

“The Troubles” A Review of Peace Walls and Propaganda

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Throughout the late twentieth century, Northern Ireland was the epicenter of one of the most infamous guerilla-style warfare conflicts in modern history. Spanning thirty-two years from 1966 to 1998, “The Troubles” ravaged the communities of Northern Ireland, resulting in 50,000 injured and 4,000 dead. These casualties were the direct result of the years of political and historical conflict that existed between the Unionist/Loyalists and Nationalists/Republicans. Following the Northern Ireland Riots of 1969, walls were constructed as a ‘peaceful approach’ to the conflict, creating a barrier between Unionist and Nationalist neighborhoods. These ‘peace walls’ ranged in size from a few hundred yards to many miles in length. Typically, the walls were over twenty-five feet tall, and were often fashioned out of brick and metal. Interestingly, the walls became canvases on which both Loyalists and Republicans painted murals. Due to political and social unrest, both groups released and posted propagandized literature in the form of posters and social contracts in hopes to gain support for local and national elections. Other posters and murals were created to commemorate certain events, or celebrate the lives of those lost in the conflict. This presentation will present a timeline of the imagery of “The Troubles.” It will reveal an interesting correlation between the amount of deaths/severity of the conflict, and the iconography painted on the walls and in the political propaganda. A review of the imagery of the thirty years of “The Troubles” will establish “The Troubles” as not only an actual war, but also, as a war of imagery.