

“The Boxer”

Exploring the Conflict in Northern Ireland

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce analyzuje konflikt v Severním Irsku na základě historie, národní identity, náboženství a segregace se zaměřením na katolickou komunitu. Tato komunita je dále rozebrána v praktické části práce opírající se o film the Boxer. Hlavním cílem mého snažení je zaměřit se na jednotlivce uvnitř katolické komunity a pochopit co ovlivnilo jejich přístup ke konfliktu. Práce dochází k závěru, že katolíci nikdy nebyli sjednoceni jako celek, a proto ani nikdy nesdíleli stejné cíle.

Klíčová slova: severoirský konflikt, the Boxer, nacionalisté, republikáni, unionisté, lojalisté, Irská republikánská armáda, Belfast, historie, diskriminace, mírový proces, národní identita, náboženství, politika, segregace, vztahy, volný čas, policie, znovusjednocení Irského ostrova, soudržnost katolické komunity

ABSTRACT

The thesis explores the conflict in Northern Ireland from the point of view of the history, national identity, religion and segregation with the focus on the Catholic community. The community is further examined in the analytical part of the thesis with the help of the film, the Boxer. The main aim of the analysis is to observe the individuals within the Catholic community and to understand what affected their approach to the conflict. The thesis states that the Catholics were never well organized as a whole and hence never fully united in their aims.

Keywords: the Northern Irish conflict, the Boxer, nationalists, republicans, unionists, loyalists, the Irish Republican Army, Belfast, history, discrimination, the peace process, national identity, religion, politics, segregation, relationships, leisure, police, reunification of the island of Ireland, unity of the Catholic community

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INTRODUCTION

A religious conflict between Protestants and Catholics played a significant role in the history of whole Europe. It used to change its form in dependence on historical circumstances of a particular state as religion has always been closely linked to politics the world over. Therefore, the English Reformation was highly distinctive from the Reformation which occurred in mainland Europe. Furthermore, due to historical events and nature of the people, this conflict survived the longest in a very specific part of the United Kingdom, in Northern Ireland. As late as at the beginning of the 21st century, it is finally possible to observe the ending of this long lasting disagreement between the two denominations of Christian religion as Northern Ireland seems to make relative peace among its citizens at last.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the reasons why the conflict in Northern Ireland developed to such an exceptional degree with the focus on history, religion, national identity of the people and segregation which used to be typical for the country. The core of the problem seems to be the co-existence of the Protestants and Catholics living in Northern Ireland. The approaches of these two enemy communities to the conflict and the intervention of the British state significantly contributed to its development. The approach of the Catholic community and internal issues that influenced its actions will be further examined in the analytical part of the thesis with the help of the film, the Boxer. It portrays the inside of the community from a nationalist point of view, and as it is considered to be self-critical; it should not be biased. Hence, it can help to study individual members of the community and their attitudes towards the conflict, the peace process in particular. If we became aware of the attitudes of the individuals, we could better understand the role of the community as whole in the conflict.

The fact is that the Catholics were never really successful in achieving their political aims in the entire history of the island of Ireland. The reason seems to be that the Catholic community was not fully united in its goals or in ways how to achieve them – with only a few exceptions when the Catholics were united and as result, they celebrated success. The main aim of the thesis is to prove that the Catholics in Northern Ireland had a tendency to disunity which was the main reason of their failures that occurred not only during the conflict but also in the whole Irish history.

I. THEORY

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE CONFLICT

The conflict in Northern Ireland is one of the longest lasting conflicts ever. Although the country became separated from the rest of Ireland as late as in 1921; the origins of the conflict can be traced back to the 12th century. Therefore, the history of Northern Ireland is inseparable from the history of the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain.¹ Nonetheless, Northern Ireland has the most troubled history of all four present parts of the United Kingdom. Although none of the unifications was peaceful, the problems with violence continue only in Northern Ireland (even though to lesser extent than in the last century).

The major problem in Northern Ireland has always been the coexistence of two so different groups of people whose presence emanated from the history. These two groups are generally called unionists and nationalists.² One of the main differences between them is their point of view on the geographical and political unity – while the nationalists have wanted to restore the union with the Republic of Ireland and become independent of Great Britain, the unionists have believed that Northern Ireland should remain a part of the United Kingdom.³ Another main difference between them is their religious affiliation which is, in the case of Northern Ireland, also closely connected to politics. The unionists are generally considered as Protestants because of their English or Scottish origin, whereas most of the nationalists are Catholics because of their Irish origin.⁴

The core of the conflict seems to be a different national identity and religion of the people. However, there were many additional issues which helped the conflict to develop to such a degree. Except the political and religious context, there was also “a continuing problem of economic and social inequalities”⁵ the problem of cultural identity, security or common relationships between the people. All of these problems are interrelated because each affects the

¹ John Oakland, *British Civilization: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 125-126.

² BBC, "Profile: Northern Ireland," BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/4172307.stm (accessed February 18, 2010).

³ Thomas Hennessey, *A History of Northern Ireland 1920-1996* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 2.

⁴ BBC, "Profile: Northern Ireland".

⁵ John Darby, "Conflict in Northern Ireland: A Background Essay," In *Facets of the Conflict in Northern Ireland*, ed. Seamus Dunn (Hampshire, England : Palgrave Macmillan, 1995) <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/facets.htm> (accessed February 18, 2010).

other.⁶ To understand all of them, it is necessary to look back to the main historical events, and then it is possible to understand the approach of the two communities to the conflict.

⁶ John Darby, "Conflict in Northern Ireland: A Background Essay".

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Northern Ireland is situated, as the only part of the United Kingdom, on the island of Ireland which gives the country a special position not only geographically but also historically. The history of the whole island is closely interconnected, although the history of the north slightly differs. Northern Ireland consists of six of the nine counties of the province of Ulster. This province has been mostly inhabited by unionists, only one third of the population were nationalists, at the time of the partition in 1921.⁷ This inequality, which caused many problems throughout the entire history of Northern Ireland, has its roots in the history of both Great Britain and Ireland.

2.1 Ireland

2.1.1 Ireland before the conquest

Before the Anglo-Norman invasion, there had never been a united kingdom of Ireland as the Irish society was organized into several clans. The only time when Ireland was unified, was when the position of the High King⁸ was held by Brian Boru who is considered to be the only “overlord of all Ireland”.⁹ It was probably the first and also the last time when Ireland was united under one ruler. According to Irish Genealogical, the Irish have never abandoned “the spirit of the clan system,”¹⁰ which indicates their tendency to create communities that are not really unified as a whole.

2.1.2 The beginning of the Anglo-Irish conflict

The first Anglo-Norman intervention in Ireland came during the rule of Henry II of England, in the 1170s. This was the only time when the conquest of Ireland had a pro-Catholic reason as the English Pope, Hadrian IV, conferred on Henry II the title “Lord of Ireland” because he wanted him to reform the Church of Ireland. Although Henry II gained control of most of the island by the

⁷ Hennessey, 5 – 6.

⁸ "The Irish Clan System: The Original Lineage Society!", Irish Genealogical, <http://www.irishgenealogical.com/the-irish-clan-system-the-original-lineage-society.html> (accessed March 13, 2010).; The position of the High King rotated among the leaders (cheiftans) of the royal clans that were the most powerful clans in Ireland, at that time.

⁹ BBC, "Brian Boru - Overlord of All Ireland," BBC - h2g2, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/alabaster/A378263> (accessed March 13, 2010).

¹⁰ "The Irish Clan System: The Original Lineage Society!".

middle of the 14th century, the island reverted to the Irish control again. Afterwards, England controlled just a small area around Dublin known as the Pale.¹¹ However, since then England became the major threat to the native Irish inhabitants.

The province of Ulster remained the last independent part of Ireland of English kings until the rule of Queen Elizabeth. She achieved to control the most of the island by the 1590s but at that time, natives living in Ulster still had not surrendered. For nine years the Irish chieftains, led by Hugh O'Neil, fought against the English. Although they enjoyed some victories at the beginning, they were eventually defeated. Afterwards, the Irish became subjects of the English monarch and were forced to adopt English language and customs.¹² This was the first great suppressed rebellion of the native Irish against the English which took place in the place where Northern Ireland can be found today and many more such rebellions were to continue for the next four-hundred years.

2.1.3 The origins of the Protestant population in Ulster

The diversity of population living in the north highly increased after the event that followed, known as the Plantation of Ulster. After the Irish chieftains left to Rome worrying about their safety in 1607, the English introduced the policy of plantation to control Ireland. The Plantation of Ulster was unique as its aim was to attract colonists of all classes and from all parts of mainland Britain by offering them free land. Most of the new settlers were either English Protestants or Scottish Presbyterians.¹³ Although the native Irish remained there, they were excluded from the towns built by the planters and evicted to mountains.¹⁴ At that time, the problem of coexistence between the Irish Catholics and British Protestants has begun. For the Irish, the new planters were a foreign community speaking a different language, and representing different culture and a way of life. Both groups were too different to live together peacefully. On one hand, the natives believed they were usurped and on the other hand, the planters believed that they were constantly under a

¹¹ BBC, "The Road to Northern Ireland, 1167 to 1921," BBC - History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/recent/troubles/overview_ni_article_01.shtml (accessed February 18, 2010).

¹² Ireland in Schools (iIS), "2.5. The Tudors & Ireland," New KS3 History PoS: Ireland & the Tudors, http://iisresource.org/Documents/0A3_Trafford_KS3_Y8.pdf (accessed February 18, 2010).

¹³ Ireland in Schools (iIS), "2.5. The Tudors & Ireland".

¹⁴ John Darby, "Conflict in Northern Ireland: A Background Essay".

threat of rebellion.¹⁵ This was the beginning of what was to continue almost till the end of the 20th century.

2.1.4 Discrimination of Catholics

Since then, the Irish quite often rebelled against the English rule. As a result, the plantation policy continued. The planters also served as a police force to suppress the rebellions. They became a powerful minority in whole Ireland but majority in Ulster. The most significant event which ended up in a failure, of not only the Irish but all the British Catholics, was the Battle of Boyne. This battle had a large impact on the Catholic population as the Catholic king, James II, was defeated by the Protestant, William of Orange.¹⁶ Afterwards, the Protestants were afraid of any other Catholic uprising; therefore they passed so called Penal Laws. They limited “Catholic property ownership, education [and] right to bear arms”, and also drove out the clergy.¹⁷

The English always tended to discriminate Catholics as in Great Britain, since the Reformation of the Church; the Catholics have been a minority. It only happened a few times in the history that the English monarch was a Catholic and hence the Catholics did not suffer any discrimination at all. However, it has never happened again since 1701 as the Act of Settlement was passed. The aim of the Act was to prevent a monarch from marrying not only a Catholic, but also a member of any other religion. In fact, monarchs could marry non-Protestants but it would remove them from the line of succession.¹⁸ A British habit to discriminate the Catholics was also one of the biggest problems in the conflict in Northern Ireland as the Protestant population living there, originally comes from the mainland Britain.

2.1.5 Unification and subsequent creation of paramilitary organizations

The situation in Ireland worsened, after the Irish parliament and government were abolished by the Act of Union in 1801 and their responsibilities were taken over by Westminster¹⁹. At that time, the Catholics were still not allowed to vote at general elections, nor they could hold

¹⁵ John Darby, "Conflict in Northern Ireland: A Background Essay".

¹⁶ Oakland, 126.

¹⁷ BBC., "The Road to Northern Ireland, 1167 to 1921," BBC – History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/recent/troubles/overview_ni_article_03.shtml (accessed February 18, 2010).

¹⁸ Wintour, Patrick, "End of the Anglican crown - 300 year bar to be lifted," Politics - The Guardian, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/sep/25/anglicanism.catholicism1> (accessed February 18, 2010).

