



# History of Ireland

## Text A

### A long Chronicle of Violence and Bloodshed

Ireland's history has been a record of bloodshed and violence in the name of religion. To understand the conflict of faiths and the religious hatreds by which the country has been shaken, it is necessary to go back to the Middle Ages and to the real source of so much trouble: England's desire to subjugate the "Emerald Island".

#### The conquest of Ireland

The conquest of Ireland and its Celtic inhabitants was begun during the reign of Henry II who ascended the throne of England in 1154. England however proved too weak to govern the island. The re-conquest was tried without success during the following century. Hegemony was finally established in Tudor times. Henry VIII endeavoured to bring England to a position of great political prestige in Europe and tried to subject the island to his religious revolution (the Protestant Reformation). In 1541, he declared himself King of Ireland. Irish lands, especially in the north, were confiscated and colonised with Protestant English and Scottish, who, because of religious differences, were never assimilated into the native population and began to fight against the Irish. Eventually, in 1601, the army of Elizabeth I defeated the last of Ulster's Celtic earls.

In 1649 Cromwell gave much of the Irish land to his soldiers. Ireland became a colony, the first British colony. The Irish were persecuted not only because they were the natives, but also because they were Catholics. From that time on, religion and politics became the two inextricable aspects of the Anglo-Irish conflict.

By 1700 the Irish Catholics owned only one seventh of their land. All kinds of humiliating restrictions were imposed on them. The "Penal Laws" turned the Irish into virtual slaves: they were excluded from political life, prohibited from having their own schools, and could not own more than a limited amount of land. Ireland's economy began to decline and the oppressed people were reduced to the most squalid misery and obliged to leave their country and emigrate.

#### The Act of Union

In 1801, with the Act of Union, the Irish Parliament was abolished and Ireland came under direct British Rule. Irish trade was destroyed in the interests of British capitalism, and the Irish conditions deteriorated. A devastating potato famine in the 1840s killed thousands and thousands of Irish and forced millions to emigrate, mainly to North America. The Irish had never accepted the Act of Union and there were armed rebellions in the 19th century. National feeling became stronger and an association of Irishmen (the Fenians) was created in the middle of the 19th century to secure Home Rule. In 1905 the Fenians founded a political party – the Sinn Fein (Ourselves Alone) and formed the rebel militia that became known as the Irish IRA.

On Easter Monday 1916 a rebellion broke out in Dublin and a declaration was read declaring Ireland a republic. The rebellion was put down by the British troops and its leaders executed. But the war for independence had begun.

#### The partition of Ireland

After the Easter Rising, it became obvious that the English could not resist Irish independence much longer. In any discussion about the autonomy of Ireland, however, the controversial point was always Ulster, whose Protestant majority feared the consequences of any kind of separation from England. All Irish industries were concentrated in Ulster and the Protestant industrial bourgeoisie was linked to Great Britain by strong economic ties.

In 1921 a compromise was reached. The 26 Catholic southern counties of Ireland became the Irish Free State, a British dominion, while the six northern counties (Ulster), predominantly Protestant, became an integral part of the United Kingdom. The Fenians rejected the 1921 Treaty and the IRA became illegal. In 1937 the Irish Free State repudiated its allegiance to the British Crown and on 18 April 1949 declared itself the **Republic of Ireland** (EIRE).

### 1 Read text A and answer these questions.

1. What has characterized Ireland's history for centuries?
2. When did the conflict between England and Ireland start?
3. What has the long-lasting conflict been due to?
4. When was the English hegemony over Ireland established? Explain.
5. When and why did Ireland become the first British colony?
6. Why did the Irish begin to emigrate?
7. When was direct British Rule established?
8. Why were there armed rebellions during the 19th century?
9. Who were the Fenians? What did they want?
10. When was the IRA formed? What was it?
11. What event is known as the "Easter Rising"? When did it occur?
12. What were the consequences of this event? What was the controversial point concerning the autonomy of Ireland? Why?
13. What compromise was reached? When? What was the Irish Free State?
14. When and why did the Catholic southern counties become the Republic of Ireland?

## Text B

### Northern Ireland - A history of fighting and death

#### Bloodshed in Ulster

The history of Northern Ireland is a history of fighting and death.

Since the boundaries between the North and the South had been drawn, the Protestants of the North began to feel that the Catholic minority of Ulster was on the wrong side and should get out. A policy of discrimination was begun and the Catholic working class persecuted in favour of the Protestant working class and systematically deprived of social and political justice. Tension between the two communities built up and escalated into violence. In 1969 the British Government sent troops to Northern Ireland. In 1971 internment without trial was introduced. Many suspected IRA activists, no matter if innocent or guilty, were imprisoned. In January 1972, during a Civil Rights demonstration in Londonderry, the tragedy of "**Bloody Sunday**" took place: 13 Catholics were killed and 17 wounded by British troops. In March 1972 the British Government took the very drastic and dangerous step of suspending Northern Ireland's Parliament (the Stormont) and assumed direct control of Northern Irish affairs. That would become known as "direct rule"-government of Northern Ireland from London.

