

MID-ULSTER: ANOTHER BY-ELECTION ^{the}

50 Years Ago

ON January 10, 1956 a convention of delegates from Sinn Féin Cumann in the constituency of Mid-Ulster was held in the Foresters' Hall, Omagh.

In all 23 Cumann were represented at the convention. It was presided over by Pádraig MacLógáin. President Sinn Féin and the delegates decided unanimously to contest yet another by-election in the constituency.

Tom Mitchell was again selected as their candidate. This choice was enthusiastically received by all present.

The following were elected to organise the election campaign: Director of Elections and Election Agent — Charles Lavery, Magherafelt; Director of Finance — Jack Hegarty, Ballinascreen (Draperstown); Director of Publicity — Brendan Casey, Pomeroy; Director of Canvass — Pat O'Loane, Omagh; Director of Transport — Joe Begley, Pomeroy.

What had happened? During December the Unionist candidate, Charles Beattie, who had been appointed MP for mid-Ulster by a British court in October (when it had disqualified the successful candidate, Tom Mitchell) had his own appointment declared invalid by the British House of Commons.

Nationally-minded people throughout Ireland laughed heartily! "Filleann an feall ar an bhfeallaire" (the bad deed returns to haunt the betrayer).

The Unionist had been beaten twice at the polls by the Republican, first at the general election in May and then at the by-election in August by an increased majority.

It appeared that Mr Beattie was at the time of his appointment a member of three appeal tribunals established by Stormont. These bodies were considered to be "offices of profit under the Crown" and such membership disqualified him.

The *Irish Press* of December 21 reported that "the British government's intention to hold another by-election in Mid-Ulster was greeted with derisive laughter from the Labour benches" in Westminster.

The writ would be issued after the Commons Christmas recess. "I do not know that we will nominate anyone; in any case, Mr Beattie is not likely to stand again," Mr WJ Hamilton, Mr Beattie's Election agent, said. The Unionist constituency association was to meet in Cookstown after Christmas, the *Press* report continued.

"If the Unionists decide not to contest the new by-election, the Nationalists will probably put up a candidate to oppose the Sinn Féin nominee. "We would feel it would be our duty to contest the by-election because the one clear issue would be for or against physical force", a Nationalists spokesperson told the *Irish Press*.

The constitutional forces which accepted British rule in Ireland and paid lip-service only to "Anti-Partition" has been encouraged by the remarks in Leinster House of Messrs Costello and de Valera and the saturation coverage they, of course, received.

In the 26-County Senate on December 10, Dr Sheehy-Skeffington proposed: "The Senate, while welcoming the general tenor of the Taoiseach's recent Dáil statement on Partition and the unlawful use of force, regrets the Government's failure as yet to take any active steps to stop in the Republic of Ireland open recruiting, drilling and the possession of arms by private military organisations" (*Irish Times*, December 11).

Professor Hayes said that no Minister would be present. It was "the considered view of the government that no further discussion or statement at this stage would serve any useful purpose."

Dr Sheehy-Skeffington criticised some



• Tom Mitchell.

County Councillors for their remarks and said that Mr Costello "was lacking in candour when he made no reference to the December 1925 (Boundary) Agreement with Britain."

That agreement had been confidently recommended to the Irish people by its signatories (the Cumann na nGaedheal — later Fine Gael — government of the Free State at the time.)

The Cathaoirleach (Mr Baxter) interrupted at this stage. Professor Hayes said the Senator had not only got liberty but license.

When the Cathaoirleach called for a second to the motion there was no reply and it was declared to have failed for want of a second.

The Bishop of Cork, Dr Lucey, in a letter read in the churches of the diocese on December 11, warned against unauthorised collections outside churches.

Collections could take place at or near the church gates on Sundays or holidays only with the express permission of the priest in charge, the letter stated.

It quoted from the 1955 Lenten Pastoral: "As well as recruiting members, secret societies usually also seek to raise funds. They do so as a rule under the guise of aid for some charitable or patriotic cause."

"The faithful should beware of contributing to any collections no matter what the proposed purpose of the collection unless the names of the committee controlling the funds are published and a guarantee given that the funds will be devoted wholly to the purpose for which the appeal is made."

As if in answer to Bishop Lucey, a double column three-inch advertisement was carried in the *Irish Press* and other papers on December 28 announcing a church Gate Collection on Sunday, January 1, 1956, in aid of the Republican Prisoners and their Dependents.

"The objects of the Republican Aid Committee were: (a) to raise funds to provide for the dependents of Republican Prisoners; (b) to look after the welfare of such prisoners pending release and (c) to create a central Fund from which grants may be made at the discretion of the Committee in cases of distress arising directly out of Republican activities."

The following names and addresses were carried in the advertisement: "Chairman: Donal O'Connor, Castle Hotel, Gardiner Row, Dublin; Secretary: Tomás Ó Dubhghaill, 36 Comeragh Road, Drimnagh, Dublin; Treasurer: Mrs Woods, c/o 27 O'Connell Avenue, Berkeley rd, Dublin."

There was nothing secret about the New Year's Day collection or the names and addresses of the controlling committee and its objects.

In his Christmas Day sermon in St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry, Bishop Neil Farnen said: "Perhaps blind nationalism could blind our people to the iniquities that could follow from conflict here." (*Irish Press*, December 28).

"May your prayers be that we may have an end to physical force as a solution to our difficulties in Ireland; pray that the reign of Christ may bring a settlement of our problems and peace and prosperity to our land."

The *Sunday Press* of December 25 carried Cardinal D'Alton's sermon at midnight Mass in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh.

"After discussing the chaotic troubles of 'a world without God' the cardinal appealed to young Irishmen not to have recourse to violence in their eagerness to end the 'glaring injustice' of Partition, but to work for an enduring and peaceful settlement of the problem."

The Special Edition (December 1955) of *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* carried an account of the first application of the Offences Against the State Act 1939 to the republican Movement following Mr Costello's address of November 30.

The Longford Cumann of Sinn Féin had arranged a public meeting to be held outside the Courthouse, Longford on Saturday night, December 10, followed by after-Mass meetings on the Sunday morning in Granard, Mostrim, Barnacoola, Dromard and other places.

When the Cumann Secretary approached the *Longford Leader* with the advertisement for the public meetings he was told: "We have a letter from Mr Costello telling us not to publish anything of that nature. We will have to get in touch with the government Information Bureau in Dublin."

The GIB was phoned and the terms of the proposed advertisement were read over to them. The reply was "Kill it."

In London and Glasgow, in Orange and Nationalist papers in the Six Counties, such advertisements had appeared. It remained for the Government Information Bureau in Dublin to prevent local papers in the 26-Counties from publishing a simple advertisement. Merely announcing a public meeting.

The Republican paper commented: "And then we are told: 'Put your policy before the people.'"

In January 1956 issue of the *UI* carried a further instance of censorship in local papers. The *Leinster Express* of December 24 suppressed a news item from a local correspondent on the plea that a direction had been received from the "Department of Justice" in Dublin.

The item concerned a meeting of the Laois County Board Hurling convention on the previous Sunday. The Chairman, Mr J Conroy, supported an appeal for the dependents of Republican Prisoners.

"We are depending on GAA members in each area to help with the collection", Mr J Donovan, Clonad, said. Contact would be made with Mr P MacLogan, Portlaoise, so that they could have the aid of a member of the Republican Dependents' Committee.

Censorship and suppression would be the order of the day under the new coercion regime of Mr Costello's 26-County government, it would appear!

Then on December 14 the 26-County State was admitted to membership of the United Nations Organisation. This had been blocked by the Soviet Union since 1946 but the State was now included in a package deal which finally allowed it in.

During the Anti-Partition campaign engaged in nationally and internationally from 1948 onwards by all the Leinster House politicians and others in the Six Counties and in England, it was often declared that the matter could be raised at the UN if only the State were a member.

With the way now clear, John A Costello, head of government in Dublin, announced immediately that they would not be adopting "a sore-thumb attitude on Partition" at the UN.

In other words, they would not be raising the question. Fianna Fáil, in opposition, went along meekly and did not disagree. The sincerity of them all in the matter of British rule in Ireland stood exposed starkly.

All parties in Leinster House — government and opposition — had backed down on this issue. But they were united otherwise: they would coerce those who attempted to push the matter to a showdown with England.

But other issues were brought to the UN. The Greek government insisted on confronting the British government on the question of Cyprus. Every autumn the matter was on the UN agenda and British rule in Cyprus was exposed on the world stage. People in Ireland thought "Why not

Irish national question?"

Of course, by January 1, 1956 there had been nine months of armed struggle against British rule. Thirty people had been killed, reported the *Sunday Independent* of January 1.

"Of those killed 12 were British servicemen, six Cypriot policemen, six Cypriot civilians and six Cypriot guerrillas. British troops in Cyprus have been nearly trebled in the last few months to a total of almost 15,000."

"The cost to Britain was over £100,000 per day to cope with the situation. Cypriots sentenced to terms of imprisonment totaled 126 and one was sentenced to death. There were 152 attacks and armed raids on an island half the size of Leinster."

"The Greek Prime Minister, Mr Karamanlis, sent a New Year's message to Archbishop Makarios: 'The whole Greek nation will always be solidly behind the struggle for self-determination of the Cyprus people which you are so capably leading.'"

Contrast this with Costello and de Valera's condemnations of the struggle in the Six Counties. Taking advantage of the raid on Roslea RUC barracks, Costello spoke of "Irishmen fighting Irishmen in the presence of a woman and her children". (He was referring to the Station Sergeant's family in the barrack living quarters.)

Those who later formed the Mac Criostáil splinter group from the Republican Movement had in September or October jeered and barracked Senator Liam Kelly and his Fianna Uladh at a public meeting in O'Connell Street, Dublin. "Why don't you fight?" they shouted — all of which was reported in the daily papers.

It was believed the Roslea raid resulted from this incident. But Saor Uladh did not accept responsibility for the raid, nor did it face up to the consequences.

Saor Uladh, in a statement, "refused to confirm or deny" that it carried out the action, and accused the IRA of "felon-setting" when it denied responsibility. Stormont knew and banned Saor Uladh three days later.

Casualties are always a possibility in such actions, but the deaths of one of its volunteers was concealed and he was secretly buried at night. An attempt to conceal an inquest on an "unknown man" was exposed by the press.

The whole procedure was botched. It was as if they were hiding their heads coming in and out of a courthouse. People saw it all as though they were doing something they were ashamed of, instead of proudly owning up to fighting for Ireland. Almost a month later, on December 22, a statement appeared in the *Irish Press* from Saor Uladh accepting responsibility for the Roslea raid. It was too late; people found it all disappointing.

On December 31, the *Irish Times* reported that Stormont had banned three newspapers, *The United Irishman*, *Resurgent Ulster* and *Gair Uladh* "under those titles or under any other title or description whatsoever, or any part of them". The Special Powers Acts 1922 to 1943 Regulation 8 was invoked.

It remained for the Republican Movement to recover the situation. Out of the blue came the third Mid-Ulster contest. It was availed of to the utmost.

An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman, January 1956 carried front-page banner headlines: "Republican Ireland Stands Defiant" with sub-headlines "Mid-Ulster's Answer to Britain" and "Tom Mitchell Again Selected". Forces were being mobilised.

But the forces of reaction were also preparing. The constitutional nationalists in the Six Counties and the Catholic bishops were stirring and coming to the aid of the *status quo* and British rule in Ireland.

(More next month. Refs. *Irish Press* December 12, 21, 22 and 28; *Sunday Press* December 25; *Irish Times* December 11, 31; *Sunday Independent* January 1; *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* (Special Edition) December 1955 and January 1956.)

BISHOPS CONDEMN USE OF FORCE

**50
Years
Ago**

ON January 19, 1956 the Irish daily papers carried a statement to be read at all public Masses on Sunday January 29. It was issued by the Standing Committee of the Catholic

Hierarchy on behalf of the Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland, and was signed by the Secretaries: William McNeely, Bishop of Raphoe and James Fergus, Bishop of Achonry.

Having outlined the conditions under Catholic moral teaching for war to be lawful the statement went on to declare:

"It is a mortal sin for a Catholic to become or remain a member of an organisation or society which arrogates to itself the right to bear arms and use them against its own or another state;

"It is also sinful for a Catholic to co-operate with, express approval of, or otherwise assist, any such organisation or society, and that, if the co-operation or assistance be notable, the sin committed is mortal."

In the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly an additional statement was to be read at all Masses. It was issued by Dr Kinane, Archbishop, who said permission from the local bishop was necessary for church gate collections.

"I have not given permission to anyone in writing or otherwise to make a collection for the Republican Prisoners Dependents' Fund.

"It is gravely sinful, therefore, to make a collection for this object in the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly and I appeal earnestly to the Faithful (sic) to give no support whatever to the collection."

Bishop Kinane's statement on collections really went too far for the generality of people. Whatever about the use of force, the outlawing — as far as the church was concerned — of collections for the prisoners' dependents was more than they could take.

As for Tipperary, where Cashel diocese was located, the collection was its usual success. Bishop Kinane did not disagree that the funds were being applied to a charitable object; the collectors did not wobble and the public subscribed as usual.

Veteran Republicans like Jack Moloney of Roscrea had seen it all before from 1922 — and before that — to date. They stood their ground and put backbone into the younger generation who had heard and read of such Episcopal bullying but had never experienced it.

In the larger matter of the use of force against British rule in Ireland, *An t-Eireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* in its editorial the following month January 1956 did not confront the Bishops directly. It accepted the right of the Hierarchy to make such a statement on the waging of war and the physical, moral and social evils that follow from war.

Nor would the Republican paper deny the right of the Bishops to warn Catholic youth against joining societies and organisations "whose end result is the waging of war and the bringing of violence to their own people."

It went on: "Only recently His Holiness Pope Pius XII cautioned the youth of the world against joining foreign armies." In Ireland, which Britain has traditionally used as a recruiting ground, this advice has particular point.

"Taken in this connection the statement by the Hierarchy on the evils of war is welcome. For war is a terrible evil visited on small and defenceless peoples by a predatory imperialism. As for example — British imperialism in its relations with Ireland.

"Irish Republicans wage war on nobody. They resist, and will continue to resist, tyranny and injustice masquerading under a British flag in this country. In doing this they are answering a universal law held sacred by men of all creeds, colour and beliefs."

The editorial then mentioned the evils of

British economic, political and military control: unparalleled emigration figures, unemployment, low living standards obtained on both sides of the border Britain made.

It asked: "Should we allow this to continue and be driven from the land (ie Ireland)? Or should we perhaps resolve our problems by resisting tyranny and freeing our nation?" The answer, in the last resort, lies with the Irish people.

"In this dilemma the Irish people have, for centuries, shown 'the order, forbearance, concord and goodwill' mentioned in the Bishop's statement. Yet, exemplary as these virtues are, they have not been successful in winning freedom.

"Perhaps there is a limit. If we have not yet reached that limit, then we must be rapidly approaching it.

"Accordingly, for Irish Republicans, there is no conflict of conscience. There can be none: For their task is to remove the shadow of war and evil from the lives of our people forever.

"Is there a more worthwhile objective on the face of God's earth?" the editorial concluded.

From internal evidence in the script it would appear that the editorial was penned by the iron man himself, Tony Magan, IRA Chief-of-Staff from 1948-1957.

Essentially, the piece did not quarrel with the Bishop's right to issue such a statement or with the ideas contained in it. What the editorial maintained was that the statement did not apply to the Republican Movement.

It applied to the British occupation forces in Ireland, the British Army, the RUC and the B-Specials. They were the only people who carried arms illegally in Ireland.

In the outcome, not a single person in the Movement resigned, nor did any of the helpers. Two Volunteers became inactive for a year but resumed duties with the outbreak of the Campaign proper in December 1956.

The personnel of the Movement in the 1950s were well grounded in Republicanism and were very clear on the issues involved, moral and otherwise.

Next to the editorial on page 4 of that February 1956 issue was an article headed "The Right to Resist". It quoted from a pamphlet of that name by a German Jesuit theologian, Fr Max Pribilla which was published by the Catholic Social Guild, Oxford in 1952, price one shilling.

The pamphlet was the English translation of the last chapter of a book in German by Fr Pribilla, *Deutsche Schicksalsfragen*.

It bore the imprimatur of the Archbishop of Birmingham and carried the title "The Right to Resist".

Fr Pribilla wrote of "the duty of Resistance": "Those in power have control over the machinery of government and use it without scruple; they can easily prevent or crush any budding attempt at such resistance by using propaganda to spread confusion, by intimidation, by encouraging informers and by a reign of terror."

The UI comments: "Since such methods are not unknown in Ireland it would be of value to Republicans to study this pamphlet."

It concludes: "Fr Pribilla is speaking, of course, of native oppression (and German experience of Nazi rule). How much stronger must these arguments be when related to foreign tyranny — as is the case of Ireland?"

Of course, ever since the Penal Laws were relaxed and the Catholic clergy came "off the run" themselves with the withdrawal of the county price on their heads, the RC Hierarchy — with a few honourable exceptions — have acted as moral policemen for British rule in Ireland.

