



**IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY**

**1919**

## **WELCOME**

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to SMUNC 2011! We are beyond excited to be meeting you all for this year's committee: The Irish Republican Army, 1919. Although the FIFA committee may sound enticing, we are confident that our committee will be the best one throughout this conference. Because even though soccer fans can have the same amount of enthusiasm and fervor as the Irish rebels, they most definitely will not have chairs who are as amazing, talented, fun, and just plain awesome as yours.

We would like to encourage you to go a little crazy while you are prepping for this conference. Really get into your characters, because the right amount of drama will make this committee go beyond its historical context- we really want to see committee members show the intensity that we imagine their characters did, for that is what makes them come alive.

Have fun doing your research too, and listen to some U2 while you're at it. Try to focus on the extremism of the rebels, and look at the guiding questions to find information that will help prompt good debate in committee. Good luck, and we look forward to seeing you this year.

Sid, Ellen, and Nikhita

## **Committee Rules**

The dress code for this committee is different from the others- because we actually will encourage you to dress in your historical costumes to make the experience more historically accurate. If you do so, make sure you do research for what is appropriate for the time period, and you aren't following stereotypes of early 20<sup>th</sup> century dressing. However, if you decide that you don't want to go all out, stick to western business attire.

The chair in this case is Michael Collins, leader of the IRA, so essentially he is the boss and gives the orders, along with his right hand men. However, everyone is still working as a team and everyone's character has a significant role in the IRA so respect will be mutual in this committee at all times.

## **HISTORY**

Throughout history, the creation of a common enemy has untied factions within communities. When faced with one single evil, groups of unexpected alliances miraculously allow progression in a common goal to take place. The human cooperation is admirable, as well as the process of how the underlying differences between groups of people become lost in their mettle to demolish the opponent. In the Irish Republican Army, citizens came together to attempt to overthrow the tyrannical British- but first they had to resolve their internal disputes. Those disputes were developed in the events leading up to the year 1919, and those differences turned into tensions. Diversity in extremism, goals, religion and class

all created a volatile arena for the Irish rebels as they fought not only against the British, but also amongst each other. Yet through all the thick and thin, they stayed united and strong in their battle, whether or not their efforts paid off. Their spirit is what allowed them to put aside their differences, and focus on their justified cry for independence, and create an entity devoted to the execution of freedom, called the Irish Republican Army.

The arrival of the first Anglo-Normans in Ireland in the year 1169 began Ireland's history of a bitter struggle for an independent, Catholic nation. While Henry II, the first Anglo-Norman ruler of Ireland, did not impose a brutal rule in Ireland, the Irish takeover began when Henry VII, the first Tudor, ascended the throne. Beginning with Poyning's Law, which essentially ensured the Irish Parliament could not make decisions without the consent of the kings, future generations of Tudors made sure that any independence that Ireland previously enjoyed was entirely stamped out. Following the death of his father, (Henry VII), Henry VIII inherited an Ireland where power rested largely with the Irish nobles around Dublin. One of the strongest of these families was the Earls of Kildare, who in 1534 rebelled against their English rulers. Despite their attempts, Henry VIII ruthlessly crushed the rebellion and sent around 340 troops to be permanently stationed in the area around Dublin, threatening innocent civilians and common people. Henry VIII wanted to keep watch on the nobles and keep order in Ireland, even if that meant using military force. Not being satisfied with only military control, Henry VIII in 1537 had the Irish Parliament impose Anglicanism the official religion of the Catholic Church of Ireland. Catholics had already been being persecuted in England, and now the discrimination spread to Ireland in the form of a law. In 1541, Parliament declared Henry King of Ireland and it the nobles had no choice but to accept it. By the time of his death in 1547 Henry VIII had successfully ensured that Ireland was under the control of England, and also imposed his religious ideals upon a group of free spirited people who were on a quest for equality- and these actions stirred the Irish animosity towards the English that would fuel many a future conflict.

