

An Solas

The voice of the Official Republican Movement

NEWRY CONFERENCE



A seminar was held in Newry on Saturday the 10th September 2005. The theme was Republicanism, Nationalism and Unionism in World War One and was organised by the Newry branch of the Official Republican Movement. Thirty five members attended with invited guests. A member of the National Executive of the Official Republican Movement gave a presentation with the aid of slides on Nationalism, Republicanism. The Unionist perspective was presented by

Sam Johnston a representative of the Messines Association. There followed a discussion on the mythology and misconceptions surrounding that period of our history. It was agreed, at the meeting that further dates would be arranged to further investigate the history of Republicanism v Nationalism with particular attention to the united Nationalist role in achieving the Provo cease-fire

ORM COMMEMORATION COMMITTEE

Will hold a wreath laying ceremony in
Milltown Cemetery @
1.30pm on Sunday 20th November 2005

To commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the Pogrom.
The oration will be given by Seamus Mc Donagh N.E.C. member of the O.R.M.

Members of the ruling army council of The Official I.R.A. issuing a statement July 1970



The Council of the Irish Republican Army at a press conference in July 1970 paid tribute to the defenders of the Falls who had fought a full scale military engagement with 3,000 British troops the previous weekend. It also differentiated between this battle with British troops and the sectarian fighting of the previous weekend between Catholics and Protestants.

A statement issued at the conference said that "The Army Council wish to place on record its recognition of the courageous stand made by the volunteers/auxiliaries of the I.R.A. and the people who fought shoulder to shoulder with them against the overwhelming odds of 3,000 elite troops in their efforts to disarm the people".

Commenting on the significance of the military action, Cathal Goulding, who chaired the conference said; The British Army is now being used in the same manner as the R.U.C. was used during the Civil Rights Campaign. The people are now being disarmed, the R.U.C are being rearmed and the U.D.R are being brought into service. The anti Unionist people are being forced back to the pre-August situation, where armed sectarian mobs are again likely to get the active or passive assistance of the so called forces of law and order in the event of future pogroms being whipped up. Since the change of Government in England it is obvious that the policy now is the old Imperial one of maintaining the Protestant ascendancy and coercing the anti-Unionist minority"

On the actions of British troops within the Falls the statement added; "The behaviour of British troops within the falls area is reminiscent of Black and Tan days, assaults on Cypriots, maltreatment of Kenyans, and gross viciousness towards the working classes everywhere". Condemning the sectarian fighting which took place on Saturday June 27th and which resulted in the deaths of five Protestants, the statement said; "Sectarianism is deplored by the Irish Republican Army as it can only deepen the divisions which exist and aid Britain in her task of maintaining domination over the whole Island". The stone throwing against Protestant marchers which led to the bitter sectarian outbreaks on Saturday June 27th, may well have been spontaneous reaction to gross provocation, but the escalation of this situation to the stage where guns were introduced was merely reversing the position of August 1969. It now became a viscous battle of Catholics against Protestants which merits just as much condemnation as previous pogroms of Protestants against Catholics. The hatred and bitterness engendered by the killing of six Protestant civilians can only increase the likelihood of further pogroms in the future. You cannot claim to love your country and its people and to lead a national independence movement if you are motivated by bigotry or revenge and have as your objective, or your means the fomenting of civil war.

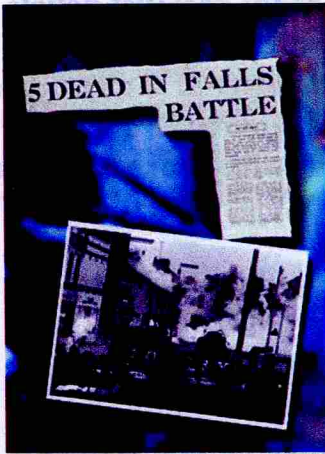
EDITORIAL: DECOMMISSIONING

While disagreeing fundamentally with the politics of Sinn Fein and protesting at the actions of the Provos over the years, we recognise and respect their Political mandate, We welcome their decommissioning and standing down of its units and congratulate them for doing the right thing at last. We as Official Republicans have long called for compromise, and will not be mealy mouthed at this historic juncture. There are no victors only the victory of vision over intransigence. All other Paramilitary groups must follow suit. There is no longer any support or excuse for Political violence in Ireland. All conspiracies must be abandoned, and democratic politics must reign supreme. The future of both communities on this Island is the responsibility of everyone. We cannot subject further generations to delinquent and outdated forms of Nationalism and Unionism. Those ex-combatants who claim to have acted in support of their communities should now turn their attention to the ending of sectarianism. The cancer of sectarianism must be eroded by the actions of those who care about our future. The foundations must be laid where the real Politics of left and right can begin to supercede tribalism. We state again that the O.R.M. is always ready and willing to meet with all groups and to play our part in creating a modern European Society.

