CHAPTER - 2

TERRORISM: THE IRISH HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE

Irish history at least the part of it that is best known, is a chronicle of armed conflicts and frustrated peace efforts. Between 1969 and 1974 conflicts in the fullest sense of the word, occurred at the highest rate. On the other hand, the history of peace seems to be nothing more than a series of successive substitutions of one impractical dream to another, each quickly ending in failure. Since 1969, peace is too often conceived as a static state of inaction.

Northern Ireland gained a separate position in 1921 only after much persecution and bloodshed, primitive mythologies always presented Ireland as a flat expanse. In the same way, much blood, if not ink has flowed since Catholics first began to suspect that the Protestants and British were not, after all, members of Irish order and society. The aggressiveness between Catholics and Protestants remained another culturally induced value. Irish terrorism as an institution is not a recent phenomenon, it pervades through the re-
corded history.

From the Gallic invasion of 1 BC (Before Christ) onward, Ireland has been conquered by numerous invaders. The twelfth century saw the division of Ireland into different kingdoms, the enviousness of keeping the separate identity of kingdoms isolated Ireland from the mainstream of European politics. It was in this situation that Henry II gained papal consent for the establishment of English ascendancy in Ireland. Though English controlled Northern Ireland for a long period yet by the end of fourteenth century England could have very little control over Ulster.

English were always apprehensive about their dominance over Ireland hence, they started the process of integration with Irish community. Consequently, in 1366, inter-marriage between Irish and English was established by Statutes of Kilkenny.

The intermingling led to the dominance of Anglo-Irish families which further hampered liaison between English and Irish. Finally, in 1543, Henry VIII was
crowned King of Ireland.¹ Henry VIII tried all possible means and ways to establish British colonialism over Ireland. The period of Queen Elizabeth was notable in this regard. The plantation of Ireland begun by bringing in more English and Scots into Ireland in order to ensure English supremacy. The Irish uprising of 1641 led to massive massacre during the reign of Charles I. Similarly, in 1649 Cromwell expelled more Catholics.²

The victory of William of Orange at Boyne in 1690 started the beginning of a new phase for Ireland. The right to legislate for Ireland was asserted by the English Parliament in 1719 which helped English to exclude more Catholics from the Irish Parliament.³

2. ibid.,
On the other hand, Irish people were reckless and lazy. It is said that in Fermanagh, people never milked their cows before midday.  

Ireland was not a unified country. It was an amalgam of a number of small states, and each state was governed by the head chosen from its governing family.  

Ireland was not in any modern sense an agrarian society. Gradually, it became a subject to exploitation and colonial domination. Hence, Engels described Ireland as the first colony of England, and due to its incapacity, is still a subject to injustice and foul play. Similarly, Winston Churchill described it as


"the long sorrowful story of English intervention in Ireland". 7

Although English were involved in Ireland yet, they did not try to break the ancient traditions of warfare between families in Ireland. When the English economic and political policies could not yield any positive result. English realised their responsibility towards Protestants by settling more English Protestants in Ireland. This process of settling more Protestants in Ireland led to the formation of complete English dominance over Ireland.

Engels is of the view that the English citizens enjoyed their liberty at the cost of the oppression of Ireland. He commented

I have never seen so many gendarmes in any country, and the sudden look of the bibulous

Persuasion gendarme is developed to its highest perfection here among the constabulary, who are armed with carbines, bayonets and handcuffs, characteristics of this country are its ruins, the latest from the nineteenth with the intervening period. The most ancient are all churches, after 1100, churches and castles, after 1800, houses of peasants. The whole of the west especially in the neighbourhood of Galway is covered ruined peasant houses, most of which have only been deserted since 1846. I never thought that famine could have such tangible reality. The country was completely ruined by the English wars of consequent from 1100 to 1850. The people itself have got its peculiar character from this, and for all their national Irish fanaticism, the fellow feel that they are no longer at home in their own country.8

From the British occupation of Ireland until the present time, the political and social situation in

Ireland has marked by collective use of violence, individual and organised terror. Therefore, the condition of Ireland was characterised either by civil war or by condition akin to civil war. Social protest as well as class conflicts were accompanied by endless revolutionary violence. Similarly, the substitute character attaching to "violence" reflected in Irish poverty and under development in the form of individual action and reaction. On the other hand, in the course of industrialisation Britain flourished and Ireland remained subject to exploitation. Engles commented that "centuries of Irish resistance convinced them of the boundless vitality of the national liberation movement of even such a relatively small people, and of futility of even the most systematic and cruel measures to suppress it."9

It was particularly in the late Seventeenth century that political violence and terrorism began to form part of the Irish reactionary movement's action.

