Chapter 1

They Haven't Gone Away, You Know

The Troubles have not returned,
they just never went away.

- Andy McNab, former British
soldier in Northern Ireland

Making peace is like pedaling a
bicycle, if you stop, you fall off.

- Tony Blair, former British
Prime Minister

Belfast looks so peaceful from high up on top of a tall building. The red brick houses are all lined up in neat rows. Smoke from coal fires curls up in a predictable pattern. The winding streets appear so quaint and serene. Down below buses are running on time. Stores and pubs are open for business. But appearances are deceptive – Belfast has been a troublesome place for well over 150 years. There are many reasons why there has been turmoil. The root causes are (in no particular order) political, historical, economic, religious, cultural, territorial, colonial, sectarian, and nationalistic. There have also been countless cases of police brutality, discrimination and gerrymandering. Widespread sporadic riots between Protestants and Catholics have occurred here for as long as anyone can remember.

However there have been times when the suppressed anger got completely out of hand. The violence became so severe in 1969 that the British army was brought in to try to keep order. But the army (which was trained to fight conventional wars) was notoriously unsuccessful in chasing gunmen down the narrow streets that look so picturesque from up above. It was a frustrating place to fight a war.

It wasn't long before the British army, the local army reserves, and the police were all involved in street actions against paramilitary groups from both sides. There is strong evidence that the government forces favored the loyalist, but the first soldier killed

was actually shot by Protestants. It was a complicated war – the bottom line was that no one was completely safe anywhere at any time.

When I first set foot in Northern Ireland, government forces were out on the street, all day and all night. It was especially dangerous for army and police patrols in Catholic working-class neighborhoods marked by green, white, and orange curbstones (colors of the Irish Tricolor flag) and in Protestant neighborhoods with the red, white and blue markings (colors of the British Union Jack). Some Irish republicans, who wished to avoid any association with the color orange, refer to the Irish tricolor flag as being green, white and *gold*.

These neighborhoods were adorned with opposing flags and painted curbstones symbolizing the political allegiances of local paramilitary members who defied anyone to take down the flags or paint over the curbstones. These were the visible signs of an ancient Irish "Holy War." It has haunted the villages and cities of Northern Ireland for a very long time.

The British have always declared that they were not a part of the dispute, but everyone knows that they colonized Ireland hundreds of years ago, and really sowed the seeds of the present conflict. Self-declared Catholic nationalists and republicans have spent many lives trying to expel British governmental forces from all parts of the island. Protestants, who call themselves unionists and loyalists, arrived from England and Scotland to help neutralize the native population. These newer "settlers" have wanted to maintain the union with Britain and remain loyal to the Crown.

In 1921 the southern part of Ireland was given some measure of independence. After that, the fight centered on the question of whether the northern part of the island would remain "British" or if the entire country would be united under one "Irish" government?   Resistance from Irish republicans was sporadic for several decades, but in 1969 the conflict intensified into widespread violence from all sides. Both Catholic republicans and Protestant loyalists recruited and trained illegal paramilitary units who took to the streets. The British army spent 38 years trying (unsuccessfully) to end the violence. Finally, in 1998, it was agreed by the principal parties to establish a power-sharing government in the North, but without settling the outstanding underlying dispute of whether the North would be united with the South. The issue of Irish unity is still an

open question. It is the "elephant in the room" in Irish politics.

Anyone who even thinks of permanently ending the conflict should remember that it has been engrained in the communal DNA of both Irish republicans and Ulster loyalists for centuries. Small groups on each side have fighters who are following in the footsteps of their parents, grandparents and great grandparents. Every new generation produces a fresh crop of people who want to "fight for their country."

As long as the British rule any part of Ireland, *it is inevitable that some Irish republicans will fight back.* In addition there will always be working-class youth who have romanticized the conflict as they hear stories about what happened in the past. Often the older generation leaves out the parts about front doors being knocked down in the middle of the night, long months in prison cells, losing loved ones, broken marriages, and no prospect for a decent job. But despite the grim "truth," some young people feel they were "left out" last time and they want to have "their own turn" now.

