

The highly regarded historian R-F Foster describes the situation in Northern Ireland as one with an absence of peace. The question remains constant, how does one solve conflict when two groups are confined within a small geographical area and have conflicting political beliefs. Kennedy & Arguably the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland produced a popular movement towards peace.

As Kennedy Pipe argues in her book, "The origins of the present ~~of~~ conflict in Northern Ireland" although the context of a popular peace movement is important to support the peace process of the 1980's and 1990's, it is the paramilitary groups and the governments who represent these people who make the actual peace progress. It can be argued therefore that there is an interrelationship between all of ~~these~~ <sup>these</sup> areas; the popular peace movements themselves did little towards the peaceful solution, it is the groups and governments who represent these people who make the final decisions however, without the concession of the people themselves

policies have no real effect or produce any change. To support this argument consider the key events which led to the peace process and how the interrelationship between people and parties led to the ~~the~~ peace process.

The political conflict caused by the Hunger Strikes of <sup>the</sup> 1980's mobilised popular movements which contributed to the formation of the Anglo Irish agreement in 1985. Without the popular support of this political conflict the agreement may not have been reached. After the political conflict between MP Bobby Sands and Thatcher, as Walsh describes "Thatcher saw the hunger strikes as a battle between democracy and terrorism, good and evil" and after her speech "crime is crime is crime", a huge popular movement was arisen. As McKeen explains, never had society been so embittered than after the hunger strikes of 1981 as Quanne identifies "in Catholic ghettos pictures of Bobby Sands evoked the death of Christ." As a result of the hunger strikes Sinn Fein were able to mobilize a

popular movement, seen in their 73% vote and West Belfast seat of 1983. As Kennedy, Pipe ~~argue~~ asserts, the hunger strikes of 1980 provide the context within intermediaries and moderates to see Sinn Féin as freedom fighters, not terrorists. So, therefore, the popular movement towards 'perceived freedom, peace and freedom civil rights' was mobilised which caused a chain reaction of peaceful solutions.

The result of the 1981 hunger strikes was, in effect, the cause for the 1985 AIA agreement which began the foundations of a peaceful solution. As Morton identifies "it ~~demonstrated~~ allowed for the Northern Ireland majority to be heard and for the vital bipartisan approach to succeed in a peaceful solution. As Walsh and Jackson argue this provided <sup>the</sup> SDLP with a much needed boost against Sinn Féin. The support for the SDLP, the more moderate and peaceful orientated party was supported by the popular movement which dropped support of Sinn Féin to 2%.

The effects of the conflict in 1987 and 1988 mobilised again, the popular movement toward peace. The father, Wright, of a young girl killed in the 1987 Ennistullen bombing, amongst 11 others was broadcasted across the world. As McVea and Walsh assert; Wright, a unionist, set a new tone to popular peace movements, claiming that he would not be embittered but would commit himself to a peaceful solution. This popular movement was, in some ways more successful than the woman's peace movement of the 1970's as he later became a senator. As Jackson asserts "The violence and increased sectarian hatred of the violence in the late 1980's provoked in the people towards a more peaceful resolution". This is where the interrelationship between people and politics becomes vital. The Hume Adams talks of 1988 and the Back Channel represent, as Walsh explains "Parties coming together as a response to the increased hatred in a way which symbolised a long term commitment to peace. Therefore the popular movement was once again successful

in encouraging and supporting a peaceful solution.

The popular peace movement was successful in support of the cease fire of 1994 but as local Catholic MP asserts, "with the protestant parades passing through nationalist areas it posed a threat to peace whilst reaffirming the Catholic's inferiority of rights" therefore historians are persuaded to believe the popular peace movement could only be effective if the sectarian hatred subsided. The sectarian conflict ensuing after the Duncree violence and then the IRA Canary Wharf bomb signalled that the popular peace movement in itself, was not enough without stronger intergovernmental policies. Jackson asserts that the conflict of the 1990's put an increased importance on the peace process, therefore the conflict had persuaded people to react in a more radical approach. Conflict therefore, had reduced support for a peace movement which was failing to reduce sectarian violence.

Kennedy Pipe asserts that after the violence of the 1990's, the British government realised the importance and centrality of the ~~British~~ <sup>Dublin</sup> government in producing a peaceful solution. The widespread calls for peace amongst Catholic and Unionist moderates as well as extremists, such as Sinn Féin, demonstrates that the context within the people was in full support of a peaceful solution.

It can be argued that the Mitchell principles as well as the decommissioning amongst the people had revitalised a hopeful outlook toward peace. It wasn't until the conflict of 1996 however, which encouraged both people and political parties to ~~fast~~ speed up the peace process. The support of the Good Friday agreement, announced 10<sup>th</sup> April 1998 would not have eventuated without the support of the people. The three strand agreement was received with a 71% yes vote in Northern Ireland and 95% yes in the South. The agreement, which included the prospect of decommissioning and release of political prisoners, including the relinquish of articles 2

and 3 of the constitution corresponded with the popular peace movement and political demands. The overwhelming popular support can, as McKethick argues, be linked to the age old sectarian violence and conflict which at last, had produced an agreement which corresponded to the idea of a peaceful solution.

In conclusion, without conflict there is no incentive towards Peace. The huge emotional impact of conflict, as demonstrated in the Enniskillen bombing, the sectarian hatred of Drumree or the political suppression mobilises popular peace movements.

Popular peace movements in themselves had little affect as Walsh believes rumours were circulated to undermine them, <sup>as they</sup> believed they were in conflict <sup>with</sup> party interests. It is however, only through the popular support of Mitchell's six principles and the Good Friday agreement that paramilitaries and politicians could recognize, as Kennedy Pipe continually argues, that the context was ready for a peaceful solution.