Comments to:
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CURFEW 1970

WE HAVEN'T GONE AWAY YOU KNOW



Recent denunciations by Provo spokesmen of revisionist versions of Irish history would likely have been taken at face value. However, having recently viewed a DVD loosely based on The Falls Curfew, it would seem that while they are against others rewriting history they feel free to do so themselves. This DVD, concocted by what can only be described as a propaganda unit, seems to be aimed mainly at their Irish American Supporters and backers.

The storyline reads like any good Hollywood script, "evil tyrants force a small band of virtuous heroes into conflict in defence of their community. Those entrusted with the weapons to defend the people are corrupt traitors and cowards (O.I.R.A) who have also been bullying our heroes. These renegade Republicans as they are termed, throw away their guns and flee in terror when the Brits attack. Our heroes (six Provos) bravely stand their ground and give the Brits a sound thrashing. Even the enemy grants them grudging respect at the end. There is also some female interest as well".

This fantasy version of events is not a bolt from the blue, but rather like all good fairytales has become more wondrous with every telling.

For many years after the Curfew the Provos ignored the event. This was due to the fact that the Provos as an organisation played no part, hoping the Brits would do some housekeeping for them by fatally damaging the Official I.R.A. However a small number of local Provo I.R.A did play a peripheral role. Some of these men I had thought more of before witnessing their performance on film.

The Provo adoption of the Curfew began when an enterprising member from another part of Belfast realised the events importance in the history of the present troubles. It was time to embrace it, but the facts had to be revised. He proceeded to create a story where the Provos took centre stage. The author was later to become a victim of the same propaganda unit. He rightly supposed that there would be no outcry from the O.I.R.A members who had engaged the three thousand British Soldiers during the long battle. There were several reasons for this lack of response.



CURFEW 1970 Cont...



Firstly there was the fact that the true events were still fairly fresh in peoples minds. Therefore the article would be judged for what it was. Some people regarded the tale with amusement. There was also a tendency among Officials not to glorify military actions. Secondly this production was aimed at an American audience where the socialist beliefs of Official Republicans had little support. A fact that caused them no great concern. Thirdly and most importantly the majority of the O.I.R.A had formed a political party. As the leadership of this party strove for respectability and establishment credibility they chose to ignore and even deny their links with violent republicanism.

There was little public mention of the Falls Curfew in the intervening years until the approach of this its 35th anniversary. There was much talk from historians and journalists on the historical significance of this event as a pivotal point in relations between Nationalists and the British Army. Enter the propaganda unit complete with airbrush and the task of securing the event for Provo mythology.

A series of articles commemorating the curfew appeared in the local paper (The Andersonstown News) these articles were typical of any "red top newspaper". This paper has changed its editorial ethos over the last few years and has adopted a blatant Sinn Fein line. It has lately adopted a more sectarian line, not the rabid sectarianism of the football terraces, more the sneering sectarianism evolving among the Catholic middle class. We were not happy with these articles but what can you expect from Provisional sympathisers but a Provisional line. In order to redress the balance, members of the ORM who had been involved in the Falls Curfew contacted the Irish News to put forward their views for the record. They believed the events were no longer fresh in peoples minds and that a new generation should avail of the truth.

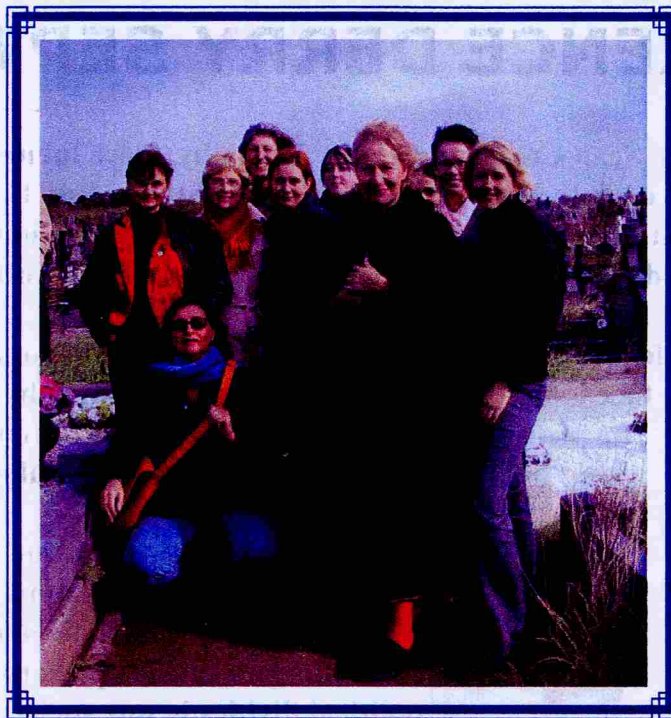


People evolved from the Workers Party to form the ORM, an organisation not afraid to admit its mistakes and successes, and defend the name of the O.I.R.A.

