

# SÉAMUS MAC COLLUM ARRESTED IN ENGLAND

## 50 Years Ago

ON January 29, 1954 a local bus conductor was arrested in a railway station in Liverpool, England. A suitcase he was carrying was found to contain 500 rounds of .45 automatic ammunition suitable for Thompson submachine guns.

His name was Séamus Mac Collum, aged 31, and he was a native of the city, but was of Irish descent. Police believed him to be a member of the Irish Republican Army.

He was charged with being in possession of the ammunition "with intent to endanger life or cause injury to property", and was remanded to Walton prison, Liverpool where he awaited trial. The IRA was evidently re-arming.

Meanwhile the January issue of an t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman carried reports of commemorations held on or about November 23 in memory of the noble Three hanged in Manchester — near to Liverpool — 86 years earlier.

Known ever since as the Manchester Martyrs, Allen, Larkin and O'Brien were continuing to inspire Irish Republicans. On Sunday, November 22 major events were held in Cork city, sponsored by a local committee.

Mass at 11.15am in St Augustine's Church was offered for the souls of the martyrs, while they were prayed for in other city churches. Wreaths were laid on the grave of the Fenian Brian Dillon in Rathcooney Cemetery, at the Republican Plot in St Finbar's Cemetery and at St Joseph's Cemetery.

Fianna buglers Owen O'Connell (brother of Dáithí Ó Conaill) and John Madden sounded the Last Post and Reveille. At noon a parade headed by the Cork Volunteer Pipe Band with the Butter Exchange Band and the Barrack Street Band marched to the National Monument at the Grand Parade.

There a wreath was laid and a decade of the Rosary in Irish was recited by Cáit Ní Cheallacháin of Cumann na mBan, who is now known by her married name Kitty O'Brien, still faithful and still active.

Séamus Ó Réagáin, Coraigh, in his oration outlined how two Cork men, William P Allen of Bandon and Michael O'Brien of Ballymacoda with their comrade Michael Larkin from Co Offaly had, by the sacrifice of their lives, "inspired people to carry on the fight for the All-Ireland Republic right down to the present day".

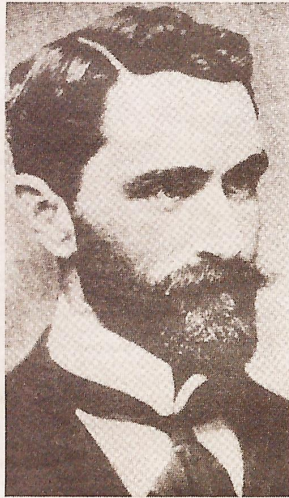
He mentioned how the memory of their sacrifice "had helped men in recent years in British and Irish jails to remain loyal to the Fenian faith". (He himself had served a 20-year sentence, imposed in England, in Dartmoor prison.)

In Kilrush, Co Clare a ceremony was held at the Manchester Martyrs Memorial in the Square. Martin Whyte presided, Joe McMahon of the North Clare Memorials Committee laid a wreath and Tomás Ó Dubhghaill gave the oration.

"A most impressive commemoration was held at Inistioge, Co Kilkenny, on Monday, November 23rd, a torchlight procession led by St Colmcille's Brass Band paraded the principal streets to the church gate where a decade of the Rosary was recited and an inspiring oration was given by Seán Dunne."

A Commemoration Céilí was held in the Coliseum Ballroom, Portlaoise by Laois Comhairle Ceantair, Sinn Féin and was highly successful. An address was delivered by Pádraig Mac Logáin.

The memory of another Irish Republican, Roger Casement, hanged in England on August 3, 1916 was recalled on page six of the December issue of the paper. An entry in Terence Mac Swiney's diary for that day spent in Reading jail was sent in by Eithne, his sis-



• *The memory of Roger Casement, hanged in England on August 3, 1916, was recalled in Terence Mac Swiney's prison diary published in An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman, 50 years ago.*

ter. It read:

"In the morning about ten minutes to nine (the execution was fixed for 9am) we began the Rosary to strengthen him in his ordeal. It was decided to say the whole fifteen decades.

"We finished prayers exactly at a quarter past nine, so that during the time of the walk to the scaffold and the execution we were on our knees.

"When we read of the execution in the evening papers it was a consolation to learn how splendidly he faced death and with a reverence with which Irish people always like their leaders to do.

### 'GOD SAVE IRELAND'

"We had the details before evening prayers and we said the Rosary for him again. But there was nothing said in our prayers. The note of victory was struck on rising from our knees when Arthur Griffith asked someone to sing 'God Save Ireland', and at once Peadar Sweeney, Loughrea [Co Galway] started it and we all chorused in, with the greatest spirit, as one man.

(God Save Ireland was the slogan of the Manchester martyrs and the name of the ballad in their honour.)

"When at the conclusion O'Connell called for three cheers for Casement and three cheers were given again such as I suppose were never heard before in Reading jail.

"They were cheers of triumph. And it was well. For they celebrated a Victory."

On a page devoted to "December — executed without trial in Mountjoy in 1922 — as well as of Barney Casey and Charlie Kerins are carried.

Rory O'Connor's last letter to his brother, Norbert is quoted: "What I have done in the past I have thought right. I stood and stand now for the Independence of Ireland.