¹⁹ John Darby, "Conflict in Northern Ireland: A Background Essay".

parliamentary or most of the public offices.²⁰ Therefore, the movements which aim was to overthrow the union were established during the 19th century. Some of them were parliamentary such as the Repeal movement or the Home Rule movement, others were not afraid to use physical force like the Fenians.²¹

The tradition which the Fenians started still persists in the form of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) even today. According to Coogan, the Fenians “displayed all the characteristics of Irishmen throughout the ages. [They] had colossal energy, daring, flair, suspicion, illogicality, tendency to disunity and splits, lack of organization, courage [and] naivety”²² Some of these characteristics can be later observed among the members of the IRA, too.

The Protestants were never in favour of the idea of Home Rule because of political and religious reasons. The differences between the north and the south of the country increased during the 19th century – mostly Protestant north became industrialized, while the south remained agricultural. Thus, the Protestants living in the north associated their economic success with being a part of Great Britain.²³ As Hennessey points out, they also believed that if the island had become united and independent of the United Kingdom, they would have been delivered “into the power of the Papacy”²⁴. Hence, there were many outbreaks of violence from the Northern Irish Protestant majority. Consequently, the Protestant paramilitary group the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was founded in 1913. A few months later, in replay, the Catholics founded their own group, the Irish Volunteers, which was a predecessor of the IRA.²⁵ According to Coogan, it is possible that if there was no UVF, the IRA would not have been created either.²⁶

However, the Home Rule movement became so strong and public opinion against the United Kingdom increased a lot, after the execution of the Easter Rising leaders in 1916 that

²⁰ BBC, "British History Timeline," BBC – History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/timeline/empireseapower_timeline_noflash.shtml (accessed February 18, 2010).

²¹ John Darby, "Conflict in Northern Ireland: A Background Essay".

²² Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), 13-14.

²³ Coogan, 6-7.

²⁴ Hennessey, 3.

²⁵ Martin Melaugh, "Chronology of Key Events 1170 to 1967," CAIN: Northern Ireland Conflict, Politics, & Society. Information on 'the troubles', <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/chron/ch67.htm> (accessed February 18, 2010).

²⁶ Coogan, 4.

the unionists felt, they could not resist any more.²⁷ Therefore, they began lobbying for the exclusion of the six counties of the province of Ulster. They chose just these six counties deliberately as the majority of the Protestants lived there. It gave them more power in the Ulster Parliament than they would have if the province of Ulster remained united.²⁸

2.2 Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland was born between two wars. In both of them, the IRA played a key role. The organization was founded at the very beginning of the Irish war of Independence where it fought a guerilla war with the British government forces.²⁹ It seems that this was the only time when the organization was united in its aims. In addition, it shared the common goal with most of the Catholic population in Ireland - to break away from Great Britain. As a result, the Irish celebrated success in the form of the creation of the Irish Free State in 1921.³⁰ This fact indicates that when the Irish Catholics were united, they were able to achieve at least some of their aims.

Nevertheless, the partition caused the first split inside of the IRA. Some nationalists still believed that the island should have remained united and some were satisfied with the partition. Two main Irish political figures led the opposite sides - Michael Collins led the pro-treaty government forces, while Éamon de Valera the anti-treaty 'Irregulars'.³¹ The Irregulars were defeated, hence the main aim of the Irish Free State became achieving its own complete independence, while Northern Ireland ceased to be an important issue.³² Thus, the Irish Catholics became divided again which had far-reaching consequences for the Catholic population in Northern Ireland.

2.2.1 Discrimination of Catholics in Northern Ireland

Catholics dissatisfaction with their conditions was to continue in Northern Ireland due to overt discrimination from the Ulster Unionists dominated Government. To ensure the control of the

²⁷ Coogan, 21.

²⁸ Hennessey, 5-6.

²⁹ BBC, "The Irish War of Independence," BBC – Homepage, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A4240766> (accessed February 18, 2010).

³⁰ BBC, "The Irish War of Independence."

³¹ BBC, "The Road to Northern Ireland, 1167 to 1921," BBC – History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/recent/troubles/overview_ni_article_07.shtml (accessed February 18, 2010).

country, the new legislation was introduced to restrict voting rights of the Catholic population. The judicial system was in control of the Protestants, too. From 1921 to 1972 at least half of the appointees to the high court were either current or former members of the Unionist political party which strengthened the link between political and judicial control. As a result, there were also other areas of Unionist domination such as public sector areas of employment, housing allocations and education.³³

The Unionist Parliament also passed several Acts to discriminate Catholics; the most prominent of them was the Special Powers Act of 1922. Although it was implemented to control the part of the IRA which did not accept the partition, the Act was repealed by the British government as late as in 1973.³⁴ Mulholland explains that it gave the security forces powers “to arrest without warrant, detain without trial, search homes without warrants, prohibit meetings and processions, and hang and whip offenders”.³⁵ The Act was enforced by the police force – the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and its paramilitary reservists – the Ulster Special Constabulary (USC). The members of RUC were required to carry arms and were trained in military tactics. Although the force was legally required to reserve one-third of its spots for Catholics, according to Hancock, “the number never reached higher than 12% of the force”.³⁶ In addition, there were open ties between the members of the USC, the Orange Order (the largest Protestant organization in Northern Ireland³⁷) and also with illegal Protestant paramilitary forces such as the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).³⁸ It seems that the Catholics living in these conditions thought they had a right to defend themselves with the only method which was possible, with the use of violence. Although, according to Coogan, they have never been united in the idea, that the use of force is the right and the only possible way how to protect their interests.³⁹

³² BBC, "Historic Figures: Eamon de Valera (1882 - 1975)," BBC – Homepage, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/de_valera_eamon.shtml (accessed February 18, 2010).

³³ Landon Hancock, "Background Essay on the Northern Ireland Conflict," CA IN: Northern Ireland Conflict, Politics, & Society. Information on 'the troubles', <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/landon.htm> (accessed February 18, 2010).

³⁴ Landon Hancock, "Background Essay on the Northern Ireland Conflict".

³⁵ Marc Mulholland, *The Longest War: Northern Ireland's Troubled History* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2002), 32.

³⁶ Landon Hancock, "Background Essay on the Northern Ireland Conflict".

³⁷ BBC, "Profile: The Orange Order," BBC News - NORTHERN IRELAND, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/1422212.stm (accessed February 18, 2010).

³⁸ Landon Hancock, "Background Essay on the Northern Ireland Conflict".

³⁹ Coogan, 38.

2.2.2 The beginning of the Troubles

After the Second World War, the Catholics' conditions slightly improved. Terence O'Neill, the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland of that time, undertook series of economic reforms and sought to improve relations with the Catholics living in the country and also with the Republic of Ireland. Nonetheless, some Catholics were frustrated with the lack of evidence of the reforms.⁴⁰

As a result, they began to form organizations which main aim was no longer the unification with the rest of Ireland but the end of the discrimination within Northern Ireland. Catholics, inspired by the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, tried to bring an attention to their problem through the (initially) peaceful marches.⁴¹ However, most Protestants viewed these marches just as nationalist and republican⁴² protests and not as the protests against discrimination.⁴³

The use of force by the RUC against marches in Derry 1968 helped to harden attitudes on both sides and after the loyalist⁴⁴ attack of the Catholic student's group, People's Democracy in 1969, as Gillespie states, "the sectarian conflict became inevitable".⁴⁵ This was the beginning of the violent period in Northern Ireland known as the Troubles.

By 1969, paramilitary groups began to operate on both sides. However, it was unionists again who started with paramilitary tactics. While the new UVF was created in 1966,⁴⁶ the IRA was during the sixties inactive even if the violence from the unionists' side worsened. The graffiti reading "IRA - I Ran Away" appeared in many areas.⁴⁷ The organization started to use force

⁴⁰ Hennessey, 125 – 127.

⁴¹ BBC., "The Troubles, 1963 to 1985," BBC - History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/recent/troubles/the_troubles_article_03.shtml (accessed February 18, 2010).

⁴² Gillespie, 210; The term the republican refers to the group of people supporting the unification with the rest of Ireland who chose to use violence to achieve their aims while the nationalists preferred nonviolent constitutional methods.

⁴³ Gordon Gillespie, *Historical Dictionary of the Northern Ireland Conflict (Historical Dictionaries of War, Revolution, and Civil Unrest)*. (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2007), 4.

⁴⁴ Gillespie, 148; The term a loyalist used to be interchangeable with the term an unionist but since the beginning of the Troubles it refers to the more militant or working-class section of the unionist community;

⁴⁵ Gillespie, 5.

⁴⁶ Martin Melaugh, "Violence - Loyalist and Republican Paramilitary Groups," CAIN: Northern Ireland Conflict, Politics, & Society. Information on 'the troubles', <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/violence/paramilitary.htm> (accessed February 18, 2010).

⁴⁷ BBC, "INDEPTH - PROVISIONAL IRA," BBC NEWS, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/northern_ireland/2001/provisional_ira/1969.stm (accessed February 18, 2010).

against the loyalist as late as after its another split (between more moderate Official IRA and more radical Provisional IRA) in 1969. The OIRA declared a ceasefire in 1972, while the PIRA⁴⁸ was active throughout all the Troubles.⁴⁹ The main aims of the PIRA were to defend the civil rights of the Catholic community and again, to support the reunification of whole Ireland as the organization blamed Britain's "illegal" partition for an upcoming military conflict.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the resume of the IRA's activity was mostly a reaction towards violent behaviour from the unionist's side.

2.2.3 The direct rule

The situation in Northern Ireland worsened by 1972 to that extent that the reaction of the British government to the problem was imposing the direct rule from Westminster. The conflict became uncontrollable mostly because of the events that preceded it. In 1971, the Ulster Unionist government introduced the internment⁵¹ again in attempt to undermine republican paramilitaries. However, the impact was disastrous and led to a further escalation in violence. The police focused mainly on nationalists suspects⁵² although the loyalist paramilitary group, the UVF, was still active and in addition, the largest loyalist paramilitary organization the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) was created in the same year.⁵³ Moreover, the British Army introduced increasingly aggressive policies on the ground.⁵⁴

As a result, on 30 January 1972, the day later known as Bloody Sunday; the British army deployed the Parachute Regiment to suppress riots at a civil rights march in Londonderry (Derry). The British soldiers shot death 13 civilians (with another one dying later of wounds).

⁴⁸ Martin Melaugh, "Violence - Loyalist and Republican Paramilitary Groups"; Afterwards, the term IRA has been used for the organisation that developed from the 'Provisional' IRA.

⁴⁹ Martin Melaugh, "Violence - Loyalist and Republican Paramilitary Groups".

⁵⁰ Martin Melaugh, "Abstracts of Organisations - 'I.'" CAIN: Northern Ireland Conflict, Politics, & Society. Information on 'the troubles'. <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/organ/iorgan.htm#ira> (accessed February 18, 2010).

⁵¹ BBC, "The Troubles, 1963 to 1985," BBC – History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/recent/troubles/the_troubles_article_05.shtml (accessed February 20, 2010); the detention of suspects without trial.

⁵² BBC, "The Troubles, 1963 to 1985".

⁵³ Martin Melaugh, "Loyalist and Republican Paramilitary Groups".

⁵⁴ BBC, "The Troubles, 1963 to 1985".

Consequently, the IRA gained many new recruits and yet more British troops were deployed to the country.⁵⁵

The British government demanded that the Ulster Unionists gave up the control of security to the Westminster government. As the demand was rejected, the Northern Ireland Parliament was suspended and a system of the direct rule was introduced. No side was satisfied with the solution, many nationalists still wanted the united Ireland immediately and many unionists wanted majority rule to be restored and feared the possibility of reunification of the island.⁵⁶

As a result of mutual antipathy of nationalists and unionists, any political settlement was almost impossible to achieve.⁵⁷ Since 1972 there have been a few unsuccessful attempts to reach a political accord and better the situation. The power-sharing, which is as Oakland explains, "Catholic minority political representation in cooperation with the Protestant majority"⁵⁸; lasted just for three months as it was opposed by most of the unionists. Eventually, it was brought down through a strike of a new loyalist group, Ulster Workers' Council. This strike started the acts of violence from both sides.⁵⁹ Another British decision that enraged the unionists was the possible role of the Republic of Ireland in the Northern Irish affairs, agreed at Sunningdale Conference in 1973.⁶⁰ Consequently, Northern Ireland became ungovernable and the direct rule was imposed again (lasting till 1998).

