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**A
BRIEFING PAPER
ON
NORTHERN
IRELAND**

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Nota bene: An Irish health warning.

There is no way that a paper of this length can deal with the nuances and complexities of the Irish situation. It can only provide pointers and some basic facts. Even facts and pointers have to be placed in a perspective. The perspective and objectivity of the author limits this paper (necessarily)

1 AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The starting point for an examination of Ulster's history over the last four hundred years is its geography. Ulster was the last stronghold of the old Gaelic civilisation because of the 'natural barrier of small hills, forests, bogs, lakes and water courses' which separated it from the rest of Ireland. Behind this barrier there developed a region differentiated from others by its climate, its geology and its human geography. This natural partition meant there was more trade and communication with Scotland than with the southern part of the island; and resulted in the presence of a comparatively significant number of Scots in the present counties of Down and Antrim, well before the official plantations of Ulster. The Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell were the last of the Gaelic chiefs to hold out in their Ulster strongholds against English Rule and after their flight to Europe in 1607 their vast estates were confiscated. The Crown's plan was to displace the native Irish from these lands and replace them by loyal English and Scottish settlers who thought the imposition of English law and administration would effectively crush the old Gaelic culture and usher in an age of peace and stability. In practice it did not work out as planned. Soon it became apparent that the resources of the state were inadequate to organise the plantation of Ulster on a piece-meal basis, so the City of London and its wealthy Livery Companies were invited to assist.

Large tracts of land were parcelled out to individual companies but again resources proved inadequate and although the native Irish were often forced back on to poorer land on high ground they were generally not dispersed totally and often lived cheek by jowl with the new settlers for whom they worked as labourers and farm-tenant farmers. It is therefore not surprising to learn that grantees of lands were required to build 'bawns' or fortified walled cottages to which settlers could retire in times of difficulty.

The precarious frontier existence of the settlers was demonstrated by the rebellion of the native Irish in 1641. The massacre of planters and their families in isolated settlements confirmed for the planters the treachery and savagery of the native Irish and provided the excuse for swift and bloody retribution. However, the main significance of the rebellion lay in its reinforcement of the feeling of insecurity on the part of the settlers and the development of what has since been described as a siege mentality. Moreover this insecurity was often expressed in religious terms for unlike the native Irish and the earlier Anglo-Norman invaders of the 12th century who were both Roman Catholics, the newcomers espoused an uncompromising Calvinism with an emphasis on Puritan values. It was this religious dimension which effectively prevented the assimilation of the newcomers, with their different culture and traditions, by the native Irish, and sowed the seeds of the present conflict and division.

However, it was the defeat of the Catholic King James II, 50 years later, by the forces of William of Orange, which was to seal the division between Planter and Gael. The victories of William's forces at Londonderry, Aughrim and the Boyne finally secured the plantation's success and provided in later years the symbols to recall what was seen as the deliverance of Ulster's Protestants from the fearsome prospect of Roman bondage.

The years which followed saw the enactment of the harsh Penal Laws which prohibited both Catholic and Presbyterian from holding Government office or from sitting in Parliament. Catholics were further prohibited from purchasing land. The saying of Mass and the training of priests were also outlawed. Since the Presbyterians had been attracted to Ulster by the promise of religious toleration such laws constituted a grave infringement of their liberty. By the end of the 18th century a quarter of a million Presbyterians had emigrated to America.

The revolt of the American colonies together with the French Revolution were to have a significant impact on some of the more liberal Presbyterians who remained. As a consequence of the political frustrations they felt they formed the radical society of United Irishmen in Belfast in 1791. The movement sought to repeal the Penal Laws, to reform Parliament and to establish an independent Ireland, although some of those who joined it, including its leader, Wolfe Tone, who was born an Anglican, were less concerned with the Penal Laws than with breaking the connections with England – ‘That never failing source of all our political evils’.

The Society drew its initial support predominantly from middle class Presbyterians in certain clearly defined urban areas. But it had no following among Protestant farmers or more significantly from Protestants living in areas where the memories of the 1641 massacre were still fresh, despite the passage of 150 years. Catholic support came later as the organisation sought to expand its membership.

The insurrection of 1798 degenerated into sectarian massacres on a scale reminiscent of those of the 17th century and reinforced yet again the basic mistrust and fear each community had of the other. While the rising proved abortive – it was easily defeated and its leaders were executed or banished to France – its significance to later generations of Republicans lived on. To them it represented the uniting of Catholics and Presbyterians in the pursuit of an Ireland free from English rule. However, this linkage was very limited in both scope and duration, for the Presbyterian founders of the United Irishmen were a radical minority and not representative of Presbyterians in general. Moreover events were later to conspire to link Catholicism with Irish Nationalism in an unbreakable bond. This conjunction was viewed with foreboding by those remaining radical Presbyterians who could not but perceive that Catholic members and their values would inevitably dominate any representative Irish Parliament. This led them, by the late 19th century, to make common cause with the adherents to the established church – an alliance their more conservative colleagues had long before accepted. This trend was enhanced by the dependence of the relatively more prosperous Ulster economy on trading links with England and Scotland. Thus over the years there occurred the fusion of the religious and political divides which is still recognisable today.

The 1798 rebellion provided the government in London with an opportunity to abolish the short lived Irish Parliament, which had been established in Dublin in 1782 at the instigation of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy who controlled its affairs. The Act of Union of 1801 bound Ireland to Britain in legislative union and was to have been accompanied by Catholic emancipation. However, it took nearly 30 years for Catholic emancipation to materialise following the election to Westminster of Daniel O’Connell – a Catholic – in 1828. Attention then focussed on the repeal of the Act of Union and the establishment of an independent legislature for Ireland. O’Connell’s espousal of constitutional nationalism had little success and soon the real movement was overshadowed by a tragic event of great significance – the potato famine of 1845-47. The famine left a legacy of hatred towards England, which was then carried overseas by those who emigrated and particularly those who went to the United States.

Although there had been a brief violent reaction to what was seen as English indifference to Ireland's sufferings in the unsuccessful Young Ireland rising of 1848 it was not until 10 years later that the secret society, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, better known as the Fenians, was formed. It became the first, in a long line of revolutionary groups dedicated to the establishment of an Irish Republic, and although its rising in 1867 was, like its predecessors, abortive, the emigration of many of its leaders stiffened the resolve of those overseas to see Ireland freed from oppressive English rule.

1885 convinced Gladstone of the merits of Home Rule (devolving power to an Irish Parliament) but his first Home Rule Bill in 1886 was defeated in the Commons. A similar fate befell his second Home Rule Bill in 1893, which was defeated in the Lords.

Meanwhile, in Ireland 1893 saw the formation of the Gaelic League by Douglas Hyde and others. Its formation represented a reaction against the dominance of English culture throughout Ireland. Its aim was to revive the Irish language and create a distinctively Irish culture and although non-sectarian and non-political many of its followers were so inspired by it that later they became inextricably linked with militant republican nationalism.

Gladstone's Home Rule Bills in 1886 and 1893 had not gone unopposed in Ireland. Ulster had traditionally returned a number of Unionist MPs to Westminster who sided with the Tories in their opposition to both Bills. The Unionist MPs and their supporters believed that Home Rule would inevitably lead to independence and that would have dire consequences for Ulster. Firstly, they considered it would imperil Ulster's prosperity, for Belfast relied heavily for raw materials and exports to the British market. Secondly, they believed an independent Ireland would pose a threat to civil and religious liberties, for they feared domination by the Roman Catholic Church. Lastly, they believed an independent Ireland would dissolve the strong cultural ties between Ulster and Britain.

Nevertheless, despite Unionist and Tory opposition, Asquith's Liberal Government forced the third Home Rule Bill through Parliament in 1912. Opposition to the measure grew rapidly in Ulster and in 1912 half-a-million Protestants under the leadership of Sir Edward Carson, signed a 'Solemn League and Covenant'.

The following year a provisional government was set up to assume power illegally in Ulster should Home Rule come to pass. It quickly became clear this was no idle threat for gun running, carried out under the noses of the authorities, provided the necessary weapons to equip the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) to fight, if necessary, the forces of the Crown. The UVF's preparations for armed resistance enjoyed the support of the Tory Party at Westminster.

Meanwhile in the rest of Ireland a rival force was established - the Irish National Volunteers (INV). The threat of civil war loomed large until, in 1914, the advent of the First World War caused the Home Rule Act to be put into cold storage for its duration. Both the UVF and INV pledged support for the crown and fought in France.

After the war the significant opposition to the Home Rule Bill had to be recognised; the government of Ireland Act (1920) provided for the partition of Ireland.

In the other part of Ireland the 1916 Rising, and its aftermath, irreversibly changed opinion and destroyed the old constitutional Irish Parliamentary Party. The physical force republican tradition reinforced by the Gaelic cultural revival became dominant. Home Rule was no longer enough, particularly Home Rule which recognised partition. The 1920 Act was rejected. The armed

struggle, which had got under way in 1919 intensified. Finally the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty resulted in the creation of the Irish Free State with dominion status, i.e. a self-governing territory of the then British Empire, but it meant the acceptance of partition at least for a while and it was not the full Republic. The Treaty was only finally accepted after the conclusion of a brief, but bloody, civil war, the resulting divisions from which have continued to affect the life of the State to the present day.

Since then there is evidence that the two parts of Ireland have grown further apart. From the beginning, Northern Ireland felt under threat as the IRA launched a campaign of murder and violence designed to undermine the authority of the new government and prevent it from functioning effectively. At various times over the next 50 years they returned to the offensive in an effort to dislodge the local administration, claimed by its leaders to be a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people. Representatives of the Catholic minority were consigned to the role of permanent opposition with no prospects of exercising political power. It is hardly surprising that Nationalist members refused initially to take their seats while other members of the minority refused to participate in the 'public' life of the State, for partition ignored the presence and aspirations of approximately one-third of its inhabitants and 75% of the whole island.

The South advanced from Dominion status, through the Constitution of 1937, to formally becoming a Republic in 1949 and leaving the Commonwealth.

The Constitution of 1937, to some extent, enshrined Catholic social teaching (e.g. divorce was outlawed). Article 44 recognised the special position of the Catholic Church within the State (repealed thirty-five years later).

The confessional influences increased Unionist fears and retrospectively seemed to them to justify their belief that Home Rule would have led to Rome Rule.

In addition, Article 2 stated that 'the national territory consists of the whole island, Ireland'. In the view of Ulster Unionists this article serves to encourage the various IRA factions in the latter's attempt to reunite Ireland by violent means. Indeed distorted minds could even cite this Article to legitimise and justify their actions.

Three further factors seemed to reinforce partition. The South took no part in the Second World War, while the North of Ireland played a substantial part. Secondly, British Government financial transfers (particularly after 1945) to Northern Ireland supported a welfare state and an education system, which could not be maintained in the South. The economic 'miracle' in the Republic, coinciding with the accession to the premiership of Sean Lemass in 1959 has altered this considerably, but not totally. Thirdly, the marked decline of the Protestant population in the South (partly due to mixed marriage) seemed to suggest to Protestants that there was no future in being a minority in a Catholic dominated state.

In the North the pattern of a de facto Protestant domination and Catholic dissociation from the State continued, in essence, undisturbed until 1968, although a period of considerable improvement of relationships set in the middle sixties, both within Northern Ireland and with the Irish Republic. The Civil Rights Movement broke the old mould because it began as a demand for civil rights within the State rather than the traditional nationalist or republican demand for its abolition. It was led by a new generation of university educated Catholics like John Hume and Austin Currie.

Many of its aims were achieved – equal voting rights for all local, as well as Westminster, elections, the reorganisation of the police, the replacement of the ‘B’ Specials, the transfer of responsibility for housing from Local Councils to a central authority, the introduction of procedures for dealing with complaints against statutory bodies and the establishment of a Fair Employment Agency (now Commission) – but, unwittingly, it refuelled the old animosities.