"I felt it so utterly dishonourable to accept a Treaty bringing Ireland into the Empire that I could not continue with my former comrades. I am to meet death at their hands.

"I forgive them all. The will of God be done, and may the honour of Ireland be preserved."

Is it not an inspiring thing that despite successive letdowns and betrayals, there have always been people ready to step into the gap and preserve the honour of Ireland?

Charlie Kerins's last letter, written at 6.30am on the morning of his death to Dr Kathleen Farrell of Dublin in whose home he was captured, is also quoted:

"All I ask is that the ideals and principles for which I am about to die will be kept alive

until the Irish Republic is finally enthroned.

"This I fell will be accomplished before very long despite all the labours of traitors and hypocrites, as right will prevail.

"PS — Do you know what has just run through my head? 'Whether on the scaffold high, etc'."

A line from the chorus of God Save Ireland was on his mind just before he faced the hangman. Meanwhile the "traitors and hypocrites" slept soundly in their privilege and power.

A statement from An Cumann Cabhrach (Republican Aid Committee) in the January paper assessed the position of the prisoners' dependants. Contributions had been coming in "fairly well" and the dependants had been seen to "reasonably well".

It went on: There is a danger, however, now that Christmas has come and gone that the need for helping the fund may be gradually forgotten and the ability of the Committee to do its work, considerably hampered.

"It should be borne in mind that the prisoners in question have been sentenced to five and eight years' penal servitude. While we all hope they will not have to remain in jail so long, we must provide for that possibility, especially when we remember that since 1938 men have served six, eight, ten and up to 14 years actual imprisonment in the jails of the 26 Counties and of England."

Then eleven centers in Ireland together with London and Glasgow were named as having branches and doing "very good work". Other areas were appealed to and asked to follow suit.

Also in the January 1954 issue were two extracts from public statements by two Irish priests of the Catholic faith. The first was from John Kenyon at Limerick in July 1947.

Fr Kenyon supported John Mitchell and John Martin when they and the Young Irishmen seceded from the Repeal Association and sought a more militant policy.

The second statement in May 1953 is of particular interest in view of the rise into prominence of the author. His name was given as "Rev Fr T Fee, CC (Moy)" and his views as articulated at Dungannon, Co Tyrone were as follows:

"We pledge our allegiance, first of all, to the cause of Ireland free. It may be no harm to remind us once again that Ireland is still unfree. As long as one square inch of Irish soil is held by a foreign army, the struggle for Irish freedom remains uncompleted.

"And in these days of muddled political thinking and inconsistent leadership, let us reaffirm with Pearce that we know only one definition of freedom, which is Tone's definition and Mitchell's definition and Rossa's definition.

"And Rossa himself has stated in words that admit of no possibility of confusion that the problem of Irish freedom consists in the fact that there is a foreign army in Ireland and that it therefore behoves us to discover the quickest and surest means to get it out.

"That is the first task which confronts the present generation of Irishmen."

Brave words and very clear. Of course "Father T Fee" was An t-Athair Tomás Ó Fiach who later became Professor of Irish History at NUI Maynooth. Later still, in 1977 he became Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland.

The following year he was made cardinal and following a visit to the prisoners on protest for political status in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh Camp, he publicly compared the conditions there as akin to the notorious Black Hole of Calcutta.

He also called publicly for a British withdrawal from Ireland Cardinal Ó Fiach died a few years later at the age of 66. We have not heard such brave words since from Armagh or any other seat of ecclesiastical power.

Among Tomás Ó Fiach's publications is a slim booklet entitled Finíni Fearúla (Manly Fenians), a series of sketches in the Irish language on the Fenian leaders with a glossy photographs in each case.

He was of course a fluent speaker and a

prolific writer in Irish. Gaelgeoir cruthaithe a bhí ann as well as an enthusiastic supporter of Gaelic games.

It is a great pity that he did not live to see his native County Armagh win the All-Ireland Football Final in 2002. What he would have thought of the Sam Maguire Cup being exhibited in the Stormont parliament buildings we can only guess.

Meanwhile a large number of letters were received by An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman dealing with the question of Liam Kelly's election and imprisonment. One from Derry signed "Patrick Dempsey" was featured on Page One of the January 1954 issue.

### CLARIFICATION

He praised the Editorial on the matter which appeared in the December issue. "The situation must always be made clear to Republicans, lest there be any possibility that some of us, weltering under the blast of propaganda from newspapers and radio, might endanger our Republican faith for the political playing called Anti-Partition."

He went on: "At 73 years of age I have seen many stray from the straight road, and strangely enough it is when they fall away from the Republican Movement that they are most loud in their references to Tone, Mitchell, Lalor, Pearse . . ."

"They conveniently forget about the Ideal and blasphemously use the names of these Patriots for their own petty political ends . . . I hope you will be as true as the men in whose footsteps you are walking; may you never stray and may God bless your work."

Another letter from Pomeroy, Co Tyrone stated: "Your full page Leader in the December issue was the most explicit account I have ever read on the policy and machinery of the Irish Republican Movement. In Tyrone it has done a great deal to clear up doubt as to the standing of Liam Kelly."

"Many of us thought that he was still a member of the IRA, especially as he had been interned during the last war [WWII] and was always speaking of armed force during the election.

