**MAKING HISTORY.**

**By Conal Gilliland.**

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**Abstract.**

This essay intends to address specifically the question of how and why Catholic Nationalist history in Northern Ireland has been revised and rewritten over the last 50 years to suit the narrative being espoused by Northern Irish Republicans. This will be done by analysing the Republican interpretation of events espoused in primary autobiographical sources, as well as histories written after the events. This Republican narrative will be contrasted against opposing narratives (e.g. Civil Rights activists) and other non-orthodox Republican narratives to show how the telling of the events has been changed, or what has been omitted, in order to alter the social memory of the Troubles, particularly that of Ulster Catholics. The events focused upon in this essay are the Northern Ireland Civil Rights movement in late 1960s, and the Republican factionalism of 1972 and 1975 respectively.

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**Introduction**

*“O'NEILL: Then tell them the whole truth.*

*LOMBARD: That's exactly what my point is. People think they just want to know the 'facts'; they think they believe in some sort of empirical truth, but what they really want is a story… This isn't the time for a critical assessment of your 'ploys' and your ‘disgraces' and your 'betrayal' - that's the stuff of another history for another time. Now is the time for a hero. Now is the time for a heroic literature. So I am offering Gaelic Ireland two things. I'm offering them this narrative that has the elements of myth. And I'm offering them Hugh O'Neill as a national hero. A hero and the story of a hero[[1]](#footnote-1).”*

This passage is from the final scene of the play “Making History” by Brian Friel, where Hugh O’Neill – exiled Earl of Tyrone, and Irish leader of the failed Nine Years War (1593-1603) against England – has one final battle against Archbishop Lombard who is determined to rewrite O’Neill’s history his way. O’Neill is initially amused, then enraged, and finally despairing, at Lombard’s refusal to tell it as it happened to him. Ignoring him, Archbishop Lombard then goes on to transform the routing of the Irish forces at Kinsale into a moment of tragedy with “the crushing of the most magnificent Gaelic army ever assembled” and their subsequent fleeing into the Flight of the Earls; “a tragic but magnificent exodus of the Gaelic aristocracy”[[2]](#footnote-2). This play was written in 1988 when the Troubles in Northern Ireland was at its height and offers an insight into how both Catholic and Protestant sides were rewriting their history to justify their current actions.

The Northern Irish “Troubles”, which was a religious-based ethno-nationalist conflict spanning from the 1960s until the late 1990s, relied heavily upon narratives to shape the identities and perceptions of both Catholics and Protestants. It allowed each side to draw and impose myths and borders around their people to create both community and enemy. Similarly, both sides’ respective paramilitaries often manipulated events to shape these myths to their advantage; creating something to explain, justify, and motivate their behaviour and present its at times erratic (and sometimes incompetent) actions as part of a grand plan – usually after the events have happened[[3]](#footnote-3). Therefore, constant revisionism was a theme throughout the Troubles and remains a feature to perpetuate the myths of each ‘side’[[4]](#footnote-4). This essay intends to address specifically the question of how and why Catholic Nationalist history in Northern Ireland has been revised and rewritten over the last 50 years to suit the narrative being espoused by Irish Republicans.

For several hundred years Irish nationalist rhetoric relied on a simplistic narrative of constant struggle and subjugation, with the phrase ‘800 years of British Rule’ being bandied around Northern Ireland to this day. Although this should be amended to 850 years, and the word ‘British’ reconsidered given that the Anglo-Welsh Normans first landed on the island in the year 1169[[5]](#footnote-5). This, like the telling of many events to come, was a massively simplified view; not least because the Normans were themselves only relatively recent arrivals in England. Melding groups together is not only limited to historical enemies, but – as I will discuss in this essay – it is also used in respect of wider Catholic or nationalist groups. There are a multitude of reasons for this: for example, it can be used to present a false sense of unity within the nationalist movement, or to appropriate another separate group’s credibility.

This thesis will look at the rewriting of Northern Irish Nationalist history using historiographical analysis, drawing on memory studies, to illustrate the development of the Nationalist myth from the beginning of the Troubles in 1968, by comparing popular Nationalist history writing from 1968 until 2020. This essay will examine key events or groups; namely the Civil Right Marches of the 1960s, as well as the Official Irish Republican Army ceasefire of 1972 and the emergence of the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). These are different flashpoints in the history of Northern Ireland affecting Catholics, Nationalists, and Republicans; three terms which overlap (one can be all three of these) but not as monolithic as perceived, as this essay will show. It required deliberate effort to make each of these terms synonymous with each other.

**1.2 Nomenclature**

A point of clarification is needed before this essay gets underway. While (broadly) all Catholics in Northern Ireland tend to be Nationalist desiring a United Irish nation and freedom from Britain, not all Nationalists are Republicans. This is a term which, in the Northern Irish context, tends to refer to the more radical militant form of Nationalism; most famously associated with the various wings of the Irish Republican Army or ‘IRA’. Another necessary clarification is that while both the Protestant and Catholic cultures are in the true sense nationalistic, Protestants are generally referred to as Unionist, with their extremists called Loyalists, with both terms referring to their desire to remain within the United Kingdom. Like Republicans, Loyalists also had paramilitary groups. Finally, although the common term for the war in Northern Ireland from 1968-98 is ‘The Troubles’, Republicans sometimes describe it as ‘the Conflict’, or more often as ‘the Struggle’[[6]](#footnote-6).

**1.3 Chronology**

This essay primarily focuses on events at the beginning of the Troubles, in Northern Ireland the period between the Catholic Civil Rights marches of October 1968, up until the INLA’s actions in 1979 and the early 1980’s. The vast majority of modern public discourse of the Troubles is focused around ‘the National Question’: whether Northern Ireland should stay in the United Kingdom, or be reunified with the Republic of Ireland, with Protestant Unionists in favour of the former, and Catholic Nationalists the latter.

However, in the early period of the Troubles, this was not the case, with Catholic instead focusing upon obtaining Civil Rights within the Northern Irish System, i.e. within the United Kingdom. This began with grassroots, non-sectarian, and predominantly Catholic organisations attempting to tackle “the perceived bias of the Unionist majority government against the nationalist minority”[[7]](#footnote-7). Their demands were focused on better housing for Catholics, an end to the extreme gerrymandering taking place, and an end to employment discrimination, and their protests took the form of peaceful marches[[8]](#footnote-8). These protests were met with violent attacks from both the police force and Loyalist mobs; increasing tensions amongst the Catholic community who regarded this as a further indictment of their perpetual political oppression. This tension finally erupted into the ‘Battle of the Bogside’ on the 12th August 1969 when a traditional Loyalist parade – hearkening back to a historical victory over Catholic forces in 1689 – was scheduled to go through a Catholic area (the Bogside) in the Western city Derry-Londonderry (shortened to Derry). Having had their Civil Rights protests banned from October the previous year, this parade took on even more sectarian symbolism and quickly lead to all-out fighting between the police and its residents.

This in turn sparked off violence across the country – most notably in Belfast – with the Bogside violently repulsing Royal Ulster Constabulary “RUC” police incursions to two days until August 14th when the British government deployed the Army. During this time, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) emerged as a militant Republican force, splitting from the Official IRA – a more ideologically-focused, socialist organisation that had participated in the Civil Rights movement. However, it was not until 1972 that these organisations truly split, leading to a ceasefire which in turn created greater divisions. The Official IRA became increasingly unpopular in the years following the onset of the Troubles which were increasingly violent; eventually spawning the INLA in 1975 – a more militarily active socialist splinter group who still exist to this day, although are greatly diminished in power and influence due to infighting in the late 1980s[[9]](#footnote-9).