A useful reference on this point is the four-page leaflet "In answer to Church and State and in Defence of Irish Republicanism", published by Republican Sinn Féin in November 1987.

"No generation of Irish Republicans since the foundation of Republicanism in Ireland by Wolfe Tone has been exempt from their [the Bishops'] strictures," it says, and goes on to list them.

It observes that "in spite of it all the Irish people have in the main clung to their religious beliefs, wisely rendering to Caesar the things

"The Duty of Resistance"

"When active resistance comes to be considered, there exists already a question of the gravest national need and a complete disorganisation of public life.

"Whoever in such a situation possesses sufficient judgement and force to be able to help is obliged to set aside his own security and comfort and to put the right of resistance into effect.

"That is demanded by regard for the common good and by the love for one's nation which is suffering unspokeably under tyranny and is robbed of its rights.

"The duty of resistance is all the more imperative the greater the social position, the personal prestige and the practical ability of the one who is able and therefore obliged to intervene with decisive action."

— Fr Pribilla 1952

that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."

It goes on: "A call was made [in a statement ordered to be read at all Masses in Ireland, on Sunday, November 15, 1987] for support for the 'police forces' North and South which includes the RUC and by extension the UDR and the British Army.

"The obvious inference of all this is that the British Occupation Forces in Ireland are morally right while the 'natives' who resist them are morally wrong."

Let the record show that in 1956 — a time of maximum religious practice in Ireland — the men and women of the Republican Movement stood firm against moral blackmail by the Bishops and continued their religious observances as usual.

On a lighter note, *Dublin Opinion* in its issue of February 1956, dealt cleverly with the Mid-Ulster by-election crisis in its "Dear Mamma" series. Headed "Mamma on Mid-Ulster", it reads:

Mary: Where, dear Mamma, is Mid-Ulster?

Mamma: The term is surely self-explanatory, dear Mary; why do you ask such a question?

Mary: Dear Seán and I have read so frequently of recurring parliamentary elections in Mid-Ulster, dear Mamma.

Mamma: in the connotation you mention, dear Mary, the term refers to the parliamentary constituency of County Tyrone, one of the Six Counties of Ulster.

Seán: Governess has taught us that there are nine counties in Ulster, dear Mamma.

Mamma: The Six Counties of Northern Ireland are frequently referred to, especially in the North, as Ulster; it is a more ancient, more historic name.

Seán: Why, dear Mamma, has it been found necessary to hold so many parliamentary elections in Mid-Ulster, or more specifically in Co Tyrone.

Mamma: I shall explain, dear Seán. Northern Ireland returns 13 [recte 12] Members of Parliament to the British House of Commons at Westminster, dear Seán ...

Mary: Pardon my interruption, dear Mamma. Is not Northern Ireland a self-governing State?

Mamma: It enjoys limited self-government, dear Mary; certain legislative and fiscal powers are reserved to Westminster.

Seán: What a strange arrangement, dear Mamma!

Mamma: About two-thirds of the population of Northern Ireland desire union with Britain and recent union with Southern Ireland, dear children.

Mary: What of the other third, dear Mamma?

Mamma: The votes of this group, who desire union with the South, have led to the present paradoxical position, dear Mary.

Seán: Elucidate, dear Mamma.

Mamma: The people of Tyrone and Fermanagh, for the most part, desire union with the South, dear Seán; last May they elected the

Sinn Féin candidate, Mr Mitchell, with a majority of 260 to represent them at Westminster.

Seán: Why then another election, dear Mamma?

Mamma: Because Mr Mitchell was not allowed to take his seat at Westminster, dear Seán.

Mary: Pray why, dear Mamma?

Mamma: Because he was disqualified at Westminster, dear Mary.

Seán: Give reasons, dear Mamma.

Mamma: Because Mr Mitchell is at present imprisoned as a result of the Armagh [recte Omagh] raid, the details of which I have fully discussed with you in a previous colloquy.

Mary: But, dear Mamma, under the democratic form of government are not the electors the real rulers, the word "democracy" being derived from the Greek word for 'people' and the Greek verb 'to rule'?

Mamma: You have succinctly expressed the theory of the democratic system of government, dear Mary.

Mary: Accordingly, dear Mamma, pray explain why Westminster, the Mother of Democratic Parliaments, should reject the choice of the people.

(Dear Mamma, being at a loss for a reply, finds it necessary to stall.)

Mamma: The title "Mother of Parliaments" is due rather to Iceland whose parliament goes back over 1,000 years, whereas the British system extends at most to 600 years.

Seán: But why reject the choice of the people, democratically chosen, dear Mamma?

Mamma (still somewhat clueless, makes a gallant rally): The complex question of the authority and rights of the State is here involved, dear Mary. However, another election was held in August and the people of Mid-Ulster were again freely allowed to elect their representative to Westminster.

Seán: Was this not an injustice to Mr Mitchell, dear Mamma?

Mamma: In the event, no, dear Seán; Mr Mitchell was again elected, this time with an increased majority of 806 votes.

Mary (somewhat bitterly, for dear Mary): To be again disqualified by Westminster, dear Mamma?

Mamma: No, dear Mary.

Mary: No, dear Mamma?

Mamma: No, dear Mary; on this occasion he was disqualified by an election court held in Belfast, which ruled that the twice defeated candidate, Mr Beattie, should take the seat.

(Dear Seán collapses as if struck severely on the solar plexus; dear Mary as if the recipient of the rabbit punch.)

Seán (first to get his wind): Are we to understand, dear Mamma, that Mr Beattie was victorious because he was twice defeated?

Mary (weakly): And that a sure method of being elected to represent the people is by being twice rejected by them?

Mamma: Such was the decision of the court, dear Seán.

Seán: And the electors of Mid-Ulster are now being represented in Parliament by the candidate they rejected, dear Mamma?

Mamma: No, dear Seán.

Seán: No, dear Mamma?

Mamma: No dear Seán; Mr Beattie, after sitting for a short period, was also disqualified by Westminster, on the grounds that three posts on tribunals held by him were offices of profit under the Crown.

Mary (somewhat mollified): It would appear that Westminster tried to mete out even-handed justice, dear Mamma.

Mamma: So it would seem, dear Mary. I shall keep you informed of further developments in this Gilbertian situation, dear children, you will now withdraw.

Seán, Mary: Thank you, dear Mamma.

— APK

(More next month. Refs. *Dublin Opinion*, February 1956; *In Answer to Church and State and in Defence of Irish Republicanism* (pamphlet) November 1987; *An t-Eireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* February 1956 and the *Irish Press*, January 19, 1956.)

AP-LEAGUE OPPOSES MITCHELL IN MID ULSTER

**50
Years
Ago**

IN mid January 1956, an Anti-Partition League decided to put forward a "Nationalist" candidate in the forthcoming by-election (the third) in Mid-Ulster.

A statement issued after a meeting in Omagh on January 14 said: "It has been decided to put forward a Nationalist candidate in the by-election which was pending – on the simple issue of the recognition by the people of the authority of the Irish government to rule in this country."

The *Sunday Independent* of January 15 called this Anti-Partition League a "sensation". Michael O'Neill, who had represented the Anti-Partition interest in Westminster for the constituency from 1951 to 1955, was selected and a flurry of statements and counter-statements followed.

The Ard Chomhairle of Sinn Féin in a statement carried in the *Sunday Press* of January 22 clarified its position: "To state that the support received in Mid-Ulster has been 'represented as support of the Sinn Féin policy of defiance of the Irish government even to the extent of physical force against that government' is a deliberate falsehood."

"Official statements issued on behalf of the Republican Movement from time to time stress the point that the main concern is to get the British forces of occupation out of Ireland and that the use of physical force in the 26 Counties is not contemplated.

"Since the 'Irish Government' exercises no jurisdiction whatever over the area of Mid-Ulster nor, for that matter, over any part of the Six Counties, the question of according it recognition is completely irrelevant and cannot be made an issue, and in so far as it can be prevented, Sinn Féin will not allow it to be made an issue in any election contest within the British-occupied area.

"The issue is, indeed, a simple one for the people of Mid-Ulster and for the people of the rest of Ireland. It is the plain, simple and straight-forward issue – the irrefutable right of the Irish people to full freedom.

"The rulers of Britain deny that right and prevent its exercise by the people of Ireland. Maintenance of British rule is only feasible by armed force whilst the united effort necessary to end it is prevented by political leaders manoeuvring for party kudos and for party interests.

"This is the real issue which was presented to the people of Mid-Ulster and of the Six Counties last May.

"The electors of Mid-Ulster are being manoeuvred by those who put forward another candidate and by their party political advisers in the 26 Counties into the position of preparing the ground for repression against Republicans south of the Border who hold themselves ready to assist any effort to end British occupation of Ireland's national territory."

It concludes: "Sinn Féin appeals to the people of Mid-Ulster to support and endorse the policy of Sinn Féin and finally end the farcical and political pretence of persons who, whilst they masquerade as Irish nationalists, own allegiance to the power which holds Ireland in subjection."

The letters columns of the daily papers from then on carry many, many items of correspondence giving the opposing viewpoints. The prevailing view was that Tom Mitchell's election on two occasions had done more to rally opin-



• Tom Mitchell.

ion world-wide against British rule in Ireland than all the windy Anti-Partition campaigns for almost a decade.

His election a third time was the surest way forward, the person in the street maintained.

Two protagonists led the way" Cahir Healy, Stormont MP, and Professor Liam Ó Briain of NUI Galway. Healy had been MP at Westminster for Fermanagh, yet while holding that office was interned without trial 1922-24 and again in 1941-43.

A member of Sinn Féin in the early days, he had supported the Treaty of Surrender in 1921 which had cemented Partition in position, had accepted Stormont and Westminster and taken part in them, swearing allegiance to the Crown of England.

Liam Ó Briain, on the other hand, was an assistant in the French Department in UCD who fought in the 1916 Rising with the Irish Citizen Army, after which he was interned without trial.

He was later imprisoned during the Black-and-Tan War and was on the Coiste Gnó of Conradh na Gaeilge 1915-27. He was Professor of Romance Languages at UCG 1917-58, Dean of the Arts Faculty and a founder member of Taibhdhearc na Gaillimhe.

Liam Ó Briain led off with a letter in the *Irish Press* of January 24:

"I think it is a confounded shame that the Anti-Partition Association (*sic*) should crash into the Mid-Ulster situation at the present juncture with a tame Westminster-going candidate.

"The double election of Mitchell and his double disqualification are the best things that have happened, are the finest showing up to the world of the absurdity of the whole Belfast set-up, for many a day.

"Let the third blow be struck, let Mitchell be elected the third time, force them again to disqualify him and misrepresent the majority of the constituency.

"Add to the muddle that Stormont is in at the moment; [disqualification of Sir Norman Stronge as Speaker at Stormont, two other members Sir William McCleery and Dr Eileen Hickey were under threat of the same.] Keep up the good work. That is the obvious policy for Mid-Ulster Nationalists.

"What have they to lose? What good is the Westminster representation to them?) or the Belfast one for that matter?"

"Mr O'Neill is personally a very estimable man. I know, for I have had the honour of meeting him.

"But he must know that his presence in Westminster is of no earthly use towards ending Partition. Back to Griffith's policy."

"Mise le meas

Liam Ó Briain, Galway."

On January 28, Cahir Healy MP (South Fermanagh) replied in the *Irish Press*:

"Allow me to borrow some of the eloquent

language of the eminent Professor Liam Ó Briain, Galway in his letter of yesterday, and say:

"I think it is a confounded shame' that he should crash into print without making his own position on fundamentals clear.

"Will Professor Ó Briain tell us:-

Whether he believes the Irish government to be the legitimate government of the country?

If he approves of a policy of violence carried out by a self-constituted group?"

On January 31 in the *Irish Press* came Liam Ó Briain's spirited reply: he attacked Cahir Healy's title of MP and said:

"Mr Healy recognises Stormont and Westminster by going into them, taking an oath of allegiance and then telling them they have no right to govern any part of Ireland."

He then referred to his own part in the 1918 general election when he spoke at an eve of poll meeting in Armagh.

"It is time that Six-County Nationalists got back to the fundamental position we took then and turned, as we did, their backs on British Parliaments.

"The election of an abstentionist twice over lately, is what struck the world; the repetition will be the beginning at last of a real national policy on Partition.

"Does Mr Healy really think his or Mr O'Neill's presence at Westminster ever accomplished anything against Partition except confuse the issue?"

Prof Ó Briain then got down to basics:

"Mr Healy asks me do I believe the Irish government to be the legitimate government of the country. I do not. I believe it to be the legitimate government of the 26 Counties, and I believe it is high time we gave up all the humbug in Constitutions and enactments of pretending we are the government of the country – unless, of course, we mean to do something about it.

"There is no legitimate government in the Six Counties. They are held by the British government exactly as all Ireland was held in Mr Healy's and my younger days.

"They have, to be sure, an elaborate farce of a sub-committee in Belfast, where Mr Healy and his friends give them little jibes and 'digs' now and then, which is all they can accomplish.

"He asks me do I 'approve of acts of violence carried out by a self-constituted group'. O! There Mr Healy wants to drag me into deep waters.

"Does he want me to condemn all insurrections and revolutions in history, George Washington's, for example, or Andreas Hofer's mad, hopeless rising against the might of Napoleon, or Franco's, or some others nearer home?"

"I have published some views on the morality of one insurrection (as we all go in for being amateur theologians in this country, I mean of course all of us laymen) in a book of mine *Cuimhni Cinn*, pp 35-50 and 196-199, to which I refer Mr Healy."

Liam Ó Briain's excellent book in the Irish language covered his experiences in the ranks of the Irish Citizen Army while fighting British forces in Dublin in 1916.

"I repeat that the issue for the people of Mid-Ulster now is to do again what they have already done twice – to assert their 'fundamental' position as members of the Irish nation by electing an abstentionist candidate."

He was not going "from the safe retreat of one's middle sixties to urge young men of military age onwards" and recalled old gentlemen from some of the "most exclusive squares in Dublin urging young men on to bloodshed, when in 1914, the most violent policy ever was preached to young nationalists."

"The election for a third time of an abstentionist candidate will be a clarion call to all of us to at last get together and work out a live policy as regards Partition."

If Liam Ó Briain took seventeen inches of single column to reply, Cahir Healy came back with an even longer letter. His took 27 inches! He said that instead of replying to his question on violence, Prof Ó Briain "refers me to some book of his own, of which unfortunately most people have never heard."

This was answered in a letter from Patrick Doherty, Main Street, Letterkenny: "*Cuimhni Cinn* was a Club Leabhar choice and was known to every Irish speaker in the country. Besides, it was widely reviewed by all the Irish newspapers at the time of its publication, he wrote. It had been published five years previously.

James Slevin, Castlecaulfield, Co Tyrone, S Ó Maoil Eoin, An Lúib (The Loup), Doire Tgeas, Brian Mac Giolla Coillte, Cullyhanna, Newry were among those whom wrote in supporting Tom Mitchell and Sinn Féin. Many others wrote letters from the 26 Counties. Mitchell seemed to be in the lead.

Seán Delargy, Leas-Rúnaí, Irish Anti-Partition Association, wrote in to point out that the Association had nothing to do with running a candidate in opposition to Sinn Féin. They were confined to the 26 Counties. The A-P League organised in the Six Counties and in Britain.

Liam Ó Briain finished up while Cahir Healy jibed him for seeking Unionist votes, as did Sinn Féin in 1955 and Ó Briain himself when he stood in South Tyrone – a constituency with a unionist majority – in 1918.

Ó Briain wrote: "Mr Healy did ask me two questions which I answered as straight as any man could answer them. He framed his second question too loosely and made it easy for me ...

"The great plank of Mr Healy and Mr O'Neill in this election is that the Dublin government is their legitimate government. Why then go to a Parliament they proclaim they don't recognise? Mr O'Neill when and if elected with the help of the Orange vote [see below] should logically slip into Dáil Éireann and force them to carry him out.

"Unexpected and deplorable circumstances brought Mid-Ulster back with a bang to declaring twice to the world, without condemnation from anyone, their fundamental position as Irishmen entitled to be governed by an All-Ireland Parliament only.

"In effect, Mr Healy and his group have said to the Orangemen: 'Leave the job to us. We'll get Mitchell out for you!'"

[Note: The Unionist Association in Mid-Ulster has said they would not contest a third time. But the local Orangemen upbraided them for this and a Mr George Forrest said he would contest as an Independent Unionist. He said he would win as the nationalist vote was split.]

At a meeting in Gulladuff, Co Derry, Tomás Ó Dubhghaill, Vice-President of Sinn Féin (*Irish Press*, January 30) was reported as appealing to Anti-Partitionists to stand down in Mid-Ulster. "Did they wish to serve Ireland or England," he asked.

"As a follow-up to the election of Clarke and Mitchell, Sinn Féin was planning a campaign over the next two years to boycott Stormont.

"Anti-Partition MPs see this as a challenge to their position. It was to try and meet that challenge that they were putting forward Mr O'Neill."

However Mitchell seemed to be gaining ...

(More next month. Refs. *Irish Press*, January 24, 28, 31; *Sunday Independent*, January 15 and *Sunday Press*, January 22.)