2 CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS FROM 1968

1968

August First Civil Rights march from Coalisland to Dungannon
 October Violence at Civil Rights march in Derry

1969

January Peoples Democracy march from Belfast to Londonderry
 April Chichester-Clark succeeds Terence O’Neill as Prime Minister
 August Rioting in Belfast and Derry results in the intervention of British Army
 October Hunt Report on police reform
 December Community Relations Commission established

1970

January Ulster Defence Regiment comes into operation
 Split at Sinn Féin conference leads to formation of Provisional IRA
 April Social Democratic and Labour Party formed

1971

March Faulkner succeeds Chichester-Clark as Prime Minister
 July SDLP withdraw from Stormont following two deaths in Derry
 August Internment without trial introduced; a rent and rates strike begins
 October Democratic Unionist Party formed
 November Compton Report on interrogation of internees

1972

January Bloody Sunday – 13 shot dead by army in Derry
 March Direct Rule introduced
 July Bloody Friday – 11 killed in IRA bomb explosions in Belfast
 December Diplock Report suggests trial without juries for terrorist-type offences

1973

March Border poll shows majority in NI favour maintenance of the Union.
 White Paper proposes Assembly, proportional representation and a Council of Ireland
 April Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act passed
 July First meeting of Northern Ireland Assembly
 December Sunningdale Conference

1974

January Northern Ireland Executive takes office
 May Ulster Workers Council strike leads to fall of power-sharing Executive
 July White Paper proposes elections to a Constitutional Assembly

December Feakle Talks – meeting of Protestant clergy and laity with members of Provisional Sinn Féin

1975

May Elections to Constitutional Convention
December Last detainees released

1976

March Special category status ended for those committing terrorist-type offences
August Formation of Peace People
December Fair Employment Act introduced

1977

May Failure of United Ulster Unionist Council strike

1978

January European Court of Human Rights holds interrogation techniques used on internees did not amount to torture but had been inhuman and degrading

1979

March Publication of Bennett Report – suspected police ill-treatment of suspects
Assassination of Airey Neave
May Conservative Party wins General Election
June Election of Euro-MPs - Paisley, Hume and Taylor
August United States State Department bans sale of arms to RUC
Assassination of Earl Mountbatten
September Pope John Paul II visits Ireland
November British Government publishes consultative document for proposed Constitutional Conference
December Haughey succeeds Lynch as Taoiseach

1980

January Constitutional Conference opens
April Constitutional Conference ends
June European Commission of Human Rights finds the dirty protest' self-inflicted
July Government publishes discussion document on future Government of Northern Ireland
October Republican hunger strike in Maze Prison begins
December Thatcher/Haughey summit meeting
Republican hunger strikers end their fast

1981

March Second Republican hunger strike begins
April Bobby Sands elected MP for Fermanagh/South Tyrone
May Death of Bobby Sands
June Garret FitzGerald becomes Taoiseach at the head of a Labour/Fine Gael Coalition without a majority rule in the Dail. Two hunger strikers candidates elected
August Election of Owen Carron as MP for Fermanagh/South Tyrone
September James Prior becomes Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Garret FitzGerald launches his crusade to change the 'sectarian' features of the Republic's Constitution

October	Hunger strike called off after a total of 10 deaths
November	Thatcher/FitzGerald summit meeting Death of the Rev. Robert Bradford, Official Unionist MP for South Belfast, murdered by the Provisional IRA Paisley's 'Third Force' makes its appearance
1982	
March	Charles Haughey becomes Taoiseach again but without a majority in the Dail
April	James Prior announces plans for a Local Assembly in NI with 'rolling' devolution of power
October	Elections for a Local Assembly in Northern Ireland; Sinn Féin candidates elected
November	Local Assembly meets but without the SDLP or Provisional Sinn Féin
December	Garret FitzGerald becomes Taoiseach again at the head of a majority Labour/Fine Gael Coalition
1983	
May	First meeting of the New Ireland Forum
June	Conservatives win General Election; Gerry Adams becomes MP for West Belfast
November	Thatcher/FitzGerald summit meeting
1984	
May	New Ireland Forum produces its Report; preferred option is a Unitary State
September	Douglas Hurd becomes Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
November	Thatcher/FitzGerald summit meeting
1985	
September	Tom King replaces Douglas Hurd as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
November	Anglo-Irish Agreement giving Republic consultative role in NI affairs
December	UUP and DUP members of Parliament resign their seats at Westminster
1986	
January	By-elections. Official Unionist Party loses one seat
March	Loyalist 'Day of Action'
June	NI Assembly wound up
1987	
February	General Election in Republic. Charles Haughey becomes Taoiseach. Garret FitzGerald resigns as leader of Fine Gael, replaced by Alan Dukes
June	Conservatives win General Election. Official Unionists lose seat to SDLP
December	Extradition Act ratified in Republic of Ireland
1988	
March	Shooting of three IRA members in Gibraltar by SAS
October	Ban on paramilitaries appearing on broadcast media
1989	
May	Review of Anglo-Irish Agreement published
June	Elections in Republic. Charles Haughey remains Taoiseach but Fianna Fail has to share power with Progressive Democrats
October	Release of the Guildford Four

1990

January Talks about talks begin with the political parties in NI and the Irish Government
November Mary Robinson elected President of the Republic of Ireland

1991

June Round table talks between the NI political parties begin
July Talks end without any agreement

1992

February Resignation of Charles Haughey as Taoiseach of Irish Republic – replaced by Albert Reynolds
April Patrick Mayhew replaces Peter Brooke as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Gerry Adams loses his seat in West Belfast
Talks begin between British Government, Irish Government and NI political parties
June Ulster Defence Regiment and Royal Irish Rangers amalgamated to form Royal Irish Regiment
November Talks end without agreement

1993

January New Fianna Fail-Labour Coalition Government in Republic. Albert Reynolds remains Taoiseach
April Talks begin between John Hume, leader of the SDLP and Gerry Adams, President of Sinn Féin
September Hume and Adams suspend their discussions to allow the British and Irish Governments to consider a report to be forwarded to the Irish Government
November Confirmation of contact between British Government and IRA
December Joint Declaration by British and Irish Governments

1994

August Declaration of complete cessation of violence by Provisional IRA
October Loyalist Paramilitaries cease all operational hostilities.
November Albert Reynolds resigns as Taoiseach; replaced by Bertie Ahern as leader of Fianna Fail Party. Fianna Fail – Labour Coalition collapses in Republic
December New Fine Gael – Labour – Democratic Left Coalition in Republic John Bruton becomes Taoiseach

1995

February Joint Framework Document and plans for a new Northern Ireland Assembly published
May First official meeting between British Government Minister and Sinn Féin
September David Trimble becomes Leader of UUP in succession to James Molyneaux
November President Clinton visits Northern Ireland

1996

January Mitchell Report on decommissioning produced. John Major announces plans for an elected body in Northern Ireland.
February IRA ends ceasefire with bomb at Canary Wharf in London
May Elections to Northern Ireland Forum and to participation in all-inclusive party talks
June Party talks commence without Sinn Féin

July Large scale disturbances throughout Northern Ireland in relation to Orange march in Portadown. SDLP withdraw from NI Forum.

1997

May New Labour Government. Dr. Marjorie Mowlam replaces Sir Patrick Mayhew as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

June New Fianna Fail – Progressive Democrat Coalition in Republic.

Bertie Ahern becomes Taoiseach

July Disturbances in nationalist areas in relation to Orange March in Portadown. Orange Order agrees to re-route some marches on 12th of July

IRA ceasefire restored

September Sinn Féin enter all-party talks, having signed up to Mitchell Principles

October First session of full negotiations

1998

January Irish and British Governments produce Heads of Agreement.

All Parties in the talks except Sinn Féin accept proposals as a basis for negotiation

March Talks chairman George Mitchell issues April 9 deadline for negotiations to end

April Signing of Good Friday Agreement

May Almost 72% of voters in Northern Ireland and just over 96% of the electorate in the Republic say yes to the Agreement

June Elections held for new NI Assembly. Independent Police Commission appointed and begin work

July First Minister David Trimble and Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon appointed
Tensions rise as the Drumcree Orange Church Parade is banned; 7 nights of loyalist violence culminating in murder of Quinn children in Ballymoney

August 29 killed in Omagh bomb by Real IRA

LVF ceasefire

September First prisoners released under Agreement INLA ceasefire.

November Northern Ireland Act, providing for the Human Rights and Equality Commissions and the Assembly, becomes law

December Agreement reached by parties on 10 government departments and 6 cross-border bodies

1999

February Assembly approves structures and departments agreed in December

March Secretary of State for NI and Irish Foreign Minister sign treaties to establish North/South Ministerial Council, British-Irish Council and British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

April Hillsborough Declaration on Decommissioning rejected by Sinn Féin

May Proposed compromise on decommissioning rejected by Ulster Unionists.

Absolute deadline of June 30 set by British Prime Minister to establish Executive

July After 5 days of intensive negotiation the British and Irish Governments release

‘The Way Forward’ document. Rejected by Ulster Unionist Party.

Attempt to form Executive collapses when Ulster Unionist Party refuses to nominate ministers.

Seamus Mallon resigns as Deputy First Minister.

Agreement goes into review. Senator George Mitchell appointed to facilitate review

August Secretary of State for Northern Ireland makes determination on state of ceasefire.

September Senator George Mitchell begins review of Good Friday Agreement.

October	Patton Commission produces report on policing. Mr. Peter Mandelson becomes Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in succession to Mo Mowlam.
November	Arising out of Mitchell review a piece of political choreography takes place which includes statements by General John de Chastelain, chairman of the decommissioning body, by the UUP, Sinn Féin, and the IRA and the final report by Senator Mitchell. The Ulster Unionist Council then meets on November 26 th and agrees, provisionally to endorse the Unionist Party going into the Executive with Sinn Féin. The final decision is put off to February 2000 to see if the IRA decommissioning takes place.
November	Mr Seamus Mallon is reinstated as Deputy First Minister and members of the ten-person Executive are selected in the Assembly on 2 December 2 nd .
December	Power devolved to NI Assembly and Executive. The North/South Ministerial Council, the British-Irish Council and the British-Irish Inter-Governmental Council also established. The Irish Government signs away Articles II and III. The IRA appoints interlocutor to decommissioning body, as does the UFF.

2000

January	Secretary of State for NI accepts most of Patten's Commission's proposals.
February	Mandelson suspends Province's nine-week-old power-sharing Executive and announces he is returning Northern Ireland to direct rule from Westminster. De Chastelain commission says it has 'received no information' from IRA on when decommissioning will start.
February	IRA pulls out of disarmament talks with De Chastelain.
March	Trimble says he is prepared to re-enter government with Sinn Fein - if there is a firm guarantee on decommissioning.
March	Trimble narrowly defeats South Belfast MP the Rev Martin Smyth to retain leadership of the Ulster Unionist party.
May	The British and Irish governments put forward proposals to restore devolved government in Northern Ireland by 22 May.
May	Ulster Unionist Council narrowly accepts David Trimble's proposal to rejoin NI Executive.
May-midnight	Secretary of State lifts suspension of Executive and other institutions.
June	First inspection of IRA arms dumps.
August	Outbreak of loyalist feud between UVF and UDA on Shankill.
September	DUP defeat UUP in South Antrim by-election
October	Re-inspection of IRA arms dumps Meeting of Ulster Unionist Council. Trimble survives attempt to have Unionist Party withdraw from Government with Sinn Fein. He excludes Sinn Fein ministers from attending North-South Ministerial Council because of failure of IRA to decommission weapons.

2001

January	Dr John Reid replaces Peter Mandelson as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.
May	Trimble lodges post-dated resignation as First Minister with speaker of NI Assembly, pledging to quit on 1 July unless the IRA has started to decommission weapons.
June	General Election and Local Elections in Northern Ireland. Losses for Ulster Unionists and gains for Sinn Fein and DUP.
July	Trimble resigns on 1 July as First Minister.

