THE IRISH QUESTION
A SHORT HISTORY
Part II – from the 20th century to the present day
prof.ssa Silvia Mazzau

Questo file è licenziato in base ai seguenti termini delle licenze
Creative Commons Attribuzione-Condividi allo stesso modo

Tu sei libero:
• di condividere – di copiare, distribuire e trasmettere quest'opera

Alle seguenti condizioni:
• attribuzione – Devi attribuire la paternità dell'opera all'autrice che ti ha dato l'opera in licenza condividi allo stesso modo – Puoi distribuire quest’opera solo con la stessa licenza o una simile a questa.
5. The early 20\textsuperscript{th} c.: 1914

- On 18\textsuperscript{th} September 1914 the Government of Ireland Act was passed by Parliament to provide home rule for Ireland within the UK.

- However with the outbreak of the First World War it was formally postponed for a minimum of 12 months: Britain couldn’t afford to go into war without the Irish to the point that, in March 1918, conscription became a serious threat.

- The Armistice ended the Great War on 11\textsuperscript{th} November 1918 so that the military draft bill was never implemented.

- Nevertheless subsequent developments in Ireland led to further postponements of the Act till it was finally repealed in 1920. Meanwhile...
6. From 1916...

• In 1916 the Easter Rising took place: it was mounted by Irish republicans with the aims of ending British rule in Ireland as well as establishing the Irish Republic.

• The Rising lasted from 24\textsuperscript{th} April (Easter Monday) to 30\textsuperscript{th} April 1916: members of the Irish Volunteers, led by schoolteacher and barrister Patrick Pearse, joined by the smaller Irish Citizen Army of James Connolly, along with 200 members of Cumann na mBan (the women’s paramilitary organisation), seized key locations in Dublin and proclaimed the Irish Republic independent of Britain.

• The Rising was suppressed after seven days of fighting, and its leaders were court-martialled and executed, but it succeeded in bringing physical force republicanism back to the forefront of Irish politics.
In the **1918** General Election to the British Parliament, republicans (then represented by the **Sinn Féin** party, Irish for *we ourselves*, founded in 1905) won 73 seats out of 105: theirs was a policy of abstentionism and Irish independence.

In January **1919**, the elected members of who were not still in prison at the time, including survivors of the Rising, convened the First Dáil, i.e. a unicameral, revolutionary parliament which refused to recognise the Parliament of the United Kingdom, and established the Irish Republic.

The British Government in turn refused to accept the legitimacy of the newly declared nation, precipitating the **Anglo – Irish War** (also known as the Irish War of Independence).
7. 1919-1921: the Anglo-Irish War.

- The **Irish War of Independence** was a guerrilla war mounted by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) **against the British government** and its forces in January **1919**, following the Irish Republic's declaration of independence. Both sides agreed to a truce in July 1921, but violence continued in the northeast (mostly between republicans and loyalists).

- The post-ceasefire talks led to the Anglo-Irish Treaty on 6th December **1921**, which ended British rule in most of Ireland and established the **Irish Free State**, a self-governing dominion of 21 counties, which replaced the Irish Republic.

- Six **northern counties** of Ulster, one of the four provinces of Ireland, **would**, however, remain within the United Kingdom as **Northern Ireland**.
8. From 1922 to 1949.

- The Irish Free State came to an end in 1937, when the citizens voted by referendum to replace the 1922 constitution.

- It was succeeded by the modern state of Ireland in 1937, an entirely sovereign state with a new constitution.

- **1940-45**: in World War II, the Irish Free State remained neutral while Northern Ireland took part in the fighting.

- The last formal link with the United Kingdom was severed in 1949 when the Oireachtas (national parliament) passed the Republic of Ireland Act.

- Nevertheless the Irish question has remained alive throughout the second half of the 20th century...

- Catholics supported by the IRA (*Irish Republican Army*) attempted to reunite the island: a terrorist campaign began.

- **1962**: the terrorist attacks were stalled by the lack of weapons.

- **1963-68**: discrimination against Catholics spread in housing, jobs and political representation because they were seen as a threat to the State – the Catholics started to fight for their Civil Rights.

- **1969**: the *Troubles* began with British troops sent to Ireland permanently – this was followed by the introduction of *internment without trial* to stem IRA attacks in 1971.

- On 30th January 1972 in the Bogside area of Derry, 26 unarmed civil rights protesters and bystanders (including 7 teenagers and 3 pregnant women) were shot by members of the British Army, soldiers of the First Battalion of the Parachute Regiment.

- The incident occurred during a Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association march organized to protest against the continuation of internment without trial. It became known as **Bloody Sunday**.

