

PATRICK V. DOHERTY	..	AGED 31 YEARS
GERALD V. DONAGHEY	..	AGED 17 YEARS
JOHN F. DUDDY	..	AGED 17 YEARS
HUGH P. GILMOUR	..	AGED 17 YEARS
MICHAEL G. KELLY	..	AGED 17 YEARS
MICHAEL M. Mc DAID	..	AGED 20 YEARS
KEVIN G. Mc ELHINNEY	..	AGED 17 YEARS
BERNARD Mc GUIGAN	..	AGED 41 YEARS
JAMES G. Mc KINNEY	..	AGED 34 YEARS
WILLIAM N. NASH	..	AGED 19 YEARS
JAMES J. WRAY	..	AGED 22 YEARS
JOHN P. YOUNG	..	AGED 17 YEARS
AND TO JOHN JOHNSTON	..	AGED 59 YEARS

WHO DIED LATER AS A RESULT OF INJURIES RECEIVED THAT DAY

Ch. 44 - Descent into Conflict, 1969-72

WHO WERE MURDERED BY BRITISH PARATROOPERS ON BLOODY SUNDAY 30TH JANUARY 1972

Learning Intentions

In this chapter you will learn about:

- The reaction of the British Government and the birth of the Provisional IRA
- The advance of Paisley
- Internment without trial and Bloody Sunday
- The abolition of Stormont and the start of British direct rule

5.1 CASE STUDY THE EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS,
Northern Ireland After World War II
1932

The View from London

The deployment of British troops on the streets of Northern Ireland in August 1969 radically altered the security situation. Although technically present to assist the RUC and the Northern Ireland Government, their presence inevitably brought about greater involvement in the affairs of the province by the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, and his Home Secretary, James Callaghan.

When James Chichester-Clark met Harold Wilson at his official residence in 10 Downing Street, London, on 19 August, both men issued a statement promising equality of treatment for all citizens in Northern Ireland but also reaffirming that the province would remain part of the United Kingdom as long as the majority of the people living there so wished. Despite public displays of support for the Northern Ireland Government, the British Government had every intention of pulling out the extra troops as soon as the security situation improved. In order to restore calm, the British Home Secretary, James Callaghan, decided to visit Northern Ireland to convince the people there that the British Labour Government was determined to assist the Northern Ireland Government in bringing about reforms and in restoring law and order.

Adapted from Modern Ireland (Fourth Edition) by Gerard Brockie and Raymond Walsh, Gill Education.

The View from London

During visits to troubled parts of Derry and Belfast, Callaghan promised reforms to nationalists and assured unionists that the British Government was committed to the Union between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. The process of reform got a boost on 12 September when the Cameron Report was published. It contained a detailed and comprehensive condemnation of the anti-Catholic discrimination which existed in Northern Ireland. A month later, Lord Hunt's report on the police was published. He recommended that the RUC be disarmed and that the part-time B-Specials be fully disbanded. They were to be replaced by a new part-time police force, which became known as the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR). This new force would be under the control of the British Army.

Most unionists objected strongly to the recommendations in the Hunt Report. There were serious riots in Belfast's Shankill Road, during which a policeman was shot and killed - the first to be killed in the Troubles. In quelling the outbreak, the British Army killed two rioters. Chichester-Clark then went on television to call for calm and to appeal to Protestants not to oppose the British Army.

Although peaceful conditions returned towards the end of 1969, it was a case of the calm before the storm. Towards the end of December, a split occurred in the IRA which was to be of huge significance for the future of Northern Ireland.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did James Callaghan, the British Home Secretary, visit Northern Ireland?
2. What message did he have for nationalists and unionists?
3. What were the findings of the Cameron Report?
4. What were the findings of the Hunt Report?
5. Explain unionist reactions to the recommendations of the Hunt Report.
6. What was the Ulster Defence Regiment and who would control it?