The year 1972 marked an escalation in violence for Northern Ireland, when the British Army shot dead thirteen unarmed civilians during a march on the 30th January in what became known as the Bloody Sunday Massacre. This march took place in protest against the policy of internment in which suspected insurgents were arrested and held indefinitely without trial, a policy that had begun in 1971, lasting until 1975 predominantly affecting Catholics. This policy was legally authorised under the Special Powers Act – a policy that the Northern Irish Government had used before[[10]](#footnote-10)**.** The next flashpoint in Northern Ireland came in 1981, when twenty-three convicted Republican prisoners, predominantly part of the Provisional IRA, went on hunger strike to protest their lack of status as political prisoners. This strike became a showdown between them and the Thatcher Government of the UK who proved not to be forthcoming. The deaths by starvation of seven IRA members and three INLA members between the 5th May and the 20th August marked another escalation in the conflict that continued throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s, before peace talks began in 1994.

The Troubles continued until the Good Friday Agreement (“GFA”) of 1998. As I will demonstrate in the first section of this essay, the conflict led to deepening sectarian divides between Catholics and Protestants and worsening violence. The key figures in this violence were the Republican paramilitaries – a grouping dominated by the IRA and its spinoffs –, Loyalist paramilitaries, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (or ‘RUC’), and the British Army. The paramilitaries operated using urban guerrilla warfare, most notably through bombing campaigns, as well as targeting and shooting at individual targets, while blending into the civilian population[[11]](#footnote-11). The Good Friday Agreement led to an end to hostilities, with power-sharing between Protestants and Catholics becoming enshrined in an effort to promote stability and a lasting peace – which it largely has achieved, although at the cost of also enshrining the divide between both peoples[[12]](#footnote-12). The two largest parties in Stormont (Northern Ireland’s parliament) are Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist Party; a Republican and Loyalist party respectively[[13]](#footnote-13). Sinn Féin are the dominant force in Northern Ireland’s Catholic and Nationalist society both politically and culturally, especially since supplanting the “constitutional Nationalist” Social Democratic & Labour Party (SDLP) politically in the mid-2000s[[14]](#footnote-14).While peace mostly reigns in Northern Ireland since 1998, paramilitaries are still active – including the INLA and the newest offshoot of the IRA called the ‘New IRA’, although most of the influential Republicans are either in politics (mostly Sinn Féin) or retired[[15]](#footnote-15).

**1.4. Historiographical debate**

Much has been written on the Irish memory, with Emilie Pine remarking that “Irish culture is obsessed with the past”, and Martin Mansergh, observing ‘in Ireland, History is Ideology’[[16]](#footnote-16). However, most of this is written in the Republic of Ireland and concerns more inanimate social memory e.g. the 1916 Rising against Britain, or subsequent attempts by the Republic of Ireland to grapple with a new, less-Catholic and more pluralist identity in its current post-Celtic Tiger incarnation. However, national memory has different connotations in Northern Ireland, where collective trauma is far more recent and in the living memories of much its population. This recency is not the only reason for this difference in attitude, as since the GFA many controversial nationalistic figures on both sides of the sectarian divide have entered politics, attempting to shape it with rhetoric that appeals to old nationalisms, but reinterpreted a new way. These recent and powerful social memories in Northern Ireland are being grappled by a multitude of actors; Loyalists, Republicans, Nationalists, Unionists, as well as non-sectarian actors, including Socialists, to name a few.

Of the memory studies scholarship written about Northern Ireland by historians, a perusal of the relevant analysis shows that it is primarily focused upon the Unionist community. This is due to the claimed ‘crisis of identity’ best examined by Pierre Joanon’s ‘The Unionist Fig Leaf or the Dilemma of the Modern Ulster Protestant’, and Connal Parr’s ‘Inventing the Myth’, both of which analyse how Unionists’ convictions have been steadily undermined “by the course of modern history”[[17]](#footnote-17). On the Nationalist front however, there is less focus upon how social memory is shaped, especially of the Republican type. In fact there has been accusations from more Nationalist historians – notably Brendan O’Leary – of revisionism that downplays the role of the British government and Loyalists by modern historians who condemn Republicans unfairly in an attempt for ‘moderation’, with Michael English (Belfast-born historian of Irish Republicanism) being a particular target of this criticism[[18]](#footnote-18). If nothing else, it appears clear that Nationalists are in far more control of their history and social memory than their Unionist counterparts.

Although Pine does address a similar topic when she analyses the social performance nature of Republican martyrdom, Kevin Hearty’s article ‘The Malleability of Memory and Irish Republican Memory Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of the ‘Loughgall Martyrs’ comes closest to illustrating this type of Republican revisionism. He demonstrates the type and extent of reinterpretation that this essay advances when it describes the

*“gradual remoulding of the Loughgall memory to portray the ‘Loughgall Martyrs’ as ‘men of war’ and sanctifiers of peace, as an encouragement for Irish republican political violence and a warning against the repetition of violence and as gallant heroes killed in a war of liberation and victims of a state ‘shoot-to-kill’ policy.[[19]](#footnote-19)”*

There are many reasons for the lack of scholarship on memory studies or critiques on Northern Irish Republican revisionism. The main explanation is probably the relative recency of the Troubles and the collective trauma imparted upon the populace of the country: revisiting such a politically delicate subject as this is unlikely to be well received. Another reason is the control that Nationalists, particularly Republicans, have exerted upon their account of their own history. It appears from the sources I have examined as well as research undertaken in this essay that whilst there is a large amount of Republican history produced, not only in writing but also in museums, memory sites, and rituals, this history lacks analysis and criticism. Anne Rigney has remarked that these “various media and memorial forms [help] later generations recall things other people experienced, and do so from the conviction that those past experiences have something to do with the sense of ‘our history’.”[[20]](#footnote-20) Through telling history they have been able to capitalise upon the social memory of Northern Irish Catholics, especially due to the lack of criticism directed at them by historians.

This essay intends to look at the same shaping of memory that Hearty discusses on a larger scale – referring to Republican ability to claim the past events, thus shaping present and future interpretations of these memories. While this predominantly will focus upon the presentations of the early Troubles, hopefully this will contribute to the broader picture of modern Northern Ireland, and its segregated past and present.

**1.5. Sources and method**

This essay analyses primary sources such as the memoirs of activists, as well as leaders of the Republican movement, and is supplemented by secondary material to illuminate both the events mentioned and the narratives used. In the course of this essay several different primary sources have been employed, namely for Republican history *Hope and History*, *Making Peace in Northern Ireland;* an autobiography by Gerry Adams; a famous Irish republican politician who headed Sinn Féin political party between 1983 and 2018, and is also alleged to be one of the leading member of the IRA since the 1970s (something he strenuously denies)[[21]](#footnote-21). This source sticks close to the Sinn Féin party line (widely seen as the modern political successor to the IRA and therefore representing the ‘Republican’ wing of the Nationalist myth) and has a roughly shared narrative of history with the Republican secondary sources used[[22]](#footnote-22). Adams’ book was written in 2003; after the ceasefire and the Good Friday Agreement created peace in the country, with Adams being amongst the chief negotiators for the Republican side[[23]](#footnote-23).

