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HISTORY OF IRELAND (the Irish question)

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1536 - 2005

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From 1536 to 1691

- In these years Ireland saw the first full conquest of the island by England and its colonization with Protestant settlers from Britain. This provoked the subordination of the country to London-based governments and long lasting animosity between Catholics and Protestants.

From 1536 to 1691

- The English Reformation was to change Ireland totally. In fact, while the English, the Welsh and, later, the Scots accepted Protestantism, the Irish remained Catholic.
- In 1691, when the Irish Catholic Jacobites surrendered at Limerick, the British Protestant dominance in Ireland was confirmed.
- The Protestant victory in the war is still celebrated today by the Orange Order (named after William of Orange) in Ulster.

Act of Union

- In 1800 the Irish Parliament and the Parliament of Great Britain passed the Act of Union which, from 1st January 1801, abolished the Irish legislature, and united the Kingdom of Ireland to the Kingdom of Great Britain to create the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.
- Many Irish Catholics and Dissenters were attracted by this union as they hoped that the remaining Penal Laws (which discriminated against them) would be abolished and that Catholic Emancipation would be granted. But king George III blocked emancipation.

Catholic Associations and Emancipation

- A campaign under the Irish Catholic lawyer and politician Daniel O'Connell and the Catholic Association led to renewed agitation for the abolition of the Test Act, a series of English penal laws used as a religious test for those who wanted to enter public offices.
- In 1829 the bill granting full Emancipation for Catholics was passed in parliament.

Catholic Associations and Emancipation

- Daniel O'Connell's next objective was the quest to repeal the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland. He desired, not an independent republic, but rather an independent Kingdom of Ireland under the British monarch, in which all the people of Ireland would be represented in a parliament in Dublin. This however did not suit the interests of the United Kingdom parliament.

The Famine

- Between the years of 1846-51 famines struck Ireland with nearly a million people dying.
- In the aftermath of the Great Famine, Ireland was exhausted. The population had fallen dramatically through death from hunger and disease, and from mass emigration. Over a million people had fled to seek a new life in North America, and possibly the same number settled in Great Britain.

Charles Stewart PARNELL

- In 1879 agrarian unrest within Ireland was on the increase. As evictions began to increase so too did resistance by tenant farmers. There was potato blight in the land again and 1879 was the wettest and coldest since records began.
- Charles S.Parnell, a famous Nationalist leader, demanded the Home Rule (i.e. Home Government) and he converted the English Prime Minister Gladstone to the Irish cause.

Charles Stewart PARNELL

- The Irish Home Rule Bill was rejected twice by the Parliament.
- It was granted to Ireland only after the First World War.
- The Home Rule, which was meant on a federal basis, divided Ireland: the Ulster protestants did not want to be included in the scheme, and the nationalists did not agree to the exclusion of Ulster.
- The risk of civil war was serious; a minority, the Sinn Fein (=ourselves alone) got the support of a large part of Catholic Ireland.

The twentieth century

- In 1916, at Easter, the Sinn Fein extremists rebelled in Dublin (Easter Rising). The rebellion was crushed and 16 rebels were executed.
- The Sinn Fein party formed an army, the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.) and used terrorist methods against the British police.

The twentieth century

- In July 1921, a cease-fire was agreed and negotiations between delegations of the Irish and British sides produced the Anglo-Irish Treaty.
- Northern Ireland was given the right, immediately availed of, to opt out of the new Irish Free State.
- The new autonomous Northern Ireland was formed from six of the nine counties of Ulster: four counties with unionist majorities (i.e. Protestants) and two counties which had slight Irish nationalist majorities (i.e. Catholics).

The twentieth century

- 1922-23 Irish Civil War.
- 1932 Eamon de Valera becomes Prime Minister.
- 1937 Eire (Ireland) is established.
- 1949 Eire becomes the Republic of Ireland.
- 1969 The riot of the Bogside in Derry city –one of the major confrontation in the conflict between Catholics and Protestants.
- 1972 Bloody Sunday occurs. 14 people are killed by the British Army.
- 1973 The IRA start their bombing campaign.

The twentieth century

- 1985 the Anglo-Irish Agreement is signed.
- 1998 the Good Friday Agreement is signed.
- 1998 John Hume -Irish- and David Trimble –British Unionist- won the Nobel Peace prize for their efforts in the Good Friday Agreement.
- On 28th July 2005, after the bomb attacks by four Islamists terrorists in London, the IRA army council announced an end to the armed campaign, stating that it would work to achieve its aims solely by peaceful political means.