"The impression I had was that Liam Kelly was more or less the official Republican representative in our county, although at times many speakers from his platform were guilty of glaring inconsistencies.

"Your Editorial cleared the air, and if there was any doubt in our minds, it was quickly cleared when we saw the new Party formed up here on Sunday, 6th December.

"The rules of this new body, the speeches we heard, and some of those prominent at the meeting, left no doubt whatever that neither Kelly nor his party are Republicans." The writer then asked to have his name and address forwarded for enrolment in the IRA.

A third letter from the Falls Road, Belfast and signed "Gael" said: "It seems that the new — which intends to remove the Border by 'constitutional method', is using the old slogan — we are the followers of Pearse and Mac Swiney."

"Do they ignore the methods which Pearse and Mac Swiney advocated and used?

"It is really amusing to observe how all these 'constitutionalists' ignore the constitutionalists of previous generations, such as Redmond, O'Connell, etc, and fall back on the names of Republicans who gave their lives in the physical force policy.

"It is interesting to note also that they invariably go back to some preceding generation of Republicans and ignore the present. Consequently not a word was heard about the four IRA men at present in jail.

"To me it is obvious that this new association is following the path of its predecessors, and is using their old trick of throwing a screen of Republicanism to hide their political deviation."

So what is new? Plus ça change . . .

(More next month. Refs. An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman, December 1953 and January 1954 and the Irish Independent, February 17, 1954.)



# SINN FÉIN CANDIDATE FOR LOUTH BY-ELECTION

**50  
Years  
Ago**

JOE Campbell of Newry, Co Down was selected at a meeting in the Emer Hall, Dundalk on February 7, 1954 as a prisoner candidate to contest the

Louth by-election on behalf of Sinn Féin.

An experienced Republican, Joe Campbell, aged 32, was serving a five-year sentence of penal servitude in Belfast jail for possession of gelignite. During the early 1940s he was interned without trial in D-Wing of the same prison.

A report in the *Irish Independent* of February 8 said that the Sinn Féin "convention also decided to select a second candidate in the event of any hitch occurring in the acceptance of Mr Campbell's nomination and for this chose Mr Archie McKeivitt, Carlingford". Tomás Ó Dubhghaill, President of Sinn Féin, presided at the convention.

A statement on the front page of the February 1954 issue of *An tÉireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* said that an earlier meeting had been held in Dundalk on January 28 where the question of contesting the by-election was considered for more than two hours. "All arguments for and against were carefully weighed. In the end the proposal was put to the meeting and was carried by a two-thirds majority."

Following the convention, "it was particularly emphasized that the candidate would be seeking election to the 32-County Republican Parliament — not to Leinster House — and would merely be availing of the opportunity provided by this by-election to secure the approval of the people."

"There were people who talked about the freedom we had in Ireland today," said Mr Dan Sheridan [of Newry] at a Sinn Féin meeting in Dundalk, reported in the *Irish Independent* of February 22.

"Freedom for what?" he asked. "The only freedom they have was freedom to starve, freedom to go the wrong road, and freedom to put aside the freedom that Ireland needed."

As the campaign warmed up, amazement was expressed by Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour election workers at the ubiquity and efficiency of the Sinn Féin organisation. Did they think Republicans had not yet recovered from the coercion of the 1940s.

Speakers and workers from many counties, and especially from Dublin, crowded into the two hubs of activity — Drogheda and Dundalk. An open-air public meeting was held in each town each Saturday night.

Afterwards at a private meeting in the local Sinn Féin election premises, speakers, cars and guides were arranged for church gates the following morning. All reported back after midday and football matches or other events were covered in the afternoon.

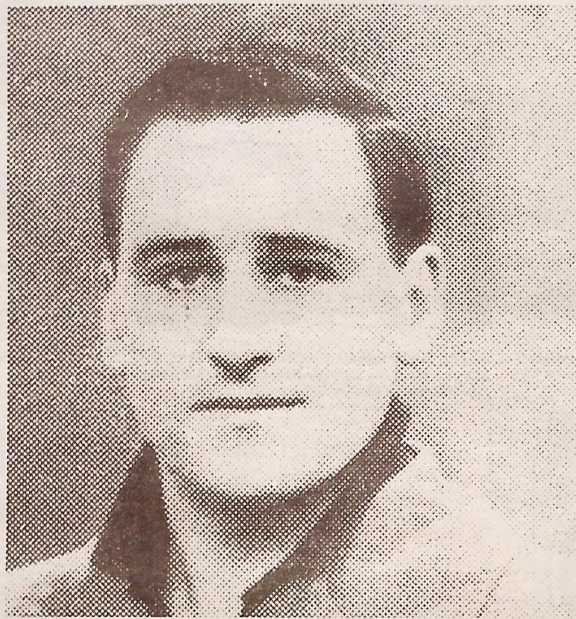
One press report dated February 15 noted the "courtous spirit" prevailing. This was appreciated by Séamus Soraghan, BL, when he addressed a meeting at Dunleer on behalf of Sinn Féin candidate Joe Campbell.

"Mr Soraghan was thanking the Fine Gael party for having invited him to use their platform."

"The funds of the Sinn Féin party (sic) were limited and they were unable to enter the campaign on a large scale. While the various parties were opposed politically, there was no reason why they should not be courteous to each other..."