The Birth of the Provisional IRA

Contrary to the public declarations of unionist politicians that the IRA was behind the civil rights movement, the reality was very different. Secret police reports confirmed that the IRA had been caught unprepared and that it was in a very weak state. During the 1960s the IRA and its political wing, Sinn Féin, had been moving in a socialist direction. This was opposed by many traditional members who had no time for socialist policies but who believed that the republican movement should concentrate on opposing the British presence in Northern Ireland. In December 1969, at a secret meeting in Dublin, the army convention of the IRA voted to end abstentionism and to recognise the de facto existence of the two existing states in Ireland. This was too much for the traditionalists. They withdrew and formed their own group, naming it the Provisional Army Council. The Belfast republican Joe Cahill and the British-born Seán Mac Stiofáin were leading figures in the new movement. On 10 January 1970 Sinn Féin also split and Ruairí Ó Brádaigh became President of Provisional Sinn Féin, which was linked to the Provisional IRA. Although, ten months later, they stated that the 'provisional' or transition period was over, the name continued to be used to describe the new movement for many years to come. The older IRA and Sinn Féin became known as the Officials and their members continued to have a strong presence in parts of Northern Ireland. Soon after its establishment, the Provisional IRA gained support in the Catholic housing estates of Belfast. In the early stages, the Provisionals had to be cautious because the locals regarded the British Army as their protectors from attacks by loyalist mobs. However, the Provisionals gradually became involved in confrontations between local youths and the British Army. During rioting following Orange marches in the summer of 1970, the Provisional IRA stepped up its involvement and began shooting loyalists. However, the event that did most to boost its standing in west Belfast was the Falls Road Curfew.

The Falls Road Curfew

After police and troops uncovered a cache of arms in west Belfast, in a house in the Falls Road on 3 July, the British Army sealed off the area for thirty-five hours and conducted house-to-house searches. Many houses were ransacked and four men were killed by the army.

Although over a hundred weapons were found, the operation had drastic political consequences. It turned many local Catholics completely against the British Army and led to a huge surge of recruitment to the Provisional IRA. By this stage the paramilitary movement had also received support from certain people in the Republic of Ireland in the form of arms and financial assistance.

The Arms Trial

The Provisionals looked to supporters in the Republic for support to build up and equip their movement. Interest in events in Northern Ireland was at a high level in the south. Because Jack Lynch was determined to prevent violence from spilling over the border into the Republic, his government kept a close watch on events in Northern Ireland. On the day after the ending of the Falls Road Curfew in Belfast, the Irish Minister for External Affairs, Dr Patrick Hillery, paid an unannounced visit to the area, much to the annoyance of unionists and the British Government. However, some other members of the Fianna Fáil Government had a more direct involvement with affairs in Northern Ireland.

Certain rich businessmen in the Republic were more sympathetic to the new Provisional IRA, which claimed to defend the nationalist community, than to the Official IRA and Sinn Féin, which promoted left-wing ideas in the Republic as well as in Northern Ireland. The same approach applied to two ministers in the Fianna Fáil Government, Neil Blaney and Charles Haughey. Blaney had actually urged that the Irish Army should cross into Northern Ireland.

On 6 May 1970 Lynch dismissed both Blaney and Haughey from the Irish Government and they were charged with conspiracy to smuggle arms into the country for use by the Provisional IRA. Blaney was discharged in July, as the state believed he had no case to answer, and Haughey was found not guilty by a jury the following October. Although the exact course of events is still unclear, money voted for humanitarian aid by Dáil Éireann vanished to pay for arms for the Provisional IRA. From the outset, the Provisionals also received money and weapons from supporters among Irish emigrants in the United States of America. As a result, within a short period the movement was well supplied with arms and was even in a position to launch a limited bombing campaign in the summer of 1970.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why was there a split in the IRA in December 1969?
2. What was the Falls Road Curfew?
3. What effect did it have on the Provisional IRA?
4. Why did the Taoiseach dismiss two government ministers in May 1970?

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Advance of Paisley

As the levels of violence increased during 1970, political representatives were responding to the unfolding events. Unionist resentment at the inability of Chichester-Clark's Government to cope with the worsening security situation played into the hands of the Rev. Ian Paisley. As a result, he was elected to the Stormont Parliament as MP for the Bannside constituency in April 1970 when Terence O'Neill resigned from Stormont to take up a seat in the House of Lords in London. An ally of Paisley's, the Rev. William Beattie, was elected in another by-election held on the same day. The following June, during the British general election, Paisley was elected MP for North Antrim in the British Parliament at Westminster.

The Formation of the Alliance Party

On 21 April 1970, four days after Paisley's election victory, a new political party was launched in Northern Ireland. Known as the Alliance Party, it was committed to reaching out to both sections of Northern Ireland's divided community.