'RENEWED VIGOUR, GROWING PRESTIGE, INCREASING SUPPORT'

**50
Years
Ago**

E A S T E R
Sunday 1956
was on April 1.
It was the 40th
anniversary of
the 1916 Rising
and all shades of
nationalist opin-
ion in Ireland
celebrated it

wholeheartedly.

All through Easter week 1956, the *Irish Press* carried a large article each day as part of a diary of the famous week in Dublin in 1916. It was penned by Donagh McDonagh, son of the 1916 leader Thomas McDonagh, and a poet in his own right.

The *Sunday Press* of April 1 had a substantial article by MJ Manus, who had died some years earlier, entitled "The Seven Who Signed", Clarke, Mac Diarmada, Mac Donagh, Pearse, Connolly and Plunkett. Pictures of Pearse, Connolly and Clarke were at the top of the feature.

The same paper carried a notice that Dorothy Macardle (who wrote *Tragedies of Kerry*) would speak on Pearse and Connolly that evening in Radio Éireann's series, "The Shaping of Modern Ireland", 1891 to 1916.

The *Irish Press* also carried pen portraits of the seven signatories of the Proclamation by seven different writers. The paper also carried the full text of "rebel ballads" and recitations such as "The Foggy Dew", "Lonely Banna Strand" and "Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week".

Certainly, in the 26 Counties at least, no one feared to speak of Easter Week in 1956. In the Six Occupied Counties the story was somewhat different.

The *Sunday Press* of April 8 reported that a force of RUC and B-Specials have blown up a tree in the village of Mountjoy, Co Tyrone, from which the Tricolour was flown on Easter Sunday". Mountjoy is on the shore of Lough Neagh.

The report continued: "For years Nationalist supporters at Mountjoy had commemorated the Easter Rising by flying the Tricolour from the tree.

"Late on Easter Saturday last, 50 [RUC] constables and specials took up duty at the tree to prevent the Tricolour being hoisted. But when dawn broke on Easter Sunday the flag was proudly flying."

The response of the British Crown Forces was to demolish the tree using explosives. Explosives were used elsewhere to hit at Easter commemorations.

The *Irish Press* of April 14 reported: "An IRA memorial at Carrickmore, Co Tyrone was shattered by an explosion early yesterday. A protest has come from an American committee which subscribed funds to erect the monument.

"Local people — the village is almost completely nationalist — believes that the outrage is a retaliation for an Easter parade from the monument to the local football ground.

"The monument had stood about six feet high. It was planned to stand at least 15 feet high and to honour all the Tyrone men who died in the War of Independence, but the Six-County government would not allow it to be finished.

"In 1931 Sir Dawson Bates, the Six-County Minister for Home Affairs, issued an order 'in the interests of peace, prohibiting the erection of any structures to commemorate IRA activities'.

"Five years ago a demand by Unionists for demolition of the monument followed an RUC baton charge in Carrickmore on the occasion of an Easter parade.

"According to an editorial in a local Unionist paper the memorial had become 'a shrine for rebels', it was not sufficient to ban its completion, 'it should be blasted out of the ground'.

"The base of the monument, in granite, about eight feet by six feet, was wrecked. No trace could be found of its inscription. Several pieces, at least seven feet long by eight inches wide, had been hurled for many years.

"Last night there were extensive patrols of B-Specials in the area. Hundreds of people visited the site of the monument. The blast left intact only the hardest granite and a Celtic cross which was intended to surmount the monument."

James Slane, a member and former official of the Tyrone-men's Society of New York told INA (Irish News Agency): "I think this desecration of a monument to the dead is shameful," he would raise the mat-



• American visitors and local people inspect the damage to the IRA memorial at Carrickmore, Co Tyrone.

ter on his return to the US, he said.

Note: Since 1956 the ruined memorial has been a "shrine for rebels" (in the best sense) every Easter. In more recent years it has been re-constructed.

On Easter Monday, April 2, 1956 the *Irish Press* carried a report of the Dublin commemoration which followed "a parade which had marched from the Custom House to Glasnevin [Cemetery]. About 500 people marched."

Cathal Ó Murchú read the Statement from the Leadership: "The Republican Movement has emerged today with renewed vigour, growing prestige and increasing support, it said.

"In the years since 1921 the Movement generally had been subjected to slander and contempt. It provided a clear programme to drive the British from our soil.

"In no circumstances will it allow itself to be drawn into any sort of military aggression in the 26-County area. With the co-operation and assistance of our people, we can with God's help, achieve the unity and independence of the Irish Nation in our generation."

Eamonn Mac Thomáis said: "Today the Republican prisoners languishing in British dungeons are crying out to you to take up the cause they left behind and work for that cause until the day when we can drive the British out of Ireland and bring the prisoners home."

Under the heading "Nation Honours Our Patriot Dead", the same paper gave a round-up of local commemorations.

"The Tricolour was carried at the head of the Easter Sunday commemoration parade in Derry yesterday. RUC men in civilian dress mixed with the marchers, but did not interfere with the Tricolour which was also displayed on the platform.

"The parade was from Meenan Park to the nearby cemetery, where a decade of the Rosary was recited in Irish. At a Sinn Féin meeting later, Thomas Mellon said that anyone who denied Ireland's right to freedom was acting unjustly.

"Seán Keenan, Derry, said that any group or party which accepted anything less than was claimed in the Proclamation of 1916 was betraying the men of 1916.

"The successors of Pearse and Connolly are Manus Canning of Derry, Tom Mitchell, Phil Clarke and the other Irish lads who are lying in English prisons," he said.

"In Belfast, thousands [the *United Irishman* said 10,000] marched from the Falls Road to Milltown cemetery where wreaths were laid on graves in the Republican Plot. Police lined the parade route and plainclothes detectives mingled with the crowd.

"The parade included two bands — the Wolfe Tone Pipe Band and St Peter's Brass and Reed Band — the National Graves Association, Pre-Truce IRA and members and representatives of local Camogie and GAA teams.

"Jimmy Steele, Belfast, said: 'We have come here not merely to honour our martyred dead but also to renew our allegiance to the cause for which they died. Our coming here for any other purpose would be hypocrisy.'

"George Dearle, Dublin, said the Republican Movement had not departed in any way from the ideals of Wolfe Tone.

"In Newry, 2,000 took part in the parade while the route was lined by thousands. Mass in Newry Cathedral was offered for the souls of all who died for Irish Independence, after which the parade headed by the Tricolour took place to St Mary's Cemetery...

"The parade was led by members of Newry Urban Council who in 1949 broke a ban on a parade imposed by the then Minister for Home Affairs.

"There was a large attendance at the Easter Sunday commemoration ceremony at the Republican Plot in Sligo. The parade marched from the Town Hall. The oration was delivered by Breandan Ó Duíll, Dublin.

"Doonbeg was the center of the chief Co Clare ceremonies. Following Mass in the local church, a parade headed by the Clononey band marched to the cemetery where wreaths were laid on graves of the patriot dead.

"A decade of the Rosary in Irish was recited by Joseph McMahon, NT. Dónal Keane, Cork, delivered the oration.

"The oration at the annual commemoration at Drumboe, Stranorlar, Co Donegal was delivered by Breandan Ó Caoilte, Drumshanbo, Co Leitrim.

"Seán Ó Murchú, Sinn Féin member of Cork Corporation, delivered the oration at the ceremony in Tralee.

"At Nenagh the parade formed up at Banba Square. The oration was given by Bernard Mac Conraoi, Portlaoise. About 1,000 paraded to the grave of Lieut Michael Baxter at Kilnavart, Co Cavan. It began at Ballymagovern, two miles away, and was led by three bands.

"A parade was held at the grave of Captain Michael O'Reilly in Killoughter Cemetery. The parade was headed by the Drumcrow and Cavan bands. Tomás Ó Dubhghaill, Dublin gave the oration.

"The memory of Con Keating, Charlie Monaghan and Dónal Sheehan, who lost their lives on Good Friday 1916 at Ballykissane Pier, near Killorglin, when the car in which they were traveling ran off the pier into the River Laune, was commemorated yesterday by a procession led by the Cullen, Co Cork, pipe band.

"The procession marched from the Pair Green, Killorglin to Ballykissane, where the wreath was placed on the river by Seán G Ryan, Tralee. He gave the oration, subsequently, at the memorial erected to their memory.

"The Co Mayo Commemoration Committee held its Easter Commemoration at the grave of Eneas McNulty, of Cashel, Achill Island, Co Mayo, who died in 1943 after his release from the Curragh Internment Camp."

In Longford the parade was in Ardagh to the grave of Vol Alfred McHugh, Irish Citizen Army who died in 1919 of wounds received during Easter Week 1916 in Dublin. Pádraig Ó Cuanacháin, Cork, gave the oration.

In every county a ceremony was held, showing a great degree of organisation and support. Enthusiasm was the order of the day.

An *Éireannach Aontaithe*/The *United Irishman* of March 1956 devoted its front page to the plight of the Republican prisoners in jail in England. In Wormwood Scrubs prison, London, Dónal Murphy was isolated from Manus Canning and Seán Mac Stiofáin and not allowed to associate with them.

He went on several 24-hour hunger strikes in protest. The other two also went on 24-hour and 48-hour hunger strikes against conditions. Rights given to ordinary prisoners were denied to them.

In Wakefield prison, Yorkshire, Joe Doyle, Séamus Murphy, Cathal Goulding and Séamus McCollum were enduring similar bad conditions. During one of the coldest winters in England for years they were denied extra blankets.

All Irish political prisoners were declared to be "Special Watch Prisoners". Reminiscent of the treatment of Fenian prisoners in Victorian times.

The Republicans sought political status but the reverse was true. Goulding was clad in a special uniform called "patches", which made him highly visible, because he had attempted to escape the previous autumn.

Sinn Féin councillors raised the question on local bodies. Galway County Council unanimously sent a resolution to the General Council of Co Councils meeting demanding prisoner-of-war status for the Irish Republicans in English jails.

A similar resolution was passed by Cork Corporation on the proposal of Liam Easley, Sinn Féin, supported by the Lord Mayor Alderman Patrick McGrath, TD, Fianna Fáil, that Prisoner of War status be accorded to the Irish political prisoners in England.

The bulk of the Christmas cards sent to the Republicans in Wakefield were ordered to be burned by Assistant Governor Holmes. He described them as "junk". Destruction of "Royal" Mail is rated as an offence in British law, but not even ordinary prisoners rights were accorded to the Republican prisoners.

Meanwhile at the nationalist section of the Longstone Road near Annalong, Co Down on Easter Monday an Orange band was prevented from marching by the actions of local farmers and womenfolk.

The *Irish Press* of April 3 reported: "Ten people were injured, including two police officers, and broken band instruments and kicked-in drums littered the Longstone Road. Shirt-sleeved lads from the RUC swept from behind their barricades, through an RUC cordon, to scatter the Ballyvea Orange Fife and Drum Band which had attempted to parade down the two-mile road ..."

A series of running fights between RUC, bandmen and farmers took place. "Tension increased when police took two women to a tender. A crowd of women gathered around and struck the police with closed fists in a rescue attempt. The two women were finally released.

"Any hope of their [bandmen] playing was dispelled when RUC patrols reported that huge boulders, which had been rummled from the ditches, could not be cleared.

"Because of them the band did not play any airs, but spent the march picking their way carefully over the boulder-strewn road until they came near Annalong. Then they struck up 'Derry's Walls' and 'The Sash'.

Joseph Connellan, Stormont MP for South Down, said that the Orangemen's action was exactly what the Home Affairs Minister had condemned when he had actually banned Orange processions from passing through this area on previous occasions.

Abroad the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist fight continued. Archbishop Makarios, Bishop Kyriakides of Kyrenia and two other senior priests of the Greek Orthodox Church in Cyprus were arrested on March 9 by British troops and deported by plane.

Sir John Harding, Governor of the island colony, accused the Archbishop of "seditious activities". Makarios was held as he entered Nicosia Airport to fly to Athens for talks with the Greek Prime Minister.

The *Irish Independent* of March 10 in an editorial headed "An act of madness", said it was worse. It betrayed "utter irresponsibility" and was a "wanton insult to the Cypriots and to the Greek people".

"In dealing with subject races they [the British] never learn. The principle of self-determination, to which politicians give such respect when it is to be applied outside their own orbit, has been denied to Cyprus.

"The unhappy islanders may now prepare themselves for an era whose course is a familiar page in the recent history of Ireland. And in the end it will be with the banished Archbishop that the British will have to come to terms."

Makarios was taken with his three compatriots to the Red Sea and transferred to a British frigate named of all things "Loch Fada", (the Long Lake in Irish and Scots Gaelic).

From there they were taken thousands of miles to a lonely British outpost in the Indian Ocean which had no telephone and no air service.

The remote Seychelles Islands' legislative council held a special meeting to enact legislation "for the detention of political prisoners from Cyprus".

The British could not have given the people of Cyprus a greater slap in the face. But their action would increase and intensify the struggle there for freedom!

(More next month. Refs. An *Éireannach Aontaithe*/The *United Irishman*, March and April 1956; the *Sunday Press*, April 1 and 8; *Irish Press*, April 2, 3 and 14; *Irish Independent*, March 10.)

SINN FÉIN 24,000; A-PL 6,000 VOTES

**50
Years
Ago**

ON May 8, 1955 the third mid-Ulster election in a year took place. The Sinn Féin candidate, Tom Mitchell, polled 24,124; the Anti-Partition League nominee, Michael O'Neill secured 6,421.

In other words Mitchell had won approximately 80% of the nationalist vote. *The Irish Times* of May 10 in its editorial said that the Anti-Partition candidate "made such a miserable showing that he forfeited his deposit".

It commented that the voting figures "show that the old Nationalist Party is a dead letter in Mid-Ulster." It commented: "Sinn Féin has established for itself an entrenched position in Mid-Ulster."

The unofficial Unionist candidate, George Forrest gained 28,605 votes and with a split vote on the nationalist side won the seat. He was a former British soldier and had the support of the unionist electoral machine and Unionist Party finances.

The Belfast correspondent of the *Irish Times* (May 8, 1956) explained the position like this:

"There is little doubt that the policy of abstention (from contesting Mid-Ulster) had the support of the Unionist party leaders, who now recognise that they have nothing to gain in Mid-Ulster."

"Outsiders already see the Six-Counties as a rather dusty corner of British politics; the sooner the spotlight is turned off Mid-Ulster the better."

"For the Unionists to win the twelfth and last seat of the Ulster (*sic*) seats at Westminster would only give strength to the impression that the Northern Ireland is an unhealthy one-party state in which popular opinion is freely thwarted at the polls."

It had been a rough election campaign. Local nationalist voters had barracked and interrupted Anti-Partition speakers at public meetings, while Sinn Féin workers had asked that they be given a hearing.

The percentage turnout of the electorate was 89.50%. The booklet "Resistance – The Story of the Struggle in British-Occupied Ireland" described polling day:

"From the Sperrins to the mountains of Pomeroy they came in their thousands, small farmers and workers and trades people, to vote for Tom Mitchell on May 8, 1956. His second majority had been a three-fold increase over the previous one."

"Now with an Anti-Partitionist in the field there was no hope of electing Mitchell again, but their people seemed determined to expose those who played England's game in Ireland."

"When the results were posted up for the second round fight in August (1955) they had gathered around the counting office in Omagh town – where Tom Mitchell had been led away, a felon in chains, to Belfast prison scarce then months before – and sang such songs as *A Nation Once Again* and *God Save Ireland*."

"Sinn Féin's jubilant election agent, Charles Laverty, had told them: 'The people of Mid-Ulster have clearly shown that they owe no allegiance to English law. We are indeed entitled to be jubilant.'"

"But now on May 8, 1956, where once there had been victory shouts there now was silence as the people waited for the count."

Forrest, the Unionist, was returned on a minority poll. The combined anti-British vote swamped him. The Anti-Partitionist splitters had done their work and yet it gave them little satisfaction.

"Their candidate, O'Neill, received only 6,421 votes and lost his deposit. Tom Mitchell



• Archbishop Makarios.

polled the unbelievable total of 24,124. The real victory lay with him and Sinn Féin.

"The three Mid-Ulster elections were interpreted as the death-knell of the old-time Parliamentary approach to the problems of Irish unity and independence – even the limited independence they advocated."

"These elections represented a turning-point in Irish history. The swing-over to Republicanism during 1955 and 1956 was decisive."

"The Anti-Partitionist members and Senators at Stormont were called on to resign from these bodies since the people of the north did not wish to dignify that Assembly as a Parliamentary Legislature any longer. They were asked to set up a united Nationalist front and rid the country of British Imperialism."

"The *Derry Journal* (an Anti-Partition organ) noted editorially on May 11, 1956:

"The result of the Mid-Ulster by election is one that the Irish Government cannot afford to ignore. Twenty-four thousand Nationalists voted against a candidate who, rightly in our opinion, held that the solution of partition was the responsibility of the Government and Dáil."

"This was not a vote in favour of physical force; it was a clear vindication of dissatisfaction with national leadership, or the lack of it, where the country's outstanding national problem is concerned. The Dáil-Government and Opposition was on trial and was found wanting."