"The gulf that separated Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil was not very deep and he thought that in Sinn Féin the people would have a new approach to their problems. He believed that they were attracting people of sincerity and idealism."

Meetings were also held in Dundalk and at



• Joe Campbell, Newry, Sinn Féin by-election candidate in the Louth constituency in 1954.

Bohar and Carlingford. Mr D Sheridan, Newry, said that Sinn Féin intended to contest all the Six-County constituencies in the forthcoming election for Westminster.

"They wanted to be sure that Irish representatives would not in future be sent to London, Paris or New York. The Irish Question would have to be settled in Ireland."

"Miss Mai Smith, Camlough, Co Armagh, appealed to women to vote for the separatist idea."

"Mr M Treinfhir, General Secretary, Sinn Féin, speaking in Drogheda, said that the Sinn Féin policy was to ensure that the fruits won by Irishmen would be used to feed and keep Irishmen, and not to clothe financiers in London, Paris, Washington and elsewhere."

"Mr Larry Grogan, Drogheda, presided."

## CLASHES

The good fellowship did not last long. The *Irish Independent* of February 22 reported "A Scene". "The clashing of Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin by-election meetings at Dunleer, Co Louth, yesterday led to a scene and some interruptions at the Fianna Fáil meeting which was addressed by Mr de Valera and Mr Aiken."

"Speakers in support of Mr Campbell were the first to address the crowd, but they had not concluded when their voices were drowned by the Fianna Fáil loudspeakers."

"The Sinn Féin spokesman had to yield and the Fianna Fáil meeting went on in an atmosphere of some excitement when Sinn Féin and Labour supporters shouted 'Free Speech' and 'Democracy'."

"When Mr Aiken was speaking, a Sinn Féin sympathiser approached the platform interrupting loudly. The interrupter was approached by Gardaí and after a struggle he was removed."

On Saturday, February 14 a double-column three-inch advertisement was taken in the daily papers by Sinn Féin. It called for support for Joe Campbell in the Louth by-election and described the prisoner-candidate as "a living example of Ireland's demand for unity and independence."

People were asked to "show their support in every way you can". Funds were urgently required and could be sent to: Patrick O'Hagan, Mullaghbawn, Co Armagh; Séamus Ó Rabhartaigh, Fachairt Iocht, Dún

Dealgan; Robert Russell, 24 Cadogan Road, Dublin; Patrick McDonagh, junior, 11 St Mary's Villas, Drogheda.

Meanwhile on February 16 the *Irish Independent* noted an incident at a Sinn Féin meeting in Derry city. "British sailors walking through Rossville Street on Saturday night passed close to a Tricolour on the platform but paid little attention to it."

"One Petty Officer interrupted a speech by Tomás Ó Dubhghaill, President of Sinn Féin. The sailor was approached by a few people and there was danger of trouble, but detectives removed the man and the meeting continued."

"The meeting was in connection with the next election for Westminster, Mr Ó Dubhghaill recalling that Sinn Féin had decided to contest all twelve Six-County seats in the election."

In the British colony, Kenya, the conflict between the Land and Freedom Army, known as the Mau Mau, and the British forces of occupation continued. The locally-recruited King's African Rifles regiment was an active participant as part of the British army.

January's *United Irishman* led with a front page headline "This Kenya Business — Is it any Concern of Ours?" the article noted that the activities of the British forces in Kenya had become a "main topic of conversation" in Ireland.

It went on to refer to the money prizes awarded for shooting down black people, how they were treated just like animals — "a new type of big game hunt for the pukka sahib".

Also noted was the dreadful ratio between killed and wounded in this "police action" compared with so-called "civilised war". (Normally there are about three wounded for every one killed but in Kenya the reverse was true.)

This emphasised the view that in Kenya "no prisoners were to be taken". Yet, the article went on, Irish people know that a root cause of conflict was the policy of the invaders grabbing all the good land with the natives being forced to accept a modern "to Hell or Connacht" policy.

It criticised the Irishmen whose membership of the British forces made them accomplices, if not actual participants, in the atrocities of the colonial war in Kenya.

Our sympathy was meaningless unless we

act. We should make it clear to any Irishman who joins the British forces that he is "an out-cast from our race", that he is "something we must shun and be thoroughly ashamed of. He bears the mark of Cain".

In this way we would be really helping the people of Kenya and also helping ourselves. The Brits were still in forcible occupation of our country.

As if in response, the February issue on its front page reported that two men Stephen Gibbons and Joseph Chapman were arrested in Belfast on January 31 in connection with the tarring and chaining to a lamp-post of a British soldier recently back from Kenya.

Placarded on the back of the soldier was the notice "Kenya Black-and-Tans beware". A fortnight previously, also in Belfast, another British soldier was stripped of his uniform, the report concluded.

The *Irish Independent* of February 20 reported the two men were charged at Belfast Custody Court with causing grievous bodily harm to Walter Mercer by pouring tar over him. A charge of possession of a revolver with intent was withdrawn.

Mercer (33) said in evidence that he had received his early education at Holy Cross School, Ardoyne. He was a member of the British army up to 1947 and had served in India, Burma and Ceylon but never in Kenya. He was an ex-member of the [British] Territorial Army.