Although the Alliance Party supported the continuation of the Union between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, it also advocated the full involvement of the minority nationalist community in the running of Northern Ireland. Given the deep sectarian divisions in the province, the Alliance Party was destined to remain relatively small. However, in the years ahead it attracted support from both Catholics and Protestants and was constantly looking for opportunities to heal divisions.

A New Government in Britain

In June 1970, the Labour Government in Britain was defeated in a general election by the Conservatives, led by Edward Heath. As soon as he became Prime Minister, Heath and his Home Secretary, Reginald Maudling, encouraged the British Army in Northern Ireland to take a strict line with anyone causing violence.

Despite this, the activities of both the Official and Provisional IRA on the one side and of Protestant paramilitaries on the other continued to expand.

The Birth of the SDLP

In August 1970, a major realignment took place on the nationalist side of Northern Ireland politics. The old Nationalist Party under Eddie McAteer was out of touch and rapidly losing support. In its place, a new party, called the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), was formed. It marked a coming together of Catholic politicians in the Labour tradition, such as Gerry Fitt and Paddy Devlin from Belfast, and more traditional conservative nationalists, such as Austin Currie and John Hume. Gerry Fitt, the Westminster MP for West Belfast since 1966, became leader of the party.

Although the SDLP had a small number of Protestant members, from the start it was the main political party of the Catholic nationalist community and it advocated full participation in the political life of Northern Ireland. As well as standing for greater equality and a fairer society, the principal hallmark of the SDLP was its total condemnation of violence and its commitment to purely peaceful means to bring about a united Ireland. This struggle against violence was to characterise the SDLP in the months and years ahead as the province descended into a nightmare of terror and bloodshed.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did Ian Paisley benefit politically from the worsening security situation in 1970?
2. When was the Alliance Party founded and what were its main policies?
3. Who became Prime Minister after the British General Election in June 1970?
4. What new nationalist party was founded in August 1970 and who was its leader?
5. Name two other leading figures in the new party.

The Pressure Mounts

From the start of 1971, pressure mounted on the Chichester-Clark Government as armed violence grew in intensity, especially in the city of Belfast. On 6 February the first British soldier to die in the Troubles was shot in west Belfast. The Provisional IRA launched a bombing campaign throughout the province. Having failed to persuade the British Government to allow him to introduce stronger security measures, Chichester-Clark resigned as Prime Minister on 20 March 1971. He was succeeded by Brian Faulkner, who had long held an ambition to hold the post. Under the new Prime Minister, the violence intensified further.

Tensions increased at the height of the traditional Orange marching season in July. The Provisional IRA stepped up its bombing campaign and there were riots in several areas of the province. There was bitter division in the Parliament at Stormont when the SDLP walked out because Faulkner's Government refused to order an enquiry into two men shot dead by the British Army in Derry. Witnesses had claimed that the men were innocent.

Against this background of mounting pressure, Faulkner persuaded the Conservative Government in London to allow him to introduce internment without trial in Northern Ireland. It was to be an extremely costly mistake on the part of the Unionist Government.

Internment Without Trial

In the early morning of 9 August 1971, in an exercise known as Operation Demetrius, the British Army rounded up 342 men all over Northern Ireland and interned them without trial. All but one of the internees were Catholics.

Faulkner justified the action by referring to the success of internment when used against the IRA during the Border Campaign of 1956-62. However, the situation was completely different back then. At that time, the Republic had also introduced internment. In 1971, there was no prospect of internment in the south and the IRA members who were not picked up could escape across the border. The numbers involved in the Border Campaign had been small compared with the surge of membership in the Provisional IRA by 1971. Lastly, in August 1971 most of the young active IRA members were unknown to the British security forces and escaped internment.

Violence soared on the day internment was introduced, with thirteen people killed on that day alone. So bad was the police intelligence that one-third of the internees had to be released within two days because they had no connection with the IRA.

The introduction of internment led to outrage among the Catholic community for a number of reasons. Despite the fact that loyalist paramilitaries in the UVF had murdered over a hundred Catholics by that time, no loyalist terrorists were interned until February 1973. Two months after the introduction of internment, it became known that internees had been tortured by members of the British Army and the RUC by means of beatings, noise, sleep deprivation and starvation. All levels of the Catholic community reacted with horror.

Internment Without Trial

A united front consisting of Catholic bishops and priests, community leaders, the SDLP, Sinn Féin and the GAA condemned the actions of Faulkner's Government. On the streets, violence escalated at an alarming rate. Twenty-nine people were killed in 1970; this figure rose to 180 in 1971.