For a less strictly defined history of militant Republicanism, *Dilseacht, the biography of Commandant Tom Maguire*, by Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, a former leader of the IRA who separated from it in 1986 will be examined; as well as the history of the *INLA* (a parallel Republican paramilitary organisation referred to above) by Henry McDonald and Jack Holland – both of whom bring a different view to wider Nationalist history. Finally, to balance militant Republicanism with non-violent Nationalism, this essay will examine Civil Rights activists Eamonn McCann and Michael Farrell’s biographies *War and an Irish Town* and *The Orange State* respectively. These two autobiographies will be examined in respect of the Civil Rights movement and its relation to Republicanism then and now. Farrell’s book ‘Northern Ireland, The Orange State’ was written in 1976 and updated in 1980, whilst McCann’s book ‘War and an Irish Town’ was initially penned in 1974, it was subsequently updated in 2018 to include his comments on modern Republicanism, giving us both his original account, as well as his opinions on the current attitude towards Republicanism.

The Nationalist myth in Northern Ireland has been evolving since the GFA in 1998, as traumas fade, and a new generation grows up in peacetime. To show this, I will be examining these sources compared alongside the narrative offered in the Free Derry Museum and Brian Feeney’s book*, a Hundred Turbulent Years*. The museum is located in the Catholic area of Derry ‘the Bogside’ and offers an unabashedly Catholic and Nationalist history of the Troubles, although this means it has stuck closely to the Republican narrative. Of note will be the comparison of this source’s account of each of the key events listed to demonstrate the drift in memory since the beginning of the Troubles. It is essentially the modern revised telling of ‘The Struggle’. However, due to the Coronavirus Crisis the number of sources available has been reduced. This essay will be relying largely on the Museum’s website and will supplement this more limited material with Brian Feeney’s ‘*Sinn Féin, a Hundred Turbulent Years’* – another, more detailed, source for the Republican narrative. By doing a close reading of the text, I will compare and contrast it with opposing narratives to highlight what has been excluded or changed.

**1.6. Relevance**

Although it is generally accepted that no one won the war that was the Troubles perhaps, as McCann suggests, the Republicans won the peace[[24]](#footnote-24). Compared to their Unionist peers, Nationalists are much more prolific in their history writing and ability to promote their story to both their constituents and abroad. For example, Sinn Fein’s online bookshop sells sixty different Republican histories with many key Republican and Nationalists writing their story – as shown by my sources[[25]](#footnote-25). Meanwhile Loyalist and Unionist autobiographical sources tend to be from mid-ranking paramilitary members rather than high-ranking, and rarely from politicians[[26]](#footnote-26).

Since the Troubles, there has been a gradual effort to portray the Nationalist movement as a monolith. The most obvious example of this could be seen in attitudes towards the memory and ownership of what occurred with the 1960s Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement which was an amalgamation of various sections of society such as Catholics, moderate Protestants, Marxists and others whose legacy has belatedly been used to justify republican violence. The former was inspired by the American Civil Rights groups and protested systemic discrimination against Catholics in the Northern Irish state but ended in repression which in turn escalated to paramilitary violence. It has since been appropriated as the foundation myth to all subsequent Nationalist struggles, and as retroactive justification for all the Republican violence that followed. There has been an effort by the Republican movement (as I show with Gerry Adams) since the end of the Troubles to portray the violence perpetrated by the Republican movement as a grim necessity of ‘the Struggle’ with each death bringing the prospect of a negotiated settlement closer, rather than as a mixture of political, sectarian and botched bloodshed. This revised Nationalist history typically ignores the mass of conflicting voices in their history – from the nominally Nationalist Civil Rights Movement, to the more extreme paramilitary groups like the Official IRA and the INLA.

The reason for this lack of discussion in academia is probably in part due to the relative freshness of these memories in the country, and the topic’s potential to be inflammatory in a war-weary population that cherishes peace. However, history regularly shows society the danger of wilful ignorance of the past – this rewriting of history (unwittingly or not) shapes the current incarnation of the Nationalist myth in Northern Ireland, and if left unchallenged can impede any prospect of nurturing the green shoots of a consensual social memory between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.

This essay will have two parts; the first will examine the Civil Rights movement, and the second will look at the IRA split of 1972 and its subsequent INLA split. These are two key moments in early Troubles history, especially for the Republicans. Each section will first tell the event from a secondary source, i.e. a scholarly account, then look at the orthodox Republican perspective, and then finally I will analyse why these sources and narratives are overlooked, and how the Republican telling of the story has changed over time.

The first chapter will be longer than the second, as it analyses a greater variety of actors while the second focuses upon purely the Republican movement and its factionalism.

**Chapter 2: The Civil Rights movement**

The usual narrative of the Civil Rights movement is that Catholics took inspiration from the US Civil Rights movement and in 1968 – a year of more general social upheaval beyond the US and its civil rights movement – they began to protest. Typically, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) is portrayed as the main organiser of this type of protest. The first protest in October 1968 was met with heavy state response, leading to more protests until the 12th August 1969 when the Battle of the Bogside began which ignited the Troubles properly. After this the IRA re-emerged to challenge the state and conflict broke out. This narrative portrays a monolithic Catholic group that were pushing for civil rights, and in doing so it glosses over the socialist elements of the protestors, portraying them as more Nationalist than they really were, and equating them to the more conservative, ethnic-identity based Catholics of the 1970s and 1980s[[27]](#footnote-27). This Nationalist assertion also gives Republicans greater claim to the narrative than they had at the time, allowing them to use the peaceful marches and subsequent repression as a justification for their violent actions going forward.

The Free Derry Museum covers the 1960s Civil Rights campaign thoroughly but in an events-driven manner. While there is factual reporting on the issues at hand – the poor economy in Derry, mass unemployment, lack of housing, gerrymandering, inspiration from the US – it glosses over contemporary Nationalist internal politics and Nationalist efforts to collaborate with the regime[[28]](#footnote-28). The presentation of the narrative as a Catholic attempt to struggle out of repression is accurate, but ignores the actions of the moderate Nationalists (namely John Hume and others who went on to form the non-militant Social Democratic & Labour Party), as well as liberal Protestants, and Marxists[[29]](#footnote-29) attempting to create a class-based struggle. Ivan Cooper is one such example, a Protestant who helped organise many Civil Rights marches (including the fateful Bloody Sunday one) and was a founding member of the Social Democrats and Labour Party (SDLP) in 1970[[30]](#footnote-30). This party has endured and is now regarded as the principle moderate nationalist party. This narrative also tends to ignore the small (at that time) role of the republicans, including the IRA, and possibly most significantly its beginnings as a Catholic community issue not overly connected to the ‘Irish Question’ of unity.

The Museum makes a passing reference to the multitude of parties who organised the first Civil Rights March on the 5th October 1968, mentioning how NICRA was “13-member committee” that included the Republican Clubs, the Ulster Liberal Party, and the Communist Party of Ireland amongst others[[31]](#footnote-31). However, after referring to this multitude of different ideologies and organisations the museum returns to an events-based narrative on the repression the Catholics by the State. This is most likely to streamline the narrative for museum visitors, but it also supports the narrative thread that links the Republicans to Civil Rights, how they tried peace before turning to more violent means whereas their role was in fact peripheral at best at that time.

**2.1. McCann and Farrell’s narrative.**



Figure 1. Eamonn McCann. Late 1960s. Derry journal.