2.2.4 Prisoners

Afterwards, the republicans faced a problem concerning the imprisoned members of the IRA. The organization considered them to be political prisoners (or as they called them, "POWs" - prisoners of war).⁶¹ This special category status was confirmed by British government in 1972.⁶² Nonetheless, the "criminalization" policy four years later, removed this status from all prisoners

⁵⁵ BBC, "The Troubles, 1963 to 1985"

⁵⁶ Gillespie, 6.

⁵⁷ Gillespie, 6.

⁵⁸ Oakland, 127.

⁵⁹ Hennessey, 228 – 230.

⁶⁰ Oakland, 127-128.

⁶¹ BBC, "What happened in the hunger strike?," BBC NEWS - UK - Northern Ireland, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/4941866.stm (accessed March 18, 2010).

⁶² Jonathan Bardon, "Intercepted message shows outlook of IRA prisoners," The Irish Times, <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2009/1230/1224261407110.html> (accessed March 18, 2010).

“convicted of causing terrorist offences sentenced after that date for scheduled offences.”⁶³ It caused a few protests among the prisoners (e.g.: “the Blanket protest” in which prisoners refused to wear prison clothes).⁶⁴ The more important protest followed in 1980-1, when the existing policy was extended to all paramilitary prisoners “regardless of when the crimes had been committed”.⁶⁵ This protest became known, as “the Hunger strike”. The prisoners refused to eat in order to require the special category status again. During the protests, 10 people died. It stirred up a huge wave of sympathy among the nationalists. About 70,000 people attended the funeral of the leader of the strike, Bobby Sands. The strikes ended because the change of the jail policy was announced, meeting some of the prisoners' demands.⁶⁶ Afterwards the support of the IRA considerably increased among the nationalists.⁶⁷

As a result, there was another attempt to resolve the bad situation in the country by meeting some of the nationalists' demands. It was the Anglo-Irish agreement, signed in 1985 which confirmed that Northern Ireland would become united with the Republic of Ireland in case that the majority of the population in the north agrees. In addition, it gave a significant role to the Republic of Ireland in the resolution of the Northern Irish situation. The unionists saw the agreement as a step to reunification, hence they opposed again.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, signing the agreement approves the ability of the IRA and even its imprisoned members to influence the politics concerning Northern Ireland. According to Melaugh, the Hunger strike was “one of the key turning points of the Troubles.”⁶⁹ In addition, it indicates a strong relationship between the organization and its imprisoned members.

⁶³ Martin Melaugh, "Events: Hunger Strike 1981 - Chronology." CAIN: Northern Ireland Conflict, Politics, & Society. Information on 'the troubles', <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/hstrike/chronology.htm> (accessed March 18, 2010).

⁶⁴ Martin Melaugh, "Hunger Strike 1981 – Summary," CAIN: Northern Ireland Conflict, Politics, & Society. Information on 'the troubles', <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/hstrike/summary.htm> (accessed March 18, 2010).

⁶⁵ Martin Melaugh, "Hunger Strike 1981 – Summary".

⁶⁶ BBC, "What happened in the hunger strike?" .

⁶⁷ Martin Melaugh, "Hunger Strike 1981 – Summary" .

⁶⁸ BBC, "The Troubles, 1963 to 1985," BBC History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/recent/troubles/the_troubles_article_08.shtml (accessed February 20, 2010).

⁶⁹ Martin Melaugh, "Hunger Strike 1981 – Summary".

2.2.5 The beginning of the peace process

The 1990s were marked by attempts to restore peace in Northern Ireland and contrary to the past, they were at least partly successful. The Downing Street Declaration signed in 1993 allowed the republican party Sinn Fein (also called “the political wing of the IRA”⁷⁰) to join the talks about the future of Northern Ireland if the IRA renounces violence. As a result, the IRA declared ceasefire in 1994.⁷¹ It seems that every side involved in the conflict started to reconsider their strategies to establish peace in Northern Ireland.

2.2.6 Change in the strategy of the IRA

Even the strategy of the most violent paramilitary organization, the IRA, changed as it moved towards the political negotiations. It was mostly caused by the nationalist politician and the leader of Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams. According to the Security force assessments contend, he “held a number of senior positions within the IRA, including membership of its ruling army council,”⁷² although he has never admitted it.⁷³ Nonetheless, whether he was engaged to the IRA or not, he certainly had a power to influence the strategy of the organization.

2.2.7 Decommissioning

However, although most of the paramilitary organizations declared ceasefire, the important issue in multiparty talks became the decommissioning of paramilitary arms. Some parties insisted on decommissioning of the paramilitaries, but those parties linked to the organizations refused it. As a result, the international body was established “to provide an independent assessment of the decommissioning issue.”⁷⁴ The body consisted of politicians from countries such as the United States, Canada and Finland. The creation of the body was endorsed by a former president of the United States, Bill Clinton who was also involved in the peace process trying to encourage the

⁷⁰ BBC, "Understanding Northern Ireland," BBC NEWS – UK - Northern Ireland, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/northern_ireland/understanding/parties_paramilitaries/sinn_fein.stm (accessed April 1, 2010).

⁷¹ BBC, "1993-94 The Downing Street Declaration and the IRA ceasefire," BBC News – History, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/events/northern_ireland/history/69283.stm (accessed February 20, 2010).

⁷² BBC, "Profile: Gerry Adams," BBC NEWS - UK - N Ireland, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/1287262.stm (accessed March 14, 2010).

⁷³ BBC, "Profile: Gerry Adams".

⁷⁴ Jeson Ingraham, "Irish Peace Process," CAIN: Northern Ireland Conflict, Politics, & Society. Information on 'the troubles', <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/talks.htm#joint> (accessed February 20, 2010).

two sides to reach a compromise. The body agreed on decommissioning of the paramilitaries during the peace-talks. However, the British Prime Minister John Major surprisingly did not accept the recommendation of the body as he insisted on decommissioning before the talks would begin.⁷⁵ Moreover, he supported unionists' proposals which "would favour the Unionist representation in any elected assembly."⁷⁶

2.2.8 Splits inside of the IRA

As a result, the IRA broke the ceasefire in 1996. At that time, another of the IRA splinter groups, the continuity IRA became active. This organization was not really interested in peace which could not be reached without compromise, as its main aim was to continue with the original campaign of violence of the IRA, to remove the British control from Northern Ireland. The Provisional IRA resumed the ceasefire in 1997 to allow Sinn Féin to be present in the peace talks. Nonetheless, not all the members of the organization agreed on that solution, thus another splinter group, the real IRA, was created.⁷⁷

2.2.9 Road to peace

The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement followed these peace talks and the power-sharing was imposed again. Nevertheless, the unionist were not satisfied with the slow progress on decommissioning of paramilitary weapons and wanted to resign from the power-sharing Executive.⁷⁸ It is understandable that they wanted assurance that the IRA would not break the ceasefire again as the organization was responsible for almost half deaths caused by the conflict (it is blamed for 1709 out of 3526 deaths).⁷⁹ Consequently, the Executive was suspended in 2002 and the direct rule was imposed again. The power-sharing was restored in 2007 after the Provisional IRA completed the decommissioning of all of its arms.⁸⁰ The decommissioning of the

⁷⁵ Jeson Ingraham, "Irish Peace Process".

⁷⁶ Jeson Ingraham, "Irish Peace Process".

⁷⁷ Holly Fletcher, "IRA Splinter Groups (U.K., separatists)," Council on Foreign Relations, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9239/> (accessed February 20, 2010).

⁷⁸ Martin Melaugh, "Irish Peace Process – Summary," CAIN: Northern Ireland Conflict, Politics, & Society. Information on 'the troubles', <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/sum.htm> (accessed February 20, 2010).

⁷⁹ Malcolm Sutton, "Sutton Index of Deaths," CAIN: Northern Ireland Conflict, Politics, & Society, Information on 'the troubles', http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/tables/Organisation_Responsible.html (accessed February 21, 2010).

⁸⁰ BBC, "Timeline: Northern Ireland's road to peace," BBC NEWS - UK - Northern Ireland,

main loyalist paramilitary groups followed even few years later (e.g.: the UDA confirmed the decommissioning as late as in January 2010).⁸¹

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/4072261.stm (accessed March 14, 2010).

⁸¹ BBC, "UDA confirm guns decommissioned," BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/8442683.stm (accessed February 20, 2010).

3 NATIONAL IDENTITY

Identification with one particular national identity can serve as a label for people sharing the same historic territory, historical memories and culture.⁸² Although all people living in Northern Ireland share the same territory; history and culture of the specific groups differ as well as their national identity. Different national identities of the Northern Irish citizens certainly helped to widen the chasm between the two enemy communities during the conflict, as they also often reflected their political opinions. Moreover, it would also divide members of one particular community as the identification with certain national identity differed among its members, too.

Hence, the national identity is more important in Northern Ireland than elsewhere in the United Kingdom. In mainland Britain, the subordinate ethnic identities (such as the English, Welsh, Scots or immigrants from all over the world) are covered under the umbrella of “the preponderant British identity,”⁸³ according to Moxon-Browne. Although their primal identities are also important to them, they can coexist together peacefully, sharing the feeling of being British. On the other hand, Moxon-Brown states that “primordial national identity is an exclusive and divisive concept”⁸⁴ in Northern Ireland. In Great Britain, the structure of population has been changing all the time, for instance due to immigration; while in Northern Ireland, national identity is deeply rooted in the history (see 2.1.3 Origins of the Protestant population in Ulster) and it is strengthened by opposing views of the people on the legitimacy of their country.⁸⁵ As far as constitutional identities are concerned, the nationalists think that the partition of the island of Ireland was not legal, while the unionists do not agree with it and are rather satisfied that the country is part of the United Kingdom. Therefore, although many people living in mainland Britain are quite comfortable with multiple identities (including Britishness); according to Ward, the

⁸² Anthony D. Smith, "National and Other Identities," In *National Identity (Ethnonationalism in Comparative Perspective)*, New Ed ed. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991) http://books.google.com/books?id=bEAJbHBIXR8C&pg=PA14&lpg=PA14&dq=historic+territory+memories%22national+identity&source=bl&ots=fJpOSnb4Fj&sig=hHEY7XJOW_SM1u1UU6V9DEaDBcA&hl=en&ei=GSLbS_f8OoSYOL7a5NQP&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CAgQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=historic%20territory%20memories%22national%20identity&f=false (accessed April 30, 2010), 14.

⁸³ Edward Moxon-Browne, "National Identity in Northern Ireland," In *Social Attitudes in Northern Ireland/1990-91* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1991) <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/research/nisas/rep1c2.htm> (accessed March 13, 2010).

⁸⁴ Edward Moxon-Browne, "National Identity in Northern Ireland".

