

## Northern Ireland

## The "troubles"

When people think of Northern Ireland, they usually think of guns, bombs and soldiers. They have heard of the fighting between Catholics and Protestants. They have seen photographs of soldiers in the streets and

funerals of the dead on both sides. Sadly, the world is used to stories of violence and death from Northern Ireland. The present "troubles", as the Northern Irish say, have been going on since the 1960s.

What are the reasons for it all? They go far back, of course, into Irish history. For centuries, Ireland was ruled by England, her stronger, richer neighbour. The people of Ireland were Roman Catholic. But most of the farmers from England and Scotland who went to live in Ireland were Protestant. The English and Scots became rich landowners, and the Irish people suffered. They fought for their freedom, and in 1921 they won. Soon after, the Republic of Ireland was born. But in the north of the country, there were more Protestants than Catholics. They did not want to become part of the Republic. So the country was divided. The northeast corner of Ireland became "Northern Ireland", and stayed with Britain as part of the United Kingdom.

This situation pleased the Protestants (two-thirds of the population of Northern Ireland), but it did not please the Catholics. The Protestants always won the elections. The Catholics had no power, and no way of sharing it. Their anger grew. In the end, it turned to violence. The "troubles" had begun.

When you watch the news on TV, it is easy to think that everyone is involved in the troubles all the time. But for most of the 1.5 million people, life goes on in the normal way. They have enough to worry about without thinking about bombs in Belfast. Unemployment is high. The traditional employers were shipbuilders, farmers and clothmakers, but all of these industries need fewer and fewer workers.

Much of Northern Ireland is beautiful, green farming land, with many forests, lakes and rivers. The coast is especially lovely, with sandy beaches in some places, and magnificent views in others. Three-quarters of a million tourists visit Northern Ireland every year to enjoy its natural beauty. When you're fishing on a quiet river, or sunbathing on the beach, it's easy to feel that the troubles are a long way away.

- 1 funeral - burial, putting a dead person in a grave
  - 2 landowner - person who possesses a piece of land, like a farm...
  - to suffer - to feel pain, be unhappy
  - to divide - to split up, split in parts
- 3,4,5

- great
- to make happy
- to give s.y. part of what I have
- land used for growing crops and raising animals
- to ask or beg for s.g
- to be connected with
- very large
- being out of work
- person who produces material from wool or cotton

## MATCH THE CORRECT WORDS:

- 1 Cotton is transported to the ... factory.
- 2 Oh, what a ... ring! It's fantastic!
- 3 ... makes a lot of people unhappy, as they have nothing to do but less money than before.
- 4 The baby ... his mother by saying "Mummy" for the first time.
- 5 Don't you have anything to eat with you? I'll ... my sandwiches with you.
- 6 A green country like Ireland has much more ... than industrial areas.
- 7 He really is ... with football: he goes to train every weekend.

## TRUE OR FALSE ??

- 1 Northern Ireland is in the south-east of Ireland.
- Many people associate Northern Ireland with bombs and burials.
- Traditional industries are shipbuilding, steel and clothmaking.
- 4 The Republic of Ireland has existed since 1960.
- 5 The Protestants are happy about the situation in Northern Ireland.
- 6 1.5 million tourists visit Northern Ireland every year.
- 7 The Catholic Irish won their freedom in 1921.
- 8 There are troubles because the Catholics don't share power in Northern Ireland.
- 9 People get jobs easily.
- 10 Most people in Northern Ireland are connected with the troubles most of the time.