

Belfast Agreement:	Also known as the Good Friday Agreement.
DUP:	Democratic Unionist Party - centre right NI Party dedicated to maintaining the union with Britain.
GAA:	Gaelic Athletic Association - an Irish and international amateur sporting and cultural organisation, focused primarily on promoting Gaelic games.
Garda Síochána:	More commonly referred to as the Gardaí or "the guards", is the police force of Ireland since 1922.
Good Friday Agreement:	Also known as the Belfast Agreement.
IRA:	Irish Republican Army.
Ireland:	The most westerly island of Europe divided into 32 counties.
Northern Ireland:	NI - 6 counties of Ireland, part of the United Kingdom.
NI Protocol:	An agreement to ensure there is no land border on the island of Ireland.
PSNI:	Police Service of Northern Ireland; new police force from 2001.
Republic of Ireland:	ROI - 26 counties. Independent.
RIC:	Royal Irish Constabulary - armed police force of the United Kingdom in Ireland from the early nineteenth century until 1922.
RUC:	Royal Ulster Constabulary; British police force in NI until 2001.
SAS:	The British Special Air Service.
Sinn Féin:	A left wing all-Ireland party dedicated to the unification of Ireland. Previously the political wing of the IRA.
Stormont:	Seat of devolved government in NI.

GREEN & BLUE: CONTEXT & GLOSSARY

PARTITION IN IRELAND BY VINCENT HIGGINS

Ireland was invaded by Britain over 800 years ago and conquered by military force. Over the centuries the ordinary people of Ireland have rebelled against that rule. In Ireland we commemorated the centenary of the 1916 Rising with lavish state sponsored events and localised tributes to the men and women who fought for Irish freedom. It also prompted much soul searching about what sort of Ireland exists today. The centenary of the partition of Ireland in 1921 was met with a lot less fanfare.

The 1916 Rising kick started a War of Independence against British rule in Ireland which eventually led to talks and then a Treaty. This Treaty proposed to divide Ireland along sectarian lines: Out of Ireland's 32 counties, 6 in the north would have a British Protestant majority and the other 26 counties in the rest of Ireland would have an Irish Catholic majority. The country was deeply divided over this proposal and civil war broke out. The pro Treaty forces armed by the British won and Ireland was divided by means of a sectarian headcount. This became known as 'Partition'. The 6 counties in the north became Northern Ireland in 1921 and became part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The other 26 counties became the Irish Free State. In 1949 a Republic was declared in the 26 counties abolishing the remaining roles of the British monarch in the governance of the Irish state.

Before Partition the island of Ireland was policed by the Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C.). After Partition the southern counties were policed by An Garda Síochána (Guardians of the Peace) and the northern counties by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (R.U.C). It in turn was supported by an armed paramilitary wing (B Specials) that was exclusively Protestant and notorious to the Irish, Catholic community.

Northern Ireland's parliament at Stormont, Belfast was in the words of its first Prime Minister, Lord Craigavon: 'a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people'.

Security of the new Northern Irish state was underpinned by a draconian Special Powers Act that gave the Stormont Government power to: intern people without charge or trial, enter and search a house without a warrant, prohibit peaceful meetings, deny claim to trial by jury, prohibit the holding of an inquest after a prisoner's death and to take whatever steps necessary to combat actual or suspected subversion. This legislation, which applied nowhere else in the United Kingdom was targeted at the Irish Catholic minority.

By the 1960's the ingredients for an explosion had been assembled. This stemmed from the political, economic, and social conditions in which the Irish Catholic minority lived. They were in every sense of the word second-class citizens; they were citizens who were treated as subjects.

Many Catholics were denied the right to vote. There was widespread, acceptable discrimination in the jobs market. Public housing was allocated in a sectarian inequity. The Irish language, Irish sports and Irish history were excluded from the state school curriculum to ensure schools were: 'safe for British, Unionist, Protestant children'. When Irish Catholics spoke about being an oppressed minority, they were right. There was plenty to be angry about.

This anger initially was channelled into peaceful non-violent protest inspired by the American Civil Rights movement. These protests were viciously and violently put down by the Stormont government and the violence escalated. Many Civil Rights marches were declared illegal and while obviously now illegal in the eyes of the regime many felt them to be morally legitimate. The violence escalated and in 1969 British soldiers were deployed on the streets of Northern Ireland. This, for many marks the beginning of a 30-year violent conflict known as 'The Troubles'.

The conflict mutated over those three decades; it flourished in both rural and urban settings; it was often reactionary and always terrible. It was a northern Irish Hydra: An age-old struggle for Irish freedom, a revolution, a sectarian murder-fest, a British colonial war, a pogrom, ethnic cleansing, the Irish problem, the British problem and finally a deadly, atrocious stalemate.

In broad terms one side was - British Unionist, Protestant, Royalist - determined to maintain British rule in the 6 counties and all the advantages of the status quo.

The other side was - Irish Nationalist, Catholic, Republican - determined to smash British rule in the 6 counties and all the advantages of the status quo.

In 2022 we are still struggling to come to terms with the legacy of the conflict. Since the ceasefires more people have died by suicide than died during the whole of the 'Troubles'.

Brexit has also destabilised the north with the majority voting to remain in the EU. Our power sharing government at Stormont is not sitting as the DUP (the largest Unionist party) refuses to form a government in protest at the NI Protocol. The absurdity of the DUP supporting the British government's agreements on Brexit, and voting for it, is lost on nobody. The DUP are no longer the largest party in the north. That honour falls to Sinn Féin, who will nominate the new First Minister if our government is ever restored. Sinn Féin also look set to be the largest party in the Republic of Ireland at the next general election.

The consequences of border posts being erected again on Irish soil is not something anybody wants to contemplate. The possibility of Scotland gaining independence and ending the United Kingdom has Unionists struggling to formulate a coherent response.

Throughout it all the legacy issues of the conflict stubbornly refuse to disappear. Victims of the 'Troubles' have been neglected terribly. There is hurt and anger. The British and Irish governments seem to hope that it will all just magically disappear with time. But it doesn't work like that. If it isn't addressed, it festers and then it mutates into the cultural DNA of communities like an incurable cancer with diabolical consequences.

Nelson Mandela said on leaving the office of South African President in 1999: 'South Africans must recall the terrible past so that we can deal with it, forgiving where forgiveness is necessary but never forgetting'.

Our plays engage with the 'post-conflict' Northern Ireland we now find ourselves living in, or the 'post-conflict' north of Ireland to those who do not recognise the legitimacy of the statelet.

There is still an uneasy peace.