BUT THE DUBLIN ADMINISTRATION AND OPPOSITION IGNORED THE MID-ULSTER RESULT. THEY SIMPLY DID NOTHING!

The manifesto of the Anti-Partitionist candidate in Mid-Ulster – circulated to the voters of that constituency quoted Costello, the leader of government; de Valera, leader of the opposition and the Catholic hierarchy's statement of January 1956.

A copy of that manifesto is to hand as this column is being written. One whole side of a sheet of paper 15 inches by ten, is devoted to "church and state condemn unlawful physical force"

The *Irish Hierarchy's* statement, read in churches on January 29, 1956, is quoted: "We declare... that it is also sinful for a catholic to co-operate with, express approval of or otherwise assist any such organisation or society and if that co-operation or assistance be notable, the sin committed is mortal."

"Twenty-four thousand mortal sins in Mid-Ulster!". Was the comment of the veteran

Republicans who remembered the church condemnations of 1916 and of 1919-21, not to mention the mass excommunications of 1922-23. The church could not manufacture sins, was their comment.

"Their unpatriotic conduct dishonours the national institutions and challenges the Constitution enacted by the people," John A. Costello, quoted in Leinster House on November 30, 1955. The "people" were of course 38.5% of the electorate in the 26-Counties.

"It is misleading the young people and leading them into roads in which they will endanger not merely themselves but the whole national position if they are allowed to persist in it," de Valera is quoted as saying in Leinster House on October 28, 1954. "It" was a policy of physical force the manifesto said.

All three were rejected by the nationalists of mid-Ulster, but such a verdict was completely ignored, just as the British and 26-County governments willfully disregarded and set aside the election of hunger-strikers and their supporters in 1981 by a later generation.

Resistance summed up the position in the wake of the Mid-Ulster by-election of May 1956:

"The democratic process was now closed to the people of Mid-Ulster and Fermanagh-South Tyrone. British-administered courts were now the electoral machinery for naming MPs to the British House of Commons – as far as the Nationalist people of Occupied Ireland were concerned. This not only denied democracy but made a farce of it."

"An *Irish Catholic* editorial put it like this: "We do not like violence and we do not believe that it is the civilised or Christian way of settling affairs. But it sometimes seems, and especially in relation to Ireland, that Westminster only wakes up when force is used."

"An American Jesuit recently quoted a Northern Ireland priest as saying: 'We must be against the use of force. But the lesson of our history is that force is the only argument that the English pay any heed to.'"

Indeed at a Sinn Féin public meeting in the Bowling Green, Strabane, in the west of Mid-Ulster constituency a few days after the by-election Kevin Agnew, solicitor, "called on the Anti-Partition MPs and Senators to resign their seats in the puppet parliament of Belfast".

The *Derry Journal* of May 11 reported on the meeting: "It was now obvious that the Republican people of the North had no longer any use for them in that capacity."

The problem was that Republican candidates could not contest against them in any subsequent by-elections because of the requirement for candidates to pledge to sit in Stormont, if elected, in order to gain nomination. Still, it was good to call on them publicly to resign as a follow-up to their shameful defeat in Mid-Ulster.

Familiar names are listed as speaking at the meeting. Seán Keenan and Tommy Mellon, both of Derry; Frank Morris, Convoys, Co. Donegal and Gerald O'Doherty, Strabane, the area organiser. O'Doherty said the result had "sounded the death-knell of parliamentarianism".

Dan Hoban, Mayo, said the people had marched solidly behind Sinn Féin for the third successive time and it ended forever Anti-Partition.

The same *Derry Journal* summed up the result of the 88.5% poll as follows: "The next move rests with Mr. Costello and his colleagues as the Government in power."

Of course neither government nor opposition in Dublin did anything at all to address the question of British rule in Ireland. When a crisis came in December 1956, they all simply sided with the British government and collaborated totally with them.

On May 12 one of the disputed Lane Paintings was removed from the Tate Gallery in London by two Irish students. They were Paul Hogan of Dublin, a student at the National College of Art in that city and Liam Fogarty of

Galway, who was attending the Veterinary College, Dublin.

Some 39 pictures from his modern collection had been made a gift by Sir Hugh Lane to the National Gallery of Ireland. Lane died in the sinking of the *Lusitania* off Cork in 1915 and the will was contested by a London gallery, backed by the British Government.

WB Yeats, Lady Gregory and others had campaigned for the rightful return of the paintings to Dublin. A body called the National Students' Council took responsibility for the seizure of the picture. "*Jour d'Éti!*" by Berthe Morisot, a French impressionist artist.

The students arranged to have a press photograph taken of the masterpiece being carried down the steps of the Tate Gallery. This photo was on the front page of the *Sunday Press* of May 15 and every policeman in London had a copy but there was no sign of the painting or of the two students.

Four days after its removal the painting was handed in to the Embassy of the Dublin Administration in London. It was in perfect condition and was returned to the Tate gallery. But the question of the Lane bequests had been highlighted and made a burning issue once more. The NSC in a statement said they acted because the government had "failed to assert the national claim to the Lane paintings." (*Irish Press*, May 17).

"This action was taken for the sole purpose of focusing attention on the injustice which England continues to perpetrate on the Irish nation by retaining the Lane paintings in contravention of the expressed last wish of the late Sir Hugh Lane."

No one was ever made amenable for this action which was highly popular in Ireland fifty years ago.

On May 10, the British occupation regime in Cyprus hanged two Cypriot patriots, Michael Karaolis and Andreas Demetrius. Two days later, EOKA announced that it had hanged and secretly buried two British soldiers in retaliation for the "judicial murder" of the two Cypriots.

"We regret to announce the execution on May 10, 1956 of Corporal Gordon Hill and Corporal Ronnie Shilton," the EOKA statement said. It was a "necessary reprisal", it continued, may God have mercy on their souls.

"We do not hate British soldiers but are determined to be free. We are compelled to use for the conquest of freedom the same means that are used by the occupation forces for suppression."

"When the majority of the people are not allowed to decide their own future according to the democratic principle of self-determination, it has no choice but to fight. We shall answer hanging with hanging and torture with torture."

The statement was signed "Digenhis" (an ancient Greek hero). This was revealed to be General George Grivas, a native of Cyprus and former Greek Army Officer. The British placed an award of 10,000 pounds on his head. Free passage to anywhere in the world by air or sea was promised. He was never betrayed. (*Irish Times*, May 12).

Two British army officers were dismissed following a court-martial for using a chain to strike a Greek Cypriot suspected of EOKA membership. They were Captain Robin Linzee and Captain Gerald O'Driscoll.

Meanwhile, a statement from Archbishop Makarios was read at all Greek Orthodox Masses on the island on Easter Sunday. It forbade anyone to negotiate with the British, pending the release from exile of the Cypriot political leaders. (*Irish Times*, May 4).

And the anti-colonial movement was warming up in Egypt – against British occupation and ownership of the Suez Canal zone ...

(More next month. Ref: *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, May and June 1956; *Resistance – The Story of the Struggle in British Occupied Ireland* by J McGarrity (Seán Cronin); *Derry Journal*, May 11; *Sunday Press*, May 15; *Irish Press*, May 12 and 17; *Irish Times*, May 4 and 12.)

ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLE SPREADS

50 Years Ago

DURING June 1956, the reaction to the Mid-Ulster by-election result continued. Tom Mitchell, the Sinn Féin candidate, had outpolled the Anti-Partitionist

O'Neill by 24,000 votes to 6,000.

At the Clann na Poblachta Ard-Fheis on May 19, as reported in the *Sunday Press* on May 20, Seán Mac Bride said: "The Mid-Ulster election result showed clearly that the Nationalist population had rejected the 'do nothing' policy of the remnants of the Anti-Partition League".

Later Fionán Breathnach, speaking on a resolution seeking [26-County] Government publicity action on Partition, said that since the Coalition Government came back [1954] there had been a criminal silence.

They expected the Minister for External Affairs, Mr Cosgrave, to spearhead the cause in international councils and make himself obnoxious to British diplomats as Mr Mac Bride had done.

"Referring to an illegal body [the IRA of course], Mr. Breathnach said he would be very sorry to see it sitting down and 'I do not decry their activity', he declared. 'All success to them. Our job is to help in every way we can and unify the efforts of Sinn Féin and Saor Uladh (sic)."

He surely meant Fianna Uladh, the political body. The problem here was that while Liam Kelly's groups and Clann na Poblachta did accept the 26-County State, Sinn Féin and the IRA did not.

In an article headed "The Lesson of Mid-Ulster" the *Irish Catholic* of May 17 said "What is really significant about the result is the clear indication the electorate gave of its preference for the candidate with a programme of action as distinct from a programme of waiting."

"It is clear that Mr. Forrest got the votes of most of the Unionists in the area because he had the audacity to step in where the official Unionists were inclined to have a vacuum."

"Similarly, it was clear that the majority of the voters who favoured a united Ireland preferred Mr Mitchell to Mr O'Neill because, whatever about the means he is likely to take or the steps he has taken, the latter proposed to do something about Partition other than waiting twenty or thirty years until the nationalist population would be in a position to out-vote the Unionists".

Editorial Note: Fifty years have come and gone since 1956, and now we are told to wait another 30 or even 50 years for this outcome, as if the British government and the unionists were going to sit idly by and permit this to happen.

Already they have had people from a nationalist background in government in Stormont. The process of absorbing nationalists into the British system goes on ...

The *Irish Catholic* continued: "There is a lesson in all this for those in the 26 Counties who are content to make an odd semi-bellucous reference to Partition and leave it at that."

"Irishmen [and women we hope, Ed] in all 32 Counties will increasingly come to expect more of their leaders than a consistent bending over backwards to Britain, pretending that we have no quarrel with her, even though she occupies six of our counties."

"The next general election in the 26 Counties may provide many surprise results," the article concluded. This last remark was indeed prescient.

However, in the face of these developments the reaction of Stormont was not to relax its grip but to tighten the screw even more.

The *Irish Times* (May 19) carried the text of a letter from Cardinal Dalton to Rev. Dean Quinn, PP, Dungannon regarding a proposal to reduce grants to Catholic schools in the Six Counties.

The letter directed Dean Quinn to summon a meeting of school managers "in face of the threat to reduce the subsidies that are not being paid to the voluntary schools."

"A small clique noted for its intolerance" was accused of sponsoring the proposals. "If this clique is successful in its present campaign it will only serve to confirm the opinion widely held ... that government policy is in the last resort being



• Greek Cypriot patriot, Michael Karaolis, whose execution by the British brought about violent reaction both in Greece and Cyprus. On May 19, 1956 the Nationalist underground called for the assassination of Governor Harding, whom they called "Gaullester Sir John Harding, the sadistic tormentor of the Cypriot people".

dictated by a body whose chief desire seems to be the resurgence of strife and disorder in this part of Ireland."

The following week at Stormont, the Minister for Finance (Irish Press, May 23) in dealing with financial allowances which were being increased in Britain, said that, "we need more small families" and that the Six-County economy was being handicapped in many ways by their very high birth rate.

However even Unionist backbenchers objected to this proposal – which was clearly aimed at nationalist families – and the parity of payments with the British level remained intact in spite of the plot.

Then on June 10, the *Sunday Independent* carried a letter to the editor signed "Dublin Veteran" alongside a photo of the Seán Russell statue memorial with the right arm broken off.

The letter read: "I think it is a disgrace the way the monument to Seán Russell in Fairview Park, Dublin has been left disfigured for so long. This statue was erected a few years ago, principally by means of Irish-American funds."

"Some objection was taken to the fact that Seán Russell's outstretched arm ended in a clenched fist and one morning it was discovered that the arm had been broken off."

"Ever since it has remained like this, an eyesore and an insult to the memory of a man who did so much in the cause of independence."

The vandals who damaged the memorial put it about that Russell was a "communist" and that he was represented in the statue as giving the communist salute. The National Graves Association (NGA) had the statue repaired several times and each time it was damaged again.

The memorial was based on a photo of Russell speaking at a 1798 commemoration at Tara [the scene of one of the battles] in 1938. He had his notes in the left hand and was making a point in his oration with the right.

During the '50s and '60s this damage was done at a time when the Cold War was at its height and "communism" was anathema. The NGA finally had the arm placed across his chest.

Then during the 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kevin Myers in the *Irish Times* and others wanted the statue removed altogether on the grounds that Russell was a fascist. At that time fascism was in fashion as the *bête noire*.

Of course Seán Russell was neither a fascist nor a communist. He was an Irish Republican and he fought for Ireland's freedom from 1913, when he joined the Irish Volunteers, until he died on active service as Chief-of-Staff of the IRA in 1940.

His detractors want to remove all memory of his life-long struggle, when so many fell by the wayside, and so they want the statue to him moved to obscurity. It is as simple as that.

Incidentally, the *Sunday Independent* headed the letter "No Venus de Milo he". The statue was unveiled in 1951 by Paddy O'Mahony of the Clan na Gael and IRA Veterans of America, a native of Co Kerry, in the presence of a large crowd.

Bodenstown Sunday was on June 17, 1956 and the attendance was as big as was usual in the 1950s. But in view of the censorship and clamp down on Republican publicity announced by the 26-County administration the previous December, reportage was scant.

In the *Irish Press* of June 18, twelve lines were

headed "Wreaths placed on grave of Tone." No massive commemoration – just a wreath-laying ceremony, with three wreaths being placed.

It concluded: "An oration was delivered by Mr G Dearnle. Three pipe bands accompanied the parade to the cemetery."

On page eight of *An t-Eireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, May 1956, a notice appeared which read:

"In our Special Issue of December last we published a statement in response to enquiries regarding the National Students' Council."

"It was then stated that this body was not a constituent part of the Republican Movement and that no branch of the Movement had any responsibility for its organisation or activities."

"It is considered that the objects and activities of this body conflict with and do a disservice to the policy and programme of the Republican Movement and, consequently, membership of the National Students' Council is forbidden in all branches of the Movement."

The reality behind this announcement was that Seasmh Mac Criosail of Dublin had engineered and led a split in a very efficient Dublin Unit of the Irish Republican Army. He took with him almost half of the Volunteers in the city including many members of the "S" Company, all of whom had experience of active service.

Employed in the Electricity Supply Board (ESB), he was a night student in University College Dublin (UCD) and the National Students' Council had become a personal instrument of his. And a member of a notable cycling family, he also had considerable influence in the National Cycling Association and NACAT.

For almost a year he had worked on the Dublin Volunteers and undermined their allegiance to the Army leadership, stating that no further military action would be taken and eventually leading a breakaway.

Mac Criosail was never a member of GHQ, the Army Council or the Army Executive. He ordered all his followers to return arms and equipment to the Army and so no physical action was taken against his group.

Soon that grouping splintered again and he led the remainder into an alliance with Liam Kelly's Saor Uladh. Little military action resulted from them and the end result was that Liam Kelly emigrated to the United States in 1960 and in 1961 Mac Criosail stood as a candidate in Dublin to enter Leinster House. He was unsuccessful and that was the end of his political career.

The news from the international scene was much better. On June 19, the *Irish Press* reported "Egypt Hoists the Flag" in banner headlines. Colonel Nasser, the Egyptian Premier, presided over ceremonies which raised the Egyptian flag over the last symbol of British occupation in Egypt.

"The Egyptian Premier went from Cairo to Port Said to hoist the Egyptian flag over Navy House, the last British headquarters in the Suez Canal zone which the British turned over to Egypt last week at the end of 74 years of occupation."

Nasser said: "This is the moment of a lifetime, in fact this moment represents the achievement of a life," as he proclaimed Egypt free and independent.

"This generation has a rendezvous with destiny. For more than 2,000 years, invaders have ruled our country, but this generation is destined to see

the end of foreign rule.

"We pray Allah to lead us to success, and grant us guidance that no other flag will ever fly over this our homeland."

The report noted that he crowds cheered wildly, ships of many nations in Port Said sounded their sirens, and the guns of Fort Kaid Bay, silenced since a British bombardment in 1882, boomed out as the proclamation was made."

Col Nasser said Egypt was neutral in the East-West struggle. She would wage war against "imperialism, atomic bombs, racial discrimination and intervention in the international affairs of other countries."

Great stuff that for Irish people, many of who remembered Egyptian support for Lord Mayor Terence Mac Swiney on his hunger strike 36 years earlier.

Republicans saw in Egypt a possible ally or supporter in the world-wide anti-imperialist struggle. But more was to come before 1956 was ended!

Cumann Briseadh na Teorann – the Anti-Partition Association – (in the 26 Counties as distinct from the League in the Six Counties) sent a telegram to Col Nasser congratulating him on the withdrawal of British troops from his country.

"We salute the Egyptian people on their final expulsion of the British," it said, "Ireland still awaits her day."

But the very fact of British evacuation from the Canal zone of Egypt put even greater pressure on another people, the Cypriots. Having been ousted from one base area of the Middle East the British were determined more than ever to maintain their bases in Cyprus.

Sir Anthony Eden, who had succeeded Winston Churchill as British Prime Minister a year earlier, had this to say in 1956: "The lives of our people depend on Cyprus as a protection, guard and stage post to take care of this vital interest of ours – the oil. This is not imperialism. It is the plain duty of any Government and we intend to discharge it." (Speech in Norwich on June 1 – UI, July 1956).

