

WORLD NEWS

Ulster peace remaining complex despite accord

By Patrick Nolan
Catholic News Service

DUBLIN, Ireland — Establishing a stable peace in Northern Ireland is still confusing and complicated even with the Anglo-Irish framework document for negotiations that was released Feb. 22.

A combination of goodwill, diplomacy and political wisdom are vital ingredients for successful negotiations. Failure could mean renewed violence.

Bolstering hopes for peace were opinion polls taken in Northern Ireland. One showed confidence that the framework document will lead to permanent accord.

The poll released Feb. 24, two days after the document was published, showed that Northern Irish Protestants took a more hopeful and constructive view of the document than their political representatives in the Unionist parties.

Most Protestants, who comprise the majority, generally favor continued union with Great Britain — hence the name Unionists. Most of the Catholics support political ties to neighboring Ireland and are called Nationalists.

The poll, conducted for British Television's Channel 4, also showed that 87 percent of all the Northern Irish wanted their politicians to take part in the negotiations proposed by the document. Ninety-eight percent of the Catholics and 79 percent of the Protestants favored negotiations.

Regarding a lasting peace, 51 percent of all respondents thought the framework document will form a basis for lasting peace, but 24 percent thought it would result in renewed violence, according to the poll.

Meanwhile, a poll in the Republic of Ireland showed majority support for changing two amendments of the Irish Constitution that historically have been roadblocks to peace. These amendments call for reuniting Northern Ireland with the republic.

The Feb. 26 *Sunday Press* poll showed that 63 percent favored constitutional changes, 18 percent were opposed and 19 percent had no opinion.

Supporters of Ireland's Fianna Fail, the country's largest party and the main opposition party, favored by a three-to-one majority changing the constitution.

Besides changes to the Irish Constitution, other major proposals of the framework paper include:

- A "North-South" group comprising elected representatives from, and accountable to, a new Northern Ireland assembly and to the Irish Parliament.



AP/Wide World Photos
Democratic Unionist Party member Jack McKee is arrested Feb. 22 outside Hillsborough Castle, Belfast, protesting against the framework document for peace in Ireland. The accord was announced by British Prime Minister John Major, and Irish Prime Minister John Bruton.

The body would have executive, harmonizing or consultative functions in matters that would be initially designated by the British and Irish parliaments, and would reach decisions by consensus.

Britain would accept the will of the majority of the people of Ulster to determine whether the province remains part of the United Kingdom or forms part of a united Ireland.

- Britain and Ireland would draw up a new, more broadly based agreement to develop and extend bilateral cooperation.

Unionist members of the British Parliament objected vehemently to the framework document's proposal to establish a cross-border institution composed of elected representatives from Northern Ireland and Ireland.

David Trimble, Member of Parliament from Upper Bann, said the document was much worse than expected.

But Northern Irish Social Democrat and Labor Party leader John Hume, representing the moderate nationalist viewpoint and a pivotal figure in getting the Irish Republican Army to agree to a truce, was confident and encouraging.

"Dialogue is the only way to bring us to an agreement that will satisfy all sections of our people," said Hume.

The Anglo-Irish framework document
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