⁸⁵ Edward Moxon-Browne, "National Identity in Northern Ireland".

relationship [between the identities] has been more complex and problematic” in Northern Ireland.⁸⁶

The main national identities in Northern Ireland, examined by surveys, are even British, Irish, Ulster or Northern Irish.⁸⁷ Descendants of the English or Scottish planters have inclined to label themselves as British as they think, as Ward points out, that their ancestors contributed significantly in the creation of Great Britain⁸⁸ (See 2.1.4 Discrimination of Catholics, in particular the Battle of Boyne). Although a fifth of them used to feel more Irish than British before the Troubles had begun; the IRA campaign of violence changed significantly their attitudes “towards adopting the label 'British',”⁸⁹ as Moxon-Browne states. On the other hand, natives have inclined to label themselves as Irish as the partition did not have so strong impact on them to change their national identity. Ward claims that they even did not start to think about their national identity before the Troubles.⁹⁰ Then, there is a slight shift in favour of the Northern Irish identity as not all of the nationalists supported the ideas and tactics of the IRA. Although they rejected the Northern Irish (Unionists) state, they have adopted an Irish northern regional identity.⁹¹ The Ulster identity has been in decline since the beginning of the Troubles. However, it used to be attractive mostly for the unionists.⁹²

Thus, it is evident that national identities among the Northern Irish citizens significantly differ. The unionists have either labeled themselves with the British national identity or considered themselves to have the Ulster or Northern Irish national identity under the umbrella of Britishness as well as the inhabitants of mainland Britain. On the other hand, the nationalists who feel more Irish have opposed any connection with Great Britain as they do not agree with the partition of the island. In addition, the identity of the unionists and the nationalists is, according to Hennessey, based on the sense of not belonging to the other group.⁹³

⁸⁶ Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 157.

⁸⁷ Edward Moxon-Browne, "National Identity in Northern Ireland".

⁸⁸ Ward, 158.

⁸⁹ Edward Moxon-Browne, "National Identity in Northern Ireland".

⁹⁰ Ward, 167.

⁹¹ Ward, 167.

⁹² Edward Moxon-Browne, "National Identity in Northern Ireland".

⁹³ Hennessey, Preface.

4 RELIGION

Religion, as well as the national identity, is more important in Northern Ireland than in any other part of the United Kingdom. These two aspects are also closely interconnected there. Therefore, the terms “nationalist” and “Catholic”, and “unionist” and “Protestant” are often used interchangeably.⁹⁴ The reason, why it is possible, is that almost all (96,9%) Northern Irish inhabitants come from families with a Christian religious background (either Catholic or Protestant)⁹⁵. In contrary to the whole United Kingdom, as just less than half of the citizens (46%) consider themselves as members of any Christian denomination there.⁹⁶

4.1 Religion and politics

Religion and national identity are also closely connected to the politics in Northern Ireland as these two aspects have played a significant role during the conflict. One of the reasons is that Protestantism and Catholicism, according to Hennessey, “represent an ideological schism within the Christianity.”⁹⁷ The main difference between these two Christian denominations is that Catholics accept the authority of the Pope while Protestants do not.⁹⁸ This fact has been always connected to politics in whole Ireland, for instance it was the main reason why the Ulster Protestants opposed Home Rule (as Coogan claims, for them Home Rule was the same as “Rome Rule”).⁹⁹ They have never wished to live in the predominantly Catholic state, as they have been afraid that it would bring them under the authority of the Pope.¹⁰⁰ Another main difference between these two denominations is, as Greely states, that the Protestants have always tended “to emphasize the relationship of the individual with God” while Catholics has always tended “to emphasize the individual relation to God as a member of a community.”¹⁰¹ Therefore, the Protestants have never been in favour of the Catholic institutional system because they perceived

⁹⁴ Edward Moxon-Browne, "National Identity in Northern Ireland".

⁹⁵ Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), "Key Statistics Report Tables," Northern Ireland Census of Population <http://www.nisranew.nisra.gov.uk/Census/pdf/Key%20Statistics%20ReportTables.pdf> (accessed April 9, 2010).

⁹⁶ Oakland, 270.

⁹⁷ Hennessey, 3.

⁹⁸ Hennessey, 3.

⁹⁹ Coogan, 8.

¹⁰⁰ Hennessey, 3.

¹⁰¹ Andrew Greely, "Protestant and Catholic: Is the Analogical Imagination Extinct?," *American*

the Catholic Church as “wishing to control access to religious knowledge and exerting a powerful influence over social and political institutions within the society”, as Hennessey claims.¹⁰² As a result, they fought for the partition and then, they opposed the reunification of the island. Therefore, the reason why Protestants have been so afraid of reunification is mostly the politics which the connection with the Catholic state would bring. As a result, they created a Protestant country discriminating the Catholic minority. The Catholics tried to oppose the discrimination and moreover, some of them started to blame Britain for causing the conflict and nourishing it by its military presence. According to Sapone, “[They did] not see their own violence as the cause of continued British military presence in Northern Ireland, but as a reaction to it.”¹⁰³ Consequently, the religion became a label for distinguishing the enemy, as the religions affiliation became the easiest identifier of national identity during the conflict.¹⁰⁴

The Protestants and Catholics have had also different approaches to the conflict. While the Protestants were more organized and united in their aims, the Catholics were not. Almost all Protestants have always wanted to remain part of the United Kingdom. They came with the idea of the partition and have stayed convinced about the rightness of their decision till today. In the 1990s, about 90% of the Protestants wanted Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom. On the other hand, there have always been mixed opinions about the reunification of the island in the Catholic community.¹⁰⁵ This disagreement was probably caused by the tactics of the IRA which were not supported by all the Catholics. At the beginning of the Troubles, just 13% of the Catholics approved the use of arms to achieve their aims.¹⁰⁶ While the IRA declared that the partition was illegal and hence they should fight for the reunification; some Catholics were still more interested in combating the discrimination within Northern Ireland. In the 1990s about

Sociological Review 54, no. 4 (1989): 485-502, <http://www.jstor.org/pss/2095873> (accessed March 14, 2010).

¹⁰² Hennessey, 3.

¹⁰³ Montgomery Sapone, "CEASEFIRE: THE IMPACT OF REPUBLICAN POLITICAL CULTURE ON THE CEASEFIRE PROCESS IN NORTHERN IRELAND," George Mason University, <http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/pcs/SAPONE71PCS.html> (accessed March 13, 2010).

¹⁰⁴ Gordon, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Richard Breen, "Who wants a United Ireland? Constitutional preferences among Catholics and Protestants," In *Social Attitudes in Northern Ireland*. ed. Richard Breen, Paula Devine and Lizanne Dowds (Belfast: Appletree Press (Ie), 1996), <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/research/nisas/rep5c2.htm#constitutional> (accessed March 13, 2010).

¹⁰⁶ Bernadette Hayes and Ian McAllister, "Sowing Dragon's Teeth: Public Support for Political Violence and Paramilitarism in Northern Ireland," CAIN: Northern Ireland Conflict, Politics, & Society. Information on 'the troubles', <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/violence/docs/hayes/hayes00.htm> (accessed March 13, 2010).

a half of the Catholics were in favour of reunification while one third was satisfied with being a part of the United Kingdom. Although, it is considered that the terms “Catholic” and “nationalist” and “Protestant” and “unionist” can be, and often are, used interchangeably, the terms such as “Catholic unionist” and “Protestant nationalist” also exist. While the first term represents a third of the Catholic population, the second one is rather a rare exception in whole Protestant community.¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, even those Catholics who supported reunification have never been united in the idea which means to use to reach their aim. There have always been two wings – one which has preferred the use of force, while the other has supported the parliamentary way. The disagreement between these two wings firstly appeared even in the second half of the 19th century (see 2.1.5 Unification and subsequent creation of paramilitary organizations) in the Catholic community and have been present in the conflict since then.

¹⁰⁷ Richard Breen, "Who wants a United Ireland? Constitutional preferences among Catholics and Protestants".

5 SEGREGATION

The important aspect in the conflict was certainly the segregation of the Protestant and Catholic community, in Northern Ireland which has developed through the time to the considerable degree. Although the segregation was not the cause of the conflict, it played a significant role in maintaining and nourishing it. The segregation has appeared in many areas. In the center of attention has always been residential, personal and marital, and educational segregation. In addition, the segregation has appeared in many more areas, for instance at work, sport or leisure.¹⁰⁸ This division of the society helped the paramilitaries to choose right targets for their violent operations as the two communities usually lived separated.

5.1 Residential segregation

Residential segregation between the Catholics and Protestants has appeared in both urban and rural areas,¹⁰⁹ thus in whole Northern Ireland. In 1990, Whyte estimated that “about 35 to 40 per cent of the population lives in segregated neighborhoods,”¹¹⁰ However, residential segregation has mostly occurred in working-class areas while middle and upper-class areas have usually been more mixed. Segregated housing underlies other forms of segregation; moreover it can intensify them. As Whyte claims, two segregated communities living in neighborhood tend to “read different newspapers, support different football teams, patronize different shops, send their children to different schools, and have totally different kinship networks.”¹¹¹

There were many reasons for residential segregation during the conflict. It could function as a base for self-defence or base from which to attack enemies; it also helped to preserve a way

¹⁰⁸ Miles Hewstone, Ed Cairns, Alberto Voci, Stefania Paolini, Frances McLernon, Richard J. Crisp, Ulrike Niens, and Jean Craig, "Intergroup Contact in a Divided Society: Challenging Segregation in Northern Ireland," In *Social Psychology of Inclusion and Exclusion*, 265-292, (Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press, 2005), 6 http://www.science.ulster.ac.uk/psyri/profiles/f_mclernon/documents/intergroup.pdf (accessed March 15, 2010).

¹⁰⁹ Miles Hewstone, et al., "Intergroup Contact in a Divided Society: Challenging Segregation in Northern Ireland".

¹¹⁰ John Whyte, "Residential Segregation," In *Interpreting Northern Ireland (Clarendon Paperbacks)*, 34-36, 1990, (Reprint, New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2003), 34.

http://books.google.com/books?id=mKnCr5IIEA0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Interpreting+Northern+Ireland+whyte&source=bl&ots=ROJyzoOYEg&sig=U-yA-QFbMoQfW6XapPaQFqfop38&hl=en&ei=cIKeS9S1JZncmgPbkOmeCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CAgQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=35%20to%2040&f=false (accessed March 15, 2010)

¹¹¹ John Whyte, "Residential Segregation."

of life and avoid embarrassing contacts with the members of different community.¹¹² Hence, people living in segregated areas could feel more secure. However, the violence more often occurred in segregated places than in places with integrated housing.¹¹³

5.2 Personal and marital segregation

As not all the Protestants and Catholics have lived in segregated areas, the cross-community friendships have existed nevertheless intermarriage has been exceptional. However, as Hewstone points out, the friendship could work only in case if “certain issues are not mentioned.”¹¹⁴ A family is considered to be a core unit of society and as the society in Northern Ireland is highly segregated, the percentage of inter-married couples is very low (during the Troubles it was about 5%, afterward at maximum 9%).¹¹⁵ According to Moxon-Brown, “the endogamy [intra-marriage] is frequently the single most important factor in maintaining the boundaries [between the communities].”¹¹⁶ In addition, he claims that it “is both a reflection and a cause of strong communal identity, [in Northern Ireland]”.¹¹⁷ Therefore, in case of division of society, the endogamy is more important than residential segregation, especially in Northern Ireland. Even when inter-marriage has occurred, a husband usually cut off all ties with his community, thus the division remains preserved. Nonetheless, even then the mixed couples have been often threatened by violence.¹¹⁸

5.3 Educational segregation

A third of the most important types of segregation is the educational segregation which creates division between children from a very early age. As a result, the segregation has become deeply rooted in people’s personalities. In addition, according to Hewstone the simple fact of separate

¹¹² Miles Hewstone, et al., "Intergroup Contact in a Divided Society: Challenging Segregation in Northern Ireland".

¹¹³ John Whyte, "Residential Segregation".

¹¹⁴ Miles Hewstone, et al., "Intergroup Contact in a Divided Society: Challenging Segregation in Northern Ireland".

¹¹⁵ Miles Hewstone, et al., "Intergroup Contact in a Divided Society: Challenging Segregation in Northern Ireland".

¹¹⁶ Edward Moxon-Browne, "National Identity in Northern Ireland".

¹¹⁷ Edward Moxon-Browne, "National Identity in Northern Ireland".

