


NORTHERN IRELAND

Derry or Londonderry?

by Byron Smith





A tattered Union Jack flag flies above a home in the walled-off loyalist Protestant enclave called "The Fountain" situated within the city of Derry/Londonderry. "The Fountain" was established when 250 Protestant families decided to stay in the city centre when their brethren retreated to the suburbs at the start of the Troubles, 50 years ago.



BREXIT AND THE GORDIAN KNOT OF NORTHERN IRELAND. THE RISK OF A NEW ESCALATION IN VIOLENCE BETWEEN CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT COMMUNITIES

- Brexit has reignited and exacerbated the tensions between catholic and protestant communities in Northern Ireland.
 - The “Northern Ireland Protocol” enshrined Northern Ireland’s compliance with EU regulations in order to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland.
 - The agreement, which involves checks on goods arriving from the rest of Great Britain before their entry into Northern Ireland, has had a negative effect on the economy.
 - The situation has raised the temperature among the extremist fringes and discontent has erupted into clashes and riots.
 - The city of Derry or Londonderry – the very name is disputed by the two factions – symbolizes a potential return to a turbulent past.
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Members of the Apprentice Boys of Derry, a Protestant fraternal society founded in 1814 with a worldwide membership of over 10,000, enjoy each other's company over drinks after a parade and ahead of the initiation of new members later that day on Friday.



Support for the IRA can be seen in Creggan neighborhood. Creggan is where journalist Lyra McKee was shot and killed by dissident republicans in 2019.

IRA
HERE TO
Stay!



Portraits of former presidents of the Apprentice Boys of Derry line the wall in the organization's meeting hall.



Attendees mill around the Derry/Londonderry Walls during the 11th anniversary show of The Roaring Meg Custom, classic bike, trike and scooter show. The high-profile event raises money for local charities.



Derry or Londonderry – depending on whether you are a nationalist catholic or a unionist protestant – symbolizes the potential for a return to the past in the turbulent history of Northern Ireland.

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement that brought an end to political violence between unionists and nationalists enshrined the uniqueness of Northern Ireland's national identity with the de facto abolition of the border between the two Irelands.

To avoid that Brexit sees a return of this border, Great Britain and the European Union agreed the so-called Northern Ireland Protocol, which includes the alignment of Northern Ireland with EU regulations, with controls on goods arriving from the rest of Great Britain prior to entry into Northern Ireland. All of these complications have had a negative impact on the Northern Ireland

economy, which was already struggling as a result of the pandemic. There have already been shortages of supermarket products, especially foodstuffs. This situation seems to have reawakened the ire of the unionists, who accuse London of treating Northern Ireland as a poor relation. At the other end of the political spectrum, the more extremist wing of the old IRA, which had never fully accepted the end to hostilities, has been exploiting the situation to resume its propaganda.

By the spring of 2021 numerous clashes had already taken place in which the protagonists were largely the generation of youngsters, who although they were born after the end of what are known as "The Troubles", remain the heirs to the factions involved in what was almost a civil war. Young people from the poorest sections of society, where the historic divisions have never fully healed, risk taking Northern Ireland back to the climate of violence that for many years was the norm in political life.



As the sun sets on a Friday evening, pedestrians cross the Peace Bridge over the River Foyle.



Ladies chat while traditional Nationalist songs are played at the Castle Bar during a “Rebel Sundays” event on Waterloo Street.



Teenagers hang out on a street.



A cigarette break outside a pub.



A memorial at the spot where in April 1982 eleven year-old Derry schoolboy Stephen McConomy was shot and killed by a plastic bullet, fired by a British soldier just yards from his home in the heavily Catholic Bogside neighborhood.



Loyalist Protestants parade through the city streets to commemorate the Apprentice Boys of Derry ahead of the initiation of new members into the organization.



A tattoo of Bobby Sands, who died aged 27 following a hunger strike during The Troubles, can be seen at the Castle Bar, the venue was known as an IRA hangout during "Rebel Sundays" on Waterloo Street.



Murals in the Bogside area, a Catholic stronghold.

Officers of the Police Service
Northern Ireland go door to
door in the Bogside area.





The Apprentice Boys are a Protestant fraternal society founded in 1814 with a worldwide membership of over 10,000.



A man walks his dogs down a road in Creggan, a Catholic neighborhood where journalist Lyra McKee, 29, was fatally shot in 2019 as she was covering rioting caused by policing in the area.



A mural of the popular Netflix television series "Derry Girls" in central Derry/Londonderry.



A night out during a "Rebel Sundays" event on Waterloo Street.



Teenagers relax on a cannon on The Derry Walls, a 17th century structure that runs through the center of the city. The walls were constructed as defences for early 17th century settlers from England and Scotland.



A bar patron wears his feelings about a passing Brexit deadline that failed to break the United Kingdom away from the EU, which happened to coincide with Halloween at Sandinos pub.



A woman walks past murals in the Bogside area depicting scenes from The Troubles. The Bogside is a Catholic enclave of the city.



Apprentice Boys share drinks and laughter at their meeting hall, after a parade.



Parade goers make their way down to Bishop Street, a main road where the Loyalist Protestants will hold their parade.



Teenagers outside a record store.

A view of the Bogside area.