But with older men and women (who actually lived through it) there is very little romanticizing about the past. A Catholic friend of mine made gun parts for the Irish republican movement, and because of it, served time in prison. A Protestant I know very well was involved in killing three Catholics. He was arrested and also served time in prison. Both lost many years of their lives their families were disrupted as a result. With very few exceptions, these veterans of the conflict *never* want to go back to war. But after some time has past, it is difficult for the young people to accept the unvarnished truth about the Troubles.

Many of the youth today want only to think about (what appears to be) the timeless and mythical nature of the conflict. Many of these young people are unemployed, have little education and live in a part of town with wall murals that glorify the war. They are drawn to the conflict like a moth to a flame. To them, the pages of Irish history are filled with accounts of those who were willing to fight for "the cause." Emotions run high in a long battle "blessed" by generations past.

A Different Kind of War

The British army was (and still is) ill-suited to deal with the motivations of the northern Irish from either side. The soldiers didn't really know what to expect in

Northern Ireland. Many of the young ones joined the army to see the world, but they ended up in dingy quarters in a divided land they could not understand. They lived in armed forts in areas where they were viewed as an occupying army. They dared not go out socially in unfriendly parts of town for fear of being "set up" by young women and led into an ambush where they would be killed. When on military patrols, they ran down the street in zigzag patterns, in full combat gear, crouching in doorways behind brick walls. They were trained to aim their automatic weapons at anyone and everyone. Even during rush hour traffic in Belfast, they pointed their guns at the driver of any car following their army land rovers. I never got used to confronting young, nervous, threatened soldiers with loaded guns pointing at my head.

The troops were nervous for good reason.   They all knew they could be killed instantly by a single Irish republican with a 50 caliber (Barrett) sniper rifle that was lethal from more than a mile away. It could make a three inch hole in the chest, even through body armor. There was no defense against a sniper who could fire a fatal shot and then fade into a friendly neighborhood. Some of the soldiers were so terrified to go out on the streets that they suffered severe diarrhea and disabling psychological problems. Suicide rates and alcoholism soared among these soldiers.

 The word on the street was that one of the best-trained snipers was a woman who was notoriously accurate. Whatever the gender of the shooter, the situation illustrated again that modern technology could be used by local rebels to intimidate one of the most professionally trained armies in the world. Despite the fact that the British army had all the latest equipment, they were never able to defeat the paramilitary fighters on either side.

Helicopters hovered overhead in Northern Ireland (day and night) watching suspicious areas. The droning sound of the engines soon became a regular background noise. It was the last loud hum I heard at night, and the first I heard in the morning. The top floors of high buildings were occupied by British army personnel and the police. Everyone knew they were being photographed on a daily basis. New technology made spying into an art form. There was a rumor that listening devices could detect conversations inside of houses and cars. We all knew that telephone conversations were monitored as well. Many people were careful to never mention a friend by name on the

phone. They spoke in hushed tones, all the time, even when they were far from any listening or recording devices. Gathering intelligence was always a top priority. Everyone knew they could be targeted, regardless of their religious affiliation.

There was always an effort (then and now) to recruit informers who reported on anything unusual happening in their neighborhood. Low-level criminals were offered amnesty if they were willing to infiltrate paramilitary groups. The Special Branch of the police also blackmailed those who had secrets they didn't want revealed. Gay people, and those involved in extra-marital affairs, were especially vulnerable. British intelligence officers acted as "handlers" to supervise and coordinate all their agents out in the field. However, if these informers were found out, they faced certain death at the hands of local armed groups. It was a risky endeavor. Few informers lived a long life. Those who did survive have been given "new identities" and are still on the run.

Downtown Belfast was a war zone complete with barbed wire and armed checkpoints. Buses coming into the city were boarded by the police who searched people at random. Security was high everywhere. One day I happened to put down a sack of groceries inside a department store and a store clerk grabbed the sack and ran outside, thinking it was a bomb.