9. ibid., p. 19
programme. After the victory of William of Orange over James II, a number of cruel acts were introduced by the Dublin Parliament which are collectively known as Panel Code. These acts were discriminatory because Catholics were denied voting rights, entry into Parliament, the municipal corporations, Commission in Army, Navy and Civil services. Similarly, Catholics were debarred from the manufacture and sale of books, newspapers and magazines. The government levied heavy taxes on the Catholic landowners. The inter-caste marriages between Catholics and Protestants were declared illegal. This kind of Panel Code did not only create social segregation but also established Protestant’s supremacy over Catholics in all fields. The Catholics were made subject to cruel penalties as the politically suspected descendants. 10

As a consequence of seeing themselves as an oppressed and exploited class. Catholics now aimed at overthrowing Protestant's ascendancy on the other hand, there were differences amongst the Protestant people, particularly between Dissenters and Anglicans. Consequently in 1771, a number of United Irishmen societies were established in Dublin and Belfast.¹¹

Although Secret Societies like the White boys in Munster and Hearts of Oak and Hearts of Steel in north were already spreading a wave of terror in Ireland. They were seeking redress for a wide spectrum of grievances.¹²

Similarly, during 1770s Protestant groups like 'Peep O' Day Boys' and Catholic "Defenders" led to varying degrees of intimidation, terror and murder. The new and characteristic feature of this period has been the formation of small paramilitary Sectarian

groups and frequent clashes between them. For example, in 1795 Protestants founded - the Orange Society which later on played a very vital role in the Irish history. Hence, Protestants and Catholics were filled with feelings of revenge and continued to attack each other with the help of local armed forces which subsequently, forced the government of Ireland to take up urgent counter-measures.\textsuperscript{13}

Consequently, on 1 January, 1801, Great Britain and Ireland were merged with one United Kingdom which later became the main source of Irish's socio-political and economic evils. Irish nationalist did not accept the political and legislative union of 1800 and declared it as a deliberate attempt of strengthening English dominance over Ireland.\textsuperscript{14}


The union of 1801 abolished Irish parliament, but the entire power-structure remained the same. Irish Catholic viewed union as an enemy firstly, because, in the 19th century Catholics suffered from the deepest social and economic crisis; hence, they were seeking an alternate to their grievances in a proper manner. Secondly, Catholics wanted their dominance in the administration of the country since they were in majority. Thirdly, the government’s Policy regarding the Irish economy was decided by an assembly which did not pay any heed to the Irish demand. Hence, Irish economy was seriously injured.\footnote{15}

The parliament did not understand the Irish problems and the entire administration was over influenced by the doctrine of laissez faire.\footnote{16}

In nineteenth century the population of Ireland was 4,500,000. The total population was composed of 3,150,000 Catholic Irish, 450,000 Protestants, 900,000 Presbyterian Scottish. The Anglo-Irish were kept at

\footnote{15. Gearoid O’ Tuathaigh, n.12, pp.40-41.}
\footnote{16. Denis P. Barritt, Charles F. Carter, n.5,p.14.}
the pinnacle of the social hierarchy. The Anglo-Irish were comprised of the official elite, the bishops, the clergy of the Protestant state church and the landowners. The Irish Catholics were comprised of the labourers and the peasants of the poor economic standard. The Scot-Irish were mainly businessmen and farmers who hailed from the Northeast part of Ireland. The condition of the labourers was very poor. The relations between landlords and peasants were very strained. The Catholics were not allowed to become a member of Parliament. The Protestants were holding all important offices.