¹¹⁸ Miles Hewstone, et al., "Intergroup Contact in a Divided Society: Challenging Segregation in Northern Ireland".

education “allows prejudice and stereotypes to flourish.”¹¹⁹ Although the integrated schools have increased in a number recently, thus some progress has been achieved; it has been opposed by some church and community leaders on both sides.¹²⁰

5.4 Belfast

A typical example of a segregated city is the capital of Northern Ireland, Belfast. Moreover, Belfast has been the most segregated place in Northern Ireland.¹²¹ An interesting fact is that Belfast has been inhabited by almost equal proportions of the Catholics and Protestants, lately.¹²² (The Catholics formed a third of the population in the 19th century and the number of them has been growing since then).¹²³ Hence, none of the community dominates the city. Belfast has always been territorially divided to some extent. However, Bryan points out that when the Troubles began, “the widespread political violence led to large population movements, leaving the city more polarized than ever.”¹²⁴ Every time as a level of violence increased, people started to seek protection within their own community.¹²⁵ Therefore, the city has become divided into two main parts - the east Belfast which has been mainly Protestant and the west Belfast being more Catholic. Although, there are a few places in Belfast which are mixed, there are also places where the segregation is almost complete such as for example famous Shankill (Protestant) and Clonard (Catholic).¹²⁶

¹¹⁹ Miles Hewstone, et al., "Intergroup Contact in a Divided Society: Challenging Segregation in Northern Ireland".

¹²⁰ Miles Hewstone, et al., "Intergroup Contact in a Divided Society: Challenging Segregation in Northern Ireland".

¹²¹ John Whyte, "Residential Segregation".

¹²² "National Statistics Online." UK National Statistics Publication Hub. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=980> (accessed March 16, 2010).

¹²³ Frederick W. Boal, "Integration and Division: sharing and segregating in Belfast," *Planning Practice & Research* 11, no. 2 (May 1996): 151-158. <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=4&hid=3&sid=ea7f66d0-f7bc-48ee-9285-e4169de12997%40sessionmgr13&bdata=JmFtcDtsYW5nPWZnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=a9h&AN=9607093211> (accessed March 16, 2010).

¹²⁴ Dominic Bryan. "Belfast: Urban Space, "Policing" and Sectarian Polarization." In *Wounded Cities: Destruction and Reconstruction in a Globalized World*, 251-270. (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003), 251 http://books.google.com/books?id=tHk17Z_zdn8C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_navlinks_s#v=onepage&q=&f=false (accessed March 15, 2010).

¹²⁵ Paul Doherty and Michael A. Poole, "Ethnic Residential Segregation in Belfast, Northern Ireland, 1971-1991," *Geographical Review* 87, no. 4 (1997): 522, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/215229> (accessed March 15, 2010).

¹²⁶ Frederick W. Boal, "Integration and Division: sharing and segregating in Belfast".

Nevertheless, the proportion of the Catholics and Protestants living in Belfast was not always nearly the same. The city was not even founded by the native Irish but by Anglo-Normans in 12th century and then, during the Plantations of Ulster it became a significant Protestant settlement. As Belfast became one of the major industrial cities, its population started to grow in the first half of the 19th century. It brought a large amount of Catholics seeking a job to the city. Since then, tension between the Catholics and Protestant in Belfast has begun. This fact makes from the history of Belfast quite an opposite to the history of whole Ireland. The Catholics moved also to other industrialized cities such as Glasgow or Liverpool, but the tension between the two communities was much sharper and divisive in Belfast. The main reason is that the Catholics started to fight for independent Ireland, at that time. Therefore, what had been only an ethnic conflict, before changed to the ethno-national one. After the partition, there were many outbreaks of violence in Belfast,¹²⁷ hence people started to seek refuge within their own community.

As a level of violence highly increased during the Troubles, many people relocated to their community areas.¹²⁸ Moreover, these areas have become separated by physical barriers. The earliest barriers were simple barricades or barbed wire fences, built by citizens for defensive purposes.¹²⁹ As a result of extreme sectarian rioting, the British Army started to build so called "peace lines" to separate the Catholic and Protestant communities.¹³⁰ As Russell explains, "they even cut roads in half, split public parks down the middle, and may stretch for some kilometres."¹³¹ These walls have become a feature characterizing the Belfast city. However, the brick walls or barbed wire fences are not the only ways that mark a divide between the Protestant and Catholic areas. It is usual for these two communities "to claim ownership of their territory."¹³² It is possible to see not only flags erected on street lights, but also kerbstones

¹²⁷ Frederick W. Boal, "Integration and Division: sharing and segregating in Belfast".

¹²⁸ Frederick W. Boal, "Integration and Division: sharing and segregating in Belfast".

¹²⁹ David Russell, "Belfast: Strategies for a Shared City," *Shared Space: A research journal on peace, conflict and community relations in Northern Ireland* 1 (2005): 21-33. <http://www.community-relations.org.uk/fs/doc/shared-space-issue-1-c-david-russell-2.pdf> (accessed March 16, 2010).

¹³⁰ Margrethe C.Lauber, "Belfast Peacelines: study," mspace, <http://www.mspace.com/belfast.study.html> (accessed March 16, 2010).

¹³¹ David Russell, "Belfast: Strategies for a Shared City".

¹³² David Russell, "Belfast: Strategies for a Shared City".

painted in national colours or murals painted on walls, symbolizing something typical for the community.¹³³

Although the period of the Troubles is considered to be over for quite long time; Belfast still remains polarized and segregated. The residential, educational and marital segregation is high, and most of the public spaces or facilities are still thought to be a property of a particular community. There are a few public spaces which are considered to be neutral; it means that they are not owned by a particular community but by the city council. However, for the safety reasons, even those places are attended by members of one community only.¹³⁴ It seems that living in segregation is so deeply rooted in people in Belfast, that even in the time of relative peace; they find the segregation between the two denominations of one religion normal.

¹³³ David Russell, "Belfast: Strategies for a Shared City".

¹³⁴ David Russell, "Belfast: Strategies for a Shared City"

II. ANALYSIS

6 THE BOXER

6.1 Main plot

The Boxer is a film portraying the conflict in Northern Ireland during the 1990s. The period when the IRA declared a ceasefire and decided to enter peace talks with the British government (see 2.2.5 The beginning of the peace process). It depicts the Catholic community in Belfast, especially current or former members of the IRA, and their friends and families. The organization is, at that time, torn within own ranks as some members do not agree with the attempt to reach their goals by more political means.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, the film is not only about politics, in fact it is more about common people whose lives were significantly influenced by the conflict. The main character Danny Flynn (Daniel-Day Lewis) is not only a former member of the IRA but also a boxer. The film starts at the moment when he is released from a prison after serving a fourteen-year sentence for his involvement in IRA operations. After the release, he does not want to be involved in IRA's activities any more and concentrates on reopening a nonsectarian boxing club. His another aim is getting together with his former girl friend Maggie (Emily Watson) who is a daughter of the local IRA leader Joe Hamill (Brian Cox). The major obstacle of their relationships seems to be that she has already married another IRA volunteer, serving his sentence in prison.¹³⁶

6.2 Authors

The film came into existence due to Jim Sheridan (director and co-writer) and Terry George (co-writer), the men who had already had a lot of experience with making films with Northern Irish themes before they started to work on the Boxer. The film is considered to be the last part of the trilogy dealing with the Troubles, as Sheridan and George also collaborated on films such as *In the name of the Father* and *Some mother's son*.¹³⁷ It seems that both authors are, to some

¹³⁵ Gary Crowdus and O'Mara Leary, "Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan," *Cineaste* 23, no. 3 (March 1998): 13, <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=1&hid=107&sid=83cd3484-69d4-4968-9d58-b4fd1fd00e7d%40sessionmgr111&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=a9h&AN=587909> (accessed March 14, 2010).

¹³⁶ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*, DVD, Directed by Jim Sheridan (Washington DC: Universal Studios, 1997).

¹³⁷ Gary Crowdus and O'Mara Leary, "Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan", 13.

degree, emotionally connected with this topic. Sheridan, originally Irish,¹³⁸ seems to sympathise with the Catholic minority living in Northern Ireland while George was in fact born there. His experience with the Troubles was real, not only because he comes from Belfast, but he was also engaged to the republican paramilitary group the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and the Irish Republican Socialist Party. Whereupon, he was arrested and sentenced to six years in prison.¹³⁹ Hence, he must have gained a lot of experience to draw from.

6.3 The Boxer as a republican film

Therefore, as Sheridan states, the Boxer is rather „a self-critical film from within the republican movement“¹⁴⁰ than an anti-republican film. It is definitely republican in sense that it also tends to criticize the English society. This is possible to observe in the scene, when Danny participates in a boxing match in London.¹⁴¹ There is an evident contrast between the approach to the boxing of the Northern Irish and the English society. Boxers in Belfast just enjoy the sport and the audience supports their favorites and cheers for them. On the other hand, the boxing match in London appears to serve just as entertainment for wealthy people. There is evident superiority of audience over the boxers. As one of the characters tells Danny: „It's a bloody circus... and you're their performin' monkey.“¹⁴² Sheridan says he tried to point up „the English tradition of monarchist, of elitists [and] of a superiority complex“¹⁴³ in this scene.

6.4 Themes

Both authors moved to the United States as early as in 1980s and they have been living there since then.¹⁴⁴ This fact suggests that their works (including the Boxer) must be influenced by the American culture, too. The romance or the boxing are typical Hollywood genre forms¹⁴⁵ which

¹³⁸ Gary Crowdus and O'Mara Leary, “Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan”, 13.

¹³⁹ "Terry George, "ROTTEN TOMATOES: Movies - New Movie Reviews and Previews!, http://www.rottentomatoes.com/celebrity/terry_george/biography.php (accessed March 22, 2010).

¹⁴⁰ Gary Crowdus and O'Mara Leary, “Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan”, 13.

¹⁴¹ Gary Crowdus and O'Mara Leary, “Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan”, 13.

¹⁴² Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁴³ Gary Crowdus and O'Mara Leary, “Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan”, 13.

¹⁴⁴ Gary Crowdus and O'Mara Leary, “Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan”, 13.

"Terry George"

¹⁴⁵ Brian Mcilroy, *Genre and Cinema: Ireland and Transnationalism (Routledge Studies in Cultural History)*, (1 ed. New York: Routledge, 2007), 83

<http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=dz4WGY6PyNUC&oi=fnd&pg=PA77&dq=the+boxer+%22terr>

helps the film to meet requirements of an international audience. However, in closer examination, it is possible to see deeper meanings engaged to these forms. Hence, the perception of the film may differ according to watcher's experience and knowledge about the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Nonetheless, taking into consideration the past and the experience of the authors, it seems that the main theme of the film is the way how people from the Catholic community in Belfast cope with their past and the upcoming peace process in Northern Ireland. The themes such as the romance or the sport of boxing are also very important in the film but their main function is probably just to demonstrate some of the problems which the common people had to deal with, at that time.

Even the very beginning of the *Boxer* prepares watchers that they are going to see a film about the conflict in Northern Ireland, the peace process in particular. Narrated quotes of people involved in the process appear even before the film properly begins. The first quote by Bill Clinton, originally said at the conference with the Prime Minister of Ireland, John Bruton, in Dublin,¹⁴⁶ expresses hope for better and more peaceful future in Northern Ireland: "So we had a good meeting, we've got a wonderful relationship, the Sun is shining, and I hope it's a good omen for peace in Northern Ireland."¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the following quotes demonstrate that to make peace in Northern Ireland is no easy matter. For instance, we can hear the motto of the loyalists¹⁴⁸ "No surrender"¹⁴⁹ or the famous quote by Gerry Adams¹⁵⁰ "They haven't gone away you know."¹⁵¹ Although this quotation is not really understandable without the context, it can arouse fear not only among the loyalists but also among all supporters of vulnerable peace in Northern Ireland. The reason is that it refers to the IRA as it is actually the reply to the question

y+george&ots=mszGliHYA&sig=aINK2Vd1a9feFNet_HBKgysglEY#v=onepage&q=many%20formal%20conventions%20of%20the%20boxing%20genre&f=false (accessed March, 22).

