

Congo-Waterford Presentation at Fitzwilton Hotel



Natalie, Mimie, Anne Marie, Floribert, Cedric, Deputy Chairman of Waterford City and County Council Cllr Jason Murphy, Olga, Gladys, Willy.

Deputy Chairman of Waterford City and County Council, Cllr. Jason Murphy was present at a special Congo presentation at Waterford's Fitzwilton Hotel.

This country of 71 million people has had a troubled history and in 1960 following freedom of independence from Belgium, the first civil war started.

Irish troops went there and, as Olga Malumba said, Irish blood was lost in their first UN mission to help save peace in the Congo.

Today a large number of refugees come from Congo to Ireland in their latest almost 20 year long civil war in the Eastern province while other areas remain stable.

Many Congolese have settled here in Waterford, where they have integrated well.

Their native Euro language is French yet they learn English here and have their kids at local schools.

The Congo people may also speak Swahili and Kikongo, Lingala, Thsiluba.

With up to 250 ethnic groups, they have the second largest population in Africa.

With huge mineral and energy resources, Congo could be one of the richest countries in Africa if it had peace and political stability.

They mine coltan, a major mineral in mobile phones and laptops and where this area is fought over by competing armed forces some with foreign help.

Other minerals fought over are cobalt, tantalum, gold, diamonds etc.



Deputy Chairman of Waterford City and County Council, Cllr. Jason Murphy.

It became a colony of the King of Belgium in 1870 after its discovery by Stanley, the king took many minerals, rubber etc. amassing a huge fortune by ruthless methods. This was investigated by the late Irish rebel Roger Casement when under instruction by the British Government. It became Belgian Government controlled in 1908, after atrocities discovered by Casement.

Olga Malumba, a resident in Waterford from the Congo gave some historical background about changes in Government since independence in 1960.

6000 Irish soldiers have served in total in the UN peace keeping forces.

Some died, when they came under fire from Belgian, French and Rhodesian mercenaries.

This has featured in books by the late Conor Cruise O'Brien, a former Irish Government Minister, but who was then working for the UN there.

Ralph Riegel of the Irish Independent. wrote a book on the 150 Irish troops that were attacked in the Katanga province, with 9 dying., a big story at the time, when the tribal word Baluba became well known in Irish folklore.

Memorials have been made for these Cork based soldiers.

In the 1970s America supported Zaire as a frontier against Communism spreading in African continent.

In 1997, Kabila became president, he was killed in 2001 and his son Joseph is now there.

Intermittent war with invasions from Uganda, Rwanda and others have taken place.

Olga finished her talk and told about the great Congo music from Rumba to Soukous, Meringue etc.

Congo art and sculpture are also popular. Among the events also was a kids quiz about Ireland, the Congo and Angola.

The kids knew Ireland better it seems as they have grown up here. There was a song sung, called the "Waving Flag".

And also a graduation ceremony with Jason Murphy, Deputy Waterford County Chairman doing the presentations.

Late DJ Murka played music in Mount Sion hall and there was a Congo meal of fried chicken, fish, fried banana, doughnut and rice.