The Irish Catholics viewed it as a process of intimidation or victimisation. Hence, the desire for reforms became overwhelmingly strong which finally

18. ibid.,
19. ibid.,
involved tremendous social pressure on the consciences of many Englishmen. In 1805, Daniel O'Connell (a young barrister, who fought for the Irish Catholics) formed a Catholic association which was formed in Dublin. The Charismatic leadership of O'Connell evoked tremendous response among Catholics. In the aftermath of the 1826 election O'Connell set up a plan for establishing a fighting fund to ensure legal aid to the victims.\(^{20}\) The great movement of O'Connell in 1823 brought the country almost on the verge of a revolution. Consequently, the Catholic disabilities were removed by the enactment of Act of 1829.\(^{21}\)

In the early 1829 the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed. According to this act now Catholics could become judges, Admirals, Generals and members of parliament but still they were not allowed to become the viceroy and lord chancellor.\(^{22}\)

\(^{20}\) Geroid O' Tuathaigh, n.12,p.71.

\(^{21}\) Encyclopedia Britanica, n.17,p.612.

The real intensity of trouble and economic hardship however, arose from an increase in population. The population of Ireland reached 4,500,000 in 1800 and this rapid rate continued till 1840.

This was followed by the beginning of famine with the failure of the potato crop. By the 1842 Ireland had become the most densely populated states in Europe. More than half of Irish population was dependent on potato for their subsistence. Meanwhile in 1845 with the failure of potato crop, famine grabbed the whole of Ireland under tremendous crisis. The intensity of famine reached its pinnacle when more than one million people died due to hunger. A large number of people migrated to England and the U.S.\textsuperscript{23}

The famine left tremendous impact on the Irish people. Now, a number of parties got united to fight

against the incapacity and inadequacy of British policies. For example, there were a number of attempts to reunite small military organisations like the Repeal Association and young Ireland. This was followed by the death of O’Connell in May 1847. This helped militants to start their terrorist and violent activities. The French revolution of February 1848 influenced the minds of the frustrated nationalist groups to overthrow British rule from Ireland. Consequently, the beginning of 1858 marked an era of Fenian Terrorism in Ireland. The Fenian were supported by the American and finally, named "Fenian Brotherhood". The rise of Fenian terrorism although ended as a failure in 1867 but it compelled the British Government to create favourable conditions for the new reforms. Hence, a number of Acts were passed in order to satisfy the Catholic demands. For example, the open entry in Irish civil service examination in 1870, the formation of

24. ibid., p.111.
intermediate education system in 1878 to listen to Catholic educational demands; the introduction of a series of new land Acts to help the peasantry, etc. 25

The late 19th century witnessed the Irish nationalist movement demanding a separate Irish Parliament which subsequently led to the beginning of Home Rule movement in 1873. The Home Rule movement generated support from overseas also. 26

The idea of Home Rule policy was enunciated by Isaac Butt in 1870 and later he became the President of this movement. It aimed at setting up a separate parliament in Dublin. The situation of Ireland in the years immediately following 1870 and particularly during 1879 and 1882 was changed due to the beginning of land war by Michael Davit and the formation of land

25. ibid., p.115.

league (with Parrell's cooperation). One of the important features of the Home Rule movement was that it even generated support in England. Due to the growing support of Home Rule movement, Protestants were frightened. Consequently, Protestants organised a petition in Belfast for the maintenance of the union. The growing Protestant agitation against the Home Rule further generated a massive rift between the two communities.27 Protestants strengthened the Orange order. Similarly, in 1886 communal riots broke out in Belfast.

In 1886, Lord Randolph Churchill visited Belfast and said, 'Ulster will fight' and 'Ulster will be right'. He further commented that "if Gladstone went for the home rule, the orange card would be one to play".28 On the other hand, in 1893 Catholics started their Second Home rule movement. This was followed by a period of predominantly conservative rule. The liberal government of 1906 did not pay heed to the demands of Home Rule and gave importance to other

28. ibid.
reforms. But in 1910, the Irish Catholics pressurised the government to grant Home Rule. Consequently, in 1910 the third Home Rule movement was started and it led to the emergence of serious crisis of 1912-14. During early twentieth century, the Sinn Fein demanded for a united and independent Ireland. On the other hand, James Connally begun a movement for a socialist united country.29