British War Minister Anthony Head said: "Unless there is a complete disappearance of British influence in the Middle East, the importance of Cyprus as a base for Britain in the Middle East has not been, and I should say will not be, influenced by developments of that kind."

The British would say that they remained in Cyprus to protect the 18% Turkish minority (have we not heard that nearer home in Ireland?), but it was revealed that the black gold – oil – and bases to dominate the region needed to be maintained – especially in 1956 with British pullout from Egypt.

Irish support for the anti-British struggle in Cyprus was being expressed. The *Irish Press* of May 24 reported that Kilkenny Corporation on the proposition of Councillor Hayes, seconded by Alderman, seconded by Alderman Delaney voted sympathy with the relatives of the two executed Cypriots and with the Cypriot people.

The Corporation condemned the action as a "travesty of justice". Lady Bellew said this was a matter outside their domain.

The corporation also adopted a resolution from Cork Corporation protesting against "the ill-treatment of Republican prisoners in British prisons".

Kilkenny County Council also passed a resolution of sympathy with the relatives of the two Cypriots and "expressed the goodwill of the Irish people towards the Cypriots in their determined fight against the tyranny of the British Crown".

On June 18 the *Irish Press* reported that General George Grivas, the man believed to be "Dighenis", the leader of EOKA, escaped capture in south western Cyprus. A British statement said 5,000 troops had searched the wooded mountains around Kykko monastery for Nationalists.

Twenty-four British soldiers were taken to Akrotiri Hospital near Limassol with burns on June 17 following a big forest fire in the area troops were searching. Twenty-one of these soldiers died.

The British said EOKA started the fires to hinder the searches. Cypriot prisoners in Wormwood Scrubs prison, London, told the Irish Republicans that the Brits had lit the fires to flush out the EOKA men, but that the wind had changed and the flames consumed the Brits themselves.

Fulléann an feall ar an bhfeathaire!

(More next month. Ref: *An t-Eireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, May June and July 1956; the *Irish Press*, June 18, 19, May 24; *Sunday Press* May 20; *Irish Catholic* May 17; *Sunday Independent* June 10 and *Irish Times* May 19. "Irish")

'OPERATION HARVEST' AND THE BATTLE-SCHOOL

**50
Years
Ago**

IN late July 1956 a meeting of the Army Council of the IRA was presented with a draft document entitled "Operation Harvest".

It had been drawn up by the Director of Operations on GHQ Staff, Seán Cronin and it outlined a programme for an all-out military campaign against British occupation in the Six Counties scheduled to commence late that autumn and early winter.

Cronin and another Headquarters Staff member, Charlie Murphy, had just returned from a tour of IRA units in the Six Occupied Counties and Operation Harvest was to be amended a number of times before it was finally adopted by the Army Council.

The Annual General Army Convention for 1956 had met in late May. In contrast to the 1955 Convention which endorsed unanimously Army policy of the great arms raids and called for their continuance, there were two dominant viewpoints a year later.

Army policy since 1948 had been based on the necessity for a friendly and or neutral territory adjoining or near to the theatre of armed struggle to be used for training and supply of guerrilla forces and such purposes.

All available books, booklets and documentation of underground resistance and partisan movements engaged in WWII, had been studied by the Army leadership and the foregoing conclusion had been drawn.

However the previous December John A Costello, the head of the Dublin government had threatened the Republican Movement when he said publicly in effect "Your next move will be your last." And that the 26-County forces would be used to prevent further armed activity by Republicans in the Six Counties. Therefore the ground for supporting such activity south of the Border would be much narrower.

Accordingly, there was a strong view at the Army Convention that the remaining time and space available in the 26 Counties should be utilised to maximum effect, ie to launch the full-scale campaign with the fullest possible advantage.

A Dublin delegate at the convention stated that the time was opportune. "... now that Mid-Ulster had given us the green light" (a reference to the overwhelming Sinn Féin vote as opposed to the lost deposit of the Anti-Partitionist candidate).

The Chief-of-Staff, Tony Mogan, was more careful and went on record as saying that he was "not so sure the Mid-Ulster result was the green light." This was the second viewpoint.

It acknowledged and took into consideration the first point of view, but remained to be persuaded. The Army should not be constrained into premature action on the ground that "there was no alternative." There is always an alternative, and even several, which should be examined. Such might indeed be unpalatable,

As usual the convention elected an Executive, which in turn elected an Army Council. The Council consisted of Tomás MacCurtáin, chairperson, Tony Mogan, Larry Grogan, Paddy Doyle, Gearóid Mac Cárthaigh, Robert Russell and Charlie Murphy. Six substitutes were also elected. (See Ó Brádaigh biography, pp. 57, 58).

Early in July Gearóid became indisposed and was no longer available. He had been Director



• British troops search Greek Orthodox priests for arms at Kikko Monastery, former residence of exiled Archbishop Makarios.

of Training since 1951 and before that Adjutant-General. He had done an excellent job in the Training Department as the national and many local training courses and camps had shown.

Gearóid was replaced by the first sub, Ruairi Ó Brádaigh, who kept silent for the first couple of meetings, as he sought to 'learn his trade'.

Gearóid was a native of Cork city who was working in Dublin. A man of much experience, he had been interned at the Curragh in 1940 at the age of 19 and was held until 1944. He was regarded with great affection by the Volunteers. MacCurtáin, Megan, Grogan, and Doyle were all 1940s veterans. Russell, Murphy and Ó Brádaigh belonged to the late 1940s and early 50s.

Tony Mogan, a native of Co Meath was re-appointed Chief-of-Staff; Robert Russell of Dublin became Adjutant-General and Larry Grogan of Drogheda, a veteran of the 1920s, resumed as Quartermaster General. Seán Cronin, a native of Kerry who had spent some years in the USA, was Director of Operations.

Charlie Murphy of Dublin replaced Gearóid Mac Cárthaigh as Director of Training. Paddy Doyle of Belfast was OC Belfast Battalion.

In mid-July the normal national training camp was replaced by a more select and specialised camp called a "battle-school". Fifteen or sixteen Volunteers from all around the country were picked to participate.

It was held in the Wicklow mountains and the D/Operations was in charge, assisted by the D/Training. Cronin had produced a booklet of about 60 pages in a green cover entitled 'Notes on Guerrilla Warfare'.

The Volunteers on the battle-school were regarded as being already on active service. Each had a rifle which had to be with the Volunteer at all times – he was never to be separated from it.

The personnel rose at 6am, washed and shaved in the cold mountain stream and were put once through a specially-constructed 'assault course' before breakfast. Later in the day they had to negotiate the course several times.

This assault course had been specially built with barbed wire and rounded poles from the nearby forestry, under the direction of a former British Army officer.

It consisted of a series of obstacles, which had to be crossed at speed by the Volunteer car-

rying his rifle. These included a high jump, a water jump, crawling through coiled barbed wire, stepping on the back of the leading Volunteer who would lie prone on coiled wire and then rise and follow on.

On the last day of the week-long battle-school the 15 or so men had to go over the course with live rifle fire directed over their heads. Beyond cuts and scratches, no one was injured.

There was no basic training on weapons or explosives. All were presumed to have completed that long since. Instead it was the carrying out of ambushes and barrack attacks with a cover-party and an assault party acting in concert.

The covert advance to the objective and withdrawal afterwards were simulated. Mines were constructed, placed and exploded, as were canister-bombs and petrol bombs. Lectures were given in the evening and a strict programme was adhered to throughout.

Olive-green fatigues, including caps were issued and worn, and each man was responsible for his own enamel plate and mug together with a set of spoon, knife and fork. Latrines were dug and maintained.

At the conclusion, following the course of firing weapons in each case, each Volunteer was instructed to carry out such advanced training in his local area, presumably at the weekends.

In this manner a certain momentum was being built up and the advanced training was certain to sort out the men from the boys. For anyone with commonsense the trend was unmistakable.

Meanwhile, elsewhere the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle continued. In an interview published in Washington and carried in the *Irish Press* of April 17, the new Prime Minister of Ceylon, Mr Solomon Bandaranaike said that he had made up his mind that British forces based on Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) would "have to go".

"Having foreign bases on our soil is not at all consistent with our sovereign rights as a nation", he said in an interview with US News and World Report, a weekly news magazine.

"It is against my line of thinking in making Ceylon, the Switzerland of Asia. Also it would make us one of the first targets if war should break out."

Britain has a navy base at Trincomalee and

two air bases on the island.

He would have to examine "very carefully" the US recent decision to grant economic aid to Ceylon.

"I am not ruling out aid from any country in the world," he added. "But I must look into it very carefully to see what conditions might be attached", the *Irish Press* report concluded.

An *t-Eireanach Aontaithe!* The *United Irishman*, June 1956 noted that Britain was fighting a little publicised war against the people of her Aden protectorate in South-Western Arabia.

"She wants to hold their oil-rich land. They want independence. There is, of course, nothing particularly new in this kind of situation.

"Even the RAF bombing of isolated hill villages is not new. They practised such methods in India during the 1930s.

"What may be new is the curtain of silence Britain draws over her atrocities. She has successfully kept the whole business a secret from the world.

"Aden guerrillas, led by the crippled Salem Ali Maher (he was incapacitated during a British bombing raid on his native village), are hitting back.

"The British have an Air Vice-Marshal (LF Sinclair) commanding there. As well as RAF units, they have British-officered native levies.

At the beginning of July fifty years ago the leader of EOKA, 'Digenis', in a statement declared "open war" on British Occupation Forces in Cyprus. The British sentenced an eighth Cypriot to death on a charge of killing a Turkish-Cypriot policeman. Two Cypriots had already been hanged by the British.

Towards the end of July in a debate in the British Commons, a leading Conservative MP was reported as follows:

"Mr WE Elliot suggested the setting up of a Boundary Commission in Cyprus to delimit a Turkish and a Greek area and a British enclave ..."

The *Irish Press* of July 27 in an editorial said: "Here is a full parallel with Ireland – a demand for self-determination smashed down with overwhelming military force and then a proposal for Partition to be implemented by a Boundary Commission. We have not heard the end of Mr Elliot's suggestion.

"The Cypriots should be forewarned: Partition will destroy them too. The minority will be lifted into a privileged position. The majority, with British connivance, will be denied employment, their voting rights will be made ineffective, they will be penalised in their religion, their education, their appointments to higher posts.

"The economy of their island will be disrupted and they will never know prosperity. The worse of all settlements would be to dismember this historic island which, like ours, has lived as a unit through thousand of years of history.

"But Ireland stands as a warning that dismemberment leads only to frustration and ends only in unmeasurable national loss", the editorial concluded.

That was in 1956. It all came to pass with the 1959 London Agreement. Today, fifty years later, Cyprus stands divided, partitioned, with Turkish occupation forces in one section and British forces holding two 'sovereign base areas' within the other section.

Partition is the British legacy and solution in Palestine, India, Cyprus and Ireland. Trouble and strife are the order of the day in all four.

(More next month. Ref. Ruairi Ó Brádaigh – *The Life and Politics of an Irish Revolutionary* (pub 2006); An *t-Eireanach Aontaithe!* The *United Irishman*, June 1956 and The *Irish Press*, April 17 and July 27, 1956.)

FERMANAGH FEIS PARADE BANNED

**50
Years
Ago**

ON THE last Saturday in August 1956 the annual Bannockburn Preceptory parades took place as usual throughout the Six Counties.

One of these parades was provocatively staged through the overwhelmingly nationalist town of Strabane in West Tyrone.

Over the bridge on the River Foyle which forms the Border is the town of Lifford, administrative capital of Co Donegal, one of the bands due to take part in the march through Strabane "warmed up" with a parade around Lifford.

A single uniformed Garda followed it and people in general ignored it. However, before it re-crossed the border bridge, a man among the group of bystanders shouted "Up Nasser!" at it.

What was the significance of that cry 50 years ago? It was at that time the modern version of an ancient slogan in the history of the Irish nation struggling for liberation.

More than 600 years earlier the Irish Chieftains had enlisted the assistance of their Scottish cousins in the battle against English colonialism.

King Robert the Bruce of Scotland had in 1314 inflicted the greatest victory ever over England in the war for Scottish independence. It was at Bannockburn and the Irish brought over Edward Bruce, brother of Robert and crowned him High-King of Ireland and leader of Irish resistance to English aggression.

Mercenary "Gall-Oglagh" or Gallowglasses, heavily armed soldiers from "Innse Gall" or the Hibernian Islands of Scotland were engaged for centuries after that as the Panzer divisions or armoured units of the Irish forces facing the invader.

Later, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was England's enemy, Spain, which helped Ireland. Memories arise of the Spanish Armada, of Kinsale and of Eoghan Rua Ó Néill, a distinguished general in the Spanish Army, who came home to give us the benefit of his military experience.

Then it was the French, at Athlone, Aughrim and Limerick. A century later their revolutionary army was at Killala, Castlebar and Ballinacree.

In the 20th Century the Germans sent 20,000 rifles for 1916 and Roger Casement came by German submarine. In 1940, Seán Russell, IRA chief of Staff and Frank Ryan tried to land from another German submarine.

After WWII and with the British Empire in decline, ordinary Irish people rejoiced in the break-up of the British power and looked once more to the strong outsider to put manners on the British Bulldog.

The Third World was asserting its rights against imperial exploitation and colonialism and the Arabs were to the fore in this. Colonel General Abdel Nasser (1918-1970), President and Premier of Egypt, was most important Arab leader of the 20th Century.

Already in 1956, he had forced the evacuation of British troops from the Suez Canal Zone. At the end of July he was refused a loan for the building of the Aswan High Dam over the river Nile. This was done by Britain and the United States together with the World Bank.

Nasser responded by seizing the Suez Canal and nationalising it. Income from it would fund the building of the Aswan Dam in place of the international loans withdrawn as stated.

President Nasser was a hero to his own people, and other subject peoples, including the Irish. Hence the shout at the Bridge between Lifford and Strabane some weeks later.

The Irish man in the street looked to the strong outsider to draw the teeth of the English Lion and there was no better man for the job than Colonel Nasser who showed how it could be done!

It was said of Eoghan Rua Ó Néill that "the sword in his hand is of Spanish steel, but his hand is an Irish hand". As the Irish liberation movement in the second half of the 20th Century looked — not to Germany, France or Spain — but to the Third World for assistance, it could be said of the Irish Volunteer:



• Irish-American writer Séamus McManus addresses the gathering at the Newtownbutler, Co Fermanagh feis. On the platform with him is Very Rev T Canon Maguire, PP, Newtownbutler.

"The AK47 Kalashnikov in his hand is of (whatever) make, but his hand is an Irish hand." Up Nasser is right and everyone like him who faced down the imperialists.

The *Sunday Independent* of July 29 reported "wildly cheering crowds in Cairo heard President Nasser declare: 'The Egyptian people stand in arms and proclaim a general mobilisation against the imperialists'."

The British Treasury announced that the sterling assets of Egyptians in the United Kingdom have been brought under British exchange control. In Paris Foreign Minister Pineau categorically stated in the National Assembly: "France refuses to accept a unilateral action that is more political than economic and tends to limit the freedom of traffic on the Canal."

Nasser went on to say in Cairo: "I saw the Egyptian people rising up in arms to defend its rights, its dignity and its freedom to live."

"This spirit will enable us to be victorious and will not allow imperialism to defeat us. We shall march forward to realise our freedom and consolidate our sovereignty."

Saying that he would hold Britain and France responsible for any damage or delay to the freedom of shipping through the Canal, Nasser accused Britain of having usurped 44% of the Suez Canal Company's shares. Yet we shall pay her compensation."

Of M Pineau he said: "I shall leave it to the Algerians (then engaged in a War of Independence against French forces) to teach the French Foreign Minister a lesson in manners."

The *Sunday Independent* continued: "Hundreds of thousands of Egyptians lined the route from Alexandria to Cairo and gave President Nasser the wildest reception any Egyptian has received since King Farouk was deposed four years ago."

The *Irish Press* of August 2 reported President Nasser as saying in Alexandria that Britain was using the "reasoning pirates" in saying that Egypt had stolen the Suez Canal.

The world must realise that a country will either be independent or not. We will defend the Suez Canal with our blood. Imperialism and imperialists have been unmasked."

In the United States, Senator Joe McCarthy urged the use of Military force if necessary to keep the canal open. "The Communists will soon control one of the free world's most vital lines of communication and trade," he stated.

Meanwhile, the struggle in Cyprus continued. An *t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* in its July 1956 issue said: "The story of Cyprus today is a story of tyranny loosened on 500,000 almost defenceless people by British Imperialism. But the Cypriots are not entirely defenceless. Their resistance forces are growing and backed by a spirited population are

striking back with increasing strength. There is a lesson here for the Irish people."

The statement headed "Understanding" was placed prominently in the middle of page two, which was devoted almost entirely to the Cyprus struggle.

The *Irish Independent* of July 13 reported "Commons in Uproar over Cyprus". Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden said he was sending Lord Radcliffe to the island to make recommendations on a constitution for 'internal self-government', when 'terrorism' had been over-come.

