



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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AA IRA Campaigns

THE CONCLUSION OF IRA CAMPAIGNS IN THE PAST

There have been 3 distinct periods of IRA hostility before the onset of the present troubles.

- (i) The Civil War 1922-23
- (ii) The Second World War Campaign 1939-45
- (iii) The 1956-1961 Border campaign.

(1) The Civil War Campaign

After the Treaty and the split within Sinn Fein and the IRA in 1921, a Republican Army Convention was held in the Mansion House on 26 March 1922. It set up an Army Executive of 16 members which in turn established a smaller Army Council.

By early 1923 it was clear that the Republicans were facing defeat in the Civil War. The Army Executive met in the Nier Valley in County Waterford in March 1923. Eamon De Valera attended as the political representative of the Republican Movement. The COS at the time, Liam Lynch opposed a ceasefire. Shortly afterwards on 10 April he was killed. At a special Army Council meeting in Dublin formed from a deleted Executive (from death and imprisonment) and the political side led by De Valera, it was agreed to issue a proclamation calling for a halt to hostilities. On April 30 Frank Aiken COS of the IRA issued a proclamation to IRA units to suspend "all offensive operations" and on 24 May the Civil War came to an end with a unilateral ceasefire from the Republicans and a "dump arms order".

(2) The Second World War Campaign

The campaign had its origin in the General Army Convention in April 1938 which elected Seán Russell as Chief of Staff and placed his supporters in control of the IRA Army Council. Russell was a proponent of an IRA bombing campaign in Britain. The campaign was a disaster and it led to the virtual destruction of the IRA by the Southern, Northern and British

authorities. By 1945 there was no COS and the Army Council was not in existence. There was no formal ending of the campaign.

(3) The 1956-61 Border Campaign

There have been some military attacks by the IRA against targets in Northern Ireland from 1951 to 1955. An overall plan of military operations was drawn as early as 1951 and it was read to the Army Convention in 1956. The initial attacks in December 1956 took the RUC and the Northern authorities by surprise. However by 1961 it was clear that the political effects of the campaign was disastrous for the Republican Movement in both the South and the North. On 18 January 1962 the IRA Army Council met and agreed to consider an ending to the campaign. On 3 February 1962 the Army Council met again and formally and unanimously voted to end hostilities. The Army Executive concurred. A special IRA army order went out on February 5 directed to all IRA units "to drop arms and move back".

(4) The Present Campaign

In the course of the last 25 years the Republican Movement has split and the Official IRA have ended their campaign. The Provisionals have also engaged in two major ceasefires.

(i) The ending of the Official IRA campaign.

After the reaction in Derry to the Official IRA killing of Ranger Best, the COS, Cathal Goulding and the Army Council decided an end to hostilities by the OIRA. In its statement the officials declared the right to "defend any area under aggressive attack by the British military or by sectarian forces from either side". It is noteworthy that the IRA have engaged in military operations against the INLA since they called the ceasefire.

(5) Provisional IRA ceasefires

The two ceasefires were agreed in June 1972 and in February 1975. On both occasions it was the Army Council which took the decision to suspend hostilities against "Crown Forces".

A PERMANENT CESSATION OF VIOLENCE IN THE PRESENT CAMPAIGN

According to Brendan O' Brien in his Book "The Long War" a decision to have a permanent cessation of violence and a handing over of arms would have to be taken initially by the Army Council followed by a General Army Convention which is in the IRA Constitution the "Supreme Army Authority". It is probably worth noting that at the end of previous campaigns it was the Army Council which took the decision to end hostilities. However, no previous campaigns ended with a permanent cessation of violence only in a ceasefire.

Anglo-Irish Section
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