August	Negotiations between the parties at Weston Park end inconclusively. Two governments produce take it or leave it package involving proposals on policing, demilitarisation and other issues and say decommissioning is “an indispensable part of the process”.
August	Decommissioning Commission reports that IRA has proposed a method to put its weapons beyond use; confirmed by subsequent IRA statement.
August	NI Assembly suspended for 24 hour period to allow further 6 weeks of discussion.
August	IRA withdraw proposal on decommissioning of weapons.
August	John Hume resigns as Leader of the SDLP
August	Revised policing proposals supported by Irish Government, Catholic Church and SDLP; rejected by Sinn Fein.
September	NI Assembly again suspended for 24 hour period to allow further 6 weeks of discussion. SDLP, DUP and UUP agree to join new Policing Board; Sinn Fein declines.
October	Secretary of State declares UDA and LVF ceasefires over
October	Three UUP Ministers and 2 DUP Ministers resign
October	IRA decommissions some of its weapons
October	UUP and DUP Ministers return to Executive
November	Trimble elected First Minister but only after Alliance Party and Women's Coalition MLAs re-designate .
November	Policing Board comes into operation; police name becomes "The Police Service for Northern Ireland"
November	Publication of draft Justice Bill with long awaited reform of criminal justice system. Abolition by GAA of Rule 21 banning members of British Security Forces from membership
2002	
March	Theft of special branch files from Castlereagh Police Station sparks political crisis.
April	Second act of decommissioning by IRA
October	Police arrest key Sinn Fein figures in alleged spy ring
October	Government suspends Assembly and imposes Direct Rule
October	Prime Minister flies to Belfast and demands that IRA carry out “acts of completion”
October	Paul Murphy becomes Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
2003	
March	The two governments hold talks at Hillsborough Castle but no breakthrough.
April	Stevens Report published - finds evidence of widespread collusion between the security forces and loyalist paramilitaries
May	British Government postpones elections due to be held on May 29 to the autumn because of lack of clarity about the IRA’s intentions. The British and Irish governments publish Joint Declaration Proposals. IRA publishes Statement of April 13 sent to two governments.
June	Ulster Unionist Council decides not to reject Joint Declaration Proposals; subsequently 3 Unionist MPs resign Whip and seek a re-alignment of Unionism
November	The DUP and Sinn Fein emerge as the largest Unionist and Nationalist parties during elections for the suspended NI Assembly

2004

- April A report from the Independent Monitoring Commission finds that, despite ceasefires, paramilitaries are still responsible for a range of violent and other criminal activities
- December Proposals by the British and Irish Governments for a comprehensive agreement sent to Sinn Fein and DUP but no agreement
Northern Bank robbery – PSNI states that the IRA is involved

2005

- January Murder of Robert McCartney in pub fight in Belfast by Republicans.
- April Gerry Adams calls on the IRA to abandon the armed struggle and embrace “pure” democratic politics and asks for an IRA response
- May DUP makes large gains in local and general elections. David Trimble loses his seat and resigns as Unionist Party Leader
Peter Hain becomes Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
- June Sir Reg Empey becomes Unionist Party Leader
- July IRA formally orders end to armed campaign, says it will pursue exclusively peaceful means
- September IRA’s arsenal of weapons, explosives and ammunition put beyond use, the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning confirmed

2006

- March Deadline for efforts to restore Northern Ireland Assembly set for 24 November
- May Assembly members recalled for a 6 week period
- October Meeting of political parties and two governments at St Andrews, Scotland. A sequenced set of proposals presented which could lead to full restoration of devolved government by March 2007
- November DUP and Sinn Fein deemed to have nominated their two candidates for First and Deputy First Minister on November 24

2007

- January Sinn Fein conference votes to support policing
- March Following Sinn Fein’s decision to endorse policing in Northern Ireland.
Northern Ireland goes to the polls on March 7. Sinn Fein and the DUP are returned with an increased number of seats. The DUP indicate that they wish the formation of an Northern Ireland Executive to be delayed from March 26 to an agreed date in May. The date eventually agreed is May 8
- May Northern Ireland Executive established with Ian Paisley as First Minister and Martin McGuinness as Deputy First Minister

3 SOME STATISTICS

- 3.1 Population:** Northern Ireland (2005) 1.71 million (estimated)
For religious breakdown see Appendix I
Republic of Ireland (2005) 4.13 million (estimated)

3.2 Statistics of violence: Figures from 1966

Deaths	3722
Injuries	over 45,000
Shooting Incidents	over 36,000
Bombs Planted	15,300

Of those killed since 1966 53% were civilians, 30% were members of the security forces and 16% were paramilitaries. It has been estimated that IRA Republicans have been responsible for ca 58% of deaths, loyalist paramilitaries for ca 30% and the security forces ca 10%. (See *Northern Ireland's Troubles: The Human Costs*, Marie-Therese Fay, Mike Morrissey, Marie Smyth for further information.) Around 350 IRA members have died since 1969 and over 100 loyalists. Around 30,000 people have served sentences as a result of the conflict. Only 29% of Republican and 50% of loyalist cases have been solved. As part of the Good Friday Agreement an accelerated release scheme for paramilitary prisoners got under way from September 1998; all prisoners were out by the end of July 2000. An Historical Enquiries Team has been set up to look into the unsolved killings since 1968 – over 1800 unsolved murders and 300 security forces related deaths.

3.3 Security Services

Over 30 year period of the troubles 302 RUC officers were killed and over 10,000 injured. The future of the RUC was reviewed by the Patten Commission. It recommended in September 1999: the renaming of the RUC with the loss of symbols and the removal of the Union flag over police stations; a new policing board to replace the Police Authority; the phasing out of 3000 members of the RUC full-time reserve as part of moves to reduce the overall strength from 13,000 to 7,500; the formation of 29 police partnership boards; and recruitment on a strict 50/50 basis of Protestants and Roman Catholics. Most of the recommendations were accepted by the Secretary of State in January 2000. A Police Bill became law in November 2000. The SDLP, Ulster Unionist Party and DUP all agree to join new Policing Board; Sinn Fein declined. The new Policing Board came into operation at beginning of November 2001 and the name became The Police Service for Northern Ireland. Sinn Fein voted to endorse policing at an Ard Fheis in January 2007 and following the formation of the Northern Ireland Executive on May 8 joined the Policing Board. The implementation of the Patten Commission recommendations will mean a virtually halving of numbers to around 7,500. The percentage of Catholics in the PSNI is around 22% (2007).

Following the IRA's announcement of a formal end of the armed campaign in July 2005 the British Government said it would reduce the army presence in Northern Ireland to 5000 (including the disbandment of the home service 3 battalions of the RIR) and the removal of watch-towers and security bases. The reduction to 5000 will be done by 1 August 2007 and the number of sites where troops are stationed will be reduced to 14.

3.4 Economics

The Northern Ireland unemployment rate for January - March 2007 was 4.2%. Jobs in the public sector make up around 36% of total employment (20.2% in GB and 22% in the Republic). The public sector accounts for some 55% of GDP compared with less than 40% in the UK as a whole. The subvention from the British Exchequer is around £6 billion per annum. There are over 100,000 children in Northern Ireland living in poverty (one quarter of all children) and 30% of households living in poverty. The economic inactivity rate is 27% (June-August 2006).

4 SOME OF THE LEADING ACTORS - Republicans

4.1 The Provisional IRA and Provisional Sinn Féin

The Republican Movement in the 1960s had been concentrating on social revolution rather than armed struggle. It was thus signally ill prepared for the events of August 1969. After a period of intense internal debate within the Movement, the Provisional IRA emerged in 1969. It split from the 'Official' Movement on ideological grounds and the question of the armed struggle. By January 1970 there were two IRAs and two Sinn Féins (the political wing of the Movement). The Provisional's basic policy was to get the British Government to admit defeat and declare its intention to withdraw from Northern Ireland.

Political activity increased from the hunger strikes in 1981 and the long-standing policy of abstention from elections was abandoned. Five candidates were elected to the 1982 Northern Ireland Assembly with the support of 30% of the Catholic population (10% of the over-all first preference vote). They did not take up their seats.

A decision was made to take up seats on Local Councils. The Party gained 59 seats in the May 1985 Council elections (11.8% of the total vote) and had representation on 17 out of the 26 Councils. After the Anglo-Irish Agreement Sinn Féin lost support to the SDLP; in the Local Council elections of 1989 the party's share of the vote went down to 11.3%. However, since the early 1990s the party vote has steadily risen. The share of the vote in the 1997 Local Government elections was 16.9% and in the 1997 General Election it was 16.1% with 2 MPs being elected; in the 1998 Assembly elections it was 17.65%; and in the 2001 Local and General Elections 20.7% and 21.7% respectively. It has now overtaken the SDLP as the largest Nationalist Party, receiving 23.5% of the vote in 2003 Assembly elections, 24.3% in the 2005 General election and 26.2% in the 2007 Assembly elections.

The policy of abstention from taking up seats in the Dail was abandoned in the autumn of 1986. A more active political role was sought in the Republic. A seat was gained in Dail Eireann in the June 1997 elections, and the Party increased that number in subsequent elections, but fell back at the 2007 elections to 4 seats.

In 1992 the Party accepted for the first time that British withdrawal could only come about by agreement between the British and Irish Governments. The joint communiqué issued by John Hume and Gerry Adams at the end of April 1993 agreed that the Irish people as a whole have a right to national self determination but it was accepted that a new agreement must 'earn and enjoy

the allegiance of the different traditions on the island by accommodating diversity and providing national reconciliation’.

The Hume-Adams initiative was overtaken by the two Governments’ Joint Declaration in December. Sinn Féin were offered a place at preliminary talks on the future of Northern Ireland ‘within three months following a verifiable declaration of an end to violence’.

Sinn Féin demanded clarification on the Declaration, which was eventually given by the British Government in May, 1994. The Declaration was effectively rejected at a national delegate conference of Sinn Féin in July after a period of internal and external consultation. Sinn Féin wished the British Government to become persuaders for a United Ireland and rejected what was called a ‘Unionist Veto’. A complete cessation of violence was announced by the Provisional IRA at the end of August 1994. In October the British Government said that it was acting on the ‘working assumption’ that the ceasefire was now permanent. Exploratory talks with Sinn Féin started at the beginning of December with ministerial talks in May, 1995.

Sinn Féin demanded inclusion to all-party talks without there being any prior decommissioning of IRA weapons. This was resisted by the British Government and the Unionist Parties. The decommissioning issue became a major difficulty. The IRA ceasefire ended in February 1996 with a bomb at Canary Wharf in London.

The Party was excluded from all-party talks after the Forum elections of May 1996, as the Provisional IRA had not restored its ceasefire. The ceasefire was restored in July 1997 and Sinn Féin was admitted to the talks in September after signing the Mitchell Principles.

Following the Good Friday Agreement a special conference was held in May which voted to end the long-standing policy of abstention from taking up seats in a Northern Ireland Assembly and to take up its places in the Executive.

The decommissioning issue created constant political difficulties, although there was an aspiration in the Good Friday Agreement to have decommissioning completed by May 22nd 2000. There was also no link between Sinn Féin membership of the Executive and IRA decommissioning in the Agreement. In November 1999 Sinn Féin said that the Party was committed to decommissioning and in December the IRA appointed an interlocutor to the decommissioning body under General de Chastelain. Leading up to the suspension of the Assembly a number of statements were made by the IRA which enabled the decommissioning body to issue a positive report, but no clear timetable was produced.

In early May 2000 the British and Irish governments gave the parties a letter spelling out how the Good Friday Agreement could be put into operation. This was followed by an IRA statement saying it was prepared to “completely and verifiably put IRA weapons beyond use”. It indicated its willingness to allow some of its arms dumps to be inspected by agreed third parties. It also said it would re-enter discussions with the decommissioning body. The agreed independent third parties were duly appointed in early May 2000 and made their first inspection of IRA arms dumps in June. There were further inspections. However, there was no decommissioning and this produced a crisis in the Peace Process. In early August 2001 the Decommissioning Commission reported that the IRA had proposed a method to put its weapons completely and verifiably beyond use; this was subsequently confirmed in an IRA statement. The proposal was withdrawn following the temporary suspension of the NI Assembly. However, an act of decommissioning took place in October 2001 followed by a second act in April 2002.

Alleged republican involvement with Columban rebels, the Castlereagh break-in and the claims of an IRA spy ring led to the collapse of the Assembly in October 2002. Discussions took place between the two governments and the Republican movement in an attempt to create a deal involving an unambiguous IRA commitment that its activities were at an end.

A Joint Declaration by the two governments proposed a whole series of acts of completion which included the repeal of the British government power to suspend the North of Ireland's political institutions, a programme of "security normalisation", moves towards giving power over policing and justice to the NI Executive and Assembly, plans to resolve the cases of those "on-the-run" and a new, independent body to monitor the carrying out of commitments to end paramilitary activity. The IRA were unable to produce a sufficiently clear commitment to end all paramilitary activity to convince the two governments. This led to a postponement by the British Government of the elections due on May 29 2003 to the autumn. The IRA released its statement to the two governments of what it was willing to do after the two governments published their Joint Declaration Proposals. The two governments continued their search for a formula for verifiable decommissioning, but a proposed deal in December 2004 fails over photographic verification.