¹⁴⁶ John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, "William J. Clinton: The President's News Conference With Prime Minister John Bruton of Ireland in Dublin, December 1, 1995," The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=50840> (accessed March 22, 2010).

¹⁴⁷ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁴⁸ Dara Mulhern, "Symbols - Unionist and Loyalist," CAIN: Northern Ireland Conflict, Politics, & Society. Information on 'the troubles', <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/images/symbols/unionloyal.htm> (accessed March 25, 2010).

¹⁴⁹ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁵⁰ Alex Thomson, "Have the IRA said enough?," Channel4: C4 News - UK - Northern Ireland, www.channel4.com/news/2003/10/week_4/21_ire_prob.html (accessed March 25, 2010).

¹⁵¹ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

“What’s happened to the IRA?”¹⁵², asked from an audience at the Belfast rally after the Good Friday agreement had been signed.¹⁵³ Thus, it is probably the reason why it took the IRA such a long time to decommission its paramilitary arms. As this Adams’ remark accommodated both wings of the organization, those preferring the parliamentary methods were satisfied with the peace process and the more radical wing could still hope that their time to use the weapons would come again. However, neither as influential politician as Adams was able to unite all the members of the IRA as the most radical members of the organization broke away from the IRA continuing in its violent tactics (see 2.2.6 Splits inside of the IRA). Thus, it is evident that there were people with different attitudes towards the peace process, not only in whole Catholic community but within the IRA, too.

6.5 Main Characters

These different attitudes can be nicely observed when we have a look at the main characters of the film. It seems that natures of the characters were created deliberately by the authors to portray the community which has many internal issues caused by opposing opinions of its own members on the conflict and consequently on the peace process. The characters rank from the most radical to the most moderate members of the Catholic community. For the purpose of my thesis I have chosen the character of Harry, Joe, Danny and Ike as they clearly represent personalities with different attitudes to the problem.

6.5.1 Harry

The character representing the most radical person in the community is certainly Harry. He holds a higher rank within the IRA - he is in charge of a district but he is still supposed to follow orders by his boss (Joe). In contrary to Joe, he prefers the use of violence to achieve the IRA’s aims that are reaching the united Ireland and stopping any kind of discrimination against the Catholics in Northern Ireland. He is married to a woman sharing his believes. It is understandable from the context that he had a son who either died during one of the IRA's operations, or was killed by the police or the loyalists.¹⁵⁴ He seems to be one of the reasons why Harry does not agree with the

¹⁵² Alex Thomson, "Have the IRA said enough?".

¹⁵³ Alex Thomson, "Have the IRA said enough?".

¹⁵⁴ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

IRA declaring the ceasefire and entering the peace talks. He thinks that his son would have died in vain if the organization was not able to reach its aims by its original violent tactics. As so many people within the community lost their lives during the conflict, he appears to be convinced that they deserve to be avenged and that any compromise with the opposite side is impossible.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, he still seems to blame the Protestants for former discrimination against the Catholic population. Therefore, he is obviously more interested in the revenge than in making peace in Northern Ireland. However, as the IRA changes its strategy towards political negotiations, the Harry's approach can threaten the peace process. As a result, he is killed by order of Joe, at the end of the film.¹⁵⁶

His attitude towards the conflict is expressed during a conversation he is having with Joe, after someone shot at Danny. He denies that his people shoot at him but it is clear that he does not approve Danny's effort to create a non-sectarian boxing club: 'He's [Danny] fillin' people's heads full of shit, Joe. 'Leave the fighting to Danny' means that all the people who are in prison, who died, who didn't surrender to the Brits... that means that their sacrifices aren't worth a lousy fuckin' boxin' match.'¹⁵⁷ He does not approve any mixing of the Catholics and Protestants as the Protestants are for him the enemies who caused many deaths of his own people. Hence, he perceives Danny as his enemy, too and his non-sectarian approach to the situation as a betrayal to the community. As he points out after the first non-sectarian boxing match: 'It's not just boxin', Danny. It's a fuckin' statement...'¹⁵⁸

Furthermore, he also opposes the idea that the Catholics could live in peace with the Protestants in Northern Ireland even in the future. He does not believe that the Protestants would stop with the discrimination of the Catholic community because as long as the history of Northern Ireland or whole island of Ireland goes, the Catholics were always discriminated by the Protestant population (see 2.1.4 Discrimination of Catholics and 2.2.1 Discrimination of Catholics in Northern Ireland). In the conversation with Joe where Joe points out that the Catholics are going to have to live with the Protestants sometime, Harry replies: "You're never going to be

¹⁵⁵ Gary Crowdus and O'Mara Leary, "Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan", 13.

¹⁵⁶ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁵⁷ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁵⁸ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

treated as an equal, Joe.”¹⁵⁹ Thus, his idea seems to be that the Catholics could be satisfied only in case they have power over the Protestants which would probably happen if the island became unified; thus the Catholics would become the majority and no discrimination would be possible.

The problem of Harry is that his approach to reach the united Ireland is completely idealistic as it is impossible to achieve the IRA's goals without any compromise. As there are two opposing sides fighting in the conflict, the solution must, to some degree, accommodate both of them. Nevertheless, according to Sheridan, the IRA's aim, hidden for reunification, was to disengage the British from the Northern Irish issues in order that the Catholics could eliminate (in political sense) the Protestants.¹⁶⁰ Notwithstanding, this solution would not certainly end the conflict as if the Protestants felt defeated; they would probably continue with the fighting to reach at least some of their goals. However, there are still some republicans, for instance within the IRA splinter groups (see 2.2.8 Splits inside of the IRA), who are still strictly against the Protestants living in Northern Ireland. Thus, it is possible to say that Harry represents this type of a Catholic who does not wish any accommodation for the Protestants as he is not able to forgive them the past.

As the situation in Northern Ireland changed, people like Harry threatened the upcoming peace talks. There appears a question what to do with people like him. Harry was finally shot death in order to safe Danny's life in the film (which was, according to Cineaste, “essentially a murder committed to save the peace process.”)¹⁶¹ However, someone may argue that to kill a man from your own community in order to save the peace is quite rough resolution. On the other hand, it seems impossible to negotiate with anyone so emotionally interested in the problem that an assassination may look like the only possible solution. In this case, it can be observed that the Catholics could be threatened even by members of their own community if they did not agree with each other. Harry wanted to kill Danny as their attitudes towards the situation differ but Harry himself was finally shot death as he rebelled against his boss (Joe). Hence, even the segregation of the Catholics and Protestants could not prevent violent attacks on the Catholics from members of their own community.

¹⁵⁹ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁶⁰ Gary Crowdus and O'Mara Leary, "Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan", 13.

¹⁶¹ Gary Crowdus and O'Mara Leary, "Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan", 13.

6.5.2 Joe

Character of Joe represents more moderate position than Harry. He seems to realise that the violent tactics of the IRA will not be necessary in the future.¹⁶² As a result, he is trying to engage the organization in political negotiations. Although he wishes peace for Northern Ireland, he still has some requirements for the British government that must be met, in order that the IRA would entirely stop with its violent operations.¹⁶³ According to Cineaste, “he is the Gerry Adams type”¹⁶⁴ (see 2.2.6 Change in the strategy of the IRA). He is in favour of peace on condition that the end of the conflict will not seem as a defeat of the Catholic community (including the IRA). Furthermore, he appears to approve the acts of violence which the organization committed in the past.

Joe’s approval of former violent tactics of the IRA is evident as one of the main requirements to the British government is the release of the republican prisoners sentenced for paramilitary offences (“POWs” as they are called in the film and as the members of the IRA perceived them to be). Just like Harry, Joe seems to deeply respect them for what they did for the organization. For instance, when he is praising his daughter (Maggie) for decorating a place for a wedding celebration, he says: “You did a great job, you. The prisoners would be proud of ya.”¹⁶⁵ The release of the prisoners seems to be his main aim, as he would put the newly-acquired vulnerable peace at stake just to get them out of the prison.¹⁶⁶

He is also blaming “the Brits”¹⁶⁷ that they want the cease-fire to be broken because they are not in favour of releasing the prisoners, as when he says: “We’re this close to a deal.. but I’m gettin’ no concessions on the prisoners. It’s as though the Brits want the ceasefire to fail. Harry says the only thing they respond to is violence.”¹⁶⁸ He does not seem to realise that not only the Catholics were harmed by the conflict, but that it was the IRA that killed almost half of the victims during the Troubles (see 2.2.9 Road to peace) and that the prisoners committed crimes on the Protestant population. In his eyes, the prisoners are probably the warriors who fought for the

¹⁶² Gary Crowdus and O'Mara Leary, "Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan", 13.

¹⁶³ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁶⁴ Gary Crowdus and O'Mara Leary, "Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan", 13.

¹⁶⁵ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁶⁶ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁶⁷ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁶⁸ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

better future of the Catholics in Northern Ireland. Nonetheless, the other side would have not definitely been satisfied, if the IRAs prisoners had been released, as no one would have had any guarantee that the ceasefire would not be broken soon. He also seems to doubt the way he has chosen for the IRA to follow as he is reconsidering if the Harry's approach would not be better, in this speech. Although he wishes the peace for everyone in Northern Ireland, he seems to look at the problem just from the point of view of the Catholic community.

On the other hand, he appears to be the main reason why the IRA has declared the cease-fire and opened itself into political negotiations, in the film.¹⁶⁹ If there had not been people like Joe in the IRA, the peace process would have been hardly so successful. It is true that the process was not a complete success but the change in the strategy of the most violent paramilitary organization at least allowed the process to happen and moved the situation forward. Even though people like Joe could not forget the past entirely, they were at least able to reconsider more peaceful approach to the future.

Contrary to Harry, Joe does not mind mingling with Protestants as he believes that both communities can live in peace in the future. He allows Danny to re-build the non-sectarian gym¹⁷⁰ which is probably in ownership of the Harry's community (see 4.2.4 Belfast). There is an evident shift of the organization leadership towards the change. Joe approves his support of the non-sectarian activities by attending a boxing match. However, his presence causes mixed reactions there, definitely negative from the Protestant part of the audience and mixed from the Catholics.¹⁷¹ Those Catholics who disapprove the tactics of the IRA feel probably offended by his presence, although the rest seems to welcome the change. In addition, Harry's opinion (representing the radical members of the Catholic community) to any support of the non-sectarian activities is expressed by the bomb placed in the car of a policeman who attends the match in order to give it support on behalf of the police. Therefore, Joe can be perceived as a controversial person, as his actions can produce contradictory reactions.

¹⁶⁹ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁷⁰ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁷¹ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

6.5.3 Danny

Danny as a protagonist is the most important character in the film. He represents even more moderate position than Joe. As he never held a position of a boss, his experience with the Troubles seems to be the most real, as he was directly involved in the IRA operations.¹⁷² It might be the reason why he has completely changed his opinion about the organization. He had seen people to die, and afterwards he probably realised that the violence is not the right way how to deal with the situation.

It is evident from the context that he already broke away from the IRA in the prison as he refused to mingle with other IRA prisoners.¹⁷³ As Harry points out: “All you had to do was walk across a prison corridor... and shake hands with some of your old friends in the IRA. Snubbin' people is not nice.”¹⁷⁴ As it was mentioned, he decided to ignore them, and as a result he fell into disgrace. Harry even says that Joe wanted him “out of town.”¹⁷⁵ Although Danny was one of the IRA prisoners who used to be blindly worshiped by the members of the organization (see 2.2.4 Prisoners), he was able to decide on his own not to be engaged to the IRA any more.

