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### Language

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The growing tension between the Protestant and Catholic communities in the 1970s and the rising violence by both republican and loyalist paramilitary groups led to a number of attempts to halt the violence and promote reconciliation, for example Witness for Peace created by a Protestant clergyman in 1972, and Women Together founded in 1970 to stop stone throwing and gang fights. But the most publicized and controversial campaign against violence was that of the Peace People, founded in 1976 after three young children were killed by a runaway IRA car whose driver had been shot by the army. Two women initiated the movement, Protestant Betty Williams, who saw the tragedy, and Catholic Mairead Corrigan, the children's aunt. The Peace People brought 10,000 and then 20,000 out onto the streets in Belfast in August, and 25,000 in Derry in September to demand an end to paramilitary violence. These demonstrations were followed by rallies and public events in more than a dozen towns and cities in Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic and Britain. By November 1976 the Peace People had over 80 local groups, offices in both Belfast and Derry and its own paper, *Peace by Peace*. The movement was criticized, especially by Provisional Sinn Féin, for its initial failure to condemn violence by the British Army and the Protestant-dominated RUC, and attacked by the militant Protestant leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, Ian Paisley, as a Catholic front. Over time, under the influence of the third key figure in the movement, former journalist Ciaran McKeown, the Peace People turned to long-term community organizing. See its website: <http://www.peacepeople.com> [1].

Two periodicals which ran articles on the Peace People from a nonviolent perspective are [Peace News](#) [2] (London) and the monthly *Dawn* (published by a collective from Belfast, Derry and Dublin). In the latter, see especially issues no. 25 (November 1976), the editorial on the Peace People leadership in no. 26 (Christmas 1976), and the analysis of Peace People strategy in nos. 27 and 28 (January and February 1977). *Dawn* also published a combined issue, 'Nonviolence in Irish History', no. 38-39, (April-May 1978), which traced nonviolence in Ireland back to the arrival of the Quakers in the 17th century, through the campaign of Daniel O'Connell for Catholic Emancipation, the Land League agitation in the 19th century and nonviolent elements in the national and labour movements (late 19th and early 20th centuries) to the Peace People.

Cory, Geoffrey, [Political dialogue workshops: Deepening the peace process in Northern Ireland](#) [3], Conflict Resolution Quarterly, Vol. 30, issue 1, 2012, pp. 53-90

The author discusses the more than fifty residential three-day political dialogue workshops he facilitated between 1994 and 2007 at the Glenree Centre for Reconciliation near Dublin that brought together politicians from all parties in Britain and Ireland during the period of peace negotiations in Northern Ireland.

Deutsch, Richard, [Mairead Corrigan, Betty Williams](#) [4], Foreword by Joan Baez, Woodbury NY, Barrons, 1977, pp. 204

Account of the genesis, development and programme of the Peace People by French journalist resident in Belfast at the time the movement began

McKeown, Ciaran, [The Passion of Peace](#) [5], Belfast, Blackstaff Press, 1984, pp. 320

McKeown was one of the group of student activists campaigning on civil rights issues at Queens University Belfast in the mid-1960s from which People's Democracy emerged in 1968. However, he opposed the Belfast to Derry march in January 1969 as likely to inflame sectarian divisions, and the Marxist direction to which the organization turned. Best known for his leading role in the Peace People whose origins and development he recounts in detail. Sets out his idea for a parliamentary system based not on political parties but on autonomous community groups.



O Connor, Fionnuala, [Community politics in Northern Ireland](#) [6], In Randle, [Challenge to Nonviolence](#) [7] (A. 1.b. [Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements](#) [8]), Bradford, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, pp. 207-222

Text of a talk given in June 1997 to the Nonviolent Research Project at Bradford University.. Discusses the development of community level political engagement and the vision of Ciaran McKeown of the Peace People that it could someday provide an alternative to the existing political system. She argues that Community politics up to that time (1997) was more developed in the Catholic/Nationalist community than in that of the Protestant/Unionist one but there too it had emerged in the previous five years or so. Former members of paramilitary groups were frequently involved because they had come to see the futility of the violence or because they wanted their own children to have a different life to the one they had experienced.

Overy, Bob, [How Effective Are Peace Movements?](#) [9], Bradford and London, Bradford School of Peace Studies and Housmans, 1982, pp. 78

Includes a sympathetic analysis of the Peace People pp. 30-38. See also: <https://civilresistance.info/challenge/effective> [10].

Wells, Ronald A., [People Behind the Peace: Community and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland](#) [11], Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans Pub, 1999, pp. 126

Focuses on the contribution to the peace process in the lead-up to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement of three ecumenical Christian peace centres in Northern Ireland – the Corrymeela Community, the Christian Renewal Centre, and the Columbanus Community. The author, in contrast to the majority of commentators, identifies religious differences as the main cause of the conflict, though he argues that religion can be ‘both cause of and cure for social conflict’.

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### Links

[1] <http://www.peacepeople.com> [2] <http://peacenews.info> [3] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2012/political-dialogue-workshops-deepening-peace-process-northern-ireland> [4] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1977/mairead-corrigan-betty-williams> [5] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1984/passion-peace> [6] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2002/community-politics-northern-ireland> [7] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2002/challenge-nonviolence> [8] <https://civilresistance.info/section/introduction-nonviolent-action/1-theory-methods-and-examples/1b-strategic-theory-dynamics> [9] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1982/how-effective-are-peace-movements> [10] <https://civilresistance.info/challenge/effective> [11] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1999/people-behind-peace-community-and-reconciliation-northern-ireland>