Figure 2. Michael Farrell, 1972. Getty Images

However, an alternative narrative is provided by main NICRA leaders Eamonn McCann and Michael Farrell in their books ‘War in an Irish Town’ and ‘Northern Ireland: The Orange State’ respectively. This may be called the ‘activist’ narrative as both authors were leading members in NICRA and were a major part in organising the marches. The major difference between the Republican and activist accounts is the importance and commitment of Marxism and Republicanism to the Civil Rights movement. The activist account is that the IRA courted Marxism after the “debacle of the 1956-62 border campaign” and left the group bankrupt and having sold most of its weapons to Welsh Nationalists[[32]](#footnote-32). Rather than solely a Northern Irish movement, McCann and Farrell both portray the Civil Rights movement as a grassroots socialist mobilisation in both Northern Ireland and the Republic, with the IRA in full support of this policy. This commitment to working-class socialist ideals manifested in their actions, with the group spending much of the 1960s attacking foreign-owned farms (often burning them) in the Republic of Ireland on behalf of unions[[33]](#footnote-33).

Similarly, the border question that was so integral to the Republican movement later was less important to most Catholics at the time, with McCann claiming the Republican and Nationalist movement de-emphasised the border question in order to gain wider working-class appeal. “In 1969 the left and the right, the ‘militants’ and the ‘moderates’ in the civil rights movement, were united in one front; that partition [of Ireland] was irrelevant with this point being brought up in each civil rights meeting held[[34]](#footnote-34)”. McCann goes as far as to claim that Republicans were the most zealous in stressing this, although there was an unspoken assumption that all these reforms would eventually bring Irish unity closer – a sort of ‘nominal Nationalism’[[35]](#footnote-35).

McCann and Farrell present an IRA moving away from its purely Republican image towards a sort of Irish working-class Socialist organisation whose Nationalism came from an anti-imperialist justification. McCann believes this was a shift away from militancy and a “clear attempt by the leadership and the remaining rank and file” of the Republican movement “to escape from the narrow Nationalism and the gun fetishism of the past and lay a foundation for a socialist republican platform”[[36]](#footnote-36). The IRA was influenced by, and heavily intertwined with, the Civil Rights movement and their ideologies, and were fully supportive of their actions.

However, these aspirations did not last long. The 1968 protest was met with heavy repression from the RUC, who violently drove the protest back into the Bogside until it dissolved into a general struggle between the youth of the area against the police. These repressive measures only increased with each successive protest, until finally culminating in the Battle of the Bogside on the 12th August 1969: typically seen as the first major event of the Troubles. To many Catholics this represented the failure of non-violent protest in a state weighted against them. This was given extra sting because the Battle ignited due to a traditional Loyalist march being permitted to go through the Bogside by the Northern Irish government despite banning all demonstration on the 18th November 1968 in response to the Civil Rights protests. This symbolic gesture, as well as the violence inflicted upon the Catholic population, left the population disillusioned and began the shift away from political and ideological terms and towards an ethno-nationalist viewpoint.

This onslaught of violence and increasing ethnic tension reintroduced the focus on the border question to the population and re-divided the nation into ethnic, rather than class, boundaries. Farrell describes this change in Catholic perspective as

*“a subtle political change had taken place as well. Up this point, mass support in the Northern Catholic population had been for civil rights and for reform within the Northern state, with Irish unity following gradually. Now most Northern Catholics felt that the Northern state was unreformable, and that they would only get civil rights in a united Ireland. Their objective was no longer to reform Northern Ireland but to destroy it.”[[37]](#footnote-37)*

In this vacuum a new group called the Provisional IRA emerged as a more militant and less ideologically focused republican force, splitting from the Marxists who became the Official IRA. For a while, the Official IRA (‘Officials’) and Provisional IRA (‘Provisionals’ or ‘Provos’) co-existed uneasily alongside each other, with the Provisionals being the more proactive group launching “an urban guerrilla offensive against government and commercial offices and building throughout the North[[38]](#footnote-38).” Meanwhile the Official IRA still operated in a predominately political fashion, with their attacks being “confined… to military and political targets”, with the army bearing the brunt of this[[39]](#footnote-39). However, there had not been total abandonment of political principle by 1970, although it was much diminished. On the 26th October 1971 there was a gathering called ‘Alternative Ulster” made up of political groups and headed by the SDLP. Farrell calls this “a fairly obvious attempt to win back some initiative from the IRA and the politics of the streets” from the old political groups who opposed violence, although Farrell believes it was simply that “the Catholic middle class was determined to rebel with dignity.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

Farrell and McCann believe that only during the unprecedented violent attacks by the police and Loyalist gangs did the Republicans factions rise to prominence with the Civil Rights movement becoming equated with Catholic Nationalism “posed in stark, and increasingly sectarian for-or-against partition terms”[[41]](#footnote-41). This environment gave militant Republicanism a huge groundswell of support as peaceful means were rejected – and the ideology that went along with it – “it gave the Provos … an almost clear field in the North. It was they and their politics which began to dictate the course of events[[42]](#footnote-42).” While there was still differing opinion, as seen by Alternative Ulster, over the next few years Republicanism support would increase further under “the almost total solidarity of the Catholic population reacting to internment and reinforced by the actions of the state on Bloody Sunday”.[[43]](#footnote-43)

**2.2. The Republican narrative**

The Republican narrative, according to Feeney’s “Sinn Féin”, is a lot more simplistic and when it does mention the multitude of groups and their socialist aspirations it usually does so in a condemning manner. Feeney’s description of the Marxist turn by the Official IRA both downplays the group’s actual belief in the ideals, but also emphasises how integral their organisational skills were to the Civil Rights movement.

He claims that it was “republicans who produced the plans for a civil rights movement in the North… [and were] a major influence in the role that movement played across northern politics from 1967-1972” and “in cooperation with NICRA…organised the marches. Often they advised on the route”[[44]](#footnote-44). While McCann and Feeney agree that Republicans played a role, both also stress they were only an aspect of a group more interested in housing and employment than national liberation. Feeney goes on to downplay Sinn Féin’s actual commitment to these socialist ideals, claiming that these “policies did not dignify Marxism but were in fact the true mainstream republican tradition of James Connolly… that is, Republicans have always been on the side of the underdog”; this explanation strips away the controversy of the far left from more sceptical supporters – for example the Irish-American group Clan na Gael were much more conservative, as well as a major source of financial and political support[[45]](#footnote-45). Feeney goes onto reassert that “the most militant and critical Republicans did not care too much about the party’s social and economic stance. For them the sole aim was a United Ireland.”[[46]](#footnote-46)

Further critiquing the socialist ideals, Feeney portrays “the Marxist theory… [as] nonsense and its practice dangerous” with the activists “no idea of the strength of emotion that existed amongst unionists in the North” that these activists would unleash in their attempt to reconcile with them. Feeney even paradoxically claims that Republicans had been led astray by this rhetoric, and the “leadership of Sinn Féin and the IRA ignored warnings, even from men sympathetic to their view… that… Northern unionists had always been sectarian[[47]](#footnote-47).” While McCann and Farrell depict the Civil Rights movement as a diverse range of groupings including liberal Protestants, Feeney portrays the period along the ethnic lines. He paints the movement and its attempts to reach out to Protestants as unwittingly echoing to the ‘the split’ of 1921 – referring to Irish partition – and “reawaken[ed] the visceral hatreds that had simmered beneath the surface of northern [Ireland’s] society for generations”[[48]](#footnote-48). This is essentially a more detailed version of the typical Republican narrative – that Catholics (represented by Republicans) had tried peaceful Civil Rights marches, but the violent suppression by the Unionist Government and Loyalist groups demonstrated that violent resistance was the only way forward. Feeney does nominally include the activists, mentioning how NICRA “encouraged people to engage in street protests across the North” to show a shift away from peaceful means[[49]](#footnote-49).