During the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s paramilitary groups carried out violent campaigns. The IRA launched a bombing campaign which targeted public areas both in Ireland and on the British mainland. Bombs exploded in many cities like Dublin, Monaghan, Guilford, Woolwich and Birmingham killing and injuring many civilians. The Protestant loyalists (loyal to the British Crown) responded with violence against the Catholic community. The

internal struggle in Northern Ireland during "The Troubles" took more than 3,600 lives, most of them civilian.

#### The Peace Process and Devolution

Important steps have been taken over the years to try and create conditions of compromise between the IRA, fighting to unite Ulster's six British-ruled counties with the Republic of Ireland, and the Protestant paramilitary, determined to keep the province British. Negotiations were held in 1991, 1992 and 1993 for a possible political settlement of the Ulster problems.

On 13th October 1997, the British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams met at the Stormont (Belfast). It was the first time that a British prime minister had agreed to meet a top representative of the IRA's political wing. After several years' talks, the IRA and the loyalist paramilitary groups agreed to a ceasefire and on 10th April, under Tony Blair's government, the **Good Friday Peace Agreement** was signed. It restored a **devolved government** to Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Assembly, with a power-sharing executive of representatives from all the main political parties.

A referendum held on 23rd May 1998 showed that an overwhelming majority of the people of Ulster supported the Good Friday Agreement. It was certainly a major step forward, but implementation of the agreement proved difficult. As a result the Assembly was suspended in 2002. It was only after the Irish elections in March 2007 that the two major political parties, the Democratic Union Party (DUP) and Sinn Fein, announced the formation of a power-sharing government.

**2 Read text B and answer these questions.**

1. Why were the Catholics discriminated in Ulster after the partition of Ireland?  
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2. What did discrimination lead to? Outline the main events.  
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3. What was the conflict between the IRA and the Protestant paramilitary due to?  
.....
4. Outline the main steps that have been taken since the 1990s for settlement of the Ulster question.  
.....

**3 Class discussion.**

- Wars are often fought in the name of religion. Can you give examples of wars of religion?
- Do you think that many religion wars often have other reasons?

## Text C

### Sunday, Bloody Sunday

*U2, 1983*

Sunday, Bloody Sunday  
 I can't believe the news today  
 I can't close my eyes and make it go away  
 How long, how long must we sing this song?  
 How long?  
 Tonight we can be as one, tonight  
 Broken bottles under children's feet  
 Bodies strewn across a dead end street  
 But I won't heed the battle call  
 It puts my back up, puts my back up against the wall  
 Sunday, Bloody Sunday  
 Sunday, Bloody Sunday  
 And the battle's just begun,  
 There's many lost, but tell me who has won?  
 Trenches dug within our hearts,  
 And mothers, children, brothers, sisters torn apart  
 Sunday, Bloody Sunday  
 Sunday, Bloody Sunday  
 How long, how long must we sing this song?  
 How long?

Tonight we can be as one  
 Tonight, tonight  
 Sunday, Bloody Sunday  
 Sunday, Bloody Sunday  
 Wipe the tears from your eyes  
 Wipe your tears away  
 Wipe your blood shot eyes  
 Sunday, Bloody Sunday  
 Sunday, Bloody Sunday  
 And it's true we are immune  
 When fact is fiction and TV reality  
 And today the millions cry  
 We eat and drink while tomorrow they die  
 The real battle just begun  
 To claim the victory Jesus won  
 On a Sunday Bloody Sunday  
 Sunday Bloody Sunday.

"Sunday, Bloody Sunday" is a famous song that U2 wrote in 1983 about the massacre of January 30, 1972 in Londonderry (Northern Ireland) where 13 people were killed and others wounded by British soldiers. They sang it for the first time in Belfast.

**4 Read the text of the song *Sunday, Bloody Sunday*, then tick (✓) the correct answers.**

1. What was the author's aim?
  - a. to call the audience to battle
  - b. to inform the audience about what happened
  - c. to protest against useless violence and hatred
  
2. What is the U2's attitude towards the facts the song refers to?
  - a. detachment
  - b. anger
  - c. concern
  
3. What is the main emotion expressed by this song?
  - a. aggressiveness
  - b. irony
  - c. sorrow

**5 Research work & writing.**

- Find information about U2 and write a short biography of the members of the band.
- You can listen to the song on YouTube. You can also see the video and send a comment.

**6 Class discussion.**

- What do you think of this quotation by Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)?

*"We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough religion to make us love one another".*

Do you think it still applies to today's world? Explain why and make examples.