

No going back

Northern Ireland arpillera, by **Sonia Copeland**, 2009

Photograph: Martin Melaugh

In early 2009, just 10 years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, the killing of three British army personnel provoked cross community demonstrations by a public both outraged at these deaths and fearful of a return to violence.

This arpillera, the first made by long-time quilter Sonia Copeland, captures the emotion of these events. Sonia explains:

“My piece shows the Belfast City Hall, and in the foreground, a representation of one of the cross-community demonstrations, which followed the murders of Constable Stephen Carroll and Sappers Mark Quinsy and Patrick Asimkar by so-called ‘Republican terrorists’.”

This demonstration of support for the victims and their families was important to Sonia, who had served in the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) during the worst years of The Troubles and had suffered as a result of terrorist attacks on four occasions.

Fear about going back to a time of war strengthened Sonia’s unwavering resolve for peace:

“It seemed to me that the peace that was won with so much pain and suffering was once again to be snatched away. I resolved that nothing and no one would steal from my children the right to a peaceful life, which was stolen from me and my generation.”

This dogged determination to cling to the hard-won, still fragile, peace is embodied in the commanding slogan, visible in the centre of the arpillera: “No going back!”

Source:

Accounts of the Conflict (*archive*)

Bacic, Roberta. (*individual compiler*)

Conflict Textiles (*collection*)

<http://accounts.ulster.ac.uk/repo/collections/show/153>