This is a typical Republican narrative – the same as seen in the Free Derry Museum, but more detailed. It claims the Civil Rights movement as the first attempt to change the system within before they were forced to overthrow it entirely. On the same page Feeney follows this description of the subsequent riots with the description of the rebirth of militant republicanism; how “from the ashes of Bombay Street rose the Provisional… never again would Catholic areas be undefended. In its inception in Belfast, the Provisional IRA was a Catholic defence organisation”[[50]](#footnote-50). Feeney then goes on to describe how these new Republicans “immediately overturned the policy that had been laboriously constructed during the 1960s”, trading an unwieldy and unworkable political apparatus for militant defence, with “the emphasis put on political development [being] swept aside”[[51]](#footnote-51).

While Adams’ autobiography begins in 1977, he infrequently references the Civil Rights movement of the late 1960s, although he always describes it as a violent failure. His description of the “attacks on the Civil Rights movement” and how “in 1969 when the people of Derry repulsed the RUC invasion of that area” are also always framed along ethnic lines, as well as seeded with violent language[[52]](#footnote-52). Likewise, his mention of the August demonstration in 1968 reduces it down to an “RUC attack on a civil rights demonstration” that “brought the apartheid nature of the British state in Ireland to international attention” – presenting it again along ethnic lines and as the start of ‘The Struggle’[[53]](#footnote-53).

**2.3. Conclusion**

As I have discussed throughout this essay, the incorporation of the Civil Rights movement into the Republican ‘canon’ is primarily to appropriate their association with the moral high ground. Both Feeney and Adams mention Civil Rights as a movement that could not work that ‘they’ (the Provos) tried, as the system was systemically ethno-nationalist and rigged in favour of Protestants. The failure of the Civil Rights movement – the ‘higher ground’ – was appropriated by the Republicans to serve as retroactive justification for the violent actions the IRA carried out. It also buries the ideas of an older, weaker IRA who were associated with Marxist politics that are unpopular now with both local and international audiences. Finally, it helps the Republicans narrative to portray the Catholic population as a monolith, of which the IRA were a part. They, like the rest of the populace, were wounded by the police actions and so, the Catholics decided to fight back, with the merely IRA being the extension of the community’s unanimous will.

In her article ‘What’s the Story? Transitional Justice and the Creation of Historical Narratives in Croatia and Serbia’, Ana Ljubojevic describe the emergence of “Mutually exclusive “truths” about war and the atrocities committed” developing quickly and as in Northern Ireland these “were used by political elites and mass media in the creation of new national narratives, reinforcing at the same time the fragmentation of post-war societies”[[54]](#footnote-54). This is certainly true for the Republicans, who emphasised a Catholic identity in opposition to a Protestant one and have only become stronger in their capacity to harness the media to influence their status as political elites. The pluralist and politically diverse nature of the NICRA marches was not suitable for the Republican narratives in Northern Ireland either during, or after, the Troubles. Unlike the Balkans, Northern Ireland’s conflict lasted longer, meaning that the narratives used went through constant revision, as the next chapter will show.

**Chapter 3: Discontent in the Republican movement**

**3.1. IRA Split**

Another key omission in the Free Derry Museum, is it failure to mention the INLA or the spilt in the IRA prior to this group’s emergence[[55]](#footnote-55). A reason for this could be that the emergence of factionalism in the Republican movement is needlessly confusing to a general audience, but it could also be that the infighting within the movement undermines the moral high ground of the conflict and makes things less black and white.

The IRA split in 1972 when the IRA declared a ceasefire to focus on more political aims while those who remained militant began to call themselves the Provisional IRA. This split between the Official and Provisional IRA is often glossed over in most modern narratives, but was due to ideological differences within the IRA, with Marxists clashing with their more conservative Catholic groups. This led to the Officials agreeing to a ceasefire, in order to pursue more political aims, while the Provisional IRA (often nicknamed “the Provisionals” or “Provos”) remaining militant. According to historians Jack Holland and Henry McDonald in their book ‘INLA’, this ceasefire was unpopular amongst Catholic neighbourhoods, and especially given it was after Bloody Sunday. Furthermore, the Official IRA (frequently referred to as “the Officials”) had managed to bungle several reprisals, with one incident killing six innocent civilians and in an unfortunate irony, a Catholic Army chaplain[[56]](#footnote-56). Holland and Henry describe how further incompetence – killing an off-duty Army man popular in Derry – led to “two hundred women marching in protest to the Officials’ headquarters… calling for them to get out of” the city[[57]](#footnote-57).

Civil Rights leader Michael Farrell recalls how intense the feeling was, that “the church, the press and television whipped up a wave of anti-IRA hysteria and on 29th May the Officials succumbed and declared an unconditional ceasefire”[[58]](#footnote-58). As they grew more and more unpopular the Provisionals began to condemn them – as a “conservative and Catholic group” they mistrusted the Marxist ideology they espoused, claiming they wanted to “set up a Marxist state… a one party state[[59]](#footnote-59).” This coincided with “better dead than red” graffiti appearing in areas of the city[[60]](#footnote-60).

This ceasefire was also unpopular amongst different members of the republican tradition. Tom Maguire, the only surviving IRA commander of the 1919-23 campaign that gave the Republic of Ireland its independence, disowned the Official IRA, choosing instead to recognise the Provisionals who he saw as continuing the Republican tradition[[61]](#footnote-61). Ruairí Ó Brádaigh (a Provisional leader at the time) writes how he especially condemned the Officials’ recognition of the parliaments of Westminster (for the UK), Stormont (the Northern Ireland seat of power, controlled by Unionists), and Leinster House (the Irish Parliament) stating that the “IRA constitution defines an Army Convention, [and] that the authority of the last sovereign parliament for all Ireland rested with [the Provisionals]”[[62]](#footnote-62).

**3.2. Republican narratives**

There is little mention of the Official IRA at all in any of the Republican texts. Adams’ memoir skips them as his memoir begins in 1977, however the Free Derry Museum has no mention of them at all despite its history beginning in the Civil Rights Movement. Brian Feeney’s “Sinn Féin” invokes the Official IRA sporadically, usually with negative connotations; describing how they “did not oppose the [British] military’s hearts and mind’s campaign… it was only after Easter that the Official IRA threatened British troops”, presenting the group as far too lenient on the British Army who, to a Republican audience are ‘the old enemy’ [[63]](#footnote-63). They are also described in contrast to the Provisional IRA – the recognised inheritors of the republican tradition – and as feuding with them. Feeney describes how “in the 1970s when the Official IRA and the Provisional IRA flew at each other’s throats”[[64]](#footnote-64). The other reason the Official IRA are forgotten is how quickly they fell from relevance; as 1972 – known as ‘the Blackest Year’ – progressed the “traumatic events produced an influx into the Provisional IRA that made it the dominant force on the military side, finally eclipsing the Originals everywhere and bringing hundreds [of members] into Sinn Féin”[[65]](#footnote-65).