The DVD is an entirely different matter; it contains bitterness, hatred and vitriolic name-calling, not so much by the interviewee, but the interviewer. He seems to invite the interviewees to attack the O.I.R.A and the whole thing seems rehearsed. He describes the O.I.R.A as renegades and seems to have a personal hatred for them.

He must therefore regard people like Joe McCann, Liam McMillan, Jim Hargy and many other brave men who were involved in the Curfew, as renegades and cowards. In this respect, does he speak for Sinn Fein and the Provos? Elsewhere in this paper we have congratulated the Provos for the recent standing down and decommissioning of weapons. We would urge them to decommission this propaganda unit and the outdated history and petty mindedness that goes with it.

WOMEN'S HEALTH PROJECT



Grundtvig visit to Belfast September 05

The Belfast meeting of the Grundtvig European Women's Project took place in the An Eochair Offices from Thursday 29th September until Monday 3rd October. Groups involved in the project included, An Eochair-Belfast, Women for Women Burgenland, Office in Kontext-Venice, Populus Studieforbundet Folkeopplysning-Oslo and the Feminist group Ottar Norway. The project is a learning partnership and aims to enable women to become more assertive in taking responsibility for their own health. It is also concerned about how to provide equal opportunities and conditions in healthcare for women, and in particular looking at aspects of education, legislation and the environment. It gives the organisations involved the opportunity to share experiences with other European countries and to identify best practice within these countries.

The organisations involved are mostly left wing, providing education, counselling services, support and advice and guidance on health issues. The groups are also concerned with gender mainstreaming, sexualised violence against women and the trafficking of women from Eastern European countries. Groups from ethnic and religious minorities were encouraged to join the project.

Trips included a visit to the Shankill Women's Centre where we were given an impressive and informative presentation by staff and users of the centre. We were impressed by the amount of programmes delivered at the Centre and the personal experiences of the learners. We also visited Culturlainn where a member of the Belfast Health Initiative, Elsie Best gave a talk to the group about the work of the Health Initiative regarding Women's health in West Belfast. There is an emphasis on alternative therapies including the setting up of the Belfast School of homeopathy. The members of the project were struck by the similarities of the difficulties experienced by women in both communities.

A city tour of Belfast and Milltown cemetery as well as background information on the conflict in Northern Ireland helped to clarify the complex political and social situation here. When forming the project, members had been eager that an organisation from Belfast would participate so that they could visit Belfast and get a better understanding of the effects of conflict on the health of the people in general and women in particular.

CROSS COMMUNITY FACT FINDING CONFERENCE DERRY SEPTEMBER 05

An Eochair delegates, Sean Curry and Harry Donaghy, were invited to attend a Conference in Derry hosted by React North West in the Calgagh Centre in Butcher Street in the City centre. The conference was attended by a range of groups and organisations from the Bogside, Creggan and Waterside areas who are involved in Cross-Community and Interface projects in Derry and Belfast.

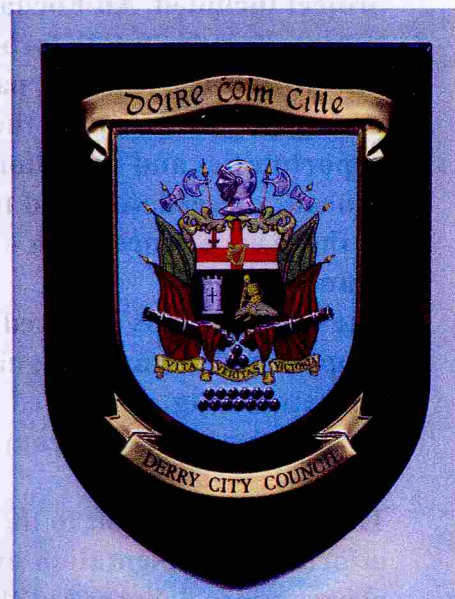
The theme of the conference was "What can we learn from each other in addressing cross-community and inter-face issues". The delegates were welcomed by the Mayor of Derry, Lynn Fleming of Sinn Fein. She praised all of the groups and organisations represented at the conference who are working to bring people together through dialogue on issues of common concern and interest.



The An Eochair contribution to the Conference was delivered by Harry Donaghy. He outlined the work carried out by An Eochair over the past number of years in building relationships across the sectarian and political divides in our society. He stressed the importance of ongoing and constructive dialogue between groups and organisations in addressing Cross-Community and Interface issues.

The speakers contributions were followed by a question and answer session from the members of the audience. The exchanges were constructive and gave the opportunity for all concerned to listen to others opinions and viewpoints on the Conference theme.

The speakers and guests were invited to attend a reception at the Guildhall which was hosted by the Mayor, Lynn Fleming. A commemorative Plaque was presented to Sean Curry of An Eochair by the Mayor, on behalf of Derry City Council. She again thanked all of the speakers and guests for their participation in the Conference and expressed the hope that many more similar engagements will take place in the future.



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