On January 30 he was passing near the intersection of Butler Street and Herbert Street when about six men emerged from an entry. One of them pointed a pistol at him and he was taken to a lamp-post at the corner of Crumlin and Brookfield Streets.

He was ordered to remove his jacket and was chained and padlocked to the lamp-post. A tin of tar was then poured over him. He kept his eyes closed.

## CLEARED

On February 9 he attended an identification parade but failed to pick out either of the prisoners before the court. The two men were remanded in custody and at a later court were cleared of all charges.

They were Stephen Gibbons (35), Brompton Park and Joseph Chapman (34), Leopold Street. Neither the placard nor its wording were mentioned in court. The motive was hidden.

In Liverpool a day earlier Séamus McCollum (31), bus conductor, Lovat Street, Liverpool was accused of "stealing" ammunition and possessing with intent to endanger life.

The *Irish Independent* of February 17 reported that he had told the police: "I am a member of the IRA".

Mr W Lewis [prosecuting] said that when McCollum was stopped by police at Lime Street [railway] station on January 28 500 rounds of ammunition were found in a case he carried.

In his possession also were two pieces of paper on which, the prosecution alleged, were codes. In addition, he had had a piece of paper bearing a Dublin address.

Questioned by Det-Sgt Starkey, McCollum was alleged to have said: "I am a member of the IRA and will tell you nothing. That is all there is to it."

Regarding the papers, McCollum was alleged to have said: "That's the code given to me when I was told to operate here. You will have to puzzle it out for yourself. I was to write to that address for further instructions."

Asked if he knew what the ammunition was to be used for, he was alleged to have said: "I hope it will not be necessary, but, if it is, I hope it is used to liberate Ireland from the invaders."

Séamus McCollum was remanded in custody for trial at the next Assizes. When asked if he had anything to say, he replied: "No statement of any sort to make to this court."

(More next month. Refs. *An tÉireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, January and February 1954; the *Irish Independent* February 8, 15, 16, 17, 20 and 22.)



# LEO McCORMICK SENTENCED TO FOUR YEARS

ON March 3, 1954 at a Special Court in Newry, James Carr (32), no fixed address was returned for trial to Armagh Spring Assizes on

**50  
Years  
Ago**

March 18, on a charge of having in his possession documents "relating to an unlawful organization".

According to a report in the *Irish Independent* of March 4 documents purporting to come from IRA Headquarters in Dublin, some of which were signed by the Adjutant-General were read to the court.

James Carr refused to recognise the court or make any statement.

The documents referred to "training in preparation for the campaign against British Forces of occupation" and dealt with lectures on battlefield, preparation and use of explosives for demolition, and the use of Sten and Bren guns.

An interesting point was the note on the battlefield sheet, which it was stated read: "The object of all training is to teach the Volunteers the most efficient method of conducting themselves and handling their weapons to destroy the enemy ... to kill as many of the enemy as possible is the object. The enemy will show you no mercy. You must deal ruthlessly with them."

Note: This was a quotation from an instruction in the training notes of the time. "We are not teaching men to play games or ... but to fight a bloody war." It would have been familiar to all Volunteers of the period seriously engaged in military training. The instructor was directed to repeat this message at the beginning of every training class, lecture or military exercise.

At the British court in Newry, evidence of the arrest of James Carr was given by Customs Officers who stated that when they asked the prisoner at Goughwood (Border crossing point on the Dublin-Belfast railway line) to open a parcel, he said: "If you want to know what is in it, it is papers in connection with Sinn Féin."

He ran away and dropped two more parcels. When captured he burned letters in a fire at the customs office but they were retrieved badly charred.

Two weeks later, on March 20, the *Irish Independent* reported on the trial and sentence: "Sentence of four years penal servitude was imposed by Mr Justice Shiell in Armagh on James Carr (32), no fixed address, who was charged with having, at Goughwood on February 17, been in possession of documents relating to the affairs of an unlawful organization — the Irish Republican Army and the Irish Volunteers."

"When asked by the Clerk of the Crown, 'are you James Carr?' accused did not answer. Again when asked if he was otherwise known as James Leo McCormick, he did not answer."

"A jury was empanelled to try if accused was 'mute of malice or mute by the visitation of God' and after evidence that he had spoken in English, he was found to be mute of malice."

"A jury was then sworn to try him and when arraigned on the charge he did not answer."

"Serge P Quinn (RUC) described papers which he had seen on a table beside accused in the Customs hut. They were headed Oglagh na hÍreann ..."

"Thomas J Norris Land Preventive Officer, in evidence, stated that on February 17 he saw accused on the train from Dublin and asked what he had in a green parcel which he carried. He told accused he would have to come to the Customs hut."

"One half page, which was shown to the jury, was salvaged from the fire. Accused had thrown the papers into the fire."