Mr Gaitskill, leader of the Opposition, asked did the British Minister not realise that terrorism in the island is the direct result of the refusal of the [British] government to show any indication to the Cypriot people that the principle of self-determination will be implemented?

A Conservative MP's charge that Mr Gaitskill had made "a most highly treasonable statement" caused further noisy protests from the labour benches.

The Prime Minister said that the differences which the Government had with the Archbishop (Makarios) were not on the terms of discussions, but about his 'refusal to denounce violence'.

Surely this has a familiar ring to Irish people. Makarios was exiled without charge or trial to the Seychelles Islands several thousand miles away in the Indian Ocean.

The *Sunday Press* of July 1 reported "Poland seething with rebellion" while next day the *Irish Independent* piece was entitled "Workers Brought to Trial in Poznan." Rioting had flared and 300 were arrested.

The Editor of *Gazette Poznanski* said that many more rioters were killed than the 38 admitted by the Government. Students in the university city of Kracow tore down the red flag and hoisted the Polish national flag.

The Special Correspondent was quoted as saying that "the rising was influenced to a great extent by anti-Russian feeling, and was therefore just as much a nationalistic revolt as a blow by hungry workers."

Troops had been called out when workers staged a "we want bread" demonstration in the city. Reports from behind the Iron Curtain alleged worker's demonstrations also in Hungary and Yugoslavia. But more was to come...

At home in Ireland, the *Irish Independent* of July 4 quoted the 26-County Minister for External Affairs, Liam Cosgrave, as saying that "In the United Nations, of which we are now members, we are determined to miss no opportunity of seeking to undo the unnatural divisions of our country."

Speaking in Leinster House, he said: "It is a

matter for regret that the actions of the illusory quick solution by violence have impeded the progress in the development of more neighbourly relations."

He went on: "The climate in which violence flourishes, which is the inevitable result of loss of faith in constitutional methods, is nothing more or less than a predictable reaction to the abuse of constitutional processes whereby the most elementary democratic rights have been denied to the Nationalist minority in the Six Counties by gerrymander, discrimination in housing and employment and even open provocation by the paramilitary force usually called the B-Special."

Unlike Greece in the case of Cyprus the Dublin Administration never raised the question of British rule in the Six Counties at the United Nations. They sat in their seats and let it all pass by!

Then on July 17, the *Irish Press* reported that the Stormont Minister for Home Affairs, Captain Terence O'Neill had, under the Public Order Act 1951, banned the parade of school children to the annual Co Fermanagh Feis at Newtownbutler.

The Feis would go ahead, declared Very Rev. Thomas Canon Maguire, PP "as though Stormont did not rule our feis field and the band contest field."

RUC men visited schools in the locality, "warning teachers that the children must not march to the Feis or otherwise they must take the consequences."

A similar ban had been enforced the previous year causing clashes in which twelve civilians and five RUC men were injured. Eleven arrests took place and men were jailed.

Two years earlier there were also clashed between RUC and local people when Tricolours were seized when displayed from the Parochial House. In 1955, water cannons were used to drench local people and the formidable parish priest, Canon Tom Maguire himself.

Óraíd Osciail na Féise was delivered on that occasion by Tomás MacCurtáin, Republican leader and son of the martyred Lord Mayor of Cork.

Fifty years ago the speaker was the Irish-American author and writer Séamus MacManus (1861-1960). A founder member of Sinn Féin in 1905 he was born in Mountcharles/Tamattallon, Co Donegal and was married to the renowned poet Eithne Carbery, who had contributed to an anthology of poems with her husband and Alice Milligan of Tyrone.

The historical pageant banned from the town was held in the Feis field. Five streamers spanned the streets, including one which read: "Stormont declares Irish a foreign language."

The Newtownbutler Pipe Band carried their instruments through the main street. When the St Mary's Mountain Road Pipe Band, Derrylinn were crossing a public road from a field adjoining the feis grounds, they were ordered to stop playing their pipes by the RUC.

Séamus MacManus spoke of the dying British Empire: "the senile lion and the donkey of Stormont."

"The Six Counties had been left suffering. I am greatly afraid the rest of Ireland has forgotten you."

Douglas MacGinley, BL, referred to the Races of Castlebar when the English were chased by the Irish and the French, and said the day would come when the English would fly in the same way from every corner of the country.

Séan Nethercott, Enniskillen, made a strong appeal for a revival of the Irish language.

The platform party, including Canon Tom, more green, white and orange sashes.

On August 7, the *Irish Press* reported that the RUC had stopped the NACA (National Athletic and Cycling Association) Rás Taitteann at Lurgan and at Cookstown and seized Tricolour pennants from cars.

This massing of armed and steel-helmeted RUC at Newtownbutler and the assaults on the cyclists passing through by baton wielding police with officers using blackthorns certainly angered nationalist Ireland. All was being noted and considered.

(More next month. Refs. An *t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, July and August 1956; *Irish Press*, July 17, 18, 23 and August 7, 2, 8; *Sunday Independent*, July 29 and *Irish Independent*, July 4 and 13; *Sunday Press* July 1, 2, 2.)

ORGANISERS FOR ALL SIX COUNTIES

50 Years Ago

IN September 1956 the first of a team of full-time IRA organisers was selected and dispatched to the Six Counties.

He was Piaras Ó Dúill from the

Dublin unit, now an t-Athair Piaras Ó Dúill. OFM Cap., a Capuchin Father in the tradition of Fr Albert and Dominic for about 40 years.

Piaras was son of Ben Doyle of Dublin's South Circular Road, former OC of the IRA's Dublin Brigade in the 1920s and a founder member of the National Graves Association in 1926. Ben remained faithful until the end.

A brother of Piaras, Brendan, noted Gaeilgeoir, singer and actor died recently, Go ndéanadh Dia Grásta air.

Piaras becoming a priest was no surprise to Republicans. He had served six years imprisonment in A wing of Crumlin Road Jail, Belfast and on release went to work with the Irish language organisation, Gael Linn.

Later he joined the Capuchin branch of the Franciscan Order. He was simply following in the footsteps of Fr Liam Pilkington, of Sligo, former GOC 3rd Western Division, IRA in the 1920s; Brother Mickie Conway, Clonmel, Co Tipperary, activist in the 1930s and '40s. Canon Seán Kearney, Ard-Rúnaí of Sinn Féin in the early 1950s and Michael Joe O'Keeffe, Mullagh, Co Clare, Curragh internee 1957-59 who has ministered in Alabama, USA for more than 40 years now.

Piaras Ó Dúill was sent to a key Republican area in the center of the Six Counties, South Derry. He ranked as a staff officer attached to the Operations Department.

Other organisers were quickly selected and sent to all parts of the Occupied Zone. In all about a dozen were put to work at ground level in this manner.

They included Dáithí Ó Conaill of Cork who was allocated Fermanagh, John Kelly of Belfast (Tyronne), Tom Fitzgerald, Dublin (Derry City), Gerry Higginbotham, Dublin (Tyronne-Fermanagh, assistant to Ó Conaill), Mickey Buckley of Cork (Armagh) and Paddy Constantine of Dublin (Down). There were others.

The twelve were given full instructions before being dispatched to work with the local units in their area of jurisdiction. All were recalled to GHQ regularly to be debriefed, have their situations assessed and be given fresh instructions.

Security was emphasized and tightly observed and none of the organisers were uncovered. The Department of Training and of Operations oversaw all this activity which was reported on to the Army Council.

At the Council meetings Operation Harvest was discussed constantly and the advisability of implementing it in autumn/winter 1956 deliberated on.

Finally after an unusually intense debate it was decided to summon a meeting of the original Military Council which had drafted the Overall Plan for the Movement in 1951 and to submit the Operation Harvest document to it.

The MC was asked to advise the AC as to whether the Harvest scheme of things fitted in with the Overall blueprint. The Council sought to avail of all the ability available to it consistent with security.

There was a division of opinion on the Council with regard to this proposal. Four had voted in favour – McCurtain (chair), Paddy Doyle (Belfast), Russell and Ó Brádaigh. The remaining three had voted against – Magan, Grogan and Murphy.

Meanwhile there was no doubt in the 26



• This map shows British army, navy and airforce bases in the Six Counties. The very numerous RUC barracks are not included.

Counties as to the attitude of Leinster House in the event of further activity against the British occupation forces in the Six Counties – not to mention an all out resistance campaign.

This had been made abundantly clear once more in an interview with John A Costello. Head of the Dublin Administration by the *London Times* on the previous June 28.

Mr Costello gave his guarantee of action by the 26-Counties regime in collaboration with the British government in the event of further resistance. He was speaking on the occasion of the meeting in London of British Commonwealth (new name for 'Empire') Prime Ministers.

The interview was quoted in *An t-Eireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* of July 1956 and is of interest to Republicans and students of the period.

He said: "There were no political prisoners at the moment (presumably in the 26 Counties -Ed) and the closest watch was being kept to ensure that the small minority which was represented by the IRA did not cause more trouble. The action of the Catholic Church in condemning IRA methods had been most influential.

"The IRA had declared that their policy was to proceed against the British military in the north and in Britain, but every effort was being made by the Republican (sic) Government to prevent a recurrence of incidents.

"If they did occur notwithstanding his best efforts.....

The *Times* continued: "Mr Costello made it clear that offenders who came to the Republic (sic) after having committed offences in Britain or in the Six Counties would be treated as political prisoners not liable to extradition."

The *United Irishman* commented: "Mr Costello chose this method of telling Britain through her Imperial organ, *The London Times*, that Irishmen in the Occupied Six Counties who resist British rule will be jailed if they venture into the 26-Counties.

"He speaks of 'the small minority which was represented by the IRA' when he well knows that the Irish people if given the opportunity (as they recently were in mid-Ulster) would declare for the policy of resisting British rule in Ireland.

"Or as he put it to the *London Times*: 'The

IRA had declared that their policy was to proceed against the British military in the north... Our people know and our history proves that this is the only policy that can free Ireland.

"Why then does Mr Costello give Britain a guarantee at this time that he is opposed to the struggle of our people in Occupied Ireland to free themselves of foreign rule maintained by force?" the Republican organ concluded.

In the August edition of the same paper an article headed "Notes of the Month – A Country to Win" the following comment was made on Mr Costello:

"On other matters he – and his fellows – are quite explicit. The famous interview with the *London Times* is an example. Strange how none of our major newspapers here have bothered to comment on that!

"What it consisted of was a guarantee to the Empire – through the Imperial organ – on the eve of the Commonwealth Premiers' conference that young men fleeing from British terror in the north-east would not be given asylum in the 26-Counties. They'll be jailed, said Mr Costello in effect."

The same edition of the Republican paper carried a report of the Wolfe Tone commemoration in Trafalgar Square, London on June 17, when Tomás Ó Dubhghaill, Vice-President of Sinn Féin made an incisive observation:

"It is a fact that in our history the resurgence of national feeling has gone in cycles; after an all-out effort there is a period of apathy.

"We had an all-out effort between 1916 and 1921; the period of surrender brought us to apathy and disillusion. But now there is a change and the tide is starting to flow in our favour."

The front page of the paper reported on the posting of the First Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment from Cyprus to Omagh, Co Tyrone.

Field marshal Viscount Montgomery (of Alamein), Deputy Supreme Commander of NATO in Europe, flew from Paris to Southampton to address the British troops en route to Ireland.

He warned them to be on their guard while in Ireland. He told them that it was especially important for them to be watchful in Omagh and he referred to the raid on Omagh Barracks as an example. He said their arms and ammuni-

tion might be seized.

Montgomery had served in the British Army in Cork in 1920-21. As Major Montgomery he had been stationed in Victoria Barracks, Cork city. Later he stated that the use of regular troops against popular guerrilla forces was disastrous for the moral of the troops.

He has served in WWI and distinguished himself in North Africa, Italy and France in WWII, becoming Chief of the (British) Imperial General Staff 1946-48.

It is relevant to ask if fifty years ago he had forgotten the lessons dearly learnt in Cork against him by Liam Lynch, Tom Barry and the 'popular guerilla forces' of the First, second and Third Cork Brigades, Irish Republican Army?

Also on page one of the Republican organ Britain's Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd, is quoted as saying that the Imperial Government stood for the principle of self-determination of all nations.

The comment: "One might be inclined to congratulate them. How many lives has it lost to make them see this point of view? But congratulations would be premature, for he also says:

"What is a very different matter is the application of the principle. If it were to be accepted that people have a right to self-determination wherever they ask for it, it would make nonsense of organised international society'.

"So now you see – self-determination as long as you don't interfere with the British Empire. How about that famous 'patience and co-operation' Messrs Costello and de Valera tell us about?

"That fits in with the Empire plan too. You can talk as much as you like and as long as you don't DO (sic) anything the Empire statesmen aren't worried.

"Especially when you never blame THEM for the occupation of the country! After all – they believe in self-determination in principle also!"

The First World war was fought for 'the freedom of small nations' and the principle of national self-determination. A month after the end of WWI, in December 1918, the Irish people acting as a unit self-determined themselves.

The English Establishment never accepted the result. The answer was the Black-and-Tan regime and the division of the Irish unit of franchise into Six Counties and 26 Counties.

The Stormont Agreement of 1938 was based on the imposed British Government of Ireland Act 1920 and the Treaty of Surrender of 1921: Six Counties and 26 Counties.

The result of a referendum in the Six Counties would be decisive, successive British Secretaries of State declared. So the "application" of the principle is the critical point as the British Foreign Secretary stated fifty years ago. This can be used to negate and nullify the principle of national self-determination – as in the case of Ireland with partition in the 1920s.

(More next month. Ref. *An t-Eireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, July, August, and September 1956 and *The Times* of London, June 28.)

Beannachtaí

CONGRATULATIONS to Tom and Theresa Malone, Wexford, on their 50th wedding anniversary. From Cumann Pádraig Ó Pearail, Loch Garman.

CONGRATULATIONS to Tom and Theresa Malone, Wexford, on their 50th wedding anniversary. From Jock and PJ, Portlaoise POWs REPUBLICAN Sinn Féin, Limerick wish Des Long a speedy recovery following his recent operation. LIMERICK Republican Graves Committee wish Des Long a full recovery following his recent operation.

DARING PRISON ESCAPE IN ENGLAND ABORTED

**50
Years
Ago**

DURING October 1956 Bell records that "the increasingly hectic planning for the campaign was interrupted by one of the most daring operations ever conceived".

He records that Tony Magan had always been determined to get Cathal Goulding out of prison but Goulding had been cursed with incredibly bad luck.

Several plans had aborted and the most frustrating of all was when Goulding broke free into the prison yard. A rope tossed across the thirty foot wall was new and it curled up and remained out of reach for the prisoner.

Eventually, in order to hide his intentions and protect those outside, Goulding had to run for some sheds in a far corner of the prison yard where the two mobile patrols within the walls in time discovered him.

After that as an attempted escapee he was compelled to wear "patches", a version of prison uniform which distinguished him visibly among a crowd of prisoners in the exercise yard.

Magan's enthusiasm prevailed and a new attempt was launched. It was felt at leadership level that the rescue from the prison of Cathal Goulding, Séamus Murphy, Séamus McCollum and Joe Doyle would be so popular in Ireland that it "would tie the hands" of the Dublin government and prevent it from acting against the Movement as a result of the operation.

A successful action on these lines without any loss of life would, of course, also boost the morale of Republicans generally and of their supporters, which would in turn assist the preparations for the all-out campaigns.

The plans were vetted in detail by the Army Council. Maps of Walkfield Prison — where Frank Stagg was fated to die on hunger strike 20 years later — and of the surrounding area were viewed.

Goulding was informed through his line to Magan that arrangements were being made on the outside. However, this time the method of escape was to be by chartered aircraft direct to Dublin!

Aer Lingus was approached in Dublin and a DC3 aircraft was rented for the "Skellig Players, a not too well known Irish Drama Group conceived on the spur of the moment." (Incidentally, Ballinskelligs (Baile an Seailg) in the Breac-Ghaeltacht part of South Kerry was Séan Cronin's birthplace.)

Five Cumann na mBan "actresses" and ten IRA "actors" were to fly over to Huddersfield and give a Sunday night Irish drama. Séan Garland and "wee" Séan Cronin (not to be confused with the "American" Séan) were already in England setting up the break.

So on a fine Sunday morning the Skellig Players took off from Dublin with dismantled Thompson guns and bits and pieces of equipment in their "rather lumpy" costume bags. At Huddersfield the players piled out and into a rented bus.

The actresses were dropped out along the way to take in a film. They were in care of Noel Kavanagh. The bus sped on to Wakefield. On arrival the plot aborted when Goulding and his comrades failed to get over the wall.

The bus ride back to Huddersfield was long and devious. Because of delay there was anxiety that the IRA air force might have departed for Dublin without them. However all of the players returned home successfully.

When GHQ went over the operation the prisoners were still in Wakefield and the IRA had put up £800 for the DC3 and another £200 for expenses. "The IRA was broke", Magan told Charlie Murphy. Bell says this was "no novelty".

Bell goes on: "As every man in the street could tell you at the time, the IRA was getting money from the United States but never in the glorious vast amounts rumoured; in fact, things were very tight as a captured GHQ cash book read out in court in January 1959 (recte 1957) showed."