Nerves were on edge throughout all of Northern Ireland. Most every morning the local radio news reported on who had been killed the night before. Funerals became a dreary ritual. Crying family members trailed behind coffins coming out of churches on both sides of the divide. Valium became the drug of choice for many as they adjusted to a conflict that seemed to feed on itself. Every working-class person I knew had a story to tell about a friend, neighbor, or family member who had been jailed, beaten up, wounded or killed.

But despite the everyday threats, life went on. Young people met, fell in love, got married and raised a family. Children were born and raised in a culture in which there was "recreational rioting" right after school in working-class neighborhoods unless it was raining too hard. They lived in neighborhoods encircled by ugly, 25-foot walls and never met anyone from the "other side." When these young people were a little older they were approached by local paramilitaries to join in the fight. Parents were sometimes the last ones to know when their children were drawn into the battle.

Before the Troubles broke out in 1969, Northern Ireland had been one of the most law-abiding areas of Europe. Belfast had an exceptionally low crime rate. But soon after the conflict escalated, more prisons were built to house both Protestants and Catholics who were arrested for paramilitary offenses. Most of these men (and a few women) never would have seen the inside of a jail had it not been for the war out on the streets. There soon developed a very unusual honor system among these Protestant and Catholic prisoners. Many were given home-leave at Christmas and Easter each year. The condition for temporary release was that if any one of them did not come back, the program would be canceled. Both sides would celebrate and cheer their people as they came home for the holidays.

I visited friends in the prisons regularly and was surprised to note how both sides had drawn up rules governing the visits. Buses with visitors as passengers were given safe passage en route to the prison. There was only one case where a bus was attacked by a rogue faction, and the violation was condemned by all the other groups. Inside the prison, inmates (who had tried to kill each other on the outside) could peacefully meet their friends and families (a few feet apart) in the visiting room. Northern Ireland is really a small place – prisoners who were bitter enemies, made eye contact inside the visiting room and showed some measure of respect for each other.

Prison guards were in the room, but there was an unwritten rule that they stayed at one end of the room, ignoring what was going on. There was actually some privacy in the small meeting booths. Most present in the visiting room had the good sense to turn away when inmates were having intimate moments. Several wives and girlfriends became pregnant in the open room while visiting the prison.

Surface Changes

In recent years the violence in the streets has been winding down and the main prison has been torn down. But is it over? The causes of the conflict haven't been resolved. Those who think it can't happen again should take note of what has happened in southeast Europe, the Middle East, parts of Africa and Asia. Conflicts that have tribal, religious, nationalistic, or ethnic overtones don't seem to ever end, they just wax and wane with each new upheaval.

There is still a deep fissure running through Northern Ireland that can't be papered-over soon, if ever. Below the surface, there are still undercurrents of ancient, volcanic hatreds that have continued despite the efforts of an endless line of peacemakers. There have been many positive developments in recent years, but something that has lasted for hundreds of years doesn't just end after marathon negotiations or joint meetings. Change is slow to filter down to the street-level. Individuals still have all those memories! Stories are told and retold. Poetry and music keep the flame burning.

Just below the surface, there is a small (but determined) group ready to do battle again, and they are desperately looking for a way to restart the shooting war. They are hoping it may take only one, outrageous, violent spark to incite people and even bring the British army back out on the streets for another round of the Troubles.

But everyone else is war-weary. Both sides are just trying to put the old issues out of their minds. And because of this, some are shocked when there is a bomb threat or a riot – they shouldn't be! *The northern Irish are experts at* r*emembering*!

Many times in the past the Irish conflict was thought to have ended, only to flare up again. It has been reignited repeatedly by small-scale incidents as well as major revolts. Over the centuries it has ebbed and flowed as though it had a mind of its own. There were long periods when nearly everyone thought (and hoped) it was over. Also there were times when virtually no one thought the guns would ever be put away. Looking back, historians can offer explanations for what started each new era of *peace or war*, but the future does not offer any dependable guideposts. Every time there is a violent incident, the question is asked – could it happen again?