"Witness gave details of the documents all of which related to the IRA. Some dealt with use of explosives, demolitions, duties of officers, and some purported to be issued by the 'Adjutant-General of the Irish Republican

## SINN FEIN MEETINGS Widespread, and Lively

Continuing their campaign of Public Meetings throughout the Six Counties, to put their policy and programme before the people, Sinn Féin speakers were out in force on Sunday, 14th January. Four meetings were held: all in Tyrone, at Altmore, Gabaly, Aughnagar and Tullyallen. Principal speaker at the two latter meetings was Frank McGlynn, Armagh. Mr McGlynn had just been released from Crumlin Road Jail, Belfast, the previous day after serving a term for engaging in the S.F. National Collection without first obtaining permission from the County Inspector. Mr McGlynn was also accused several years' imprisonment for his Republican activities, told the Tyrone audience that Ireland's freedom depended on the Republican Movement. It was a movement of the people, he said.

attacking them he certainly has it. You are taking a mean advantage. Father, if you allege that we have come to speak against Liam Kelly, or to attack a man while he is behind bars. Republican Ireland has four soldiers behind bars today. Four I.R.A. men—Cathal Goulding (Dublin), Manus Canning (Derry), Sean Stephenson (London), in Pentonville and Wormwood Scrubs, serving a year's penal servitude for attacking the army of occupation, and Seamus Campbell (Derry), serving a year's penal servitude in Belfast. Surely we can tell these people, who are all Republicans at heart, just why these soldiers of Ireland are in jail and how they can pledge their loyalty to them, by themselves coming into the movement or at least voting Sinn Féin at the Westminster elections when they come out.

The crowd then asked why was it that

### • Reports of Sinn Féin meetings (and heckling by a Catholic priest at Altmore) in Co Tyrone in 1954 from An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman.

Army, with headquarters in Dublin.

"When asked if he wished to give evidence or to address the jury accused remained silent. The jury after an absence of 12 minutes, returned a verdict of guilty."

Meanwhile the Louth by-election campaign continued with public meetings held by Sinn Féin every weekend. The *Sunday Press* of February 21 reported under the heading "Men in jail for Ireland".

"That men were suffering in Irish and English jails so that Ireland could be put on the right road was a statement made by Mr Gearóid Ó Broin, Sinn Féin (Dublin) addressing a by-election meeting in Drogheda last night in support of the imprisoned candidate, Joseph Campbell.

"Appealing to his listeners to put all thought of petty materialism out of their heads, Mr Ó Broin said that it was on an appeal for patriotism that Sinn Féin originally came to the forefront and put the country on the verge of victory. Politicians were coming forward and making promises — but forgetting that Ireland was divided.

"Mr T Doyle (Tomás Ó Dubhghaill), President, Sinn Féin said that if the candidate had been born after the treaty he would according to Irish Free State legislation be looked upon as a foreigner. His nomination was accepted for the by-election because he was born before the treaty.

"Mr Éamonn Thomas (Mac Thomáis), Dublin, was heckled during his speech. The heckling continued and the man was then escorted away by two Gardaí, having been previously spoken to by a sergeant."

A parade with bands and a torchlight procession preceded the final rally in Drogheda. A daily newspaper reported: "The fundamental issue before the people was the British occupation of the Six Counties — an issue evaded by all the political parties, said Seosamh Mac Críostáil at a Sinn Féin final rally in Drogheda.

"The political parties were basing their campaigns on the cost of living because they were afraid to face the real issue, but that figure, he said, was a myth, the real and factual point being the standard of living.

"Their candidate, Mr Campbell, was in Belfast jail because of his activities and what greater support could be given to Republicanism than to give him the No 1 vote."

"Messrs Saoirse Dearle (Dublin) and G Ó Broin (Dublin) also spoke and Kevin Quigley, (Drogheda) presided.

Tony Magan's Ford V8 car was grossly overloaded ferrying members of Sinn Féin back to Dublin after the meeting. Among the Fianna Fáil speakers during the campaign were the notorious Minister for Justice (sic), Gerry Boland and Brian Lenihan, then a student at UCD.

Lenihan stated at one after-mass meeting that there was only one Republican party at the by-election and that was Fianna Fáil. "A vote for Fianna Fáil is a vote for the Republic," he said.

This was contradicted by another UCD student and Sinn Féin speaker Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, who was listening. Brian Lenihan admitted to him decades later, that he made

that statement because he felt O Brádaigh "would not know his history".

He admitted that he was surprised at the rebuttal made which showed that Sinn Féin speakers knew their history.

Polling Day was Ash Wednesday, March 3, and some UCD students hitch-hiking from Dublin to Drogheda heard on a car radio, from Radio Éireann, that a truce had been announced in Kenya "between British forces and Mau Mau forces". The Land and Freedom Army which had been so denigrated was now being recognised.

The *Irish Independent* of March 5 gave the result: the Fine Gael candidate George Coburn won the seat. Joe Campbell for Sinn Féin polled 1,446 first preferences. Of these 500 were transferred to Roddy Connolly, the Labour candidate, Coburn 457 and the Fianna Fáil candidate Pádraig Faulkner 207. Of Joe Campbell's votes, 219 were non-transferable.

The veteran Republican Tommy Greene of Dundalk was Election Agent for the Sinn Féin candidate. At the conclusion of the count he said that the day of Sinn Féin was coming as it had come in 1917. Mr Campbell in Belfast jail, would feel proud that he had so many supporters in Louth.

Sinn Féin supporters who worked hard in the campaign were satisfied. If they had a similar vote in each of the other 25 counties of the Free State they would have had a close on 38,000 first preferences. And the political parties had told Sinn Féin it had no support!

