to the past, to history. Any observer (and all analysts) would do well to consider Ireland both a special and general case, and so consider the implications for all, for everyday people, for democracy and terror, for analysis and political understanding.

#### Further Reading

There are now nearly ten thousand books on the contemporary Irish Troubles, as well as a considerable library on modern Irish history. Because the crisis has had no conclusion, there is no single narrative treatment. Instead, studies tend to clump around special and spectacular events, such as the civil rights struggle, the hunger strikes, and the peace negotiations.

Since the Troubles have had no final act, the processes continues, and so too the need for updating. If the peace process continues, then an authoritative book on the Troubles may be possible—my own *Irish Troubles* ended just before the peace process dominated events. That process, like all Irish events, has had long roots.

These roots in modern Irish and Anglo-Irish history were ignored until the beginning of the Troubles as a minor area for non-Irish historians and a source of only bitter memories for the Irish. As a result, in 1968 the historical literature on modern Ireland was small, a specialized field, still limited by the bitterness of the civil war. In fact, historical narrative was apt to end in 1916 or perhaps in 1921; the next fifty years were left in newspaper files, memories, and unopened documents. Historical fashions, the need to explain the present, and the opportunity of

untouched sources has encouraged a great many academics, not only in Ireland but around the world, to examine the Irish past.

Ireland is now well served by history in particular and by scholarship in general. Once the Troubles begin, even with official archives closed, there was an enormous flood of primary material, combined with the availability of the participants, so that scholars and analysts have been attracted to the issue. Any of these who attempt a complete chronological narrative have been frustrated by the receding cutoff date: the Troubles go on and on. My book on the IRA, *The Secret Army* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Transaction, 1997), finished first in 1968, with each new edition has grown more substantial –(it has doubled in size to 702 pages) and, like my *The Irish Troubles Since 1967* (New York: St. Martins, 1994), offers more than most want to read. In this case, *The Irish Troubles* also offers a long bibliographic essay on sources relevant to further reading.

With the peace process seemingly secure, serious political violence may be over, and the contemporary Irish Troubles may evolve into a historical period rather than, as has been the case for a generation, a crisis without culmination. In the meantime, the peace process continues, and so do the books.

Thus there have been many splendid works offered over the years, some still worthy but none definitive; it is far easier to be authoritative about the Tan War or the establishment of the Stormont system than about the motives of those engaged in the peace process. For Irish history in general, there is R. F. Foster's *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London: Penguin Press, 1988), which critics feel revised away much of militant Irish nationalism –(cf. Robert Kee, *The Green Flag, A History of Irish Nationalism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972) and the more focused and analytical *Political Violence in Ireland, Government and Resistance Since 1848* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983) by Charles Townshend). For Ireland in this century, the best work is J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

In 1966, the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising generated the first real attempts to address modern Irish history; selections may be found in edited volumes like F. X. Martin's

*Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising* (London: Methuen, 1967) or Owen Dudley Edwards and Fergus Pyle's *1916—The Easter Rising* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968). The anniversary also inspired the first general and optimistic survey of contemporary Ireland, by the editor of the *Irish Press*, Tim Pat Coogan, *Ireland Since the Rising* (London: Pall Mall, 1966).

For the Tan War there are not only the guerrilla classics of Tom Barry, Dan Breen, and Ernie O' Malley, but also an expanding literature based on local sources, survivors' recollections, and scholarly investigation; a good analysis can be found in Charles Townshend's *The British Campaign in Ireland 1919-1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). The civil war from 1921–1923 is covered by Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1988). With the beginning of the Troubles, there has appeared a library of books that focus on the historical roots of the conflict, but primarily on the roots in Northern Ireland—the arena of the conflict. Thus most works on the Irish Republic that include the Troubles, if they are considered relevant at all, include them as an issue, not a primary factor. As for the North, the greatest number of works tended to clump around the issue of the moment, and then later on the meaning of that issue: the civil right struggle, the IRA campaign, peace efforts, Anglo-Irish negotiations, the loyalists, the evolving political events, the hunger strikes, and the peace process. For a general and fair (if nationalist) explanation, there is John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland* (London: Blackwell, 1995). The survey works tend to have a problem with sources close to the present and the lack of a satisfactory final date; the peace process books have the same problem. The precipitous reduction in political murder has allowed the appearance of one of the Troubles' most depressing and longest works, David McKittrick, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney and Christ Thornton, *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children Who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (Edinburg & London: Mainstreet, 1999) that lists all the relevant details of each death from John Patrick Scalon, a Catholic shot and killed on June 11, 1966, in Belfast, by the UVF to Brian Service, also a Catholic and also shot and killed by loyalists in Belfast on October 31, 1998. The few deaths after that may be included in later editions, but the enormous volume—1630 pages—makes all

too tangible for anyone, reader or no, the cost of the Troubles. A recent overview is Thomas Hennessey's *A History of Northern Ireland, 1920-1996* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997).

What is most useful are works that give a flavor of the times rather than a survey. So for the civil rights process, Bernadette Devlin's *The Price of My Soul* (New York: Knopf, 1969) holds up after a generation. The history of the Provisional IRA up to 1987 can be found in Patrick Bishop and Eamonn Mallie, *The Provisional IRA* (London: Heinemann, 1987), and there are various works on other republican splinters and on the Protestant loyalists; see in particular Steve Bruce, *The Red Hand, Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). There are works on the Royal Irish Constabulary, the British Army (including multi-volume exercises), and on all the spectaculars and operations. A good survey of the armed struggle for much of the period is Brendan O'Brien, *The Long War: The IRA and Sinn Fein from Armed Struggle to Peace Talks* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1995). See as well, for a sympathetic treatment of the Irish hunger strikers, *Biting at the Grave: The Irish Hunger Strikes and the Politics of Despair* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990). For a non-analytical sense of the reality of an armed struggle, try Kevin Toolis, *Rebel Hearts: Journey Within the IRA's Soul* (London: Picador, 1995). And to end with the peace process, Thomas Hennessey's *The Northern Ireland Peace Process: Ending the Troubles?* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2000) is valuable, the question mark indicating the consensus that the uncertain future is certain to inspire still more items for further reading.

COPYRIGHT: © Irish Historical Studies Publications Ltd 1962. Recommend this journal. Email your librarian or administrator to recommend adding this journal to your organisation's collection. Irish Historical Studies. During the Irish War of Independence (1919-1922), and the subsequent Civil War (1922-1923), many Tyneside men and women of Irish birth, or Irish descent, gave support to the Irish republican cause. They did so via organisations such as the Irish Self Determination League (ISDL), or played a more active role by joining the Irish Volunteers, (better known as the IRA). In their minds, it was time for the Irish people to right these wrongs by exercising self-determination in an independent Irish Republic. Readers must decide for themselves whether these activities were justified - the following account simply seeks to relate historical events to the extent that I have been able to establish them.

Background. More information about: The Troubles. The Troubles refers to a violent thirty-year conflict that began with a civil rights march in Londonderry on 5 October 1968 and concluded with the Good Friday Agreement on 10 April 1998. At the heart of the conflict lay the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. The goal of the unionist and overwhelmingly Protestant majority was to remain part of the United Kingdom. The Anglo-Irish Agreement (AIA) in 1985 was a serious attempt to achieve a political accord that resolved the "Irish question". It gave the Irish government an advisory role in the affairs of Northern Ireland and determined there would be no change in Northern Ireland's constitutional status - no Irish unification in other words - without the consent of its people.