

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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Visit of Miss Mairead Corrigan and Mrs. Betty Williams  
to the United Nations, New York, 23 - 26 May 1978

1. The two ladies were accompanied by Mr. Ciaran McKeown.
2. On 23 May a lunch was given for Miss Corrigan and Mrs. Williams in the Delegates Dining Room at U.N. headquarters. The host was Mrs. Sipila, Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. The lunch was part of the Women of Achievement Programme, organised by the Secretariat (U.N. Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs) to promote the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace 1975-1985. Earlier lunches honoured Valentina Tereshkova, the USSR astronaut, and Rosalyn Yallow, the American winner of the 1977 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.
3. The lunch was funded by a number of Guarantors, Patrons and Sponsors (list attached). The sponsors included Aer Lingus, Bord Failte and CTT. Neither the Mission - nor I believe the Consulate - had any communication from the State Agencies about their sponsorship. No similar U.K. organization was involved. Proceeds from the event will be used for public information activities related to the Decade for Women.
4. The attendance at the lunch included U.N. diplomats, members of the Secretariat dealing with women's affairs, representatives of interested NGOs and representatives of the sponsors. Ambassador Kennedy and Mr. O'Donovan attended.

5. Toasts were given to the Peace People by Mrs. Lillian Affinito, President of Simplicity Patterns, principal Guarantor of the lunch, and by Mr. Brian Urquhart, Under Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs. The U.K. PermRep made introductory remarks. Ambassador Richard described the Peace People as 'Britain and Ireland's Nobel Peace Prize Winners.' The Ambassador is an admirer of Oliver Cromwell - at least in the latter's English capacity as radical puritan - and took the occasion to say that the Irish question had existed even before the Protector's arrival in Ireland. It is probable that Mr. Richard made the reference as a helpful chronological guide to his audience.

In any event, he did not seem conscious of the considerable role of the Cromwellian period in establishing the 'Irish Question', or of the inappropriateness of referring to him in introducing representatives of an Irish Peace Movement urging the principles of non-violence.

6. Miss Corrigan, Mrs. Williams and Mr. McKeown - who was also induced to speak - made a good impression on their audience. Miss Corrigan, in particular, was very effective in describing the origins of the Peace Movement and its aims. Mrs. Williams and Mr. McKeown did not confine themselves to Northern Ireland. Mrs. Williams deplored the slums of Harlem and described a personal visit there. She also denounced 'the fanatical Begin's invasion of Southern Lebanon' which caused some unease in her

audience. Mr. McKeown spoke in a general way of the striving for peace and referred sceptically to the UN Special Session on Disarmament (now meeting) as likely to produce 'a lot of hot air.'

7. After each of the Peace People had spoken individually, Miss Corrigan spoke again on behalf of all three. She said they would retire from their executive positions in the Peace Movement later this year.

8. At the conclusion of the lunch, guests were asked to give the kiss of peace and to stand, holding hands, while the Peace People led a recital of the Declaration of the Peace People.

9. Copies of Mr. McKeown's pamphlet 'The Price of Peace' were distributed to guests.

10. On Friday 26 May, the Peace People addressed a meeting organised by and for members of the U.N. staff.

*Declan O'Donovan*

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6 June 1978