Coogan is more critical: "When the rescuers

got to the prison they found that there was a police patrol car circling the walls at regular intervals, and that alarm bells were sounding from within the prison. The raid was called off."

He went on: "The incident was in a way typical of the IRA attitude: concern for a captured comrade (all four comrades in the prison were to be rescued, Ed.) great daring and ingenuity, and a wasteful expenditure of money, energy and potentially Resistance Movement, with comrades of personnel."

Coogan under-

lines the fact that many leadership figures had been risked two months before the campaign proper was scheduled to begin.

Back in Ireland MacCristail had not delivered on his guarantee of "immediate action" the previous summer. As a result a sincere, if misguided, section of his men attempted action themselves.

In September, the Fowler mansion on 800 acres of land near Enfield, Co Meath was entered stealthily by night. Five shotguns, a revolver and a sporting rifle (.22) were taken from the 'gun-room' without disturbing the occupants.

It was presumed in Republican circles to have been the work of the splinter from MacCristail's grouping. These young men proceeded to the Donegal border, near Laghy and Ballintra where they openly engaged in training and allowed themselves to be interviewed by the press.

Some of them later made their way to South Leitrim, from which more press reports emanated. There was no action against British forces and a number of them ended up in Mountjoy on charges of possessing shotguns without a licence.

All this was not helping the IRA's preparations for the campaign as it was stirring up police vigilance on both sides of the Border and possibly giving an excuse for a general crack-down by Leinster House.

The *Irish Independent* of September 17 noted: "Their presence (at Ballintra) caused a warning to be sent out to all naval, military and air force establishments in Northern Ireland. RUC stations along the Border intensified security precautions over the weekend and patrols by Special Constabulary especially along the Fermanagh-South Donegal border were strengthened."

The men in Mountjoy were released after a few weeks, having been given nominal fines. But as delegates gathered for the Ard Fheis of Sinn Féin in November, reassurances were sought that it was not the Republican Movement which was "sending young men out with shotguns" to face the British forces.

In Cyprus, EOKA declared a truce in September. The British did not take advantage of it to initiate talks with political leaders and Archbishop Makarios remained confined in exile in the Seychelles Islands in the Indian ocean.

The occasion passed and EOKA resumed action. A substantial target, Kyrenia police barracks was raided and arms and ammunition were seized.

Then the British hanged three more EOKA fighters, bringing to eight the total to die in this manner for Cypriot freedom. Two — already adverted to in this series — had been hanged in May.

In August, Andreas Zakor (25), Iakovas Patsatos (22) and Chirilaos Michael (22) were executed. Before his death Andreas, speaking also for his two comrades, appealed publicly for the life of an elder Briton, John A. Cremer taken prisoner by Cypriots. Cremer was immediately set free.

Before the hangings Andreas's aged father said: "We do not want condolences; we are proud of Andreas." The dead patriot himself had conspired



General Grivas, leader of the EOKA Cypriot Resistance Movement, with comrades.

relatives before his execution:

"Don't worry about us. We are prepared to meet death with courage."

An Irish newspaper commented: "The hangings recall the fate of the Manchester Martyrs — Allen, Larkin and O'Brien — immortalized in TD Sullivan's 'God Save Ireland' and quoted the opening stanza 'High Upon the Gallows Tree, etc'"

The *New York Times*, August 9, said that the Cyprus issue was

"driving towards an explosion that could have even more serious consequences than President Nasser's action" in seizing the Suez Canal.

Failure to resolve the crisis satisfactorily, the editorial said, could result in disastrous consequences to the Balkan Alliance and conceivably the NATO Alliance.

"In the state of the world's history", the *Times* said, "It does not take many acres or many thousands of people to set a big fire."

The Archbishop of Kitium, acting head of the Greek Orthodox Church in Cyprus, prophesied that the hangings would "widen the gap between the British Government and the people of Cyprus."

The *Irish Press* of August 10 reported that as senior British officials watched the executions at dawn, prisoners in the Central Prison, Nicosia, created uproar and cried clearly "EOKA".

A general protest strike of workers took place throughout the entire island. Greek papers in Cyprus were restrained in comment because British regulations could cause closure of their plants and other penalties if they "incited trouble".

Then on September 21 another three were hanged. They were Andreas Panayides (22), Setlios Mavromatis (23) and Michael Koutsos (22). The *Sunday Press* reported (September 23) that Andreas told a Greek priest just before he died: "Tell Harding (British Governor) I forgive him as well as my executioners".

The *Sunday Press* quoted from a *Manchester Guardian* editorial of September 21, 1956: "In Cyprus we are carrying out a policy of drop by drop — drop by drop of the gallows trap... But the two or three who go through the mill of trial and execution — here are the men who live on people's tongues."

"We are handing Cyprus its Peasants and Connollys, probably with as much benefit to ourselves as we reaped forty years ago."

The *Irish Press* of September 22 reported that Greek Cypriots staged a "mourning strike" for the three fighters of freedom. Stelios was accused of shooting at two British Airmen while Michael and Andreas were accused of killing an airman.

Giant EOKA banners strung across a street in Nicosia were removed by Brits.

The few Greek Cypriot youths seen on the streets of Nicosia that day all wore black armbands. A Greek priest who was within the prison when the executions took place said the three sang the Greek anthem before they died.

The *Irish Press* went on: "Nicos Kranidiotis, secretary-general of the Cypriot Ethnarchy was today served with a detention order and sent to Kokkiniotritimha camp."

"M. Kranidiotis has been under interrogation since September 5, when Sir John Harding described him as a 'dangerous person who should not be left at large'."

"He was present at all talks between Archbishop Makarios and Governor Harding, as well as those between the exiled Ethnarch [Makarios] and the [British] Colonial Secretary. Mr Lennox-Boyd."

In other words he knew too much about British

policy in Cyprus and needed to be silenced. What is being recalled here is another people going through the agony of struggle against British rule, just as did the Irish from 1916 to 1923.

Then on Sunday, September 30, three inscribed plaques were unveiled at the base of the Redmond Memorial in Redmond Square, Wexford. It was the centenary of the birth of John Redmond (1856-1918), leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party in the British Parliament at Westminster.

Redmond while seeking Home Rule for Ireland in 1914 agreed to the "temporary exclusion" of the Six North-Eastern Counties in deference to the Unionists. In September of the same year he called on the Irish Volunteers to join the British Army then engaged in WW1.

He died in 1918 and in December of the same year his party was wiped out by Sinn Féin in the general election. His brother Major Willie Redmond was killed in action in 1917 while serving with the British forces and his seat in East Clare was taken in a by-election by Sinn Féin.

Sir John Esmonde, SC one of the three surviving members of the Irish Parliamentary Party, unveiled the plaques to the Redmond family members. Joe Stewart, Stormont MP, Dungannon spoke "on behalf of the Nationalists of the Six Counties."

The *Irish Independent* of October 1 said "the ceremonies were an indication of unity among all shades of political opinion in their earnestness to solve the problem of partition."

James Dillon, 26-County Minister for Agriculture said: "Let me declare again with pride, that I can now, as I was the day we buried him, a proud and unrepentant Redmondite."

General Richard Mulcahy, 26-County Minister for Education and for the Gaeltacht, represented Taoiseach John A. Costello at the ceremony. A message from Mr Costello was read by Sir John Esmonde.

It quoted from one of Redmond's early speeches: "The one great principle of the Irish question must be the recognition of the 'Divine' right of Irishmen and Irishmen alone to rule Ireland. (The 1916 Proclamation said Irishmen and Irishwomen!)"

That night a Symposium was held in the Theatre Royal, Wexford. Speakers included Prof D Gwynn, UCC, Prof Mary O'Donovan Sullivan UCG, Dr FS Lyons, Fellow of TCD and Very Rev EJ Coyne, SJ, Vice-Provincial who referred to John Redmond as a Jesuit pupil.

Prof Sullivan said that Redmond did not believe that England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity.

Mr Éamon de Valera presided as Chancellor of the National University of Ireland. He felt it was his duty as Chancellor to be present due to the work of the Irish Parliamentary Party in getting the University Act of 1908 passed, under which the NUI was founded.

He continued: "It was against the view that the Irish people should fight in the first world war. I felt that if small nations were to be defended, here was one small nation that deserved to be defended."

He thought we had the grit to triumph over the difficulties that beset us at the present time.

However the *Independent* noted in a panel that "Mr Keyes, Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, speaking at the ceremony, announced that it was proposed to issue a commemorative stamp early the next year to the memory of John Redmond."

The stamp was duly issued in 1957 as a further part of the effort to rehabilitate Redmond, whose party in the British parliament cheered the news of the executions of the 1916 leaders.

Tom Clarke's centenary of birth the following year, 1958, went by officially unmarked — no stamp, no commemorative ceremony.

A veteran Fenian, he had suffered in a Victorian jail in England 1883-98, was the first to sign the Proclamation in 1916 and was rewarded for his life-long efforts by a British firing squad. The message was clear: all honour to Redmond — none to Clarke.

(More next month. Ref. *The Secret Army* by J Bowyer Bell; *The IRA*, by TP Coogan; *Irish Independent*, September 15 and October 1; *New York Times*, August 9; *Irish Press*, August 10 and September 22; *Sunday Press*, September 23; *Manchester Guardian*, September 21.)

ARD-FHEIS: EXERCISE IN CONSOLIDATION

**50
Years
Ago**

THE Annual Ard-Fheis of Sinn Féin in late October was headlined on the front page of *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* in the November

1956 issue.

Meeting in the O'Connell Hall, Upper O'Connell Street, Dublin some 200 delegates heard the President, Pádraig Mac Lógain, "deliver a powerful address on the aims and objectives of the Republican Movement today".

"He said that in the past 12 months a concerted effort had been made to discredit and finally smash the movement to pieces.

"That it had emerged from these onslaughts and the forces emerged from these onslaughts and the forces arrayed against it to progress to new strength is a fact, Mr Mac Lógain said, that can be added today to the record of the movement.

"They well realized why they were being attacked on every front, he said. The enemies of Republicanism sought to destroy the Movement and crush it out of existence".

Delegates from branches in Ireland, Scotland and England were present. Messages of greeting were received from the USA, Canada, Australia and South Africa.

Pádraig Mac Lógain continued: "As part of an Overall Plan evolved by the Republican Movement to establish a National Government exercising, or actively attempting to exercise jurisdiction over all Ireland, Sinn Féin entered the contest of elections to Westminster last year.

"Plans have now been made to provide the people of the Six Counties during the next General Election to Stormont with an alternative to supporting candidates selected by party and/or sectarian interests, and with the opportunity of selecting representatives to a National Government.

"Complimentary to the preparation of these plans the initial steps have been taken to enter candidates in the next General Election in the 26 Counties ——. All of this was "part of a united and positive effort to compel Britain to withdraw her forces of occupation from Irish soil".

The *Irish Independent* of October 21 listed the new Ard Chomhairle as follows: Uachtarán: P Mac Lógain; Leas-Uachtarán: Tomás Ó Dúibhail, Margaret Buckley; Rúnaíche: Micheál Treinhear, Belfast and Máire Nic Ghabhann, Armagh; Cisteoirí: Paddy O'Hagan, Armagh and Éamonn Mac Thomáis, Ath Cliath; Liam Earley TC, Cork; G Dearnle, Dublin; Tony Mangan, Dublin; Gearóid Mac Carthaigh, Dublin and Cork; Robert Russell, Dublin; Tomás Mac Giolla, Tipperary; Paddy Doyle, Belfast and Pádraic Ó Ceallaigh, Galway.

Ó Ceallaigh and Rúairi Ó Brádaigh had an equal number of votes for the last seat. Ó Ceallaigh won in a toss-up and Ó Brádaigh was co-opted at the first meeting of the new Ard-Chomhairle.

Viewed retrospectively, the 1956 Ard-Fheis was largely an exercise in consolidation and tying up ahead of the great storm which would break out shortly afterwards.

At the Army Council, a report was read from the Military Council to which the Operation Harvest plan had been referred to see if it fitted with the Overall Plan of the Movement.

The Military Council had been unable to agree. Mac Curtáin and Mac Lógain felt that not even four of the five conditions for an all-out campaign had been met. In particular the ground had not been developed sufficiently among the nationalist people of the Six Counties. The rest of the M.C. wished to go ahead with the campaign.

However they all agreed with drawing up a list of recommendations for steps to be taken in the event of the campaign proceeding. Also a meeting of the Army Executive was called and they were filled in on the situation. As six of the Council were also Executive members this exercise consisted of briefing the remaining six. Searching questions were asked by Councillor Liam Earley of Cork.



• Egyptian and other students marching through Dublin to deliver a protest note on Britain's actions to the British Embassy.

Then in mid-November came a signal that Liam Kelly's Saor Uladh and Mac Criostáil's group had forged a working relationship. The *Irish Press* of November 12 reported that six British Customs Posts in Counties, Tyrone, Armagh and Fermanagh were destroyed.

"The posts destroyed were: Tullydonnell, 4 1/2 miles north of Dundalk; Kinawley, about 2 miles inside the Fermanagh border; Moybridge (Aughnacloy), 600 yards from the frontier on the main Monaghan road; Carnagh, 4 1/2 miles south of Keady, Co. Armagh; Middletown, 9 miles south-west of Armagh and Clontiverts, Newtownbutler, 500 yards from Clones.

"In some cases the records were destroyed. All except that at Middletown were blasted by high explosives. The Middletown post, opposite which stands a two-story house, was demolished with an oil bomb.

"A partly burned sub-machine gun, and some rounds of automatic ammunition, were found beside the burned Middletown post".

Whether abandoned deliberately or not, the discovery of the automatic weapon indicated that an organised body with military equipment was involved. This was more serious than the shotguns and 22 sporting rifle of the Mac Criostáil splinter group.

A clue was given at an "anti-imperialist and anti-Communist meeting" held in College Green, Dublin by the National Students' Council, a creation of Mac Criostáil. The speakers included a Russian and an Egyptian and Soviet actions in Hungary and British actions in Suez and Cyprus were condemned.

The *Irish Press* of November reported: "The demonstrators carried Egyptian, Hungarian and Greek flags. They also carried anti-imperialist and anti-Communist posters and slogans calling for the release of political prisoners in the Six Counties and in Britain".

Significantly the *Irish Press* also reported that Senator Liam Kelly spoke on the platform:

"The people down here should make up their minds that if they really wanted freedom, they should adopt the means of the Cypriots, the Hungarians and the Egyptians, he said."

It was the first public demonstration of a working relationship between the Mac Criostáil and Kelly groupings.

But what of the twelve IRA organisers within the Six Counties and how far did the destruction of the Six Customs posts along the Border affect them?

Certainly security measures were stepped up which did not help them. Dáithí Ó Conaill reported that foot patrols of RUC in the towns were immediately doubled from one man to two. In Lisnaskea, the pair on duty were accompanied by an Alsatian dog.

He himself, posing as a student of speleology (the scientific study of caves), was held up and questioned. When pressed, he discoursed at some length on the Marble Arch caves in Fermanagh, near to the Culeagh Mountains. He was allowed to proceed.

References at the College Green meeting to Hungary and Egypt in anti-imperialist and anti-

colonial conflict arose from events on the international scene which had grabbed the world's attention.

In Hungary, following Stalin's death in 1953 the pro-Soviet hardliner Rakosi was replaced by János Nagy as premier. Nagy loosened political and economic control but was ousted in 1955.

Rakosi was returned to power and his Stalinist methods spurred discontent. On October 23, 1956 more than 200,000 protestors crammed into the square outside the Hungarian Parliament. They were addressed by student leaders who had penned a manifesto for an uprising — the Sixteen Points.

Their demands included free elections, the right to strike, the expulsion of 75,000 Soviet troops based in Hungary.

As it became apparent that the Hungarian government would not repress the uprising and with János Nagy returned to power as premier, the Soviets sent in a massive military force.

At dawn on November 4 they struck. The *Irish Press* of November 5 reported: "Messages from Hungarian sources told of heroic resistance, street by street and house by house, as the Russian armour and aircraft attacked Budapest, turning the city into a sea of fire and blood.

"The Russians, with their enormous superiority in armour and fire power, spread their attack over the entire country. Cardinal Mindszenty, released only last week from a Communist prison, found refuge in the US Embassy.

"There was no definite word about the fate of Premier Nagy and his Government, last reported awaiting the Soviet advance in Hungary's Parliament building".

A more pro Soviet government, headed by János Kádár was installed. In 1958, János Nagy was secretly executed.

The Irish people were deeply stirred by the images of "Soviet tanks crushing Hungarian freedom fighters like eggshells under their tracks". Refugees flooded into Ireland and were accommodated in a disused military camp at Knockalishen, Co. Clare.

It was a good time to start a resistance campaign against British Rule in Ireland. And the situation in Egypt exploded about the same time as that in Hungary, adding fuel to the flames internationally.

It emerged later that England, France and Israel had entered into a conspiracy to recover the Suez Canal for the imperial powers.

On October 29, 1956 Israeli armed police suddenly invaded the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula. They quickly occupied the Peninsula and moved towards the Suez Canal.