This decision approves the strong personality which the character of Danny certainly has. He is able to leave the past behind and move completely forward (contrary to Joe). Even when he was a member of the IRA, he never became as “maddingly emotional”¹⁷⁶ as Harry. He started to be interested in the organization as, according to his own words, “the police were burning people out of their homes [and] soldiers [were] shootin' people on the corner.”¹⁷⁷ However, the situation in the 1990s improves to that extent that Danny probably does not see any reason why to continue with the use of the violent tactics. Hence, he fights alone for what he thinks is worthy to fight for and he does not give up. His effort to re-establish the relationship with Maggie and to rebuild the gym resists all the obstacles. He does not let anyone to threaten him. Nonetheless, he is inside a romantic and an idealist. His nature is proved by the fact that when he was in prison, he

¹⁷² Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁷³ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁷⁴ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁷⁵ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁷⁶ Gary Crowdus and O'Mara Leary, “Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan”, 13.

¹⁷⁷ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

hoped that Maggie would have waited for him.¹⁷⁸ In addition, he seems to believe in better future not only for his relationship with Maggie but also for whole Northern Ireland.

Nevertheless, Danny does not represent a typical Catholic living in Northern Ireland as he has decided to prefer individualism to collectivism.¹⁷⁹ This pattern of behaviour seems to deviate him from other members of the Catholic community. As it was mentioned in 4.1 Religion and Politics, the Catholics tend to cling together creating communities which impose orders intended to be followed by their members. Sheridan also points out that organization of Catholicism is the same as the organization within the clan system; in addition, the same as within the republican movements in Northern Ireland.¹⁸⁰ Thus, the IRA itself is a typical example of the Catholic republican community which has adopted the clan system. Its members stick together; the organization has its own rules and orders which have to be obeyed. In case, a member violates them; it can have far-reaching consequences, including death of a member.¹⁸¹ Danny broke away from all that and as Sheridan says: “He fights within his own world.”¹⁸² Therefore, he represents a Catholic with features of a Protestant as he prefers individualism to “a clan system.”¹⁸³ Whereas Sheridan uses a character of Danny as a “model for the way things could work,”¹⁸⁴ he indirectly states that the “things” could have worked better if the Catholics had been more like the Protestants. Hence, it must be pointed out that there are individuals within the communities whose opinions and attitudes can vary to lesser or bigger extent but a typical member of the Catholic community would conform to the community wishes. Nonetheless, it can not be applied on the character of Danny.¹⁸⁵

However, there is something he has in common with the members of the IRA and with most of the Catholics in Northern Ireland; and it is his negative opinion about the police and the Brits. Although his gym is a place where the Protestants and Catholics can be together, he does not approve that Ike (his trainer) accepted equipment for the gym from the police. In addition, he does like being photographed with a policeman before the non-sectarian match, as he is aware

¹⁷⁸ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁷⁹ Gary Crowdus and O’Mara Leary, “Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan”, 13.

¹⁸⁰ Gary Crowdus and O’Mara Leary, “Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan”, 13.

¹⁸¹ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁸² Gary Crowdus and O’Mara Leary, “Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan”.

¹⁸³ Gary Crowdus and O’Mara Leary, “Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan”, 13.

¹⁸⁴ Gary Crowdus and O’Mara Leary, “Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan”, 13.

that this kind of promotion could arouse negative emotions in the Catholics towards the gym. He says to Ike that he does not like “being used”¹⁸⁶ after the photograph is taken. From the context, it is evident that he does want to be exploited not only by the police but also by anyone else, including his own community.

He is also not in favour of the English way of boxing as he finds it too violent. Therefore, when he goes to the match in London, he decides to end it before it is considered to be over as his opponent is already too injured.¹⁸⁷ In a metaphorical way, it may be seen as a Danny’s disapproval of the English society. Thus, he does not seem to be in favour of the British intervention into Northern Irish issues either.

6.5.3.1 “Danny boy”

There is an evident symbolism between the name of the protagonists and the Irish song *Danny boy* which can be heard in the film. Although the lyrics of the song were written by the Englishman Frederick Weatherly (at the beginning of 20th century), they were added to an old Irish air. Therefore, the song achieved a great success among the Irish. Nonetheless, there are as many variations of the song as its explanations. It was purportedly written with intention to bring together the Irish Unionists and Nationalists.¹⁸⁸ The symbolism is obvious here as Danny tries to do the same thing. He is also sometimes called “Danny boy”¹⁸⁹ in the film. However, the IRA explains the song in its own way and even some verses were added to support the IRA intention to create from *Danny boy* a republican song.¹⁹⁰ This can refer to the Danny’s past when he was engaged to the organization.

6.5.4 Ike

Ike is present and also a former trainer of Danny. He became an alcoholic during the time Danny was in prison. When Danny meets him for the first time after his release, Ike seems to be in horrible condition, looking like a homeless who lost all of his believes. However, he quits with

¹⁸⁵ Gary Crowdus and O’Mara Leary, “Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan”, 13.

¹⁸⁶ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁸⁷ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁸⁸ BBC, "The Legend and History of the Song 'Danny Boy'," BBC - h2g2, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A3826136> (accessed March 28, 2010).

¹⁸⁹ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁹⁰ BBC, "The Legend and History of the Song 'Danny Boy'".

drinking after Danny's return, and starts to rebuild the gym and train children with him. It seems that Danny is giving him hope that the situation in Northern Ireland could change for the better in the future.

Ike represents the most moderate character in the film. He has never been engaged to the IRA and he despises its tactics. In particular, he hates Harry as he blames him for the Danny's imprisonment and consequently for the "ruining"¹⁹¹ of Danny's life. Thus, Ike is against any kind of violence as he points out to Danny when they meet for the first time: "You tell 'em [the IRA] Ike Weir doesn't need a gun to fight!"¹⁹² He probably wishes to believe that the situation in Northern Ireland can be solved peacefully. He also encourages public mixing of the Protestants and Catholics, for instance he invites the Protestant parents of a former member of the boxing club who died during the Troubles to the first public boxing match.¹⁹³

In addition, he is not against the police as he accepts the equipment from them. However, later he blames himself for doing this as he thinks that it was the reason why the IRA (by order of Harry) let the policeman car to explode.¹⁹⁴ Thus, he seems to realise that the situation has not changed as much as he probably thought that the IRA has still power to nourish the conflict and he can not do anything about it. Consequently, he starts to drink again when Danny goes to London for the match. He seems to losing the hope again. Once, he gets drunk and tells Harry what he thinks about him. As a result, Harry shoots him death.¹⁹⁵

Therefore, neither the most moderate character (Ike) nor the most radical character (Harry) survives, in the film.¹⁹⁶ It may be understood in a way that none of these opposite extreme approaches can help to resolve the conflict as actions from the moderates (such as accepting the equipment from the police,¹⁹⁷ in the film) could cause violent reactions from the radicals (such as the bomb exploding inside of the policeman's car¹⁹⁸). Thus, the conflict would get into vicious circle.

¹⁹¹ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁹² Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁹³ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁹⁴ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁹⁵ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁹⁶ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁹⁷ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

¹⁹⁸ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

6.5.5 Conclusion

There is a wide variety of character personalities, in the film. Only on the characters, which I have chosen, it is possible to observe how attitudes and approaches of the members of the Catholic community could differ. It is possible to say that the community struggled with lack of unity and organization towards the peace process. Moreover, the IRA itself does not seem very organized in the film as there is an evident clash between its moderate and radical members. Although the film is set in the 1990s, the problem of disunity within the Catholic community (thus the native Irish people) can be traced back even to the times when the clan system was present in Ireland (see 2 Historical background, particularly 2.1.1 Ireland before the conquest). Therefore, these different types of personalities might have appeared in every period of the whole Irish history.

6.6 The impact of the conflict on daily life of the Northern Irish citizens

As the film is set in the 1990s in Belfast, it is possible to observe how the conflict influenced daily lives of common people, at that time. It is evident that the conditions for living in Belfast have been different, than in a city which has not got such troubled past. In this sense, perception of the film between citizens of Northern Ireland and the rest of the world probably differs. What the Northern Irish can perceive as a normal part of their lives, the rest can see as something strange, abnormal or even shocking.

6.6.1 Belfast

As it was mentioned in the theoretical part of the thesis, Belfast has been highly segregated city (see 4.2.4 Belfast). It is proved in the film as there are no significant Protestant characters. The reason is that the members of the two enemy communities did not come into contact with each other due to the high level of segregation. It is also possible to observe many types of physical barriers and symbols marking a divide between the Catholic and Protestant territories. It is clearly visible at the beginning of the film when Danny, on the way home from a prison, wants to cross a divide from the Protestant to Catholic territory. He tries to get through the peaceline. On both sides of it, it is possible to see graffiti with symbols of both communities and with the symbols of their paramilitary organizations. Crossing these divides could be perilous as it is portrayed in

the film when Danny and Maggie are warned of possible danger when they are in the Protestant part of the city.¹⁹⁹

The acts of violence became everyday experience for people living in Belfast since the Troubles had begun. Even those, who were not engaged in paramilitaries, were probably constantly worried about their lives. In the film, during the conversation of Danny and Ike, it is possible to see a shot of a butcher's with people working inside, and just a few seconds later another shot of the same place but destroyed by a bomb with the people dying around.²⁰⁰ As so many persons were killed during this time, those who survived were at least affected by deaths of their friends or family members. This fact is possible to observe when Ike reads names of the death members of the boxing club as it is evident that most of the former members are on the list.²⁰¹ Deaths caused by the conflict influenced people in various ways, some wanted revenge (as Harry), and some wished to restore the peace again in order that other people would not have to die (as Joe, Danny or Ike).

6.6.2 Marital relationships

Conditions of living in such a place had certainly a considerable impact on interpersonal relationships. It is obvious that there was a tension between the members of the Catholic and Protestant community. However, the conflict affected the relationships among members of one community, too. The relationships within families, friends, lovers or married couples changed as the violence escalated.

As it was mentioned in the theoretical part of the thesis, choosing a right husband or wife was very important in both communities (see 4.2.2 Personal and marital segregation). Hence, the intermarriage was rather an exception as it could cause tension between members of both communities. Although there are no mixed couples in the film, it is possible to observe that reservations to certain relationships existed among Catholics themselves as they also conformed to the community rules.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²⁰⁰ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²⁰¹ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²⁰² Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

The relationship between Danny and Maggie breaks one of the most important rules in the community as Maggie is so called “prisoner’s wife.”²⁰³ It is inconceivable that a woman married to an IRA prisoner would appear unfaithful to her husband in public and a question of a divorce seems to be a taboo. The prisoners were the heroes in the eyes of the IRA, therefore free members of the organization used to protect their wives, also in sense of being unfaithful to them. It is evident in the scene where a young man dances with a prisoner wife at the wedding party. Immediately when their dancing becomes just a little bit sexual, members of the organization intervene.²⁰⁴

It seems that the Danny’s relationship with Maggie is one of the main reasons why Harry decides to kill Danny as before the planned assassination, Harry shouts: “I’m not gonna let you drive around with a prisoner’s wife. Get out of the car.”²⁰⁵ In addition, people around shouts vulgar remarks at Maggie to express their disapproval of the Danny’s and Maggie’s relationships such as for instance: “Did you forget your weddin’ ring, ya fuckin’ whore ya?”²⁰⁶

Nevertheless, both Danny and Maggie were having doubts about their common future as they were aware of disagreement within their community. Therefore, they were considering following the rules.²⁰⁷ It is evident in the scene where they are walking by the seashore as Danny states: “You know, we can’t keep doin’ what we’re doin’, Maggie.”²⁰⁸ Although it is apparent that Maggie does not want to talk about it, after a while she agrees with him. However, later they realise they “have done nothin’ wrong”²⁰⁹ as both of them say in the film. They just happen to be in love with each other and the only obstacle to their relationship is Maggie’s husband but as Maggie says to her father her “marriage was over before Liam [her son] was even born.”²¹⁰ There would not probably be such a problem if her husband was not a prisoner.