While the IRA abandoned large-scale terrorism it was responsible for a number of murders, including some drug dealers. The IRA also raised large amounts of money by various activities including tax scams, protection rackets, embezzlement and fraud. The PSNI stated that the IRA was involved in the Northern Bank robbery of December 2004.

In April 2005 Gerry Adams called for the IRA to achieve its aims by purely political and democratic activity and asked the IRA to make a response. The response came at the end of July. The IRA announced a "formal end to the armed campaign". All IRA units were ordered to "dump arms". The decommissioning process would be completed as quickly as possible by "verifiably putting its arms beyond use". At the end of September 2005 the Independent Commission on Decommissioning confirmed that the IRA arsenal of weapons, explosives and ammunition had been put beyond use. It was the view of the Independent Monitoring Commission (October 2006) that the IRA did not pose a terrorist threat as it had decided to follow a political path. However, some provisionals were still involved in serious crime, in the view of the Commission.

Sinn Fein at a special Ard Fheis agreed to endorse policing in January 2007. Sinn Fein has 3 ministers in the Northern Ireland Executive established on May 8 as well as a Deputy First Minister (Martin McGuinness).

4.2 The Official IRA

The Official IRA continued their campaign until 1972 when they declared an indefinite ceasefire. The political side of the Movement evolved into the Workers Party. In Northern Ireland it stood in local and parliamentary elections concentrating on social and economic issues and class politics without much success. In the Republic the Workers Party gained seven seats in the Dail and seemed to be making significant progress as a left-wing alternative to the Labour Party. In February 1992 the Party split over the influence of old paramilitary connections and associations with the former Soviet Union. The larger group left to become Democratic Left. Democratic Left joined the Coalition Government formed in December 1994. In December 1998 Democratic Left voted to merge with the Labour Party. The Official IRA continues to exist but is not involved in violence.

4.3 Irish National Liberation Army

A breakaway organisation from the Official IRA because of its military inactivity. It has a history of factionalism and internal feuding. INLA called a permanent ceasefire in September 1998 but continues low level violence. The Irish Republican Socialist Party is the political wing.

4.4 Republican Splinter Groups

Republican Sinn Féin split from the Provisional IRA in 1986 on the issue of allowing Sinn Féin candidates to take their seats in the Dail. The Continuity Army Council (CAC) emerged into view during the period of the first IRA ceasefire and continued its violence during the second ceasefire. Republican Sinn Féin denies that the CAC is its army wing. Both however believe in the continuation of the armed struggle. CAC is not on ceasefire.

The 32 Country Sovereignty Committee are disaffected Republicans opposed to Sinn Féin's involvement in the peace process and compromises on republican ideology. They are linked to the Real IRA who emerged in the autumn of 1997 and carried out the Omagh bombing of August 1998. The Real IRA called a permanent ceasefire in September 1998. However, it restarted its campaign in February 2000. There is continuing Republican dissident activity.

5 SOME OF THE LEADING ACTORS - Loyalists

5.1 Loyalists

The largest loyalist paramilitary organisations are the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA). They saw their violence as 'defensive', i.e. defending Ulster, and reactive to Provisional IRA violence. Campaigns of sectarian assassinations of Roman Catholics, sometimes on a random basis, were carried out. The UDA spawned a political wing, the New Ulster Political Research Group, which in 1981 metamorphosed into a formal political party, the Ulster Loyalist Democratic Party, (which became the Ulster Democratic Party) espousing the idea of an independent Ulster. The UDA published a document in early 1987 entitled 'Common Sense' which supported power sharing.

Loyalist paramilitaries in the years before the 1994 ceasefires killed more people than the IRA. It is estimated that over the years 40,000 men have been members of Protestant paramilitary groups. The UDA was banned in 1992. The UFF (Ulster Freedom Fighters) is a cover label for the UDA.

The loyalist paramilitaries announced a ceasefire in October 1994. In November the British Government announced its intention to open talks with 'loyalist political representatives' – members of the Ulster Democratic Party and the Progressive Unionist Party (which closely reflects the thinking of the UVF) and these talks commenced in December 1994. These parties were elected to the Northern Ireland Forum and took part in the multi-party talks as the Loyalist ceasefire remained in place. However, loyalists from the UFF were implicated in a number of murders in January 1997 and the UDP withdrew from the talks before they were expelled. The PUP won 2 seats in the 1998 Assembly elections, the UDP none.

The Loyalist Volunteer Force was formed in 1996 from dissident loyalists in the Portadown area. Its leader, Billy Wright, was assassinated by the INLA in December 1997. It called a ceasefire in August 1998 and decommissioned some weapons in December of that year. (None of the other

loyalist groups have decommissioned any weapons.) There has been UVF/LVF feuding which ended in August 2005. The UVF has been reviewing its future and in early May 2007 announced that it had ended its campaign of violence and was putting its arms 'beyond reach', however they were not being decommissioned.

A loyalist feud between the UVF and UDA began in August 2000 on the Shankill and led to more than 250 families fleeing and 7 people being killed (13 people were killed in 2000 in inter-loyalist feuding). A feud within the UDA led to members of the faction directed by Johnny Adair departing for Scotland in February 2003 and a number of murders. Some elements of the organisation have been seeking to move away from crime and violence and this has been encouraged by the government which agreed in early 2007 to give £1m to help the UDA move into community activity.

6 THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Sinn Féin and the Loyalist Parties have been mentioned in Section (A).

6.1 The Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)

The SDLP was founded in 1970 to replace the old Nationalist Party. It took part in the power-sharing Executive of 1974 while believing in the long-term aim of a united Ireland and finding itself unable to offer unconditional support to the security forces. The Party's long-term objective is Irish unity in terms of an 'agreed Ireland' which would take account of the 'pro-British' aspiration of the Unionist population. The SDLP and Sinn Féin are in contestation for the support of the Nationalist electorate, with Sinn Féin having decisively overtaken the SDLP.

The SDLP received 22% in the 1998 Assembly elections; 17% in the 2003 Assembly elections; and 15.2% in the 2007 Assembly elections. A leading member of the Party Mr. Seamus Mallon became Deputy First Minister of the NI Assembly and two other members of the Party gained ministerial office on the formation of the Executive. John Hume resigned as Leader of the party in September 2001; Seamus Mallon also resigned as Deputy Leader. Mark Durkan became Leader and also Deputy First Minister.

6.2 The Alliance Party

The Alliance Party was founded in 1970 and is a bi-confessional centre Party. It has a strong belief in partnership government between the two communities in Northern Ireland. It is being squeezed by an increasing polarisation of the electorate. It got 5.2% in the 2007 Assembly elections.

6.3 The Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)

The Unionist Party is the party which governed Northern Ireland from the foundation of the State to the prorogation of Stormont in 1972. The party has been in competition with the Democratic Unionist Party for the Unionist vote and has now been overtaken by the DUP; 24.2% in the 1996 Forum elections; 21.3% in the 1998 Assembly elections; 26.7% in 2001 General election; 23% in

2001 Local Government elections; 22.7% in the 2003 Assembly elections; 14.9% in the 2007 Assembly elections.

The then Party leader James Molyneux regarded the Downing Street Joint Declaration of December 1993 as not a 'sell-out' of unionism. The Party, however, rejected the Joint Framework Document of February 1995 and published its own alternative proposals.

The Party accepted the Good Friday Agreement but a significant proportion was opposed. It refused to form an executive which included Sinn Féin without decommissioning of IRA weapons. The Party rejected two sets of proposals by the British and Irish Governments to get round the problem. An attempt by the British Government to form the executive collapsed in July 1999 when the Party refused to nominate ministers because of the decommissioning issue.

Eventually, following a review of the Agreement by Senator Mitchell, a way through the decommissioning issue appeared to have been found. The Executive was formed in December 1999 with David Trimble as First Minister and 3 other UUP Ministers. However, Mr. Trimble had only conditionally agreed to enter the Executive on the understanding that IRA decommissioning would take place by the end of January. When this did not take place Mr. Trimble threatened to resign. The Secretary of State had to suspend the Assembly and the other political institutions (see Section C).

In May 2000 the Ulster Unionist Council narrowly accepted David Trimble's proposal to rejoin the Northern Ireland Executive. In the run up to the vote Mr Trimble managed to secure some concessions on the policing issue. In October an attempt to get Party to withdraw from government with Sinn Fein because of the failure to decommission narrowly fails. David Trimble excluded Sinn Fein ministers from attending the North-South Ministerial Council because of the failure of IRA to decommission weapons.

In May 2001 Trimble lodged with Speaker of NI Assembly a post-dated resignation as First Minister pledging to quit on 1 July unless the IRA has started to decommission weapons. On 1 July he resigned as First Minister, there having been no decommissioning. This gave six weeks for a new First Minister and Deputy First Minister to be elected. Failing that the Assembly had to be suspended or fresh elections called. The Assembly was suspended for a 24-hour period, giving another six weeks for discussions to continue. The Assembly was further suspended for a 24-hour period in September. In October, following the failure of a motion to exclude Sinn Fein from the Executive, the 3 Unionist Ministers resigned. The three Ministers returned to the Executive, following the IRA act of decommissioning, but David Trimble was only re-elected First Minister with the help of Women's Coalition and Alliance Party MLAs re-designating as Unionists.

In October 2002, following Republican's alleged involvement with Columbian rebels, the Castlereagh break-in and the claims of an IRA spy ring, the Unionist Party threatened to leave the Executive. The British Government then suspended the Assembly. David Trimble demanded cast iron guarantees that the IRA would get rid of all its weapons in a transparent way and renounce all paramilitary activities before he would agree to share power again with Sinn Fein.

In June 2003 the Ulster Unionist Council voted to defeat a motion to reject the Joint Declaration by a narrow margin. This was the 12th UUC meeting on issues linked to the Belfast Agreement since 1998. Subsequently 3 MPs resigned the Party Whip to seek a re-alignment of Unionism. In early 2004 Jeffrey Donaldson, MP for Lagan Valley, and two colleagues left to join the DUP. The Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland voted to sever links with the party in early 2005. The party was left with only one MP following the 2005 General election. The Leader, David Trimble, lost his

seat and subsequently resigned as Leader, to be replaced by Sir Reg Empey. The party has 2 representatives in the Northern Ireland Executive.

6.4 The Democratic Unionist Party

Founded in 1971, the Party of the Rev. Ian Paisley. Mr. Paisley has been the dominating voice of Ulster loyalism and offered a continuing threat to the Ulster Unionist Party and any attempts at compromise. The Party gained 18% in the 1998 Assembly elections and increased its share of the vote in the 2001 Local Government elections to 21.5% and to 22.5% in the 2001 General Election with 5 MPs. In the 2004 Assembly elections the DUP became the largest Unionist party with 25.7% of the vote. In the 2005 Local and General Elections the DUP made further advances. In the General election it increased its vote to 33.7% and in the 2007 Assembly elections it got 30.1%.

The Party strongly opposed the Downing Street Joint Declaration of December 1993 as a 'great sell-out' of unionism and regarded the peace process as a betrayal. The DUP rejected the Joint Framework Document as a 'one-way street' to a united Ireland. It also opposed the Good Friday Agreement. The Party, however, took up its two places on the Executive when it came into effect at the beginning of December 1999. They refused to sit in the Executive with Sinn Féin. Following the lifting of the suspension of the Executive, the Party decided to continue to take up their two places. The Party made proposals for a return of devolution (February 2004), including its terms for sharing power with Sinn Fein. Its preferred option however was for a voluntary coalition with the SDLP.

Following the Assembly elections of 2007 the party decided to enter government with Sinn Fein but not on the deadline date of March 26. A date of May 8 was finally agreed. It has 4 seats in the Executive.

7 THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

Since the introduction of Direct Rule in 1972 successive British Governments have sought the return of devolved government to Northern Ireland. In a succession of documents and discussion papers it was stated that political power sharing was one of the inescapable parameters for this. Majority rule, modifications to Direct Rule, integration with Great Britain and the return of powers to local authorities were all rejected.