France and Britain, declaring their intention to protect the canal and allow British and French troops to occupy strategic points in the canal zone.

Egypt rejected the ultimatum and Britain and France landed troops in the Suez Canal zone on October 31, 1956. By ten days a ceasefire was effected. United Nations forces soon replaced the British and French troops in the canal zone.

Meanwhile, the conflict raged. An Egyptian communiqué, for instance, said that 104 people had been killed in daylight bomber attacks and

that 14 British and French aircraft had been shot down.

"Thousands in the streets of Cairo looked on as two British jets made a low-level attack during the day. Loud cheers went up as one of them was seen to be hit and went screaming downwards in a crazy dive".

The *Irish Press* of November 7 carried a report from a British journalist headed "The death Agony of Port Said: As I write I am flying directly over the town, looking down to where British Commandos, landed this morning, are locked in a fierce house-to-house struggle with its Egyptian defenders.

"I saw thousands of terrified Egyptians fleeing along the Elkl Menzala Canal. Women with babies, men dragging children, old people with robes flying — all pounding along to escape from the stricken town and the battle as we roared over their heads." (TF Thompson with the British Forces in Port Said).

Russia had joined the USA in the UN Security Council to demand an immediate withdrawal by Israel. The British and French Governments had ordered a ceasefire in response to US pressure it was believed.

As UN forces took over, the whole British-French-Israeli conspiracy had come to nothing and "a profound feeling of relief circled the world".

The *Irish Independent* of October 22 reported another incident in England's dirty war in Kenya against Land and Freedom Army, called the 'Mau Mau'. Declan Kimatho, a leader of the organisation was captured at dawn on October 21.

Time after time he had escaped British troops and police on his trail. In a forest 120 miles north of Nairobi his luck ran out.

"A fake gang caught the 34-year-old commando while trying to escape from the forest into a native reserve. He was wounded in the thigh by gunshot and taken to Nyero Hospital."

Kimatho was another victim of the 'travelling gallows' used by British forces, no doubt. The fake gang was an old tactic used against guerrillas.

Also called a 'counter-gang' it consisted of a unit dressed as locals, armed as guerrillas and used to fool the local population. But such units often met a sudden end.

The *Irish Times* of November 1 carried a report of a debate in the Cumann Gaelach of University College Dublin on the motion "That the Irish language cannot be revived without suitable help from the Church".

Among the speakers was Seán Ó Brádaigh then a second year student at the college. He said that if they were to have a Gaelic nation, they must have the help of the clergy. Maynooth College was founded with British money and since then the Catholic Church had become Anglicised.

"Most of the clergy had been against the language and with the exception of Dr John McHale of Tuam, none of the bishops did anything but hinder the movement.

"In the past, the church had opposed all forms of nationalism, they had hindered and condemned Wolfe Tone, they had opposed Thomas Davis, they had excommunicated the Fenians, they had attacked the IRA during the War of independence, and in 1922 they had refused the Sacraments to Republicans."

At this stage the Chairman, Dr Philbin, Bishop of Clonfert, pointed out that the speaker was not keeping to the motion under discussion. Ó Brádaigh continued to speak about Republicanism and the chairman again pointed out that the chair must be obeyed.

Ó Brádaigh: "I am not against the Catholic Church and I find it difficult and distasteful to say these things. However, they are true and they must be said."

The Rev Seosamh Ó Muirthile SJ, the President of Conradh na Gaeilge, Tomás Ó Muircheartaigh agus Antoine MacGobann also spoke.

Winding up the debates, Dr Philbin said that some people believed that the Church had a duty to revive Irish but he would not agree that that she had any such duty.

The *Irish Times* report was headed: "Church has no duty to revive Irish — De Philbin."

(More next month. Ref: *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, November 1956; *Irish Times*, November 1; *Irish Independent*, October 21 and 22 and *Irish Press*, November 5, 7, 12 and 17.)

RESISTANCE CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

**50
Years
Ago**

ON the morning of December 12, 1956 a landlady in the West of Ireland told her lodgers with satisfaction: "The North got a quare oul' riser out of it last morning". This

was caused by the Éire (sic) government's ban on publication of such statements, it said.

The IRA proclamation was as follows: "Resistance to British rule in occupied Ireland has now entered a decisive stage. Early today, Northern units of the Irish Republican Army attacked key British occupation installations.

"Spearheaded by Ireland's freedom fighters, our people in the Six Counties have carried the fight to the enemy. They are the direct victims of British Imperialism and they are also the backbone of the national revolutionary resurgence.

"This is the age old struggle of the Irish people versus British aggression. This is the same cause for which generations of our people have suffered and died. In this grave hour, all Irishmen and women, at home and abroad, must sink their differences, political or religious, and rally behind the banner of national liberation.

"We call on Irishmen in the British armed forces to stand by the motherland and refuse to bear arms against their own countrymen. We call on members of the RUC and B-Special Constabulary to cease being tools of British Imperialism and either stand one side or join us in the fight against tyranny.

"We warn them that should they reject this plea they will be adjudged renegades by the Irish Resistance Movement.

"This is the fight of the Irish nation struggling to be free and in it all Irish men and women must play their part.

"They must recognise too that we want no aid from any foreign power and have received none and that in the final analysis it is the Irish people themselves — by their sacrifices, their endurance and their will to victory — who must free Ireland.

"The whole of Ireland — its resources, wealth, history and tradition — is the common inheritance of all our people regardless of religious belief. The division of this country by Britain, and its subjection to British political control in the north, and to British economic domination in the south, must now be ended forever.

"It is up to this generation of Irish men and women to resolve for all time our unity, independence and freedom from foreign domination. The alternative, if the present situation continues, is extinction as a nation.

"The foe will use his considerable resources to divide us by fanning the fires of bigotry and sectarianism — twin enemies of Irish Republicanism. Let us be on our guard; a free Ireland cannot tolerate the one or the other.

"Out of this national liberation struggle a new Ireland will emerge, upright and free. In that new Ireland we shall build a country fit for all our people to live in.

"That then is our aim: an independent, united, democratic Irish Republic. For this we shall fight until the invader is driven from our soil and victory is ours."

The above paragraphs beginning "The whole of Ireland..." "It is up to this generation..." and "The foe will use..." were in fact omitted from the text given in the *Northern Whig*. The *Resistance* version is the most complete and even it leaves out the first two sentences of the proclamation.

The *Whig's* omissions show its lack of concern with the comprehensive nature of the full Irish national demand and its reluctance to give space to the anti-sectarian nature of Irish Republicanism.

The small omission by *Resistance* seems to indicate a hesitancy in calling the stage of the campaign begun on December 12, 1956 "decisive". Perhaps when *Resistance* was first published in December 1957 the author was uneasy as to its crucial or decisive status. But these two sentences were dropped from the January 1957 edition of the *United Irishman* anyhow.

The 1956 proclamation was written by Tony Magan, the IRA Chief-of-Staff, on December 12 of that year. Magan had joined the movement in the mid-30s, had been on active service in England during the 1939-40 Bombing Campaign there, was interned at the Curragh 1940-45, was

jailed again in 1946 and was back on active service in the Six Counties and in England in the early 1950s. He served on GHQ Staff in 1940 and from 1947 to 1957.

Magan was a proud man as he read what the *Belfast Newsletter* editorial of December 13 called the "high-flown language" of the Army Council statement to an emergency meeting of that body on the evening of December 12. It was the culminating point of twelve years work since 1945.

The full text was agreed unanimously by the Council and hopes were high for the future. Larry Grogan who had signed the 1939 Ultimatum to the British cabinet was openly enthusiastic. It was his third time around since 1920. Tomás Mac Curtáin was guardedly optimistic.

Of the five points required in the Overall Plan for a successful military campaign, the following can be said:

Arms and Ammunition; sufficient arms were there in December 1956, ammunition was scarce, but neither small arms nor ammunition was a problem right up to 1962 when the campaign was halted.

Explosives, detonators, commercial and electric, black fuse, etc were scarce but "more than we ever expected" was captured on December 12 (Seán Cronin reported to GHQ) and these munitions were never a problem up to 1962. In fact stores had to be disposed of then, because they could not be conserved.

Funds: This was a definite problem area in 1956 but while difficult sometimes, was never critical until the very end in 1962.

Trained Personnel; Never a problem at any stage 1956-62.

Support: This was a vital area. The ground had been well prepared in Mid-Ulster, it was agreed, due to the three successive elections in 1955-56 but the remainder of the Six Counties needed development. This became more and more obvious after the first two years - Dec '56 - Dec '58. Yet without continual basic public support it would have been impossible to operate at all.

On December 12, 1956 also the Publicity Committee of Sinn Féin met and published a statement which received scant mention in the 26-County newspapers or radio. The *Belfast papers* did carry it and it deserves mention here.

An altered version of the Sinn Féin statement, signed Máire Ní Ghabhann, Mícheál Tréinríth, (Co-Rúnaíthe) was carried in *An t-Eireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, January 1957.

The *Belfast Newsletter* and the *Northern Whig*, both Unionist papers, published a similar text.

It read: "In the light of today's uprising of militant Republicans in British-Occupied Ireland, Sinn Féin feel it imperative that the following statement be issued to the Irish people.

"Irishmen have again risen in revolt against British aggression in Ireland. The Sinn Féin organisation state to the Irish people that they are proud of the risen nation and appeal to the people of Ireland to assist in every way they can the soldiers of the Irish Republican Army."

One of the Dublin dailies (possibly the *Irish Times*) on December 13, carried two additional paragraphs:

"It was obvious that the young men of this generation would have to rise up as the young men of other generations have risen against such tyranny.

"Only when Ireland is completely free and independent will Ireland be at peace. Sinn Féin appeals to the Irish people to support Sinn Féin policy — the establishment of an All-Ireland parliament, unfettered by any outside power."

The more measured response, signed by the two Ard-Rúnaíthe and carried in the January *United Irishman*, decried the failure of constitutional methods over 35 years to resolve the national question and stated that in such circumstances the events of December 12 were inevitable.

It was said around that the first version of the Sinn Féin statement was more suitable to a military organisation and that an appeal to political action would have been more appropriate to a political body.

In the flurry and excitement of the time, much of this passed unnoticed.

However on December 29, Stormont banned Sinn Féin and declared it an illegal organisation, a ban which remained in force until 1974 a full 18 years.

The *Sunday Independent* of December 30 quoted "senior police officers in Belfast" as saying that "the authorities had no other alternative [to the ban] in view of the fact that these organisations have approved of the virtual declaration of war against Northern Ireland."

In the circumstances of the time this proscription was probably inevitable, just as *An t-Eireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* was banned

Resistance



by Stormont following on the Omagh Raid in 1954.

The attacks on December 12 had ranged from the air and radar installation at Torr Head in Co Antrim to Derry where the BBC relay transmitter station in the city was blown up and in the county a courthouse at Magherafelt was gutted by fire.

In Armagh city the British military barracks was attacked. An RUC man was wounded when a police patrol opened fire on two Irish freedom fighters in a parked van. In Newry a B-Special training hut was burned.

A new Territorial Army Barracks was blasted at Enniskillen and two bridges across the River Erne — Lady Brook bridge near Derrylin and Carry bridge linking with Inishowen Island — were blown. In Newtownbutler, RUC and B-Specials fired on freedom fighters but their fire was returned and they withdrew.

Explosives were seized from magazines in Fermanagh and Armagh. A "ring of steel" was set up by 3,000 British troops, RUC and B-Specials in mountainous terrain in North Antrim. With tracker dogs and spotter planes they combed out the area for over a week. Apart from three freedom fighters captured on the first night they failed to locate the flying column.

The men had mistaken a private car used by RUC for one of their own. Those taken prisoner were Tony Cooney (21), Willie Gough (20) and Jimmy Linehan (20) all from Cork city. Near Armagh city Séamus Heuston (23) of Keady and James Oliver Smith (19) of Bessbrook were seized in a parked car. Heuston's arm was broken and he received 18 stitches to his head. Leonard Magill (22) of Lurgan (a brother of Brendan then working in England) was taken near Dungannon GAA park.

On December 14, backing up the warning of two days earlier, RUC garrisons in Co Fermanagh were tasked: Lisnakea where a major assault was put in, Derrylin and Roslea where a diversionary attack took place.

Public opinion was stirred deeply by all this activity, reminiscent of the Black-and-Tan War. Local councils passed resolutions in support of Irish freedom. Sinn Féin members sold *An t-Eireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* — and not just the current issue but all the back numbers available. Prisoners' collections were boosted to undreamed of proportions.

There was a "rush to the colours". Pádraig Mac Lógaín. President of Sinn Féin was a publican in Port Laoise. Two young Volunteers from South Tipperary, Domhnall Ó Lúbhail, a teacher of Irish and Donncha Ó Faoláin, a bank official, visited him and demanded to be sent on active service immediately.

Both has training and military experience but Mac Lógaín sent them back to the South Tipperary Unit to help out locally and hold themselves ready. There was a sufficiency of Volunteers in the field.

But the President had other callers. Jack MacQuillan, TD for Roscommon, formerly for Clann na Poblachta and now Independent wanted to link up with Sinn Féin on condition the Republican Movement accepted the 26-County parliament at Leinster House. Sinn Féin was becoming increasingly popular, he said. When he was refused MacQuillan became angry.

However some days later, on December 18, MacQuillan and Paddy Finucane, an Independent Farmers TD for North Kerry, sent a telegram, which they issued to the media, to John A Costello.

They called on the Head of the 26-County government to "stop using military and Gardaí as instruments of British policy". Costello had sent the police and military to patrol the Border, thereby collaborating with the British forces on the other side.

On December 13 police headquarters in Dublin had announced: "As far as we know the matter has begun and ended in the North. We have no confirmation of any vehicles or persons concerned in the incidents having crossed into the Republic (sic) afterwards." Yet next day the Dublin government announced they would send troops and police to the Border.

The first arrests came on December 16-17 when military surrounded a disused house at Knockattallan, Co Monaghan near the Fermanagh Border. Thirteen men were arrested, brought to Dublin and released because, as a government announcement said, they carried no arms and they had no documents in their possession.

Then on December 20 at Dungooley, Co Louth — a mile from the Armagh Border — eight men were arrested by military and police. They were in a disused farmhouse at the time. Next day they were charged at Dublin District Court with having firearms without a certificate and remanded in custody to Mountjoy prison.

They were John Cassidy (20) Keady, Co Armagh; Peter McCarthy (20) also of Keady; Aindrias Mac Domhnaill (21) Gallach, Aonach Urmhumhan, Co Thiobraid Árann; Séamus Slattery (21) Nenagh, Co Tipperary; Séan Ó Dálaigh (25) Lios an Oleáin, Cloch na Coillte, Co Chorcaí; Gearóid Ó Broin (32) Glenn na Geall, Tuam Ui Mheadhra, Co Thiobraid Árann; Éamonn Murphy (22) Leinster Avenue, Dublin and Michael Buckley (25), Bóthar na Togáile, Corcaigh.

Charged with possession of four .303 Lee Enfield rifles, two Thompson sub-machine guns, one .45 Colt automatic pistol and two hand grenades without firearm certificates each man answered "Nothing to say". Sent to Mountjoy jail they became the first political prisoners of the 26-County State since 1948.

In the dock they carried rucksacks and rolled military blankets. Dressed in an assortment of uniforms they responded to military orders given by Ó Dálaigh who appeared to be their Officer Commanding.

Meanwhile, British Army detachments were rushed to various points, eg the KOSB (Kings Own Scottish Borderers, the regiment responsible for the Batchelors Walk massacre of civilians in Dublin in 1914 following on the Howth gun-running to the Irish Volunteers) was moved to Enniskillen from Ballykinnar Camp, Co Down.

Along the Border troops demolished cross-border bridges and roads. Stormont invoked internment without trial and a round up of Republicans, their supporters and sympathizers began as a large and indiscriminate net was spread over the Six Counties in order to fill D-Wing of Crumlin Road jail, Belfast.

Resistance details the sequence of diplomatic events from December 12. On that day the British Ambassador in Dublin called on Liam Cosgrave, Minister for External Affairs, to impress on him the "serious view that HM Government would be bound to take of the events" north of the Border.

On December 18, the same Ambassador handed Mr Cosgrave a Note "couched in fairly stiff language" as a *Belfast* Town newspaper described it. On December 19 in the British House of Commons prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden made a statement. Mr Costello was not doing enough.

That evening, in reply to Jack MacQuillan, Mr Costello said that his use of troops and Gardaí along the Border was "to safeguard the institutions of this State".

"Who was endangering the institutions of the 26-County State?" asked *Resistance*. "The Resistance in the Six-Counties? Surely not. Surely it had enough on its hands attacking the 'institutions' of the British Occupation authorities? Who then? The Government of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, no less".

(More next month ... Ref: *Resistance: The Story of the Struggle in British Occupied Ireland*, by J McGarrity, published Irish Freedom Press, December 1957; *An t-Eireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, January 1957; *Belfast Newsletter*, December 13; *Northern Whig*, December 13; Dublin dailies throughout the month of December, *Irish Times*, *Irish Press*, *Evening Press*, *Sunday Press*, *Irish Independent*, *Sunday Independent*, and *Evening Herald*.)