

THE IRISH REPUBLICAN BROTHERHOOD

Founded in 1858 in Dublin by James Stephens, this secret organization took part in the Fenian uprising of 1867. They were easily crushed.

The organization was reinstated in 1904 in response to the newly organized Unionist paramilitary. The group gained strength over the years and in 1916 they planned and implemented the Easter Rebellion. They were reorganized after the rebellion as all of their leadership were executed. They served as a part of the army during the War of Independence (1916-19) and were led by Michael Collins. They split due to the Anglo-Irish Treaty and finally ceased to exist in 1924.

THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY

This was actually the guerilla army, made up of many different groups that fought the British in the War of Independence. When the Anglo-Irish Peace Treaty was endorsed by the Dail, the I.R.A. split to form an anti-treaty army. This new I.R.A. fought the government forces unsuccessfully in the Civil War.

The IRA became active occasionally over the years. There was the offensive in England (January 1939 - March 1940), and the border campaign (1956 -1962). The IRA was then mostly inactive until 1969.

The peaceful civil rights movement by Catholics in the north in the late 1960's was being harshly attacked. Protestant Unionists and the R.U.C. joined to physically intimidate these peaceful protesters. When the British Army came in, the Catholic minority welcomed them as saviors. It soon became apparent that the British Army would not protect the Catholics.

The Provisional I.R.A. (northern based) began to reorganize as a defensive force for the Catholic minority and to work towards the reunification of Ireland. This I.R.A. campaign continued until the recent

cease-fire.

SINN FEIN

Sinn Fein (Irish for "We Ourselves") was formed as a Nationalist Party in 1905. In the 1918 general election, Sinn Fein won over 80% of the vote. Its elected officials created the Dail Eireann. After the treaty was signed, the party split and became small and ineffectual.

In 1970, the party split again into the "Official" Sinn Fein (now called the Workers Party) and "Provisional" Sinn Fein (the Sinn Fein that we know today). Sinn Fein became prominent again as the political wing of the I.R.A. during the hunger strikes of 1981. The party has grown steadily in influence in the north by supporting Republicanism and a United Ireland.

Today, Sinn Fein holds seats in the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive, and in the British Parliament.