Although Henry VIII had managed to take control of the area around Dublin and the Irish Parliament, much of Ireland contained autonomous states with rulers who were determined to retain power and stand their ground. During the reign of Elizabeth I many of these nobles fought for their freedom from British rule, standing up for themselves and the Irish people. Beginning with a rebellion led by Shane O'Neill in 1562, the Irish unsuccessfully tried to dispel English authority twice more during Desmond's Rebellion and The Nine Years War or Tyrone's Rebellion. While the Irish had enjoyed relatively relaxed policies from Elizabeth before the rebellions, when her authority was challenged she settled on a scorched earth policy that spared no one- turning as ruthless as the English rulers who preceded her. Her army was completely inhumane and brash in their fight, slaughtering animals, plants, crops, prisoners, men, women, and children.

While England basked in the Golden Age during the reign of Elizabeth, Ireland was facing the darker side of the moon. She had all but crushed the nation's economy and stability, exploited the lands, and unfairly destroyed the way of life for tens of thousands of innocent civilians. As if that wasn't enough, the final act of stamping English authority on Ireland took place in 1607 with the Flight of the Earls to mainland Europe.

When the Earls left for Europe they left behind huge tracts of land that were confiscated by the English government instead of being distributed to the poor Irish farmers, who might have faced different fates than the tragic ones they did due to famine. This land would eventually become home to the Ulster plantation the largest of many such

plantations, which saw the Irish lose most of their land to the English. The idea of plantations was to provide fertile land in Ireland to only the Protestant settlers from England and Scotland, not to feed the Catholic homeland citizens. Land was also provided to the Church of Ireland (which was also protestant) and Irish nobles who had fought loyally with the English tyranny. In short, the native Irish were to become tenants who would pay their Protestant owners for use of the land, while the English crown rewarded the upper classes for exploiting common people, and stripping them of their integrity.

While the Ulster Plantation saw only confiscation of about 30% of the island, the rise of Oliver Cromwell in England soon led to Protestants running most of Ireland, further humiliating the native Catholics. During Cromwell's struggle for power in England, Catholic rebels had briefly had a moment of hope in Ireland, and regained power by creating an independent government. However after dominating England, Cromwell's next target was Ireland, so their moment of hope was short lived. In 1649 Cromwell unleashed his wrath on Ireland, slaughtering innocent civilians and troops. With the final gross number of deaths, there was no way the Irish could have defended themselves. By 1652 he had gained power in Ireland too.

Furthering the legal discrimination of Catholics, Cromwell confiscated a huge amount of land from them, so much so that by the end of his rule, the percentage of Catholic plantations had been reduced to 22%- an inequitable number considering they were the majority denomination in Ireland. Essentially, this meant Cromwell had left majority of the population without food, and starved them economically as well. The Cromwellian Plantations created a huge separation in wealth between the Protestant landlords who charged huge amounts of rent that made 85% of Irish live at the subsistence level. The final phase of plantations was the Williamite Plantations which William of Orange the king of England, following the Glorious Revolution, created. This confiscation of land from Catholics following another attempted rebellion further decreased Catholic land holdings from 22% to 14%, only starving more innocent people. By the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the social structure of Ireland consisted of 25% of Protestant landowners who charged ludicrous prices for land to the other 75% of Irish Catholics who lived in poverty. Obviously, this was the beginning of Catholic hate towards the not only the English rule, but also Protestants who had been exploiting them for the last 100 years by siding with the tyrannical British.

When William of Orange ascended the throne after the Glorious Revolution he faced a war in Ireland led by James II who was supported by the Catholics in Ireland. By 1691, William had won the war and his goal again was to impose English rule in Ireland, as if that hadn't already been done. By the mid and early 17<sup>th</sup> century Catholics were already banned from most public offices and Parliament, but beginning in the late 1600's numerous new restrictions on Catholics and also some on Presbyterians were introduced. These new laws called the Penal Laws sought to separate Catholics and Protestants completely making it illegal for intermarriage between Protestants and Catholics. It denied proper education to Catholics and denied them the right to vote. These laws were not contained to only the Catholics, in fact Presbyterian marriage was not recognized by the state and Presbyterians could hold a public office. England's final plan to try and stamp put unrest in Ireland was to pass the Act of Union, a historic Bill that created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland controlled, obviously by Great Britain. These laws created an even larger gap between the elite landowning class mostly Protestants and Irish Catholics, and would sow

the seeds (no pun intended) for the radical Irish Republicanism, which would be the beginning of Ireland's struggle for independence.