- The events caused shock and revulsion at an international level: within Ireland the killings resulted in a dramatic increase in support for Republicanism in general and the IRA in particular.

- The IRA, with its violent and antidemocratic character, committed atrocities and massacres at home as well as bombings even in London at the same time as Protestant para-military groups.
10. “unjustified and unjustifiable”.

- Two investigations were held by the British Government:
  1. the Widgery Tribunal, immediately after the event, largely cleared the soldiers and British authorities of blame;
  2. the Saville Inquiry, chaired by Lord Saville of Newdigate, established in 1998 to reinvestigate the events, lasted twelve years. Saville’s report was made public on 15th June 2010, and re-opened the controversy: the report found that all of those shot were unarmed, and that the killings were both “unjustified and unjustifiable”.

On the publication of the Saville report the British prime minister, David Cameron, made a formal apology on behalf of the United Kingdom.
11. The late 20\textsuperscript{th} c.: 1972 - 1981

- **1974**: the proposal for an executive formed by Protestants and Catholics together failed.

- **1979**: Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Queen’s cousin, was killed by a bomb blast on his boat in Ireland.

- **1981 (5\textsuperscript{th} May)**: Bobby Sands, an Irish volunteer of the Provisional Irish Republican Army and member of the British Parliament died on hunger strike while imprisoned in HM Prison Maze. Following his example republican prisoners joined the strike at staggered intervals in order to maximise publicity.
Bobby Sand’s example.

- The hunger strike centred around five demands:
  - the right not to wear a prison uniform;
  - the right not to do prison work;
  - the right of free association with other prisoners and to organize educational and recreational pursuits;
  - the right to one visit, one letter and one parcel per week;
  - full restoration of remission, lost through the protest.

- The prisoners’ aim was to be recognized as political prisoners or prisoners of war, not to be classed as criminals: their behaviour inspired a new way of resistance all over the world.
12. The Enniskillen bombing.

- On 8th November 1987 the Remembrance Day bombing (also known as the Enniskillen bombing or Poppy Day massacre) took place in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland.

- 11 people were killed when a Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) bomb exploded at the town’s war memorial (cenotaph) during a Remembrance Sunday ceremony – held to commemorate the contribution of British and Commonwealth military and civilian servicemen and women in the two World Wars and later conflicts.

- The bombing was described by the BBC as a turning point in The Troubles and an attack that shook the IRA "to its core".

- **1994**: the IRA proclaim a ceasefire and the Irish Peace Process is set in motion with “talks” between the British Prime Minister John Major and Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams.

- **1996 (February)**: the IRA calls off its ceasefire and one hour later sets off a bomb at South Quay which injures 100 and causes millions of pounds’ worth of damage...
14. The Belfast Agreement.

- On 10th April 1998 the Belfast Agreement (or the Good Friday Agreement) was signed in Belfast by the British and Irish governments through their P. M.s Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern: it was a major political development in the Northern Ireland peace process.

- It established the Northern Ireland Assembly with devolved legislative powers and marked a de-escalation of violence in The Troubles as the whole period of ethno-political conflict is generally known. It also committed its participants:
  - to partnership, equality and mutual respect between these islands;
  - to use exclusively democratic and peaceful means of resolving differences on political issues;
  - to oppose any use or threat of force by others for any political purpose.
15. The Omagh bombing.

- On 15th August 1998 the Omagh bombing took place: the paramilitary car bomb attack was carried out by the Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA), a splinter group of former Provisional Irish Republican Army members opposed to the Belfast Agreement. 29 people died as a result of the attack and about 220 people were injured.

- Described as Northern Ireland’s worst single terrorist atrocity, an appalling act of savagery, it made victims among both Protestants and Catholics, teenagers and children, natives and tourists.

- The nature of the bombing created a strong international and local outcry against the RIRA, which later apologised.
16. From 2000 ...

- Violence continued, though on a sporadic basis:

1. **3rd August 2001**: the **Ealing bombing** – a Real IRA car bomb injured 7 civilians in Ealing, west London;

2. **12th July 2005**: police were **attacked** with blast and petrol bombs during rioting in an area of Belfast, following an **Orange Order** parade. **80 police officers** were **injured** and several people were arrested;

3. **25th February 2006**: the **Dublin riots** a unionist demonstration was to take place down O’Connell Street but counter-demonstrators blocked the route of the proposed march. **14 people**, including journalists and photographers, were **hospitalised** and a further 41 people were arrested;
4. 7th March 2009: two British Army soldiers were shot dead and two more seriously injured during a Real IRA gun attack. Two days later a police officer was shot dead by the Continuity IRA;

5. February – October 2010: car bomb attacks were organised by the RIRA throughout the year;


• The peace process is far from over...