Mr. James Prior announced in April 1982 proposals to have an election, by proportional representation, for an Assembly which would have a system of six scrutinising committees corresponding to the various Government departments – environment, agriculture, etc. If 70% of the Assembly agreed, ministerial power over one of these areas of government could be devolved to the Assembly. It was hoped that with time agreement could be reached over an increasing number of areas and that an Executive could be formed, i.e. a system of 'rolling' devolution was proposed. An Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier was also proposed with an optional Northern Irish element (this was the sole Irish dimension of the plan). The major Northern Irish Parties and the Irish Government and Opposition opposed the proposals. However, they became law and elections were held in October 1982. The SDLP and Provisional Sinn Féin boycotted the Assembly. The scrutinising committees were set up but no further progress was made. The British Government eventually closed the Assembly in June 1986.

In the Anglo-Irish Agreement both the British Government and the Republic of Ireland Government pledged themselves to search for a widely acceptable form of devolved government in Northern Ireland. This was reaffirmed in the May 1989 review of the Agreement.

Simultaneous with the publication of the Joint Framework Document in February 1995 the British Government produced proposals for a new Northern Ireland Assembly. It included: a 90-member assembly elected by proportional representation; a system of committees set up in proportion to party strengths and a panel of 3 people elected to oversee and assist the assembly. Discussions about political arrangements for Northern Ireland increasingly take place in an Anglo-Irish context (see section D).

Following the IRA and loyalist cessations of violence in 1994 border crossings were opened, large numbers of troops were taken off the streets, 1500 returned to Britain and the broadcasting bans and exclusion orders lifted. The remission rate for those convicted of terrorist-type offences was increased to 50%, leading to a significant release of prisoners. The British Government entered into discussions with Sinn Féin and Loyalist political representatives. The Prime Minister also announced that a referendum would be held in Northern Ireland on any political settlement.

However, the issue of the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons before the inclusion of Sinn Féin (and the Loyalist paramilitary-related Parties) to all-party talks led to increasing difficulties. The British Government position was that there needed to be some decommissioning of weapons as a sign of good faith before Sinn Féin could be included in all-party talks. Sinn Féin would not accept this (nor did the Loyalist paramilitary-related Parties).

At the end of November 1995 it was agreed by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach that a twin-track approach should be adopted. An international body under the chairmanship of former US Senator George Mitchell was set up to explore ways of decommissioning paramilitary weapons. At the same time a date for all-party talks was set for the end of February 1996.

The Mitchell Commission reported in January 1996. Its recommendations included that all those involved in all-party negotiations should commit themselves to six Principles of Democracy and Non-Violence and to the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations. It, however, concluded that the reality was that there would be no decommissioning before all party talks and suggested it proceed during political talks. Mr. Major then announced proposals for an elected body in Northern Ireland as an alternative to decommissioning. This proposal was received enthusiastically by the Unionist Parties and the Alliance Party, but opposed by Sinn Féin and the SDLP.

Following the end of the IRA ceasefire the British and Irish Governments announced that all-party talks would commence on June 10, but Sinn Féin participation would depend on a restoration of the ceasefire. The Irish Government indicated that it would accept any electoral process which was broadly acceptable to the Northern Irish parties, had an appropriate mandate and was within the three-stranded structure (see section D). Both Governments suspended ministerial contact with Sinn Féin.

However, elections duly took place at the end of May 1996 to a 110 seat Forum whose purpose is to discuss issues relevant to promoting dialogue and understanding within Northern Ireland. Elected parties also choose negotiators to inclusive all-party talks, which commenced on June 10. As the ceasefire had not been restored Sinn Féin was excluded. After considerable argument Senator Mitchell was confirmed as Chairman of the all-party talks. These talks made little

progress and were adjourned in March 1997 for the period of the General Election. One of the problems blocking progress was the issue of decommissioning.

A Labour Government was returned to power in May 1997. It announced the reopening of direct contacts between the Government and Sinn Féin. In June it announced a launch of substantive political negotiations on September 15 with a view to agreement by May 1998. Any agreement would be endorsed by referendum in Northern Ireland. (There would also be a referendum in the Republic of Ireland). The establishment of an Independent Commission on Decommissioning was also announced and Sinn Féin would be allowed entry to all-party talks 6 weeks after the declaration of an unequivocal ceasefire. The two Governments then published their proposals on decommissioning which proposed that decommissioning would be addressed alongside substantive negotiations. The Unionist Parties rejected these proposals, and the DUP and the UK Unionists walked out of the talks in July. The Ulster Unionist Party decided to remain. The Decommissioning Commission was duly constituted. Following the IRA ceasefire in July talks commenced in September with Sinn Féin participation, the Party having signed up to the Mitchell Principles. The Ulster Unionist Party decided to stay having engaged in a community consultation exercise.

The talks adjourned at Christmas with little having been achieved. In early January 1998 the two governments produced a Heads of Agreement document.

Following a deadline issued by the chairman, George Mitchell, agreement was reached on Good Friday. The details of the Agreement are included in Appendix IV. On May 22, 1998 referenda were held simultaneously both North and South. In Northern Ireland the yes vote was 71.12% and in the Republic 94.39%. Elections were then held in June for the new NI Assembly. David Trimble was elected First Minister and Seamus Mallon Deputy First Minister at the beginning of July. Agreement was reached in December on 10 government departments and 6 cross-border bodies. However, continuing disagreement about the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons prevented the formation of an Executive in which Sinn Féin was entitled to 2 seats.

Various attempts were made by the two governments to resolve the issue including the Hillsborough Declaration (April 1999) which Sinn Féin rejected, and another in May which the Ulster Unionist Party rejected. Finally the British Prime Minister imposed an 'absolute deadline' of June 30 to set up an Executive. Following 5 days of intensive negotiation at the end of June the British and Irish Governments released 'The Way Forward' document. This was rejected by the Ulster Unionist Party.

An attempt to form the Executive collapsed on July 15 1999 when the Ulster Unionist Party refused to nominate ministers. Seamus Mallon, Deputy First Minister resigned. The Agreement then went into review by the two Governments. The review commenced in September and was facilitated by George Mitchell.

Emerging from the discussions during the review between the UUP and Sinn Féin a piece of delicate political choreography commenced in November. Following a positive interim report by George Mitchell, and a statement by General John de Chastelein, chairman of the commission on decommissioning, saying that he was convinced that decommissioning could best be achieved in the context of an overall implementation of the Agreement, the UUP and Sinn Féin made statements indicating their support for the implementation of the Agreement. The IRA also indicated its willingness to appoint a representative to enter into discussion with General de Chastelain. George Mitchell then issued his final report proposing that devolution should take effect, the Executive should meet, and then the paramilitary groups should appoint their authorised

representatives on the same day, in that order. This opened the way for a meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council to be held on November 26th. The Council provisionally endorsed the Party going into the Executive with Sinn Féin. A final decision was postponed to February to see if IRA decommissioning had taken place in the interim. On November 29th Seamus Mallon was reinstated as Deputy Minister and members of the ten-person Executive were selected in the Assembly.

On December 2nd 1999 power was devolved to the NI Assembly and its Executive. The other bodies established by the Agreement also were established. The IRA appointed its interlocutor to the decommissioning body.

However, no decommissioning took place, nor was any timetable agreed, and Mr. Trimble threatened to resign. The Secretary of State for NI, rather than have the Executive collapse, suspended the Assembly and the other political institutions on February 11th.2000.

In early May the two governments put forward new proposals for restoring devolved government by May 22nd. Full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement was now to be achieved by June 2001. This was followed by the IRA statement, the Ulster Unionist Council vote and the restoration of the institutions at midnight on May 29th.

Following the resignation of David Trimble as First Minister on July 1st 2001 negotiations between the parties took place at Weston Park in England. These talks ended inconclusively and the two governments then produced a take-it-or-leave-it package to the Parties involving proposals on policing, demilitarisation and other issues. It was stated that decommissioning was an “indispensable part of the Process”. The Parties did not accept the proposals and the Secretary of State for NI then suspended the NI Assembly for a 24 hour period to allow a further 6 weeks of discussion. The Assembly was suspended for a further 24-hour period in September. Following an IRA act of decommissioning the Assembly was restored in October 2001.

Following the suspension of the Assembly again in October 2002 the Prime Minister came to Northern Ireland to demand that the IRA carry out “acts of completion”. Intensive discussion took place in an attempt to create a deal involving an unambiguous IRA commitment that its activities were at an end and proposals by the two governments involving a whole series of acts of completion. The IRA were unable to produce a sufficiently clear commitment to end all paramilitary activity. This led to a postponement by the British Government of the election due on May 29 to the autumn.

8 ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS

The Anglo-Irish Talks were inaugurated at a Summit between Mr. Haughey and Mrs. Thatcher in December 1980. Study Groups were set up on possible new institutional structures, citizenship rights, economic co-operation, and measures to encourage mutual understanding, and security. These Study Groups were to relate to the ‘totality of relationships within these islands’.

In November 1981 at the second Summit between Mrs. Thatcher and Dr. FitzGerald it was decided to establish an Irish inter-governmental Council to give institutional expression to the relationship between the two governments. This was to involve regular meetings between the two governments at ministerial and official level. It was agreed that it was up to the two Parliaments whether there should be an Anglo-Irish parliamentary body comprising members to be drawn from the British

and Irish Parliaments, the European Parliament and any elected Assembly that may be established for Northern Ireland. (A 50-member Inter-Parliamentary Body was set up and had its first meeting in February 1990). Four Study Group reports were also made public after the Summit.

Relations between the two Governments took a sharp dip, partly because of Mr. Haughey's attitude on the Falklands. Relations, however, improved when Dr. FitzGerald's Government came into office. A summit was held between Mrs. Thatcher and Dr. FitzGerald in November 1983 and a further one in November 1984. The communiqué spoke of the need for a stable political framework and a better system of security. These discussions were eventually concluded on November 15, 1985 with the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The Agreement gave the Republic's Government a consultative role on a wide range of Northern Ireland affairs through an inter-governmental conference of Ministers. The present constitutional position of Northern Ireland was reaffirmed. The political representatives of the Protestant community, who had been excluded from the discussions, immediately rejected the Agreement and started a campaign of protests and boycott of councils, Parliament and meetings with ministers, etc. All Unionist members of Parliament at Westminster resigned their seats. They were all re-elected in January 1986 save one Official Unionist who lost his seat to the SDLP. All except one MP then continued with the policy of boycott of Parliament. This ended after the June 1987 General Election. The other aspects of the boycott gradually came to an end.

Both Unionist Parties refused to have direct talks with the British Government as long as the Anglo-Irish Agreement remained in force. However, 'talks about talks' commenced in July 1987 between the Unionist leadership and Civil Service officials and involved the Secretary of State. The joint Unionist leadership presented proposals to the Secretary of State in January 1988 which remained unpublished but were believed to have involved administrative devolution with power-sharing at committee level. There were also believed to be proposals for a new British-Irish Agreement, which would involve relationships between the Irish Government and a new NI Assembly. These talks did not get anywhere.

A review of the Agreement commenced in November 1988 and was published in May 1989. Both governments reaffirmed their full commitment to the Agreement and the policy of seeking devolution was reaffirmed.

In January 1990 talks about talks began between the British Government and the Unionist Parties, the SDLP and the Irish Government. Three Unionist preconditions for talks – a three week suspension of Anglo-Irish Conference Meetings, a similar suspension of the Secretariat to allow negotiations to take place, and an acknowledgement that an alternative to the Agreement was possible – were accepted by the other parties. Everyone accepted that there were three sets of relationships to be talked about – internal NI arrangements, North/South relations and relationships between the two governments. The sticking point was a Unionist demand that the Irish Government should not be involved until there had been 'substantive progress' in the talks between the NI parties.

However, the Unionists Parties agreed to a formula whereby the Dublin Government would only become involved when the Secretary of State decided substantive progress had been made. At the end of March 1991 a breakthrough came when, after an ultimatum from the Secretary of State, the four main political parties gave the go-ahead for talks. The two Governments gave an undertaking that the Anglo-Irish Conference would not meet between April 27 and mid-July.