**3.3. The INLA’s emergence**

Ironically, these factors led to the emergence of a new Republican paramilitary group - the Irish National Liberation Army (“INLA”) – another group conspicuously absent from most subsequent Republican literature despite having a significant impact upon the Troubles. Emerging in 1974 as a breakaway group from the Official IRA under Seamus Costello, they were initially a powerful challenger to both of the IRA groups, but soon settled into their niche in West Belfast, while also having a powerful presence in Derry. This presence was initially so great that Holland and McDonald claim that the INLA were able to partially supplant the PIRA in Derry around 1975, believing “the INLA had to out-compete the Provos… [they] had to outshoot them” and that “between the summer and winter of 1975 the INLA carried out more operations in Derry than the Provisionals”[[66]](#footnote-66). The Derry branch even played a role in the 1981 hunger strikes – making up three of the ten hunger strikers, although this relationship still remained tense at best with the Provisionals. Ultimately the INLA played an important but secondary role to the Provisionals in the Northern Irish Republican movement, where they remained for the next decade ending when a violent feud with an offshoot of their own group called the Irish People’s Liberation Organisation (“IPLO”) in 1987 ended their prominence. Whilst they survived this infighting they had lost much of their power, and like the Official IRA before them it was brought about “not by British imperialism or by Loyalist gangs, but by its own hands”[[67]](#footnote-67).

**3.4. Republican narratives**

In mainstream Republican histories, the role of the INLA is recognised as larger than that of the Officials. However, regardless of their role the now-orthodox Republican narrative significantly underreports their impact upon Northern Irish society, as the secondary nationalist insurgent group in the Troubles (although their impact still pales in comparison to that of the IRA). The Free Derry Museum fails to mention the INLA at all except as an offhanded photo caption for hunger striker Patsy O’Hara’s funeral procession, despite the fact that O’Hara was a member of the INLA himself[[68]](#footnote-68). Likewise, Adam’s autobiography mentions them sparsely, and in entirely separate terms to the Provisionals or any other Nationalist group, or as a “small republican splinter group”[[69]](#footnote-69). They are portrayed in this literature as either indiscriminate murderers mentioning how they killed “seventeen people… including 11 British soldiers” or they are described as baiting the loyalist paramilitaries into carrying out monstrous reprisals. An example of this was following their killing of Billy Wright Loyalist paramilitaries killed four Catholics, or when the Ulster Defence Association (a Loyalist paramilitary group) “admitted that it had killed a number of people in a ‘measured military response’ to the INLA”[[70]](#footnote-70). Finally, Feeney’s Sinn Féin echoes Adams’ approach when he does mention the group at all; claiming, due to the INLA murdering of one of Margaret Thatcher’s Tory confidents in 1979, they made the hunger strikes worse as “Mrs Thatcher made no distinction between republican armed groups… there would be no concessions”[[71]](#footnote-71).

By contrast, Tim Pat Coogan, a contemporary Nationalist historian, in his 1980 edition of ‘The I.R.A’ has a different perspective on the INLA than later nationalist or Republican literature (as this was written before its decline) he offers a perspective that they could outlast the Provisionals like they did the Officials, benefitting of course from the group’s initial “tightly knit, secretive” approach[[72]](#footnote-72). Coogan predicted that just as “the Provisionals split from the Officials… and established themselves as the strongest guerrilla movement in Europe, so too might the [INLA] prove in the long run to be even stronger” than them[[73]](#footnote-73).

**3.5 Conclusion**

Carla De Yeaza and Nicole Fox’s analysis on the role of memory in post-conflict Rwanda and Uganda emphasises that the role of forgetting in social memory is as important as remembering. They emphasise “the dichotomy between the right to forget versus the right to truth and memory”, furthermore they criticise the state’s narrow focus “on civil and political rights violations to the exclusion of social and economic rights and the structural impact of conflict. Furthermore, they overlook or simplify the gender implications of conflict.[[74]](#footnote-74)” Whilst obviously this is different in Northern Ireland, Republicans, as the Catholic political elite, have a similar narrow focus on “remembering” acceptable paramilitaries. This ability to maintain their position in charge of Catholic rhetoric was – indeed remains – essential to their survival and ‘their’ nationalist legacy.

The reason for both group’s disappearance was as much their unpopularity as it was their failures as a military organisation. Ultimately the Official IRA’s unpopularity in 1972 was threefold – initially they were shunned for having agreed a ceasefire, and especially so after the events of Bloody Sunday. Seeking to remedy this they began a military campaign which was likewise unsuccessful: consisting mostly of killing civilians, or somehow only killing the few popular army members in the Catholic community. Finally, their ideology was unpopular with their own supporters, who distrusted its secular nature and quickly turned to the Provisional IRA as a more proactive, ‘Catholic’ group. Additionally, their strong association with the failed Civil Rights movement doubtless did them no favours. However, given their respected position during the late 1960s and early 70s, their total omission from the Museum is certainly a conscious choice to write them out of their history of the Troubles.

Likewise, the writing the INLA out of the modern Republican narrative is an example of how history is written by those who remain, as much as it is the victors. There has undoubtedly been a conscious effort to scrub the INLA from the nationalist and Republican traditions and rhetoric, especially as they fell to infighting and factionalism. It could also be argued that their Marxist ideology – although weaker than that of the Official IRA – did the group no favours in the public eye. Despite their own political wing of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, they failed to capture the nationalist vote, and were dwarfed by the collaborative political, and cultural impact of Sinn Féin and the IRA.

These political aims ultimately had little effect in shaping the Troubles, and both groups were outlasted by the Provisionals and their more bare-faced ethno-nationalist ideology. While the anti-imperialist and nominally socialist rhetoric remained in the PIRA, any real Marxist ideology was gone, not in the least because this ideology failed to appeal to the devout working-class Catholic community they depended upon. For the rest of the 1970s until the mid-1990s, the Republican narrative almost ‘regressed’ - shedding its more internationally appealing facets in favour of focusing on survival for the Catholic community it represented. This was the birth of ‘the Struggle’ narrative in its current form. The reasons for this are likely numerous, but the main one was that it gave the IRA more leeway in their actions. While the narratives of the 1960s typically had an aspirational quality – the civil rights agenda especially – this ‘all-or-nothing’ existentialist perspective meant that the Republicans had a lot less scrutiny; as long as they could justify their actions as in defence of the Catholic community, something very easy during the most violent years of the 1970s and 80s.

**Conclusion**

Upon deconstructing the narratives and revealing the details often left out of the Republican story what becomes clear is the purposeful revisionist tactics used in popular retellings. This revisionism is something that constantly must be readjusted in order for them to maintain their footing atop the Catholic narrative. Kevin Hearty has a similar opinion in what he calls “Irish Republican memory entrepreneurship” in regard to Sinn Fein’s constant reinterpretation of an attack by the PIRA on a British Army base in Loughgall that left eight IRA men and one civilian dead. Hearty describes how “rather than remaining static in the annals of history the memory of the men has been invoked, reinterpreted and contested in the years since their deaths” – with the martyrs shifting from men of war, to “gallant heroes killed in a war of liberation” since the GFA was signed[[75]](#footnote-75).