While the Irish Catholics were being oppressed in England, the French Revolution had proved to Europe that people had the ability to overthrow even the strongest of authorities. In 1782, Henry Grattan an Irish Protestant gained the right for the Irish Parliament to have independent legislative power. This parliament had its own "army" called the Irish Volunteers who helped supported the Irish Parliament and also the King of England. While the Parliament ultimately held no power because of English Parliaments ability to veto anything passed by the Irish Parliament, it was the first step in creating an independent Ireland. In fact, the Irish Volunteers, who were armed, protested in Dublin for more rights for the Irish, and threatened Civil War if the demands were not met. These small rights were eventually met, proving the first instance of military force in gaining political power, which became so characteristic to the Irish struggle for freedom.

The 1801 Act of Union is what declared post-revolution England legally in control of Ireland- and forced Ireland to be a part of the United Kingdom. In response, a series of groups formed with aspirations to overthrow the British... Finally people decided to join together and do something about centuries of suffering in an organized fashion.

The first instance of radical Irish Republicanism was the Society of United Irishmen founded by Theobald Wolf Tone. The goals of Tone and his party were to unite Catholics and Presbyterians and ultimately achieve an independent nation for the Irish. Tone at first wanted to achieve these goals peacefully through parliamentary legislation but soon he joined forces with the French who he convinced to invade England from Ireland. In the end Tone was defeated and sent to prison, but his ideas brought about Irish Republicanism. Following the demise of the Society of United Irishmen, a new leader arose. Daniel O'Connell, an educated Irish lawyer, played a significant role in repealing Penal Laws that had not already been repealed, achieving rights for Catholics in Ireland, and allowing Catholics to hold office. O'Connell's idea was to begin a movement which was supported not only by the elite but also by the average Irishman. Also, he was extremely strict about not breaking laws. In 1823 he created the Catholic Association, which was open to anyone who paid a fee of 1d (penny), which was affordable for most Irish. The first goal was emancipation for Catholics. With the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act, for the first time Catholics could sit in the House of Commons and hold office in Ireland. O'Connell was elected to Parliament and made some reforms in terms of reducing the tithe, a tax paid to the Church. O'Connell's second objective was to repeal the Act of Union and he planned huge peaceful protests to gain the attention of the world and Parliament. These protests gained attention and the largest of the protests was organized for government only a few hours before it was to begin banned October 1843. O'Connell who greatly valued following the law called off the protest. This action stirred a huge debate within the Catholic Association as to whether to disobey law and use violence in such situations. When the Irish Potato Famine struck in 1845, the Young Ireland a militant group that had previously supported O'Connell decided to take action and in 1848 rose up against British oppression. This would eventually fail and the Young Irelanders would break up. O'Connell's hesitance to break the law would become the downfall of a man and a movement which peacefully brought together Irishmen and achieved much for Catholics.

Although the Young Irelanders had been defeated their leaders were set and had fled to Ireland. One of these rebels James Stephens bided his time on the European continent and eventually returned to Ireland. James O' Mahony, Stephens' fellow Young Irelander