Problems, however, quickly emerged. Unionists objected to the North-South talks taking place in Dublin. After an ultimatum from the Secretary of State this matter was resolved. Then there was disagreement about who should chair the North-South talks. This too was resolved and round table talks finally began on June 17. However, it quickly became clear that the discussions were getting nowhere and the Secretary of State brought them to an end on July 7, 1991. The Secretary of State sought to try and find a way of getting the talks going again and this was achieved in April 1992. However, these talks ended without agreement that November.

Exploratory contacts were then made with the political parties aimed at achieving a resumption of the talks process. These did not, however, lead anywhere either.

However, the Hume-Adams initiative, the violence in October 1993 and the Spring Six Principles led to the two Governments drafting a formal declaration of principles on the North – the Downing Street Joint Declaration of December 15, 1993. In the Declaration the British Government stated ‘that it has no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland’ and ‘it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland if that is their wish’. The Irish Government stated ‘it would be wrong to attempt to impose a united Ireland in the absence of the freely given consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland’ and that ‘in the event of an overall settlement’ it will ‘put forward and support proposals for change in the Irish Constitution’. Both Governments stated that all those ‘democratically mandated parties which established a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and which have shown that they abide by the democratic process will be free to join talks’.

Following a verifiable declaration of an end of violence Mr. Major offered Sinn Féin preliminary talks on the future of Northern Ireland ‘within three months’ while Mr. Reynolds held out the prospect of a Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, in consultation with other parties on the Republic to provide ‘quickly’ and ‘as soon as possible’ a guaranteed place in the political process.

Following the IRA cessation of violence the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation was set up at the end of October with Sinn Féin participation. The Unionist parties declined to be involved but the Alliance Party did so. The work of the Forum was suspended after the end of the first IRA ceasefire but reconvened in December 1997.

In February 1995 the two Governments published their shared understanding to assist discussion and negotiation involving the Northern Ireland Parties (the Joint Framework Document). This included: an undertaking by the Irish Government to end the constitutional claim to Northern Ireland; the British Government to introduce changes in UK law to accept the will of the majority to remain part of the UK or form part of a united Ireland; a cross-border body made up of elected representatives from North and South to deal with designated matters; a Parliamentary forum of representatives from North and South to consider matters of mutual interest; a new more broadly-based Anglo-Irish Agreement to develop co-operation; and a standing British/Irish Inter-governmental Conference to consider matters of mutual interest.

In January 1998 the two Governments produced a Heads of Agreement document. While this was rejected by the Ulster Unionist Party much of its contents were taken up in the Good Friday Agreement.

The Good Friday Agreement (1998) sought to address relationships within Northern Ireland, between Northern Ireland and the Republic and between the two jurisdictions in the island,

England, Scotland and Wales. It involved the setting up of a British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, a British-Irish Council and a North/South Ministerial Council (see Appendix IV). These bodies came into operation once the Executive was formed at the beginning of December 1999. The old Articles II and III of the Irish Constitution (which involved a constitutional claim on Northern Ireland) ceased to exist with the formation of the Executive and the other institutions created by the Good Friday Agreement. When the Assembly is suspended the other bodies are suspended as well.

The two governments have continued to work closely to resolve the issues around the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement and proposals by the two governments were presented to the DUP and Sinn Fein in December 2004. However, no agreement was possible because of the DUP's demand for photographic verification of IRA decommissioning. The deal involved a series of sequenced events where the IRA would end activity and disarm completely by Christmas and where a power-sharing Executive and Assembly would be restored by Easter.

In March 2006 Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern laid out their plans to recall the Assembly on May 15 to meet for 6 weeks. If there was no agreement in that period, there were plans to meet in September with a cut-off date of November 24. If there was no agreement by that date Assembly members' salaries would cease. Failure would also mean new British-Irish "partnership arrangements".

A sequenced set of proposals was presented by the two governments to the Northern Ireland parties in St Andrews, Scotland, that could lead to full devolution being restored to Northern Ireland by early March. Called the St Andrew's Agreement it deals with the core issues of policing and power-sharing, and requires the DUP to agree to enter into a Northern Ireland Executive with Sinn Fein and requires Sinn Fein to endorse the PSNI. The two parties were required to indicate their nominations for the posts of First and Deputy First Minister on November 24. There would be an election in March and on March 26 an Executive would be formed. Failure to establish an Executive would lead to an immediate dissolution of the Assembly and the two governments taking forward new partnership arrangements on the basis previously announced. At a meeting of the Assembly on November 24, despite confusion, it was deemed that the DUP and Sinn Fein had nominated their candidates for First and Deputy First Minister.

Following the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis' support for policing at the end of January, the two governments announced an Assembly election on March 7. The formation of the Northern Ireland Executive was delayed from the deadline of March 26 to May 8.

9 THE EUROPEAN UNION

The EU has had considerable influence on Anglo-Irish relations (both countries are on equal footing in a European partnership). Accession to the EU has boosted the Republic's confidence and provided alternative markets for its exports. Northern Ireland has received significant funding from Europe (1995- 2000 over £1 bn).

A special package of £246m was agreed in December 1994 to assist the peace process and encourage reconciliation. Another package was agreed for 2001-2006 of around £940m, £280m of which was for a peace programme. A further extension of £120 million was agreed to 2008. Another package of £130m was agreed to 2013.

10 THE USA

President Clinton made a campaign promise to Irish-Americans to consider naming a special US envoy to Northern Ireland. This commitment was dropped at the beginning of February 1994. However, the Clinton Administration had an active political involvement in Northern Ireland, including a behind the scene role in the first IRA ceasefire and in the Good Friday Agreement. President Clinton visited Ireland three times.

In December 1994 it was announced that the former Senator George Mitchell was to act as special adviser on economic initiatives. The US also announced an economic aid package for Northern Ireland which included more money for the International Fund for Ireland (set up after the Anglo-Irish Agreement) and an economic conference was held in May 1995 aimed at encouraging American companies to invest in Northern Ireland. Senator Mitchell was Chairman of the talks process which commenced in June 1996 and came to a conclusion with the Good Friday Agreement. He also facilitated the Review of the Agreement which led to the formation of the Executive at the end of November 1999.

President Bush indicated his support for the Good Friday Agreement. He transferred responsibility for Northern Ireland back to the State Department and appointed a Senior State Department Official to deal directly with Northern Ireland affairs. They have been frequent visitors to Northern Ireland over the years. President Bush visited Northern Ireland in April 2003.

SOME INFORMATION ON THE CHURCHES IN IRELAND

The Major Churches

The Roman Catholic Church

The 2006 Irish Catholic Directory gives the Roman Catholic population in Ireland in 2002 as 4,155,368 with 2642 churches.

16,770 religious (priests, nuns and brothers) – 2003 figures

26 dioceses.

Primate – Archbishop of Armagh

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland

270,648 persons of all ages in community (2005);

Around 400 clergy; 21 Presbyteries

Governing Body – General Assembly

Headquarters – Belfast

The Church of Ireland

1996 Diocesan returns 346, 015;

484 clergy; 12 dioceses

Primate – Archbishop of Armagh

Governing Body – General Synod

Headquarters – Dublin

The Methodist Church in Ireland

Methodist statistics give 53,990 in community at end of December 2004.

Ministers and Probationers in Ireland – around 120.

Governing Body - Annual Conference.

Headquarters - Belfast

The Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches are members of the Irish Council of Churches.

Other Member Churches of the Irish Council of Churches

The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church in Ireland

4193 in community; 33 churches (two in the Republic of Ireland); 12 clergy.

The Irish District of the British Province of the Moravian Church

700 in community; 5 churches; 3 clergy.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

1593 members (two-thirds in Northern Ireland); 24 meetings; Headquarters – Dublin.

The Lutheran Church

3200 in community (180 in Northern Ireland); 1 minister.

The Salvation Army

1180 members (60 in Republic of Ireland); number of Corps (churches) 21 plus Social Work Centres; around 40 full-time Officers.

LifeLink Network of Churches

2500 in community; 10 local churches.

The Greek Orthodox Church

400 in community; 1 clergy; 1 church.

Russian Orthodox Church in Ireland

1500 in community; 1 full-time clergy; 1 church.

Coptic Orthodox Church

55 families; 1 clergy; 1 church

Cherubim and Seraphim Church

800 in community

Romanian Orthodox Church

1500 in community; 4 clergy; 2 churches; 4 missions

Antiochian Orthodox Church

70 in community; 1 clergy; 1 church; 2 missions

Census Figures

<u>Republic of Ireland</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2002</u>
Roman Catholic	92.50%	91.60%	88.40%	3,462,600
Church of Ireland	2.77%	2.53%	2.95%	115,600
Presbyterian	0.41%	0.37%	0.53%	20,600
Methodist	0.17%	0.14%	0.26%	10,000
Others, no religion and not stated	3.61%	5.40%	7.86%	307,860
Total Population	3,443,405	3,525,719	3,916.800	

For the Protestant Churches the 2002 Census marks the end of a long period of decline, with the Church of Ireland adding an additional 26,400 adherents, the Presbyterian Church an extra 7,400 and the Methodists 5,000 more, from 1991. The number of people in the Orthodox Churches rose from 400 to 10,400.

Northern Ireland

The 2001 Census found the following:

Roman Catholic Church	Presbyterian Church	Church of Ireland	
678,462 (40.26%)	348,742 (20.67%)	257,788 (15.30%)	
Methodist Church	Other Christian (including Christian related)	Other Religions and Philosophies	Person with no religion or not stated
59,173 (3.51%)	102,221 (6.07%)	5,028 (0.3%)	233,853 (13.88%)

Comparison over time gives the following:

Year	Roman Catholic		Church of Ireland		Presbyterian Church in Ireland		Methodist Church in Ireland		Other Denominations
		%		%		%		%	
1926	420,000	33.5	338,000	27.0	393,000	31.3	49,000	3.9	52,000
1961	498,000	35.0	344,800	24.2	413,000	29.0	72,000	5.0	71,000
1971	562,000	36.8	334,318	22.0	405,719	26.5	71,235	4.6	87,838
1991	605,639	38.3	279,280	17.6	336,891	21.2	59,517	3.7	122,418
2001	678,462	40.26	257,788	15.3	348,762	20.69	59,173	3.51	102,221

Analysis by Paul Doherty (*in Northern Ireland Politics*, edited by Arthur Aughey and Duncan Morrow, Longman, 1996) of the 1991 Northern Ireland Census of those claiming no religion (3.7%) and those who refused to state a religious affiliation (7.3%) show that these are concentrated in the Greater Belfast area. Belfast and its eight neighbouring Local Government Districts all have more than 12% of their populations either claiming no affiliation; or not stating a religion. North Down has the highest level, 17.5%. Further, within these Districts there is a substantial variation; in the Malone-Stranmillis area, parts of Jordanstown and Holywood, for example, over 20% fall into this category. The author suggests that all of this indicates a move away from religion. In the 2001 Census the percentage figures for those with no religion or no stated religion for the 9 Greater Belfast Local Government Districts were now all over 16 with North Down at 25. Those claiming to have no religion tend to be of Protestant background, young and male.

All Ireland

On an all-Ireland basis the percentages would be around 74% Roman Catholic, 7% Presbyterian, 7% Church of Ireland, and 1% Methodist.