This type of rules, imposed by the IRA, seems to nourish the Catholic tendency to disunity. The reason is that it is not possible that all members of the community would follow them. This particular rule seems quite old-fashioned as the contemporary society perceives a divorce

²⁰³ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²⁰⁴ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²⁰⁵ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²⁰⁶ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²⁰⁷ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²⁰⁸ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²⁰⁹ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

between two people, caused by the fact that at least one of them is in love with someone else, as something normal. It used to be common in the past that people were punished for unfaithfulness. Hence, it is possible to say that the 1990s were marked by the fight between the past and future, between the old-fashioned and modern approach to life, in Northern Ireland. As a result, there were many ideological disagreements within the Catholic community, at that time. The character of Joe can be seen as a personification of this fight between the old and the new, in the film. It has already been mentioned that he seems to be ambivalent about the upcoming peace process. Moreover, he appears to appreciate the prisoners' sacrifice and the support of prisoners' wives given to their husbands, although he eventually approves the relationship between Danny and Maggie.²¹¹

6.6.3 Family

The conflict certainly had a considerable impact on the core units of the Northern Irish society – families. The families were affected not only in negative but also in positive sense. In the film, it is possible to observe that the families tend to cling together as their members are connected by same beliefs.²¹² It is evident in the Joe's speech in which he glorifies the prisoner's wives: "My wife Eileen, God rest her soul ... stood by me and remained faithful to the cause."²¹³ It is apparent that Eileen not only supported her husband but also believed in the same ideas. The relationship between Harry and his wife is also affected by the conflict, in particular by the death of their son; therefore they share same belief of revenge which keep them together. It does not mean that the relationships within the families were perfect in Northern Ireland; however fighting against one enemy seems to bring the family members together. This idea is supported by the fact that there is only a quarter divorce rate in Northern Ireland than in England or Wales.²¹⁴ This is certainly influenced by high religiosity of the country. Nonetheless, it also seems that sharing the same ideas is very important in marital relationships in Northern Ireland (see 4.2.2 Personal and marital segregation).

²¹⁰ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²¹¹ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²¹² Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²¹³ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²¹⁴ "Marriage and Family – Divorce," The Christian Institute, <http://www.christian.org.uk/resources/theology/apologetics/marriage-and-family/divorce/> (accessed April 1,

On the other hand, the impact of the conflict on children seems to be entirely negative. During the Troubles, children used to grow up surrounded by violence which must have affected their personalities. In the film, it is possible to observe that children would witness terrible crimes committed on people living in their neighborhood (including their closest friends or family members), particularly in the scene which has already been mentioned – the explosion of the butcher's (see 5.6.1 Belfast). There is a shot of a child riding a bicycle who watches the destroyed place with a badly wounded man inside of the ruins. In addition, there is a highly emotional scene in which Liam embraces the death body of Ike.²¹⁵

It is understandable that the children were confused about the situation in Northern Ireland, hence they could not recognize right from wrong. The character of Liam can serve as an example of a child puzzled by the surrounding conflict. As most of the characters in the film, he has a strong negative opinion about the police as he blames it for the imprisonment of his father. Thus, he seems to be strongly influenced by the ideas of the IRA which is not surprising as he has been growing up in a family engaged to the organization.²¹⁶ He does not seem to realise that his father is in prison for a certain reason, that he probably committed acts of violence on either Protestants or the police. Hence, Liam seems to justify the violence against enemies of his own community. After he learns about the Danny's and Maggie's relationship, he starts to perceive Danny as his enemy and also as an enemy of the organization as his mother is a prisoner's wife. Moreover, he may associate Danny with the police. As a result, he burns down the gym. Nonetheless, he does not seem to realise the consequences of his action as most of the people around him treat their enemies in the same way. After he apprehends severity of what he did, he apologizes to Ike and consequently offers Danny help with rebuilding the gym.²¹⁷

The Liam's experience reminds the experience of Danny and Maggie. Danny himself became involved in the IRA operations as early as in his teenage years. However, even before he was released from the prison, he had realised that the use of violence was not the right way how to deal with the situation. As regards Maggie, although she was not directly involved in any violent operation; she used to admire her father who initiated the acts of violence committed on the IRA

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²¹⁵ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²¹⁶ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

enemies, as she says to her father: "She [her mother] thought the ground that you walked on was sacred. So did I."²¹⁸ Nonetheless, her opinion about her father and the organization changes, in comparison to Liam or Danny after quite long time, when she realises that she is still in love with Danny, hence she starts to adopt his ideas about the situation.

It seems that people in relationships tend to influence each other and share the same beliefs. In Northern Ireland, it is more important than in a country which was not affected by the conflict. The fact that when people from two different communities marry each other, the husband usually adopts his wife's political beliefs (see 4.2.2 Personal and marital segregation), signifies high importance of having same ideas within the marital relationship.

In the film, it is possible to observe two families illustrating two different attitudes towards the violence. Maggie, Liam and to a certain degree also Joe²¹⁹ are against the violent tactics although all of them had to come to this decision by experience. On the other hand, the family represented by Harry and his wife seems to be in favour of the IRA violent tactics.

6.6.4 Leisure

There is possible to observe two types of leisure activities, in the film. First and the more important one is definitely the boxing, the second one happens in the community center which is about to become a gym again. We can see older people playing cards there.²²⁰ These two activities provide a contrast to each other as the community center seems to be for members of the Catholic community only, on the other hand the gym is supposed to be non-sectarian. Thus, Catholics and Protestants can spend their time there together.

It appears to be a bold idea to establish a non-sectarian boxing club in the place significantly affected by the Troubles. However, it seems that the authors chose this particular sport deliberately. The sports generally used to be segregated in Northern Ireland (see 4.2 Segregation) and non-sectarian efforts did not achieve much success there. Nevertheless, the boxing is the only sport where considerable degree of mixing of the Catholics and Protestants occurred.²²¹ Sheridan

²¹⁷ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²¹⁸ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²¹⁹ Although Harry is killed by his order, Joe is mostly in favour of the peace process and also strictly in opposition to the Harry's violent behaviour.

²²⁰ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²²¹ Scott Harvie and John Sugden, "Sport and Community Relations," In *Sport and Community*

states that the possible reason is that the boxing is “so overtly ritualized.” It seems that the nonsectarian approach to the boxing could transfer the conflict also to a ring where both sides were represented by the boxers. Sheridan explains this with a comparison of the enemy communities in Northern Ireland and primitive tribes: “I think what probably happened in society is that we had representatives of two tribes in a fight, and each side felt that whoever won, that tribe won.”²²² Hence, people could vent their anger during the match and then shake each others hands as the boxing is just a game with certain rules. Sheridan also adds that the boxing “accesses the primitive part of people where they want to have both conflict and be together.”²²³

Therefore, the boxing can also symbolize the situation in Northern Ireland in the 1990s. On one hand, most of the people hoped that both communities would be able to live peacefully together in the future; on the other hand there was still evident conflict between them. The Boxer, which was also created in 1990s, can be seen, according to Mcilroy “as a statement, a call to forsake political violence for constitutional politics and for a return to a non-sectarian community life based around certain shared pleasures, such as sport.” Thus, the use of the sport of boxing in the film can be perceived as a shift towards the more peaceful future in Northern Ireland as the gym in fact replaces the sectarian community center.²²⁴ It is a modest success of those who wish Northern Ireland to be a non-sectarian state.

6.6.5 Police force

As the authors focused on the Catholic community in the film, the police is portrayed from their point of view. It seems to be perceived by all the characters (except Ike) rather negatively as it contributed to the conflict committing acts of violence on the Catholic population at the beginning of the Troubles (see 2.2.3 The direct rule) and then, it was still rather a Protestant organization.²²⁵ Therefore, the Catholics were not in favour of it.

Relations in Northern Ireland (Coleraine, UK: University Of Ulster, 1995)

<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/csc/reports/sugdenharvie/sugdenharvie95-5.htm> (accessed April 1, 2010).

²²² Gary Crowdus and O’Mara Leary, “Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan”, 13.

²²³ Gary Crowdus and O’Mara Leary, “Getting past the violence: An interview with Jim Sheridan”, 13.

²²⁴ Jim Sheridan and Terry George, *The Boxer*.

²²⁵ BBC. "Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland (4)." BBC NI - Schools - Agreement – Policing. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/schools/agreement/policing/commission4.shtml> (accessed April 9, 2010); The reorganization of the police force followed the Good Friday agreement.

Sheridan and George illustrate this feeling with the use of helicopters in the film. The presence of helicopters used to be normal, especially in the 1990s in Northern Ireland²²⁶; according to Thomson, ignored by Protestants but hated by Catholics.²²⁷ The film through the helicopters creates an impression that everything what is happening is being watched by the state,²²⁸ even the most intimate moments such as the wedding, Danny's release from prison, Liam mourning for Ike or Harry's wife holding his death body, at the very end of the film. Furthermore, it is visible that those being watched are aware of it due to the use of camera as the shots from the ground take turns with the shots from the air.²²⁹ Therefore, it is possible to observe that although the ubiquitous presence of the police became part of daily lives of people living in Northern Ireland, the Catholics never learnt to ignore it and moreover, it seems that they might perceived it as something violating their privacy.

On the other hand, the police also seem to be a victim of deeply rooted prejudices of the Catholics, in the film. Although it offers them equipment to gym for free, to express support of non-sectarian activities, most of the characters are not in favour of this gift. It seems that even though some Catholics are able to forgive the Protestant the past, they can not forgive the institution of the police. Hence, the hostility towards policemen appears to be one unifying element of almost all characters in the film.

²²⁶ Spurgeon Thompson, "Returning the Gaze: Culture and the Politics of Surveillance in Ireland," *International Journal of English Studies* 2 (2) (2002): 104
<http://digitum.um.es/xmlui/bitstream/10201/1993/1/299069.pdf?sequence=1> (accessed April 1, 2010).

²²⁷ Spurgeon Thompson, "Returning the Gaze: Culture and the Politics of Surveillance in Ireland," 104.

²²⁸ Spurgeon Thompson, "Returning the Gaze: Culture and the Politics of Surveillance in Ireland," 104.

²²⁹ Spurgeon Thompson, "Returning the Gaze: Culture and the Politics of Surveillance in Ireland," 104.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this bachelor thesis was to explore the conflict in Northern Ireland with the focus on the Catholic community and its internal issues. To understand the conflict it is necessary to become aware of the strategies of the enemy communities and to realise what urge them to take particular actions. The thesis observes the approaches of the Protestants and British state towards the conflict in general, with the Catholic community studied in detail.

The theoretical part of the thesis observes the conflict from the point of view of the history, national identity, religion and segregation. The first chapter illustrates that the Catholics were never fully united in the whole history of the island of Ireland, with one exception when the Irish fought for the independence of the island from Great Britain, only then they celebrated almost complete success. The important aspect in the conflict is the national identity of the Northern Irish citizens which differed not only between the Protestants and Catholics but also among the Catholics themselves which was caused by opposing opinions of the community members on the use of paramilitary tactics. However, that was the religious affiliation which became the label for the two enemy communities. The religious affiliation of the Protestants also seems to indicate the same constitutional identity, which is just partly true when the Catholics are concerned. A unifying element of the members within both communities was certainly the high level of mutual segregation which helped to maintain and nourish the conflict. The highest degree of segregation has always been in the Belfast city. The place which was chosen as a setting for the film, the Boxer, examined in the analytical part of the thesis.

There is a wide range of characters portraying the members of the Catholic community with different attitudes towards the conflict, in the film. Therefore, it is possible to observe the individuals and their approach towards the conflict and the upcoming peace process. The thesis examined deliberately chosen characters to point out the lack of the unity and organization within the Catholic community. As the characters mostly represent common people, the thesis also concentrates on their daily life. Based on the previous examination of the conflict and the Catholics in Northern Ireland, the thesis concludes that the main problem of the Catholic community was its lack of unity in its aims and ways how to achieve them.

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