Republicans, initially bolstered by the groundswell of support after the Battle of the Bogside, have enjoyed a mixture of popularity and power ever since then; with a near-monopoly on the Northern Irish Catholic narrative in national and international circles. This intellectual power is also discussed by Simon Prince who explains how sites of memory in Palestine “cannot be refuted”, with elites using “memory… to put the nationalist narrative beyond scrutiny[[76]](#footnote-76)”. A clear and linear narrative is for more easily remembered than the often-depressing and far less comprehensible reality. This not only affects those growing up after the events but will often reconstruct the victims’ own memories in a similar way, although Hearty’s analysis shows there is often grassroots resistance to this. An area of study in the future is the extent to which this ‘malleable memory’ is shaped intentionally, rather than unconsciously. While I have highlighted some very intentional efforts, the willingness to accept this narrative as a modification of the Irish Catholic ‘canon’ and its endurance, especially in peacetime, suggests that it is not solely a top-down endeavour. This unconscious reshaping of memories to create national consensus at the expense of intensifying nationalist views would certainly be relevant to other post-conflict nations, but also to the wider world as a whole, given the emergence of popular nationalist groups since the mid-2010s.

The revisionism of Catholic Nationalist history in Northern Ireland during the Troubles by the Irish Republican establishment is very much an intentional act. This position is one of retroactive moral justification, cleaning up their past by both downplaying the violent, pointless infighting in their community, and through appropriating the legitimacy of the Civil Rights activists. It attempts to always maintain the perception that they speak for the Catholic population through keeping a tight grip upon their history. A conclusion that can be drawn from this essay is the evolution of political rhetoric used by Republicans throughout the Troubles. By appropriating the 1960s Civil Rights movement they were able to draw parallels with the US movement of the same name. By the early 1970s, as I demonstrated in this paper, we see the slow abandonment of the Marxist anti-imperialist rhetoric by the dominant Republican groups for a more ethno-nationalist approach. This continued – adding connotations of existential threat as the Troubles worsened – until the mid-1990s wherein the language of lasting peace was used and key Republicans drawing parallels with international freedom struggles such as South Africa. Adams’ book shows this clearly with its subtitle ‘Making Peace in Ireland’ and predominant focus upon the peace-talks of the late 1990s, even describing his meeting with Nelson Mandela[[77]](#footnote-77). As is evident, it is not solely Provisional IRA’s monopoly on violence that allowed them to ‘win the peace’; it is just as much their rhetoric. Their ability to tie themselves to the violence towards Catholics in the late 1960 allowed them to ride the wave of resentment for almost thirty years, with them making constant adjustments to appeal to current social trends. This is one of the major differences between them and the Official IRA or INLA. Both groups, although militarily outclassed by the Provisionals, were still competent organisations but were unable to present themselves in such a way as to catch public support the same way as their rival did. They could walk the walk, but not talk the talk, so to speak.

In his updated book, Eamonn McCann recently observed the funeral of IRA commander and Sinn Fein leader Martin McGuinness (a contemporary of Adams) in 2017; a huge affair with thousands lining the streets[[78]](#footnote-78). In attendance he noted important members of state from both the British and Irish governmental establishments, as well as former US president Bill Clinton, all there to pay their respects. McCann noted especially upon the presence of members of the Oireachtas (the Irish Parliament), which McGuinness had never been part of, remarking that “this was the moment the Provisional IRA campaign was enfolded into the approved narrative of… ‘Official Ireland’”[[79]](#footnote-79). Finally, enshrined in public ceremony, this “came close to the acceptance of the status that the IRA had claimed for itself, as a legitimate force authorised by competent authority to wage war in the name of Ireland”[[80]](#footnote-80). His musings brought him back to the case of Patsy Gillespie, an Irish Catholic who worked as a civilian cook in the British Army barracks. In 1990 the IRA took his family hostage and forced him to drive a van loaded with explosives to a British checkpoint whereupon the IRA detonated it, killing five soldiers as well as Gillespie himself[[81]](#footnote-81). This killing, despite being immensely unpopular with Northern Irish Catholics, was resolutely upheld by the Provisionals who claimed he was a ‘legitimate target’. There is no mention of this killing in Feeney’s ‘Sinn Fein’, the Free Derry Museum, or Adams’ biography. This sanitised Republican narrative not only hurts the Northern Irish community as a whole, but also members of the Catholic community it claims to represent, as it refuses to acknowledge the scars the Provisional IRA left upon its own community. This ethno-centric approach also promotes sectarian divisions, and as only a recent convert to democracy, mainstream Republicanism stretches its credibility in its own community when it condemns the New IRA for using the same violent rhetoric[[82]](#footnote-82). These sentiments harm the Northern Irish peace process, and the new generation that have grown up since, as well as limiting our ability to learn from the past due to their stranglehold on popular social memory.

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**Annex**:

Timeline:

* May 1169 – Anglo-Welsh Normans mercenaries land in Ireland at the request of Diarmait Mac Murchada, deposed King of Leinster, to help regain his kingdom[[83]](#footnote-83).
* 1593-1603 – Nine year’s war led by Hugh O’Neill against the Tudor colonisation of Ireland. The British forces prevail, and the Irish lords are forced to flee the island in what becomes known as the ‘Flight of the Earls’.
* 1609 – the Northernmost province of Ireland Ulster is colonized by the British in the Plantation of Ulster following an Irish rebellion[[84]](#footnote-84). Scottish Presbyterians are planted by the British crown.
* April 1916 – a small Irish force attempts revolution in Dublin. This becomes known as the Easter Rising and began the Irish War of Independence.
* January 1919-July 1921 – Irish War of Independence. IRA are the main military force used by the rebels.
* 1921 – partition of Ireland. The Island is separated into Northern Ireland and the Free State of Ireland (became the Republic of Ireland in 1937).
  + Northern Ireland is a majority Protestant state, with a large Catholic minority.
* 1967 – Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) formed.
* October 1968 – NICRA march met with violent repression by the RUC who drive them back into the Bogside.
* August 1969 – larger NICRA march devolves into violence and the Battle of the Bogside commences. Violence spreads across Northern Ireland for two days until the British Army are called in.
  + Provisional IRA emerges
* 1971 – internment begins. British Army begin interning suspected paramilitary members without trial, process mostly affects Catholics.
* 1972
  + January – a protest against internment becomes a massacre known as Bloody Sunday when the British Army murder thirteen unarmed civilians.
  + Split between Official IRA and Provisional IRA.
* December 1974 – INLA formed.
* 1981 – twenty-six Republican prisoners go on hunger strike protesting lack of recognition as political prisoners. Ten die – seven IRA members, and three INLA.
* October 1990 – Patsy Gillespie killed in proxy bombing.
* April 1994 – peace talks begin.
* April 1998 – Good Friday Agreement (GFA) led to a cessation of hostilities, enshrining a power-sharing agreement between Protestants and Catholics.
* March 2017 – funeral of Martin McGuiness

Relevant actors:

* Republican groups
  + Sinn Fein
    - Political party, closest to the IRA.
    - Notable Members: Gerry Adams.
  + Irish Republican Army (IRA). Paramilitary.
    - Provisional IRA or ‘Provos’
      * (1969-2005)
      * Members: Gerry Adams (disputed).
    - Official IRA
      * (1969-1972)
    - New IRA
      * (2012-present)
  + Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). Paramilitary.
    - (1974-2009)
    - Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP). Political party connected to INLA.
  + Irish People’s Liberation Organisation (IPLO). Paramilitary.
    - (1986-1992)
* Nationalist Groups:
  + SDLP (Socialist Democratic and Labour Party)
* British forces
  + British Army
    - (1660-present)
  + Royal Ulster Constabulary
    - (1922-2001)
    - Northern Ireland’s police force during the Troubles
* Loyalist groups
  + Ulster Defence Association (UDA). Paramilitary.
    - (1971-2007)
  + Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). Political Party.
* Civil Rights groups
  + Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA)
    - (1967-1972)
    - Members: Eamonn McCann, Michael Farrell
  + Republican Clubs
  + Ulster Liberal Party
  + Communist Party of Ireland

Places:

* Derry-Londonderry (shortened to Derry) – second-largest city in Northern Ireland. Majority Catholic.
  + City is on the border with the Republic of Ireland.
  + Bogside – Catholic area in Derry.
* Belfast – largest city in Northern Ireland. Mixed Protestant and Catholic population.