The Christian Churches in Northern Ireland
DENOMINATIONAL STATISTICS: 1991-2001

	1991 N.I. Census	Irish Christian Handbook (1994) ¹	Denominational Sources (1998) ²	2001 N.I. Census
Catholic Church	605,639	518,016 ³	as <i>Irish Christian Handbook</i>	678,462
Presbyterian (PCI)	336,891	194,718 e	not available	348,742
Church of Ireland	279,280	161,500 e	not issued	257,788
Methodist	59,517	19,357 e	approx. 30,000 ⁴	59,173
Baptist Union	19,484	8,890 e	over 8,000 ⁵	18,974
Christian Brethren	12,446	6,300 e ⁶	12,000 approx.est.	8,595 ⁷
Free Presbyterian	12,363	13,400 e ⁸	not available ⁸	11,902 + 87 ⁹
Congregational	8,176	1,900 e	2,200 ¹⁰	5,701
Elim Pentecostal	5,537 ¹¹	6,500 e	approx. 10,000	5,448 ¹²
Non-Subscribing Presbyterian	3,213 ¹³	3,600 e	4,600 ¹⁴	1,233 ¹⁵
Reformed Presb.	3,184	1,865 e	approx. 4,000 ¹⁶	2,238
Salvation Army	1,918	1,110 e	approx. 1,000	1,640
Church of the Nazarene	1,149	630 e	not available ¹⁷	1,215
Free Methodist	1,119	296 e	729 ¹⁸	266 ¹⁹
Independent Methodist	835	260 e	not available ²⁰	1,771
Quakers (Society of Friends)	804	925 e	as <i>Irish Christian Handbook</i>	749
Evangelical Presbyterian	730	494 e	458 ²¹	543
Moravians	714	340 e	600 ²²	691
Assemblies of God	326	360 e	not available	216
Apostolic	254 ²³	260 e	not available	237
Lutherans	123	55 e	not available ²⁴	186
New Churches	(1,300) ²⁵	1,800 e	not available	(1,476) ²⁶
Chinese Church	—	70 e	not available	25 ²⁷
Orthodox	72 ²⁸	183 e ²⁹	as Census	(229) ³⁰

e - estimate

Notes:

1. Figures from the 1995/6 Edition of the *Irish Christian Handbook* - published in 1994.
2. Denominational figures are mostly as provided for *A Tapestry of Beliefs* (Blackstaff Press, 1998)
3. Average weekly mass attendance in 1995 (taken as 89% of the Roman Catholic population).
4. Including 19,000 active adults and 11,000 children.
5. Baptised members only; children and other active adherents are not included in this figure.
6. Plus approximately 1,000 members of the *Exclusive Brethren*.
7. Some 2001 census respondents used terms such as *Christian* (8,502) or *Protestant* (3,674) or *Evangelical* (1,229) or *Mission Hall* (80), and it seems possible that some Brethren may have used one of these alternative appellations.
8. There are approximately 100 Free Presbyterian congregations, mostly in NI but including some in other parts of the world.
9. The 2001 census gave separate figures for *Free Presbyterian* (11,902) and *Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster* (87). These figures should most likely be combined, giving a total of **11,989**.
10. 1995 estimate of the 'Community' figure. The *Irish Christian Handbook* adds: 'Active adult members could be taken as approximately 60% of the community figure'.

11. When 1991 the figures for Elim, Assemblies of God, Apostolic are added to other named Pentecostal groups (*Pentecostal; Apostolic Pentecostal; Charismatic; Free Church of God*) the Pentecostal total becomes **10,686**.
12. The 2001 Census records other Pentecostal groups: *Pentecostal* (5,533); *Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle* (399); *Metropolitan Church* (125); *Charismatic* (93); *Full Gospel Assembly* (25), and when added to the Elim, Assemblies of God and Apostolic numbers this gives a **Pentecostal total of 12,329**. (Other groups may also be regarded as Pentecostal.)
13. The 1991 census also showed, as a separate group, *Non-Subscribing Old Presbyterian* (152). This group did not appear separately in 2001, although 379 respondents identified themselves as *Unitarian*.
14. This figure includes active adults plus Sunday School attenders.
15. This figure indicates one of the most notable proportionate declines in comparison with the 1991 figures, notwithstanding the number of Unitarians (see note 13).
16. Figure includes 2,500 communicant members plus 1,500 children and other adherents.
17. There are 13 Church of the Nazarene congregations in Northern Ireland.
18. This is based on the Church's own average Sunday service attendance figure in the early 1990s. NB: A Minister of the Free Methodist Church has given the much lower figure of **170** active members in 1998 (in *A Tapestry of Beliefs*).
19. This 2001 figure also indicates a significant decline in comparison with the 1991 census (but see also note 18).
20. In 1998 there were 16 Independent Methodist congregations in Northern Ireland.
21. The figure is for communicant membership in 1995. Average morning worship attendance in 1995 was 662.
22. In 1998 it was reckoned that approximately a further 200 adherents should be added to this figure.
23. The 1991 census also showed, as a separate group, *Apostolic Pentecostal* (156). This group did not appear separately in 2001.
24. The 1998 estimate was that there were approximately 50 Lutheran families in Northern Ireland.
25. The 1991 figure of 1,300 is for the Christian Fellowship Church - only one component of the 'New Churches' movement.
26. This most recent 'New Churches' figure is compiled (somewhat speculatively) from a number of groups indicated separately in the 2001 census: *Christian Fellowship* (1,015); *House Church* (138); *Christian Fellowship Church* (111); *Community Church* (76); *King's Fellowship* (47); *New Church* (43); *Lifeline/Lifelink Church* (35); *Gateway Church* (11). Some other named groups may also come into this category.
27. There is so far only one Chinese Christian congregation in Northern Ireland.
28. The 1991 census figure is for Greek Orthodox only.
29. This 1995 fuller estimate covers a wider range of Orthodox Churches (Greek, Russian, Romanian, etc.).
30. The 2001 census figure is compiled from several separate entries: *Orthodox Church* (113); *Greek Orthodox* (94); *Russian Orthodox Church* (22).

General Observations

Figures in the 2001 census are in many cases significantly different from (usually higher than) the Churches' own figures (as indicated in the 1994 and 1998 documentation). This may well be due to the readiness of census respondents in Northern Ireland to identify themselves with religious denominations with which they are not actively involved or to use religious terms to describe their cultural, national and political allegiance even when they do not practice any religion.

Fewer respondents in the 2001 census declined to respond to the Religion question, which may well account for the increase in the numbers for the Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (both of which offer smaller numbers in relation to regular attendance). One disappointment in the 2001 figures currently available, however, is the failure to distinguish between those who did not respond (about 8% in 1991) and those who stated "No religion" (about 4% in 1991); the total for "not stated" and "no religion" in 2001 was just over 14%. The number of Christian (and Christian-related) groups seems to have risen overall - almost 100 different groups listed with 10 or more adherents, as compared with about 60 in 1991.

The 2001 figures (like the 1991 figures before them) are somewhat distorted by the number of respondents who seem to prefer not to indicate a denominational 'label', using instead terms such as *Christian* (8,502); *Protestant* (3,674); *Evangelical* (1,229); and *Interdenominational* (131).

Norman Richardson
January 2003

(A revision and update of material initially prepared in 1998 for *A Tapestry of Beliefs*)

THREE MAIN PROTESTANT CHURCHES; CHURCH STATISTICS OVER TIME

Church of Ireland Population

1947	457,000
1965	403,500
1996	346,015

(Source: Report of the Commission on Episcopal Needs in Church of Ireland General Synod Report, 1998)

Presbyterian Church in Ireland - persons of all ages

1968	399,807
1975	379,000
1995	305,000
1999	284,704
2002	276,117
2005	270,648

(Source: Presbyterian Annual Reports)

Note: Most PCI statistics regarding persons hit their all time high in the mid-60s.

Methodist Church - Total Community

1968	65,064
1984	61,099
1995	59,669
1999	55,839
2004	53,990

(Source: Methodist Annual Reports)

Methodist Church - Adult Membership

1955	33,000
1960	32,000
1970	28,000
1980	24,000
1990	19,400
1999	17,000

(Source: Methodist Annual Reports)

Note: Methodist membership peaked in 1958.

Mass Attendance Northern Ireland

Weekly or more Mass attendance

		%
1969	Rose Survey	95
	never	1
1978	Moxon-Browne Survey	90
	never	3
1986	Policy Studies Institute Survey	90
	never	1
1989	British Social Attitudes Survey	86
	never	3
1991	British Social Attitudes Survey	85
1998	Life and Times Survey	67
	never	5
2001	Life and Times Survey	66

Protestant Church Attendance Northern Ireland

			%
1969	Rose Survey	once a week	45
		never	5
1978	Moxon-Browne Survey	once a week	39
		never	11
1986	Policy Studies Institute Survey	once a week	34
		never	15
1989	British Social Attitudes Survey	once a week	44
		never	15
1991	British Social Attitudes Survey	once a week	40
		never	16
1998	Life and Times Survey	once a week	34
		never	23
2001	Life and Times Survey		
	Church of Ireland	once a week	30
		never	17
	Presbyterian Church	once a week	37
		never	18

Mass Attendance Republic of Ireland

		%
1974	Nic Ghiolla Phadraig Survey	91
1984	Breslin & Weafer Survey	87
1989/90	MaGreil Survey	82
1990	European Values Survey	85
1992	AGB Adelaide Survey	78
1995	IMS Survey	64
1996	IT/MRBI Survey	66
1997	Catholic Church/IMS Survey	65
1998	RTE/MRBI Survey	60
1999	IMS Survey	57
2002	Millward Brown IMS	48

When two or three times a month is the standard the decline is noticeably less than when weekly mass attendance is the standard:

Mass attendance - 3 times a month or more		%
1981	European Value Survey	82
1990	European Value Survey	81
1991	International Social Survey	76
1998	International Social Survey	73

The young are dropping most quickly from religious observance and there is an increasing difference between Mass attendance in rural and urban areas.

Number of vocations in Roman Catholic Church in Ireland

1965	1375
1994	201
1998	92
2000	61
2003	30

(Source: Council for Research and Development, Maynooth.)

Note: Vocations in the Catholic Church started to decline from 1961. In 2003 there were 17,355 religious (priests, nuns and brothers).

WORLD FAITHS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Numbers of Adherents: 1991 - 2001

RELIGIOUS TRADITION	NI Census 1991	"Another Ireland" 1996 †	NI Census 2001
Islam	972	1,500 approx.	1943
Hinduism	742	250 <i>families</i> approx.	825 ‡ + 53 <i>Hare Krishna</i>
Judaism	410	250 approx. *	365
Baha'i	319	319 plus	254
Buddhism	270	100 approx.	533 ++
Sikhism	157	50 approx.	219
Chinese Religions	—	(7,000 <i>ethnic Chinese</i>)	32 ** + 41 Taoists
(Humanism)	69	—	40

† *Another Ireland: An Introduction to Ireland's Ethnic-Religious Communities* by Maurice Ryan (Stranmillis College, 1996)

‡ When the figure for Hindus of the Hare Krishna (Vaishnava) tradition is added to the number of other Hindus the total is **878**.

* This is the number of Jews actively involved in the Belfast synagogue. It is reckoned that there are about 1,000 people in Northern Ireland with a Jewish family background (including many who have married out of the faith.)

** Many members of the Chinese community have substantially secularised but retain traces of traditional Chinese religious practices. The figure given separately in the 2001 Census for Taoists should probably be added to the figure for Chinese Religions, giving a total of **73**. (The 2001 Census indicates that 0.25% of the NI population are of Chinese ethnic origin – 4,203 people.)

++ The number of practising Buddhists in Northern Ireland is not known to be currently more than about 50 according to members of the Buddhist community. The much larger Census figures (in 1991 and especially in 2001) may indicate that some respondents have used the term casually or in order to mislead. (Another possibility, however, is that some of the 533 may be from the Chinese Community.)

When one takes account of figures supplied by the faith communities themselves (even though these are often estimates) it is clear that Census figures are somewhat at variance. It seems likely that the Census reflects general allegiance rather than active membership.

Nevertheless, the 2001 Census indicates a small but significant growth in the numbers belonging to faith communities other than the Christian Churches. The number of identified religious groups has also grown, and other groups indicated by the 2001 Census include:

Pagan (148); Atheist (106); Spiritualist (106); Agnostic (66); Wicca (50); Druidism (19); Rastafarian (13); Zoroastrian (13); and Satanist (12).

Norman Richardson: December 2002

WORLD FAITHS IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

The 2002 Census gave

- the number of Muslims as 19,100, up from 3,900 in 1991;
- the Jewish Community was 1,790, up from 1,581 in 1991;
- the Buddhist Community was 3,894, up from 986;
- the Hindu Community was 3,099, up from 953.

MIXED MARRIAGE

According to a survey in the 1980s by Professor Paul Compton and Dr John Coward (published in 1989) one in sixteen Northern Ireland marriages were mixed marriages. Forty per cent of one of the partners changed their religious denomination and half of the children were brought up as Catholics. Mixed marriage was highest among manual workers and more common in the 'more peaceful and less segregated' North Coast area of the Province and lowest in the 'sectarian conflict' areas of mid-Ulster and south Armagh.