When the Belfast Agreement (also called the Good Friday Agreement) was signed and approved by a majority vote of the people in 1998, there was hope in the air. And when both sides agreed to share power in 2007, many around the world breathed a sigh of relief. They thought it was over. But there was no dancing in the streets of Northern Ireland. People on both sides have been down that road before. They have hopes, but their optimism is balanced by hundreds of years when nearly everyone thought the fire was out, only to be disappointed again. Despite the new optimistic feelings, they know what still remains in the hearts of their neighbors. Each time there is a street disturbance, newspaper writers speculate whether the same old problems are back again.

But most are unsure of what can be done to promote accommodation. Perhaps one of the best ways to reduce the tensions of today is to try to find out *what makes the northern Irish people tick*. There is real value in setting out all the underlying issues in a comparative format so everyone can see the foundations of this conflict. It may sound surprising, but the northern Irish may benefit *most of all* from an objective analysis of how all these issues have evolved to the present. For local people, the power of mythology on both sides has elevated the conflict to a level beyond rational thought. Despite the thousands that were killed, *many on both sides don't really know why they were fighting*. It is utterly surprising that they still say, "What was it all about?" And if they don't know why they were in a war, they certainly can't bring it to a close.

Peace-making and signing agreements are fine, but unless it is clear to everyone *why the conflict burned out of control for nearly forty years, there is no chance of ever permanently putting out the fire.* To understand *both sides now,* it is absolutely necessary to find out what still goes through their minds on a daily basis! Ordinary people (inside and outside of Ireland) need to know:

- How does each community really look at itself and the other side?
- Is religion really at the foundation of the dispute?
- To what extent are social-class divisions (within each community) even more divisive than sectarian attitudes between the two opposing sides?
- How has historical/political/ethnic/cultural/religious mythology shaped mind-sets on each side?
- Who are the people that want to go back to war?
- What has been the role of music, sports, culture, and contentious sectarian parades?
- Why does each side have a competing version of history?
- To what extent does each side approach problem-solving and negotiations in a dramatically different manner?
- Will there ever be a sense of equality between the two communities?
- Why does the average person feel so powerless?
- Is there any hope for real peace while working-class neighborhoods and schools are still voluntarily segregated?

- Have the leaders in London and Dublin done all they can to promote political accommodation?

- Can the churches play a more positive role?

- Why do some people believe that a small quantity of guns remaining in each community is a stabilizing factor?

- In what way may the leadership of paramilitary groups be the best hope for the future?

These questions are what this book is all about. Perhaps the most important step toward a lasting peace would be an objective exploration of why this conflict continued out of control for decades. Who started it, what kept it going, and why couldn't community leaders stop the violence?   No one expected it would escalate so quickly (and once it got going) no one really knew how to stop it.   It soon became apparent that this conflict was like a "political iceberg," with only a small portion that was visible and understood. The underlying reasons for the centuries-long dispute were (and still are) "under water." During the shooting war, *all* the principal leaders misjudged the depth of the division between the two communities. Surprisingly, virtually no one on either side had any idea of what really lurked below the surface. And very few today have a comprehensive idea of what still remains hidden from view.

If there is any chance for reducing the deep-seated communal antagonism, this conflict needs to be dissected objectively so everyone can see (how and why) average people contributed to it, even though they never fired a gun.   Just ending the aggressive behavior won't bring people together. Conflicts of this kind are not resolved unless there is a sincere effort to look into the dark corners of history. What is it about the collective souls of these two peoples that caused them to turn on each other with such a vengeance? Who fanned the flames to promote a street war that took more than 3,600 lives?   What can be learned to make certain the *bad old days* won't return?