1. Brian Friel, Making History (Faber and Faber Limited, 1989), 66 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Friel, Making History, 65 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The theme of narrative creation in the aftermath of armed conflict has been widely studied in a number of historical contexts, as seen here with Jelena Obradovic’s book ‘*Ethnic Conflict and War Crimes in the Balkans: The Narratives of Denial in Post-Conflict Serbia’*. Bloomsbury Publishing, (2013), as well as Carla De Yeaza, & Nicole Fox’s article. "*Narratives of Mass Violence: The Role of Memory and Memorialization in Addressing Human Rights Violations in Post-Conflict Rwanda and Uganda*." (Societies Without Borders 8 (3): 334-372). More specifically in regards to the Northern Irish memory are Kevin Hearty’s article ‘*The Malleability of Memory and Irish Republican Memory Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of the ‘Loughgall Martyrs’* (Ethnopolitics, 16:2, 126-144), or Chapter 4 ‘*Performing the 19801 Hunger Strikes’* of Emilie Pine’s book ‘*The Politics of Irish Memory’* (Springer, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. While I recognise the nuances of each of the ‘camps’, in the interests of simplicity I will be putting them together as ‘sides’ as they are still broadly tied through shared ideas about history and identity regardless. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Francis Xavier Martin, Art Cosgrove (ed.). A New History of Ireland, Volume II: Medieval Ireland. 1169–1534. (Oxford University Press 2008) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. ‘The Northern Ireland Conflict 1968-1998 – An Overview’, The Irish Story, Last modified: February 9th, 2015

   <https://www.theirishstory.com/2015/02/09/the-northern-ireland-conflict-1968-1998-an-overview/>

   & Graham Spencer, *From Armed Struggle to Political Struggle: Republican Tradition and Transformation in Northern Ireland*, (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2015), 145 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ‘How the Troubles began: a timeline’, The Irish Times, Last modified: Aug 15, 2019, 12:26. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/how-the-troubles-began-a-timeline-1.3987076> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ronnie Munck. "*The Making of the Troubles in Northern Ireland*." (Journal of Contemporary History 27, no. 2 (1992): 211-29). Gerrymandering is the manipulation of electoral boundaries to favour a specific group, in this case Protestants, who were the party of the government. Likewise, far more Protestants were employed in Northern Ireland than Catholics [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. For more information on a timeline of the Troubles, ‘A Chronology of the Conflict - 1968 to the Present’, Cain webservice, last modified July 2nd, 2019 <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/othelem/chron.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Laura K. Donohue. "*Regulating Northern Ireland: The Special Powers Acts, 1922-1972*." (The Historical Journal 41, no. 4 1998): 1089-120. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Neil Ferguson & Burgess, Mark & Ian, Hollywood. *Crossing the Rubicon: Deciding to Become a Paramilitary in Northern Ireland*. (International Journal of Conflict and Violence 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. ‘The Belfast Agreement’, gov.uk, last modified April 10th 1998. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-belfast-agreement>, & Eamonn McCann. ‘War and an Irish Town’ (Haymarket Books. 2018), 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. ‘NI Assembly Election 2017 - Result Sheets’, The Electoral Office of Northern Ireland, <http://www.eoni.org.uk/Elections/Election-results-and-statistics/Election-results-and-statistics-2003-onwards/Elections-2017/NI-Assembly-Election-2017-Result-Sheets> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. ‘NI Assembly Election 2017 - Result Sheets’, The Electoral Office of Northern Ireland, <http://www.eoni.org.uk/Elections/Election-results-and-statistics> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. ‘Who are the New IRA and what have they done?’, Irish Times, Last modified Apr 23, 2019, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/who-are-the-new-ira-and-what-have-they-done-1.3869569>, & ‘An Address to the IRA’, Sinn Fein party website, <https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/15207> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Martin Mansergh, Ideology and the Irish Question: Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism 1912-1916

    Paul Bew (Clarendon Press, 1995), 56 & Pine, Politics of Irish Memory, 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Pierre Joannon. *The Unionist Fig Leaf or the Dilemma of the Modern Ulster Protestant*. (Études irlandaises, n°16-2, 1991) 146 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Revising Irish history: The Northern Ireland conflict and the war of ideas, Robert Perry, 349 & O'Leary, Brendan. (2007). Cuttlefish, Cholesterol and Saoirse: Review Article on Richard English, Irish Freedom: The History of Irish Nationalism. Field Day Review. 3. 187-204. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Kevin Hearty ‘*The ‘Loughgall Martyrs’* (Ethnopolitics, 16:2), 141 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ann Rigney. “*Plenitude, Scarcity and the Circulation of Cultural Memory*.” (Journal of European Studies 35, no. 1 March 2005): 25 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. ‘Ballymurphy inquest: Gerry Adams denies IRA membership’. BBC News N. Ireland. Last modified May 8th 2019. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-48198268> [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Liam Clarke. *Broadening the Battlefield: the H-blocks and the Rise of Sinn Féin*. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
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24. Eamonn McCann. ‘War and an Irish Town’ (Haymarket Books. 2018), 26 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
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27. ‘The Northern Ireland Conflict 1968-1998 – An Overview’, The Irish Story, Last Modified Feb 9th, 2015, <https://www.theirishstory.com/2015/02/09/the-northern-ireland-conflict-1968-1998-an-overview/> [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
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31. ‘NICRA’, The Museum of Free Derry <https://www.museumoffreederry.org/content/nicra> [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
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33. Liam Cullinane. *A Happy Blend'? Irish Republicanism, Political Violence and Social Agitation, 1962-69*. (Saothar 35 2010). 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
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47. Ibid, 237 [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Ibid, 237 [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Ibid, 255 [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Ibid, 255 [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ibid, 256 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
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58. Farrell, *Orange State*, 294 [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
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60. Holland and McDonald, *INLA*, 17 [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
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62. Ó Brádaigh, Dilseacht, 45 [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Feeney, *Sinn Fein,* 264 [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Feeney, *Sinn Fein,* 346 [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Feeney, *Sinn Fein,* 270 [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Holland and McDonald, *INLA*, 78 [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Holland and McDonald, *INLA*, 349 [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Ibid, 125 &‘Escalating Unrest, 1972-1994, Free Derry Museum, <https://www.museumoffreederry.org/content/escalating-unrest-1972-1994> [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Adams, *Hope and History*, 17 [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Adams, *Hope and History,* 330 [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Feeney, *Sinn Fein,* 286 [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Coogan, *IRA*, 569 [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
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77. Adams, *Hope and History,* 213 [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. I was there. & *Martin McGuiness’ Funereal in Pictures*, The Guardian, Last modified: March 23rd, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/gallery/2017/mar/23/martin-mcguinness-funeral-in-pictures> [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. McCann, *War and an Irish Town,* 20 [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. McCann, *War and an Irish Town,* 20 [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Mia Bloom, and John Horgan. "*Missing Their Mark: The IRA's Proxy Bomb Campaign*." (Social Research 75, no. 2 2008) [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. An Address to the IRA’, Sinn Fein party website, <https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/15207> [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
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