The Provisional IRA went from strength to strength as recruitment rose rapidly following the introduction of internment. In the midst of this turmoil, two important new organisations were established by extreme Protestants dissatisfied with the efforts of the Unionist Government to defeat the IRA.

In September 1971, Ian Paisley launched a new political party, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which would challenge the leading position of the Ulster Unionist Party in the years ahead. In the same month, a new loyalist paramilitary organisation, the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), was formed in Protestant working-class areas.

By the end of 1971, it appeared that the British Government would have to dismiss Faulkner and assume direct control over Northern Ireland as the violence intensified at a shocking rate. The final breaking point was reached in tragic circumstances in Derry at the end of January 1972.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did James Chichester-Clark resign from his position as Prime Minister of Northern Ireland in March 1971?
2. Who succeeded him as Prime Minister?
3. Why did the SDLP walk out of the Parliament in Stormont?
4. Against a background of increasing violence, what measure did Faulkner persuade the British Government to allow in August 1971?
5. How did the Catholic population react to the introduction of internment?
6. What was the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and when was it formed?
7. What effect did the introduction of internment have on the levels of violence?

Bloody Sunday

On Sunday 30 January 1972 the Civil Rights Association organised a mass protest against internment in Derry, despite the fact that the march had been banned by the Unionist Government. By the time the marchers had passed by the Bogside area, they numbered at least 15,000. Shortly after four o'clock in the afternoon, soldiers from the Parachute Regiment of the British Army began firing into the crowd. Although they claimed that they had been fired on, members of the crowd claimed that the soldiers were the first to open fire. By the time the firing ended, the soldiers had killed thirteen men, seven of them under nineteen years of age. Fr Edward Daly, a priest from the Bogside who later became Bishop of Derry, attended to the dead and wounded, as did a local doctor, Dr Raymond McClean.

After the initial shock, there was outrage among Irish nationalists in Northern Ireland, in the Republic and in the United States of America. There were several protests in the days and weeks ahead throughout Northern Ireland. In the House of Commons in London, Bernadette Devlin slapped the face of the British Home Secretary, Reginald Maudling, because he defended the actions of the soldiers in Derry.

The reaction in the Republic of Ireland was extremely serious. The Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, condemned the shootings as 'unbelievably savage and inhuman' and recalled the Irish ambassador from London. Three days after the shootings in Derry, a crowd of 30,000 people marched to the British Embassy in Dublin and burned it down. The British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, refused to accept the criticisms of the Irish Government and declared that events in Derry were purely a British responsibility because Northern Ireland was part of the United Kingdom. Therefore, the aftermath of Bloody Sunday marked one of the lowest points in the relations between the British and Irish Governments during the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

An official enquiry was set up under the chairmanship of Lord Widgery to look into the events on Bloody Sunday. When he issued his report, most nationalists condemned it as a cover-up; indeed, a new tribunal of enquiry was to be set up into Bloody Sunday over twenty years later.

The Fall of Stormont

Bloody Sunday marked the final stage in the existence of the Unionist-controlled Government in Northern Ireland. In the weeks after this event, republicans carried out bombings in Northern Ireland and in England. On 24 March 1972 Faulkner and his government ministers were called to London to meet the British Prime Minister, Edward Heath.

Heath informed them that he was transferring control of security from them to the British Government. When the Northern Ireland Government resigned in protest, Heath prorogued, or dissolved, the Northern Ireland Parliament for a year and instituted direct rule from London. The period of unionist self-rule that had begun in 1921 had now come to an end. While nationalists were triumphant at the fall of the Stormont Government, unionists were outraged and blamed the IRA campaign for the loss of the parliament they had controlled.

The British Government in London now faced two main challenges: in the short term, to end the violence by restoring law and order; and, in the longer term, to return power to the local politicians.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What occurred in Derry on Sunday 30 June 1972?
2. What was the reaction among nationalists in Northern Ireland to the events on Bloody Sunday?
3. How did the government of the Republic of Ireland react?
4. What was the Widgery Enquiry and how did most nationalists react to its report?
5. Why did the Government of Northern Ireland resign and what subsequent actions were taken by the British Prime Minister, Edward Heath?
6. What were the reactions of nationalists and unionists to the fall of Stormont?