

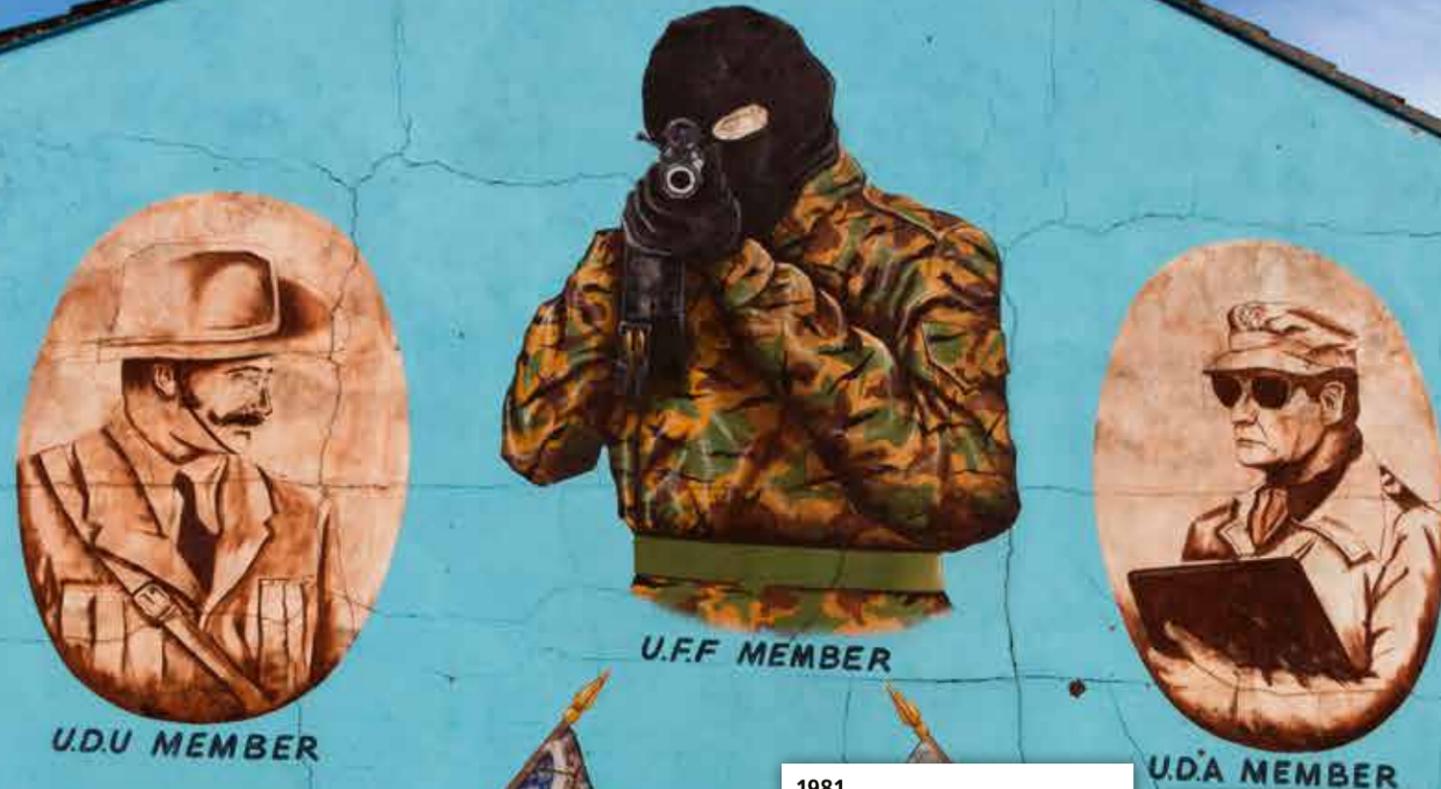
Northern Ireland Troubles

In this issue, gain an overview of the Troubles through to the Good Friday Agreement

1968 The struggle for civil rights

The Government of Ireland Act in 1920 divided Ireland into two territories, effectively creating Northern Ireland, which consisted of the six counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Derry and Tyrone. This was in response to unionist resistance to Home Rule. Although the self-governing region was mainly Protestant, it contained a substantial minority of Catholic nationalists. This Catholic minority suffered discrimination in employment, in the allocation of social housing, and in elections where boundaries were constructed to group the Catholic voters together to dilute their proportionate strength.