In view of subsequent splits with the formation of the Worker's Party in 1969-70 and the Provo Parliamentary Party in 1986, it is interesting to quote the following letter carried in the *Sunday Press* of February 21, 1954 under the heading "Sinn Féin":

"In the *Sunday Press* of February 14, there was a report of a Sinn Féin meeting in Dungannon on Saturday night in which you quote me as saying in reference to the Sinn Féin programme for an All-Ireland Parliament for the 32 Counties that 'it would be vital to enter Leinster House or Stormont'.

"I wish to state that I did not use these words. What I said in reference to the Sinn Féin programme was: 'We are contesting this election on the same policy as that of 1918, that is to break the connection with England; to end the entire British Imperialism system in Ireland; to end poverty and insecurity; to replace the Leinster House and Stormont set-up by an All-Ireland Parliament for 32 Counties having complete and effective jurisdiction over the entire territory of the nation'.

"Considering the implication in the published statement, and the fact that the Sinn Féin candidate is in a Stormont prison, I think your next issue should carry the corrected reference as quoted above.

"Frank Mc Glynn, Sunshine House, Abbey Lane, Armagh, 16th February 1954."

So Sinn Féin public meetings were being held in January and February in the Six Counties in preparation for the Westminster elections to come. The following assessment in, of all papers, the *Irish Catholic* of February 11 under the heading "Sinn Féin".

"Meanwhile Sinn Féin organisers are

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working throughout the Six Counties and especially in the two Border constituencies. A series of meetings is being held and speakers, mainly from Dublin, have been putting the Sinn Féin programme before the people.

"Though the meetings have not been largely attended, it is only fair to state that the moderate attendances have been due to the wretched weather of the last few weeks and that the attentive hearing accorded the speakers is an indicator that their views will be seriously examined.

"It is being widely commented that the Sinn Féin organisers are confining themselves to the exposition of principles and are refusing to attack any section or group in the Six Counties.

"They are prepared to admit that others may be as sincere in their outlook as Sinn Féin, though trying to reach the common goal by another road, and consequently personalities or abuse are strictly banned from the Sinn Féin platforms.

"Sinn Féin asks the friendship and co-operation of all workers in the cause of re-unity. Whatever views may be held in some areas as to the propriety of Sinn Féin intervention in the next elections, there is unanimity on the manner in which the party is conducting its organizing campaign."

Apart from the public meeting in Derry city mentioned in the February '04 issue of SAOIRSE, other Sinn Féin meetings were held in Dungannon, at Ann Street, on January 30, and at Moortown and Ardboe next day.

The Dungannon meeting was addressed by Tomás Ó Dubhghaill, Uachtarán, Sinn Féin, Éamonn Mac Thomáis and Séamus Soraghan — all of Dublin — and Frank McGlynn, Armagh city. Art Mac Eochaidh, Dungannon chaired the meeting.

An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman of February 1954 reports "In spite of the intense cold there was a good attendance and the speakers got a very attentive and favourable reception."

"A very effective point" was made by Séamus Soraghan speaking of the need for bringing Catholic and Protestant together under the common name of Irishman.

In 1948 when the bodies of executed Republicans were exhumed and handed back for re-interment by their relatives, the body of George Plant was received and lay in state in Christchurch Cathedral in Dublin.

Every facility was given by the Protestant Archbishop to those wishing to show their respect to the dead patriot. This was a signal honour since it was the first time in over a hundred years that a body was allowed to remain overnight in the church.

That event would serve as a symbol and a hope for the eventual bringing together of all our people to serve the nation as a whole. This had been the Republican ideal down the years and was still the ideal for which the Movement strove.

The speakers at Dungannon also spoke at the after-mass meetings at Moortown and Ardboe. Peadar Mac Partland, Bessbrook, south Armagh also spoke at both venues.

On the previous Sunday, Altmore, Gabaly, Aughnagar and Tullyallen in Co Tyrone were the location of other public meetings addressed by Éamonn Mac Thomáis; Seosamh Mac Críostáil (Dublin); Frank McGlynn, Armagh city; veteran Republican of many campaigns, Dan Sheridan of Newry, Co Down; Tommy O'Neill, Dungannon; Patrick McShane and Peadar McPartland, south Armagh.

The Altmore meeting was remarkable for the intervention and heckling by the local Catholic Curate who charged the speaker with attacking Liam Kelly. The subsequent answers and bouts of heckling, as recorded in the Republican paper, make interesting reading.

The priest raised the question of the 1937 Constitution, only to be told that "the 1916 Proclamation is our Constitution". Eventually the priest remarked as he was driving off: "Well, I'll say this for you, you are good Irishmen anyway."

(More next month. Refs. An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman, February, 1954; the *Irish Independent*, March 3 and 20; the *Sunday Press*, March 21 and the *Irish Catholic*, February 11.)



# CANDIDATES IN CLARE, LOUTH CONTEST GENERAL ELECTION

**50  
Years  
Ago**

WITH the Easter Commemoration ceremonies completed in mid-April 1954, attention for the remainder of the month and for May focused

on the general election in the 26 Counties called for May 18.

As was reported last month, two Sinn Féin candidates were selected at constituency conventions in Louth and Clare in early April.

Election workers from Munster and Connacht poured into Clare in support of veteran Republican Martin Whyte of Lisdoonvarna, while help from Leinster and Ulster was channelled into Louth where the prisoner candidate Joe Campbell of Newry was standing again.