There has always been a belief among elected British and Irish political leaders to "walk softly" through political issues and events of recent history. For decades the unofficial motto was: "When there's violence we don't talk about it for fear of making it worse – when there's less violence, the warning is: don't stir up the past, it might start it up all over again." It was that kind of *managed silence* that kept this conflict going for

centuries. Perhaps the most serious mistake has always been to underestimate the negative power of a secret, one-sided history that people past down from one generation to the next. How can that chain be broken?

Today it is the same old thinking: "It will do no good to talk about issues that divide people." The official strategy is to build "a shared future" that focuses on the positive aspects of life. There is an underlying hope that a prolonged period of relative peace will cause people to feel more secure, and ultimately both sides *may* decide to come out from behind their walls, both figuratively and literally. But the leadership on both sides needs a dose of "truth telling" to keep both sides on a reality track. There needs to be some clarification of *who* took actions that were completely indefensible.

Much of the "terrible truth" about the past has evolved to a mythical level. It is lodged in the folklore of each side. In Ulster, *perceptions are more important than fact*. What people *think* happened is *always* more important than what *really* happened. Stories, music, and poetry abound with vivid accounts of tragedy – when "our people" were victims. A sense of injustice haunts the history of both religious traditions. With this as a backdrop, symbolism among the peacemakers is one of the most effective ways to ease the pain from the past. In Ireland, *history must be dug up before it can be settled.*

Good examples of symbolically "settling the past" were the acknowledgments made by two British prime ministers and the Queen: In 1997, Tony Blair made a public apology for his country's role in the Irish famine of the 1840s. Later in 2010, Prime Minister, David Cameron admitted that the British army was "unjustified" and "wrong" in killing 14 unarmed Catholic nationalists on "Bloody Sunday" in Londonderry in 1972. And finally, in 2012, Queen Elizabeth shook hands with Martin McGuiness, the former leader of the IRA, and Prime Minister Cameron apologized for the government's involvement in the 1989 killing of a Catholic attorney, Pat Finucane.

Some may see these actions as mere "political propaganda," but all of these actions add up and help relieve some of the resentment that had been festering for years. But there is still much more to be told: At what level (in the British government) was the decision made to arm loyalist paramilitaries? On the republican side, where are the "disappeared" people who were killed and buried in unmarked graves? There are many more questions that need to be answered. Bad actions don't get better in time.

Yet there has been notable progress among former paramilitaries on both sides. New channels have been opened for peaceful intent. Some (but not all) of the weapons have been destroyed and pledges have been made not to go back to war. When a leading Ulster loyalist, David Ervine, died of a heart attack, Gerry Adams, (leader of the Irish republicans) went to his funeral and consoled the dead man's wife. Ervine and Adams had been on opposing sides for many years. Virtually everyone was impressed that Adams dared to journey into "enemy territory" to show his respect for a former foe.

Public statements by British prime ministers, the Queen, and gestures from former paramilitaries will not restore any of the lives lost, but these public acknowledgements may well ease the plight of the living that still hold in fear and resentment. There will be short-term pain realizing what was done (especially by your own side) but unless the past is brought out into the open, there will never be a lasting peace. Truth always has a way of seeping out later. (Examples include illegal actions and criminal activities by members of the clergy, paramilitaries, the police and British government officials.) It is far better to initiate actions bringing out this dirty laundry willingly than to have damaging details leak out every few months and poison the future for years to come. Victims of the Troubles need to feel vindicated by the public record of wrongdoings, but it is *even more important for the perpetrators to come to terms with themselves*. They must learn to live with their own memories of what they did to others.

But it is not just individuals who are to blame. Much of the responsibility is at the door of leaders (from various talks of life) who turned a blind eye to the gathering clouds of violent sectarianism. People were killed by assassin's bullets while respected authority figures (who knew the truth) hid behind public denials. Today everyone needs to engage in some measure of reality, especially in the schools where they still skip over the controversial parts of recent history, or tell it only from one point of view. It is time to start using the same history book, not only in schools, but in society as well.