went to the United States. During the Irish Potato Famine numerous Irish fled to America, creating a huge Irish population in the United States. This was the beginning of the Fenian movement, which soon created two branches, one in the United States called the Fenian Brotherhood, and the other in Ireland called the Irish Republican Brotherhood. The goal of the Fenian movement was to secretly plan the overthrow of the British in Ireland. In 1865 and 1867 the IRB unsuccessfully attempted two uprisings. Both these uprisings were violent and one of them resulted in the death of 30 Londoners. Stephens was eventually caught and sent to prison but soon escaped to France. This violence and unrest caused William Gladstone in 1869 to get rid of laws that recognized the Anglican Church as the official Church of England and also to eliminate the tithe. This violent method of achieving results was not completely eliminated by failure of the IRB; rather it became another tool for political movements in Ireland. The new face of Irish reform became Michael Devitt, an IRB member who was a founding member of the Irish Land League who sought to allow tenants right to own land and rent it at a fair price. This league incorporated intimidation tactics on many landowners who were unfair to tenants. Soon they had huge support all across Ireland. This support though would be meaningless without Parliamentary reform. This is where Charles Stewart Parnell came in. As President of the Irish National Land League Parnell strongly advocated land reform in the Parliament. With the support of Devitt, who with his huge support was able to get supporters of the Land League voted to Parliament, Parnell pushed Gladstone to pass the landmark Land Act of 1881. This act guaranteed the three F's: fair rent, free sale, and fixity of tenure. After achieving this victory Parnell's next goal was Irish Home Rule. The First Home Rule Bill was presented to Parliament in 1886 was generally supported by Liberals and of course the Irish Party. The Bill was eventually rejected but it was a huge step towards Home Rule, as the Bill had not been rejected by large number of votes. This was to be the major contribution of Parnell, as his career would end over a relationship scandal. Nonetheless following his demise, the English government generously built two colleges in Ireland, improved public works, and passed the Wyndham Land Act. This period saw the rise of radical movements that used only violence to achieve their goals but also more moderate groups that used O'Connell's love for abiding the law and also Young Irelanders intimidation tactics.

Despite the ongoing baby steps towards progression, the rebellion erupted after a motivated leader was able to centralize the various rebels. In 1909, Michael Collins took the oath of membership into the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

Collins eventually joined "Sinn Fein's political party in 1918, and was elected to represent Ireland in British Parliament. Even though he had the opportunity, his hatred for the British stopped him from legally advocating for independence. Instead, he helped Sinn Fein form Ireland's own parliament, and became the minister of finance. Eventually the Irish Republican Brotherhood evolved into the Irish Republican Army, as they had to resort to more violent forms of rebellion and with the acquisition of weaponry.

Collins had a more focused strategy, and executed it by starting with the organization of a siege to get weaponry. He planned a takeover of German submarines that were patrolling the UK's coasts, and acquired arms as a result. This advancement allowed them to become the Irish Republican Army instead of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. With restored confidence and motivation, the IRA tried to take control of rural districts while the English remained focused on larger cities and towns. The English falsely accused the IRA of terrorism, and made up stories depicting them as barbarians. The libel was all in attempt to divide the Irish people between those who wanted self rule and those who wanted to stay

with the UK- even though they succeeded at igniting civil war, the IRA still continued to revolt. Also in response to the revived enthusiasm of the IRA, the English felt threatened and hired Irish spies to feed them information of prospective attacks or revolts. Also after the IRB gained arms, the English enforced censorship and took control of rebellious areas in the countryside that previously had remained relative untouched. They released English agents known as G-men, who were released to hunt for IRA leaders. In response, Michael Collins organized the Dublin Brigade, also known as the “Squad,” to assassinate G-men and English spies. In short, the IRA, led by Michael Collins, was building up their fight against the British attempts towards a totalitarian resembling control, which is ironic since the English would also fight against that later in the century. The English hypocrisy did have a silver lining- it infuriated the Irish rebels and fueled their fight- it provided them with the spirit and mettle to put aside their differences, ignore the disparities and factions in the IRA, and instead focus on destroying the evil they had been facing for centuries.

### Questions to Consider

**Is** the conflict in Ireland based on religious motivations, or economic motivations?

**How** does the cause of the revolt play into the disparities within the Irish rebels?

**At** what point does the Irish rebellion lose its validity and justification and turn into an extremist movement?

**How** will the IRA gain the support of the common people and combat the British while retaining their secrecy?

**Should** Ireland stay part of the UK or not? This is the debate between Northern/southern Irish rebels, or in other words, how radical should we be?

**How** are we going to wage a guerilla war on the British?