In 1912, major Protestant organisations like, Solemn League, Convenant and Ulster Volunteer force became very active for the demands of Ulster's independence. Meanwhile in 1912, Asquith enunciated a Bill for all Ireland. While describing the main feature of the 1912 Bill, he commented that Ireland is "a nation, not two nations, but one nation".30

29. T.A. Jackson, n.10, pp.338-70.
On the other hand, Bonar Law and James Craig were against the Bill. While opposing the Bill, James Craig said, "We are against every clause, every line, and every word on it on behalf of those not only in Ulster but in all parts of Ireland who have been the friends of this country in the past".  

The last attempt for Home Rule movement before the first World War was made by the Buckingham Palace Conference in 21-23 July, 1914. In this conference Home Rule for the whole Ireland was constitutionally demanded but the sudden outbreak of the war delayed the granting of independence to Ireland. The poor economic conditions during the World War led to violence, strikes and finally, the formation of the citizen Army which was composed of Dublin workers, men and boys. It was led by James Larkin.

During the early years of war the Sinn Fein party started getting much prominence. The party was founded by Arthur Griffith in 1900. It demanded a self contained Ireland. Culturally, it was in favour of the revival of the Irish language.

The years of wars were the years of mounting violence in Ireland. The most squalid sort of violence was planned by the citizen army, the left wing of the volunteers and Sinn Fein. But the German aid could not arrive in time. The German arms were captured. Sir Roger Casement who came from Germany was arrested and later executed. The volunteers got frightened and wanted to stop the rebellion but the citizen Army broke out the rebellion on Easter Sunday of 1916. The fighting took place in Dublin and continued for at least a week. Consequently, the British troops lost 377, including 106 killed. On the other hand, fifteen

---

33. ibid.,
rebels, along with James Connally were executed. But
the execution of the leaders made their Sacrifice more
prominent and Sinn Fein became even more popular than
before. Subsequently, in 1918, at the general election, the old Irish party was almost routed and out of
106 Irish Representatives more the 72 Sinn Fein leaders
were elected.\(^{34}\) Hence, the Sinn Fein, which in the
beginning did not have much support was now strength-
ened. Daniel Breen was of the opinion that in order to
clear the British out of the country, killing of Irish
constabulary was the only way. The period from January
1919 until May 1921 was marked by the Anglo-Irish war,
which finally brought about a dominion status for 26
states of Ireland.\(^{35}\) The Anglo-Irish war led to the
shooting of policemen, and the civilians working with
the British Service who tried to disturb the revolu-
tionary movement. In the beginning, the major chunk of
Irish population was against the shooting. But gradu-
ally, the success of this movement generated tremen-
dous support.

\(^{34}\) ibid.,

\(^{35}\) ibid.,
As a result of major portion of the Cork (one of the states in Southern Ireland) was burned down by the regular military. Similarly, military also murdered a number of revolutionaries which were engaged in the violent activities.\textsuperscript{36} Hence, violence was accompanied virtually in every stage from early 1920 to June 1922. The city of Belfast was almost burning in violence. The British tried their best to suppress this violent movement but faced only stiff resistance. Meanwhile, in 1920, the cabinet introduced the Home Rule Act, in order to solve the problem by providing for the setting up of the two governments. The division was into two areas, Firstly, for the North including six Counties carved out of Ulster and secondly, for the south (the remaining 26 Counties. By 1921, the constitution of free Ireland was signed. It allowed a separate administration for the six Counties in the North. But

\textsuperscript{36} ibid.,
Catholics refused to participate in Ulster politics, perceiving themselves unequally placed among the pro-English Protestant majority. The Northern Ireland was made a part of Great Britain and the powers of the Northern Irish's parliament were derived from the British parliament. The Northern Ireland now composed of six former countries of Antrim, Down, Armagh, Londonderry, Tyrone, and Belfast. Although the Government of Ireland Act gave substantial powers to the Parliament of Northern Ireland yet subjects like, Defence, Foreign Policy, Navigation and certain Taxes were left at the disposal of the British parliament. The Northern Irish parliament consisted of the House of Commons, Senate and Governor who was representative of the British Monarch.