In the absence of public honesty, the disaffected in each community will "feed" each new generation with a mind-set that will keep the conflict alive far into the future. One-sided stories of "what they did to us" will still be repeated by those recruiting young people into sectarian gangs.

Perhaps the surest way to undercut the bombers of tomorrow is to be honest

about the events of yesterday. It will be more difficult to recruit paramilitary members into future violence if there is a general atmosphere of truthfulness. Clearly there is a fear among many that a fragile peace might be jeopardized if the past is unearthed and acknowledged. They fear losing the narrow ledge of goodwill they have today. But it may be just the reverse! Times of "relative peace" may be the *only opportunity* to "tell the truth" and turn the tide before society is deluged again into open sectarian warfare.

My Journey

I spent the better part of 14 years in Belfast on a personal journey. From the beginning, I was fascinated to understand *why* such *good* people could do such *terrible* things to each other. I asked a lot of questions, but mostly I listened. It wasn't long before I realized that almost no one really listens to the northern Irish with an open mind. Nearly everyone has a preconception about the people who live in this northeast corner of Ireland, and many of these preconceived assumptions are dead wrong.

To begin with, this is not a conflict caused by sectarian bigotry. Anger and bitterness are a symptom of this age-old quarrel, not a cause. The underlying reasons for this dispute are actually much more complex and deep-seated than most people can imagine. Contrary to most conventional views outside of Northern Ireland, religion is not really the most important issue. Most of those doing the fighting and dying never go to church – there is almost no effort to convert people to the "other side." And most importantly, the northern Irish are not a violent people – they are, rather, two national groups (living on the same land) who have been divided systematically by their *political, social, economic, cultural, religious, and colonial* history.

Also, this conflict is not just an accident created by opposing religious allegiances. These people have conflicting loyalties because they have been *set up* by forces on both sides of the divide. There are some (inside and outside of Ireland) who have benefited from the division. For example, the churches of Ireland would not be as prominent in Irish life had it not been for the conflict. If one studies the history of religious and political groups, it is painfully obvious why northern Protestants and Catholics have been locked in a conflict for centuries. *This conflict is not accidental.*

But out on the street there is a different view. Ask anyone in Ulster why "their people" have been driven to violence. They will tell you it is all about "what they did to

us." It is always "they" who set the conflict in motion. And one of the depressing things about northern Irish history is that often these allegations are actually true. There is no shortage of blame. Atrocities occurred on both sides.

Because of the violence, many around the world have concluded it is not safe to live or work in Northern Ireland. Nothing could be further from the truth. Actually I feel more secure in Belfast than I do in many American cities. The northern Irish are careful to make a distinction between outsiders (who are completely safe) and their eternal foes that live just across town. Everything about the *enemy* is remembered here. Nothing is forgotten. That's one of the major reasons why this conflict has gone on for so long.

I taught political science for 11 years at The Queen's University of Belfast. My schedule was to spend two days each week in the classroom and the other five days out on the street getting to know the average people on both sides. I lived in both Protestant and Catholic areas of the city. My journey was at the street-level (not only in my own neighborhood) but also in all other parts of town as well. I was especially drawn to the small embattled sections of the city that were on the flashpoints of the conflict. In the process of walking into every part of the Belfast, I wore out several pairs of shoes and countless umbrellas. However, I gained an access to the people that would never have been possible through the more conventional channels of contact.

The major political and religious leaders were all willing to talk with me. Yet I soon discovered that the most compelling stories came from those who had never been interviewed before; they have been the *real* victims of sectarian abuse from paramilitary groups, the British army, and the police. They are ordinary Catholics and Protestants who share the anguish of never feeling secure, even in their own neighborhoods.

I soon developed a deep affection for these folks who welcomed me into their lives. The more time I spent with them, the more I came to realize that I wanted to write about their daily lives on the sectarian divide that cuts through many areas of Belfast. My journey would be to see the conflict through two different (yet similar) sets of eyes.

