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Wednesday, 21st May 2008

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Hunger strike commemoration passes peacefully

The IRSP held its annual hunger strike commemoration in Derry on Sunday amid a large scale security operation mounted by the PSNI.

Around 300 people, including relatives of dead INLA volunteers, marched from the Rosemount factory to the republican socialist monument in the City Cemetery.

Two PSNI landrovers drove at the front of the parade while four more followed behind with more PSNI officers lining the route of the march. Landrovers could also be seen on roads leading to the City Cemetery, which has been the scene of disturbances at previous republican commemoration events. A police helicopter flew overhead throughout the event.

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At the commemoration, which was held to remember the ten hunger strikers who died in Long Kesh in 1981 as well as INLA volunteers from Derry and Tyrone, wreaths were laid at the graves of local republican socialists, including Patsy O'Hara and Mickey Devine.

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Leading IRSP member Paul Gallagher from Strabane gave the main oration at the event and said the Republic the hunger strikers died for is now further away than it was in 1981.

"Sinn Féin now sits on the Stormont executive that they once proclaimed should be smashed. They now advocate support for the Police Service of Northern Ireland that they once said should be disbanded. On the economic front, workers are paid less in Derry than in the rest of the North, unemployment is rising, manufacturing plants have closed down, fuel prices are rising, food prices are rising, taxes are going up, water charges are coming in and, at the same time, services are diminishing. Stormont has done nothing for the people of the North except invite American investors here whose only aim will be to see how much profit that they can squeeze out of Irish workers before they scuttle off somewhere else when the incentives dry up," he added.

Mr Gallagher also told the crowd to re-double their efforts to build a republican socialist alternative.

Wreaths were then laid on behalf of the INLA, the IRSP, the family of Patsy O'Hara, the 32 Country Sovereignty Movement and Oglagh na h'Áireann. The event ended with the national anthem being played by the Seamus Costello flute band.

Commenting on the security operation, PSNI chief inspector Chris Yates, said he was pleased with peaceful outcome of the march. "The event was well organised and we had no problems with it. That bodes well for future events. There were a few incidents of stone-throwing, these were of a low-level and I'm satisfied they were not connected with the organisation of the parade," he said.

The full article contains 436 words and appears in n/a newspaper.

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