The Republicans refused to recognize the treaty and most of the I.R.A. members resorted to violence. Liam Lynch commented "We will not live under any other law." Frank O'Connor says that the "Simply high spirited, generous, adventurous boys, escaped from farms and class rooms". Gradually, they had reduced the country to carnage and destruction. When the
British troops had begun their evacuation in January, 1922, they had handed over the barracks, weapons and installations to the most authoritative of the local I.R.A. Commanders. It was a matter of chance that these fell into the control of pro or anti treaty forces. The British were naturally unable to discriminate. The Republican officers of the I.R.A., a large number of whom appear to have been generals, consolidated their gains by seizing arms and barracks from troops loyal to the provisional government.37

In March 1922, the Republican wing of the I.R.A. led by Rory O'Connor held a convention in Dublin. Later on the convention was crackled with militancy. Finally, the convention established an Army Executive of almost sixteen officers headed by Liam Lynch and declared its freedom of political control.38 This force was known as "the Irish Republic Army. While describing the armies of the I.R.A., De Valera commented that the "Republicans would have to wade through

38. ibid., p.293.
Irish blood, through the blood of the soldiers of the Irish government, and through, perhaps, the blood of some members of the government, in order to get Irish freedom".39

On the other hand, Lloyd George and Churchill warned the Republicans that in case of the violation of treaty, British forces will occupy Ireland again. Collin was advised to take immediate actions in this regard. Hence, the government took all the measures to throw the Republicans from Ireland. By 1923, at least seventy-seven Republicans were executed along with O’Connor. Consequently, the Republicans gunned down two members of Dail.40

But in May, 1923, De Valera surrendered without any previous notice. Similarly, the Republicans also buried their arms. Hence, the civil war ended and the Republicans were crushed badly.41 On the other hand, the unity of the Protestant was based upon the Sectarian ideology of the orange order which subsequently,

39. ibid., p.294.
40. ibid., pp.297-98.
41. ibid.,
led to the uneven development in Ireland. The working class of the Protestants have always been militantly anti-nationalist. The Protestants begun to discriminate against Catholics by openly excluding them from government employment and by enacting exceptional legislation.

The years between 1924 and 1962 saw a series of attacks by I.R.A. on government offices including several in the north. The new government of Northern Ireland faced many problems, firstly it had to protect the country against external threat and secondly it had to protect itself from subversion within. De Valera's attempt of keeping away from Britain throughout the 1930s and his internal policies brought about temporary peace in Northern Ireland, but situation was soon deteriorated by communal strife.42

The fear of threat gave the leaders of the new

government a strategy for maintaining their support and compliance, identification with Protestant majority. Lord Craigavon commented that it was "A Protestant government and called it "a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people". Only Protestants were given opportunities to participate in the government. Catholics were expected to comply with the laws of the government; their support was neither considered worthy nor obtained. It led to the division on the basis of caste.

Since 1921, first election until present time, the Unionist Party always won with a massive majority. The Nationalist party in Northern Ireland was in a very tragic situation. It was always anti Sinn Fein. The Nationalists were totally a failure in the effective organizational capacity and consequently their supporters also broke away and started supporting Sinn Fein party.

43. ibid.,
44. ibid., p.93
The main trouble in Belfast began in 1930 due to world depression and economic difficulties resulting from civil war. This led to the problem of unemployment, and subsequently, Northern Ireland's increasing dependence upon Britain for subsidies. But the major trouble began due to communal riots. By July, 1935, 574 people were injured, 11 were killed and a few arrests were made but Protestants were not convicted.\(^4^5\)

The I.R.A. started its violent campaign in Britain in 1939-40 to weaken the British resolve to 'hold' Northern Ireland. By the mid 1950, the I.R.A. launched successful raids for arm. In 1955, the candidates from Sinn Fein party won in general election by marking victories in Fermanagh and South Tyrone.\(^4^6\)

For Catholics, job opportunities were very limited. Although the north-eastern part of Ireland was heavily industrialized but it was dominated by the Protestants. The Catholics felt economically very