A Catholic Priest and a Protestant Bishop

Early on, portions of this book were read by many people from both religious traditions of Northern Ireland. I asked each of them to tell me if there was anything they disagreed with or found to be inaccurate. Two of these people happened to be clergymen

of different faiths. After some reflection, I concluded that their individual reactions revealed the critical center of this conflict. Their individual comments were at the very heart of why each community holds such deep resentments toward the other.

Father Joe McVeigh is one of a handful of Catholic priests who is a spokesperson for Irish nationalism. His parish is in a rural area in County Fermanagh, southwest of Belfast. He is rare in the priesthood because he has written several books critical of his own church. On the other side was the Right Reverend Samuel Poyntz, former Belfast bishop of the Church of Ireland, the largest Protestant denomination in Ireland. As the head of his church in the North, Poyntz is also unusual in that he was born and raised in the South of Ireland, and is known as a reformer who favors closer ties between the two religious traditions.

I will never forget Father McVeigh's first statement as he threw the manuscript down in front of me: "You don't focus enough on the most important cause of this conflict. It's *colonialism.*" He went on to say that every Catholic knows that the English sent Protestant settlers to colonize Ireland, and that the Irish will never rest until they throw off the yoke of colonialism and take their place among the *free nations* of the world. McVeigh's words still ring in my ears: "Everything the British do here is an attempt to hang on to their first and last colony. It's *colonialism*, pure and simple."

Bishop Poyntz actually did something very similar. He also tossed the proposed book back to me and said I made one big mistake, "You use the term *Catholic* in your writing, not *Roman Catholic.*" The Bishop's eyes narrowed as he reminded me that his church also uses the term *Catholic* to mean "the universal church." He went on to say that every Protestant knows that the Reformation was all about re-establishing Christianity and leaving behind the old Roman-based body. Poyntz spoke for Protestants who see themselves as the "true Christians" of Ireland who have no regard for that "other church" led by a pope in a foreign land. He concluded, "Always call them by their complete name, *Roman Catholics*."

The remarks of these two churchmen underlined a characteristic of the conflict that cannot be over-emphasized. In keeping with Father McVeigh's analysis, Catholics are driven by political, anti-colonial issues. Their public struggle is to free Ireland from British colonial control. The enduring slogan for the Irish Republican Army is, "Our Day

Will Come." But the comment of Bishop Poyntz illustrated the point that Protestants see the conflict in a religious/cultural context. Their struggle is to save their people from a foreign culture that would undermine the freedom to practice their religion. The main slogan for Protestant paramilitaries is, "For God and Ulster."

Many in both camps see compromising as losing out in the most important struggle of their lives. For Irish Catholics it would be giving in to continued British control that keeps them down as second-class citizens. And for British Protestants it is the fear that they have surrendered to the Roman Catholic Church and that they will be overrun by a foreign culture. For both, *their apprehensions and goals are incompatible.*

But with this as a backdrop, nearly everyone in the North says they want peace, yet they are all aware that there are two overriding, irreconcilable visions alive in this land. Peacemakers of today are respected, and even admired, but never fully believed by people out on the streets. Thinking positively about a peaceful future is an engaging process, but the past still haunts this land.

The Irish conflict has been smoldering for hundreds of years. There have been many times when people thought the lid was on tight, that it would never explode again. Sometimes years would go by with only a few riots and murders, but there was never to be a lasting peace.

Today there is *hope* that the peacemakers will be successful, but everyone suspects there is still much *hate* in this land. There are some who recoil a bit when the word "hate" is used. It's such a strong term that conjures up so many negative emotions. Some say "it used to be that way, but now it's different." Perhaps that is a bit of wishful thinking, but maybe it has changed for the good. Who knows? But one thing is certain, it is difficult to be hopeful when recognizing the deep roots of antagonism on both sides that have existed here for so long. Northern Ireland today is a contradiction between the optimism of *hope* and the pessimism of *hate*. No one knows which will prevail in this troubled land.