In 1967, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association was formed to fight discrimination against Catholics. In 1968 their tactics changed from petitioning and lobbying to protest marches which were increasingly dispersed violently by the police. The start of 'the Troubles' is often dated to a civil-rights march in Derry on 5 October 1968, when there was a violent struggle between the police and young Catholic residents: the so-called Battle of the Bogside. The immediate consequences of the civil-rights riots were the deployment of British troops to restore order and the rise of the militant Provisional Irish Republican Army who launched a new armed campaign.



1998 The Good Friday Agreement

After decades of bloodshed the republicans were engaged in secret negotiations from the late 1980s with both the British and Irish governments. In 1994 the Provisional IRA declared a unilateral ceasefire which was followed a few weeks later by an equivalent ceasefire from the main loyalist organisations. The key political parties — Sinn Fein (republican), the Social and Democratic Labour Party (moderate nationalist), the Ulster Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Party (representing loyalist paramilitary groups) — were in talks throughout 1997. The only party to refuse to take part was the Democratic Unionist Party led by Ian Paisley.

These discussions eventually led to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. The Agreement confirmed that the constitutional status of Northern Ireland would be decided only by a democratic vote but allowed inhabitants to take both British and Irish citizenship. The Northern Ireland Assembly was established to restore legislative powers to Stormont and governed the province until the resignation of Martin McGuinness in January 2017 forced its suspension. Cross-border bodies were set up and the Republic of Ireland rescinded its territorial claim to the province by amending its constitution. The Royal Ulster Constabulary was replaced by the Police Service of Northern Ireland which had quotas for Catholic police officers.

The Agreement was confirmed by referendums in Northern Ireland and the Republic. John Hume (SDLP) and David Trimble (UU) shared the 1998 Nobel peace prize for their efforts to find a peaceful end to the conflict in Northern Ireland. The Good Friday Agreement has provided an uneasy peace in Northern Ireland for 20 years, although there is some anxiety about the future of the border and its impact on stability when the UK leaves the European Union in March 2019. A majority of voters in the province voted to remain in the EU in the referendum of 2016.

1965 1970 1975 1980 1985 1990 1995 2000

1968
Civil-rights marches take place across Northern Ireland

1969
British government sends troops to Northern Ireland as a 'limited operation' to restore law and order

1972
30 January, 'Bloody Sunday', 13 civilians shot dead by British army. March, Stormont government dissolved and direct rule imposed from Westminster

1974
Pub bombings in Guildford (5 deaths, 5 October) and Birmingham (21 deaths, 21 November)

1979
30 March, Airey Neave MP killed by a car bomb as he leaves Parliament. 27 August, Lord Mountbatten and three others killed by a bomb in Sligo, Republic of Ireland

1981
1 March–31 October, Republican prisoners at the Maze prison go on hunger strike. Bobby Sands is elected as an MP. He and nine other prisoners die while on hunger strike

1985
15 November, Margaret Thatcher and Garret FitzGerald, the Irish Taoiseach, sign Anglo-Irish Agreement

1984
12 October, bomb explodes at the Grand Hotel Brighton during Conservative Party conference, five people die but Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher survives unhurt

1987
8 November, 11 civilians killed by a bomb at a Remembrance service in Enniskillen

1990
30 July, Ian Gow MP killed by a car bomb

1998
10 April, Good Friday Agreement signed and hailed as the end of the Troubles. Between 1968 and 1998 over 3,600 people had been killed and thousands more injured

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