\(^{4^5}\) ibid., p.95

deprived. But the growing population of Catholics became a matter of serious threat for the Protestants. Beside, since 1921, the system of proportional representation was greatly opposed by the Unionist. Hence, this system was finally abolished by the first Prime Minister James Greig in 1929. It was followed by the single member constituencies. This system generated resentment among the nationalist. On the other hand, the new system helped the Unionist to remain in power till 1972. Because, the franchise was linked with the right to property and position in the society, it was known as "business premises qualification" of single member constituency made impossible for the nationalist to win the elections and form a government in Northern Ireland. Hence, Sinn Fein and its military wing I.R.A. started operating. Although in the beginning, there were only few signs of I.R.A. operation but in the later period and particularly 1938 onwards there was rapid increase in I.R.A. activities. This could become very prominent in January, 1939. When an ultimatum was delivered to Lord Halifax (the British Secretary of Foreign Affairs) on 12 January
1939 saying that all British forces should immediately leave the Ireland, failing which I.R.A. would take appropriate action.47

Soon after the expiration of the ultimatum, I.R.A. began its bombing over Manchester, London and Birmingham. It generated anti-Irish feelings among English. Later, under the leadership of the Chief of Staff, Sean Russell, the I.R.A. became a potential threat to Britain. Therefore, since March 1939, I.R.A. remained the most disturbing threat. At the end of the Second World War, various schemes for social legislation were introduced. In November, 1948, the Republic of Ireland Bill was introduced and by 17 April, 1949, the Republic of Ireland became free from Commonwealth's control. But this did not cover the six countries of Northern Ireland.

In 1950, the I.R.A. organized armed attacks and ambushes in Northern Ireland. The new Prime Minister of the Republic Ireland, De Valera took repressive actions against the terrorist.\textsuperscript{48}

Hence, the period from 1921 until 1969, was marked by the institutionalization of caste, violence and terrorism. The Northern Ireland merely became a desert of anarchy created by the I.R.A.'s terrorism and the launching of anti-Catholic activities by Protestants.

In one way or another, much of the twentieth century's violence has also spread by the Protestants' militant activities. The partition of Ireland in 1922 had placed the Protestants in majority in Northern Ireland but at the same time they were aware of the fact that any question of reunification can put them back into a minority position.

Symbolically, it was in response to this condition that the Stormont government used almost all powers devolved to it from Westminster to punish the Catholic's reaction by every possible means.

On the other hand, economic hardship, political and social deprivation transformed the I.R.A. into a more violent terrorist organization. In 1967, the Catholics formed a civil right movement. Similarly, in the beginning 1968, Paisley organised Protestants against civil right movement which led to the massacre of at least 1,800 people during the next couple of years. Therefore, since 1967 onwards, Northern Irish political situation was repeatedly punctuated with sudden bursts of violence and killings.

With the tremendous expansion of I.R.A.'s activities during the late years of the twentieth century, many freelance multiple murderers emerged in the various segments of Northern Irish society. This led to the beginning of some differences among the I.R.A.'s members regarding the strategies of operation. Consequently, in 1969, the I.R.A. was divided into two groups namely - the official and the provisional. The
official I.R.A. was more left oriented and aimed at achieving "United Socialist Republican Ireland" through Marxist style of national liberation. On the other hand, Provisional Army was a hardcore terrorist organization and it aimed at achieving a United Ireland through the means of bullet and bomb.

In 1971, the Provisional I.R.A. introduced great spasm of violence through its urban guerrilla campaign. The trouble grew out in many Protestant areas with the formation of Protestant's paramilitary Defense Association. At the same time, a militant Protestant organization i.e. Ulster Volunteer Front (UVF) decided to fight the I.R.A. Gradually, extremists on both sides in Northern Ireland have used attacks on public services to harass the govt. of the day. From 1971 onwards, I.R.A. protest combined political, social and economic grievance in a formidable challenge to British

---

government. Multi-faceted nature of the I.R.A. campaign thus attracted a broad base of support in Northern Ireland. The conflict between I.R.A. and Protestants formed a new background for the recent crisis which added a new dimension to the terrorist activities. Thus, violence became a legitimate means of helping the cause of national emancipation in Northern Ireland.