Mixed marriages have increased since the 1950s and are still rising, although a decline was noted when the Troubles were at their height between 1968-72. Using data from the NI Social Attitudes Survey and the NI Life and Times Survey it has been found that the number of mixed marriages has increased from 6% in 1989 to 9% in 1998. In that period people also appear to have become more tolerant of mixed marriages.

Concerning the Republic of Ireland, Dr Richard O'Leary, of Nuffield College, estimates that two of every five native-born Protestants who married in the 1980s were wed to a person of different religious beliefs. Dr O'Leary, who based his figures on data from the 1991 census, believes that as few as one in eight Protestants married outside their faith in the late 1950s. Dr O'Leary says it is likely that rates of intermarriage are higher among Dublin residents and people living in the State who were born abroad. He says it is probable the rate of intermarriage will increase even further in coming years. Fifty per cent of Church of Ireland people seeking to be married in the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough are entering mixed marriages.

Conversions among intermarrying persons have fallen in recent years, Dr O'Leary says. A 1973 survey of the population of Dublin found that half of all religious marriages were 'hidden by conversion'. However, more recent data from a survey of the population in 1995 suggest that conversion is now less common, occurring in about one in seven of intermarriages. Changes in the teaching of the Catholic Church on intermarriage in the aftermath of Vatican II also helped reduce the rate of conversions, Dr O'Leary believes. He also reports 'a major shift from the practice whereby intermarriages were almost entirely solemnised in the Catholic Church to one where a growing minority take place in Protestant ceremonies'. (*Economic and Social Review*, October 1999)

EDUCATION AND RELIGION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

In 2003/4 5.6% in controlled schools (largely Protestant) were from a Catholic tradition and 0.8% of pupils in maintained schools (mainly Catholic) were from a Protestant background. Fewer than 28 (2.1%) of the 1222 schools outside the integrated sector draw 30% or more of their student intake from the other traditions. Approximately 15% of Catholics are now educated outside Catholic schools (many in grammar schools).

There are (2006) over 61 integrated schools with around 18,300 pupils (around 5.5% of pupil numbers in Northern Ireland). Studies show that a large proportion of pupils attending integrated schools are the children of mixed marriages and there is more evidence that integrated schools are attractive to Catholics who have become alienated from their Church. The Irish language schools have 1%.

FACTS OF DIVISION

- Family: 88% have partners of same religion
- Housing: 92.5% of public housing segregated (2004) with Belfast almost completely segregated
- Workplace: only 26% of private firms with more than 25 employees have fewer than 10 Protestant/Catholics
- Walls: 27 walls, fences or other physical boundaries which mark the boundaries between Protestant and Catholic areas in Belfast and a further 10 in other parts of Northern Ireland (the number has risen since the paramilitary ceasefires in 1994)
- Intimidation: in the 10 years since the paramilitary ceasefires nearly 14,000 people have been forced to flee their houses to find alternative accommodation due to intimidation.

SUMMARY OF THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

Constitutional Issues

The Agreement recognises the consent principle: that change in the status of Northern Ireland can only come about with the consent of a majority of its people. It acknowledges that while a substantial minority in the North and a majority on the island want a united Ireland, the majority in the North currently wishes to maintain the Union.

It says that if that situation changes, there is a binding obligation on both governments to give effect to whatever wish the people of the North express.

It also recognises ‘the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland’ to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish, British or both. Their right to hold both British and Irish citizenship remains, and would not be changed even if the status of Northern Ireland changed.

A number of concrete legislative and constitutional changes are proposed:

- The Government of Ireland Act, claiming British jurisdiction over all of Ireland, is to be repealed.
- Provision is made for future polls in the North on its status, to be held on the order of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Such polls must be at least seven years apart.
- The Irish Government is to hold a referendum to amend Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution; to allow the State to be bound by this new Agreement and to allow the proposed new North-South bodies exercise powers in the island without constitutional impediment.

Strand One

There will be a 108 member Assembly elected by proportional representation.

There are a number of measures to ensure this Assembly will not simply be dominated by a majority.

Committee chairs, ministerial posts and committee places will be allocated in proportion to party strength. Key decisions of the Assembly must be taken on a cross-community basis. For a decision to be made by simple majority, there must be a majority among both nationalist and unionist members. Alternatively a decision can be passed with just 40 per cent of nationalist or unionist votes, but only if its support amounts to 60 per cent of the total voting.

Such key decisions will include the election of a chair of the Assembly, the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, standing orders and budget allocations.

Committees will be established for each of the main executive functions of the present administration of Northern Ireland currently carried out by the Northern Ireland Office. In addition, other standing committees may be established from time to time. The committees will have a policy development, advisory and scrutinising role.

There will be an Executive authority, with a First Minister, Deputy First Minister and up to 10 ministers with departmental responsibilities. The ministerial posts will also be allocated on a proportional basis.

All ministers must affirm an oath of office undertaking to discharge effectively and in good faith all their responsibilities.

The Assembly will have authority to pass legislation for Northern Ireland in areas of policy devolved to it. It can legislate in other 'reserved' areas subject to approval by the British Secretary of State.

This Assembly will meet first as an interim body without legislative and executive powers. During this interim period it will agree its standing orders and working practices and prepare for the establishment of the new North-South and East-West institutions. There will also be an interim executive during this period.

Strand Two

A North-South Ministerial Council will be established under legislation at Westminster and the Oireachtas, to bring together ministers from the North and the Republic. This Council is to: 'develop consultation, co-operation and action within the island of Ireland - including through implementation on an all-island and cross-Border basis - on matters of mutual interest within the competence of the administrations, North and South'.

The Council decisions will be made by agreement between the two sides, and the ministers involved will be accountable to the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Assembly respectively. Participation in the Council will be an essential responsibility attaching to relevant posts in the two administrations.

The Council will have a plenary meeting each year, with the Northern Ireland First Minister and Deputy First Minister leading a Northern team, and the Taoiseach leading the Republic's delegation. Otherwise relevant ministers will have bilateral meetings 'on a regular and frequent basis'.

The Council must exchange information, discuss, consult, try its best to reach agreement and make determined efforts to overcome disagreements.

Each side at such meetings must be in a position to take decisions 'within the defined authority of those attending' while remaining accountable to the Assembly and Oireachtas whose approval is required for decisions beyond the 'defined authority' of those attending each meeting.

A number of measures are included to ensure that the North-South Council is actually set up, and is not emasculated by those opposed to the concept:

- Inaugural meetings of the North-South Ministerial Council, the British-Irish Council and the Assembly in their transitional forms must take place as soon as practically possible after the Assembly elections.
- During the transitional period the Council must draw up a work programme covering at least 12 subject areas, with a view to identifying by October 31st, 1998 areas where mutual co-operation and implementation would benefit both sides. These areas include: animal and plant

health; teacher qualifications; transport planning; environmental protection; tourism; social security fraud; and certain EU programmes.

- The two governments will take measures to ensure ‘as an absolute commitment’ that bodies to implement cross-Border co-operation actually function at the time of the formal inception of the new Agreement.
- It is stated explicitly that the Assembly cannot function without the North-South Council.
- The Council can be developed further with the approval of the Assembly and Oireachtas.
- A joint Secretariat made up of members of the Northern Ireland Civil Service and the Irish Civil Service will support the Council.

Strand Three

A British-Irish Council will be established consisting of representatives of the British and Irish Governments, devolved in situations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. It will hold summit meetings twice a year, and regularly at other times to discuss particular policy sectors.

The Council will ‘exchange information, discuss, consult and use best endeavours to reach agreement on co-operation on matters of mutual interest within the competence of the relevant administrations’. Suitable issues for discussion are listed as transport links, agriculture, environmental, cultural, health and education issues as well as approaches to EU matters.

The Council can agree on common policies and actions, but any individual participant can opt not to participate in such common policies or actions.

The elected parliaments and assemblies of the Council members will be encouraged to develop inter-parliamentary links, perhaps building on the existing British-Irish Parliamentary Body.

British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

A new British-Irish Agreement will establish a new British-Irish Conference which will subsume the inter-governmental machinery established under the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The new Conference will take on the role of the one established in 1985, which is being formally abolished. It will meet sometimes at Summit level (Prime Minister to Taoiseach) and otherwise at the level of various ministers to discuss matters of mutual interest.

These matters include specifically: ‘non-devolved Northern Ireland matters, on which the Irish Government may put forward views and proposals’. It will keep the workings of the new institutions established by the new agreement under review.

Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity

- The incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into Northern Ireland law will be completed.

- A new Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission will be established by Westminster legislation.
- A new statutory Equality Commission will replace the Fair Employment Commission, Equal Opportunities Commission, Commission for Racial Equality and Disability Council in Northern Ireland. It would be open to the new Assembly to consider grouping responsibility for these matters into a Department of Equality.
- The Irish Government will also establish a Human Rights Commission; proceed as quickly as possible to ratify the Council of Europe framework Convention on National Minorities; implement enhanced employment equality legislation; introduce equal status legislation; and ‘continue to take further active steps to demonstrate its respect for the different traditions in the island of Ireland’.
- A joint committee of the two human rights commissions will be established.
- A new economic development strategy for Northern Ireland is to be developed by the British Government.
- The importance of respect for and tolerance of the Irish language, Ulster-Scots ‘and the languages of the various ethnic communities’ is explicitly recognised. The British Government is to take “resolute action” to promote the Irish language.

Decommissioning

The participants reaffirm their commitment to the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations, and confirm their intention to work constructively with the Independent Commission on Decommissioning. They are ‘to use any influence they may have to achieve the decommissioning of all paramilitary arms within two years following endorsement in referendums North and South of the agreement and in the context of the implementation of the overall settlement’. The two governments will take steps needed to bring the relevant decommissioning schemes into force by June 1998.

Meanwhile, the British Government is committed to reducing the number and role of the security forces in the North, removing security installations, ending emergency powers and taking other measures to normalise the level of security in society.

The Irish Government is to review the Offences Against the State Act with a view to reform and to dispensing with elements of it no longer required.

Policing, Justice and Prisoners

An independent commission will be established to make recommendations for future policing arrangements in the North. The Commission will have expert and international representation and must report by summer 1999.

There will also be a review of criminal justice carried out by the British Government with an independent element.

Implementation of the recommendations of both commissions will be discussed with the political parties and the two governments.

The British Government will put in place mechanisms for the accelerated release of paramilitary prisoners. However, those attached to organisations which have not established a complete and unequivocal ceasefire will not benefit from this. Release dates will be set for all qualifying prisoners.

Briefing Paper on Ireland (June 2007)

Nota bene: An Irish health warning. There is no way that a paper of this length can deal with the nuances and complexities of the Irish situation. It can only provide pointers and some basic facts. Even facts and pointers have to be placed in a perspective. The perspective and objectivity of the author limits this paper (necessarily).

- 1 AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**
 - 2 CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (from 1968)**
 - 3 SOME STATISTICS**
 - 3.1 Population
 - 3.2 Statistics of Violence for Northern Ireland
 - 3.3 Security Services
 - 3.4 Economics
 - 4 SOME OF THE LEADING ACTORS - Republicans**
 - 4.1 The Provisional IRA and Provisional Sinn Fein
 - 4.2 The Official IRA
 - 4.3 Irish National Liberation Army
 - 4.4 Republican Splinter Groups
 - 5 SOME OF THE LEADING ACTORS - Loyalists**
 - 5.1 Loyalists
 - 6 THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

(Sinn Fein and the Loyalist Parties have been mentioned in 4 and 5 above)

 - 6.1 The Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)
 - 6.2 The Alliance Party
 - 6.3 The Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)
 - 6.4 The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)
 - 6.5 Other Unionist Parties
 - 7 THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT**
 - 8 ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS**
 - 9 THE EUROPEAN UNION**
 - 10 THE U S A**
- APPENDIX I Some Information on the Churches in Ireland**
The major Churches/ Other member churches of the Irish Council of Churches/
Census Figures Rep of Ireland, Northern Ireland, All Ireland / Denominational
Statistics/ Main Protestant Churches Statistics over Time/ World Faiths in
Northern Ireland/ World Faiths in Republic of Ireland
- APPENDIX II Mixed Marriage**
APPENDIX III Education and Religion in Northern Ireland
APPENDIX IV Facts of Division
APPENDIX V Summary of the Good Friday Agreement