The election address to the people of Clare and Louth set the tone for the Sinn Féin campaign: "In asking you to vote for Sinn Féin, we are asking you to declare the right of the Irish people to separate nationhood and independence."

"The Sinn Féin candidate in the 1954 general election stand by the same principles and programme held by Tone, Emmet, Fintan Lalor, the men of the [19]16 period and later, men like Tony Darcy, Charlie Kerins and Richie Goss.

"While all Irishmen applaud this principle, the Republicans in Sinn Féin and the other branches of the movement — the IRA, Na Fianna Éireann and Cumann na mBan — are determined, with the co-operation and help of the people of Clare, Louth and all Ireland, to use ALL the means advocated and used by these men, who have proved that they are the only effective means to force English power out of Ireland.

"Separation means complete freedom for the Irish people to work out the life of the nation in all its political, economic, cultural and other aspects without interference from any foreign power.

"The Republican Movement, through Sinn Féin, proposes

"1. To convene the elected representatives of all Ireland as the National Assembly of the Independent Irish Republic;

"2. To proceed to legislate for all Ireland;

"3. To use every means within the power of the Irish people to overcome opposition to the Republic;

"4. To repudiate all treaties, pacts and laws that in any way curtail the nation's independence.

"Sinn Féin is convinced that so far as elections are concerned, this is the logical method of securing this national objective. Its elected representatives will not take part in either of the partition parliaments. Our demand is for a national parliament for all 32 counties.

"The example given by politicians who operate the partition parliaments of Stormont and Leinster House, which were set up by a British Act of Parliament, has led the young people of Ireland to believe that part of Ireland has attained complete freedom, and has made them lose sight of the fact that England still dominates all our country, occupies six of our counties and still is our only enemy.

"For National Unity and Independence  
**VOTE SINN FÉIN  
WHYTE FOR CLARE  
CAMPBELL FOR LOUTH."**

Let us introduce Martin Whyte to our readers. A native of north Clare he joined the Republican movement as a boy during the Black-and-Tan War.

He saw service right through the war against the Free State with the mid-Clare Brigade IRA. Martin often spoke fondly of his commanding officer, Comdt Peadar O'Loughlin of Killynora who had a distinguished record against the Tans but fell ill on active service and passed away on August 1,



• **Martin Whyte, Sinn Féin candidate in Clare.**

1922.

Martin Whyte served loyally through the '20s and '30s, was jailed in Mountjoy in 1940 where he occupied the cell next to Tomás MacCurtáin of Cork, then held on a capital charge.

Martin was transferred to the Curragh concentration Camp on expiration of sentence but emerged to re-organise Clare once more in the late 1940s.

He was back in the Curragh Concentration Camp in 1957-58 where he was noted for fashioning rings from silver coins. On release he campaigned for Séamus Sabhat in the Clare by-election of 1959 and served unswervingly right up to his death in 1973.

## BACKBONE OF THE MOVEMENT

People such as Martin Whyte are the backbone of the Republican Movement, the rocks that remain visible when the tide of public support recedes. They are also the lodestones to whom the new generation are drawn, as to magnets.

With only four weekends between Easter and election day, activity was hectic. Speakers from Dublin alternated between Louth and Clare and enthusiasm was high.

The redoubtable Sandy McNabb (native to Castlewelling, Co Down) was again among those volunteering to ferry speakers to both areas at weekends.

On May 2 an advertisement, measuring three inches double column, was placed in the *Sunday Independent*. Headed "Sinn Féin and the Election" it read:

"After 32 years trial it has become obvious to everyone that no solution to our national problems can be found by means of Leinster House politics. No amount of adjusting or renaming the 26 County State can make it anything other than a compromise, a betrayal of the national ideal.

"Sinn Féin asserts that only by rebuilding the national movement with the same broad principles and the same methods of 1918-21 can any progress be made. This is the aim of the National Unity and Independence Programme.

"To rally support for this programme Sinn Féin are putting forward two candidates — Martin Whyte in Clare and Joe Campbell in Louth. They stand for the Irish Republic of all 32 Counties.

"To make their fight a success funds are urgently needed and workers for transport, canvass etc are immediately required.

"All offers of help will be acknowledged and should be addressed to An Rúnaí, Sinn Féin, 3 Lower Abbey St, Dublin or to any of the following:

**Robert Russell, 24 Cadogan Rd, Fairview.**

**PD McLogan, Main St, Portlaoise.**

**RD McKenna, Thomas Ashe Hall, Fr Matthew Quay, Cork.**

**Peter McParland, 5 The Gardens, Bessbrook, Co Armagh.**

**Joe Cahill, 60 Divis St, Belfast."**

When nomination day came on May 4, the name of Sinn Féin was excluded from news



• **Joe Campbell, Sinn Féin candidate in Louth.**

broadcasts on that day by Radio Éireann as an organisation which had nominated candidates. A letter of protest was sent to the radio station.

A reply was received signed "M J Lawlor, News Editor" expressing regret for the omission of the two Sinn Féin candidates. It was done inadvertently "in the rush to get all the nominations on the air... no discourtesy was intended".

Those interested should watch this point. When in 1961 party political broadcasts from Radio Éireann were initiated, Sinn Féin with four outgoing TDs and candidates in 19 constituencies was excluded. That was before the notorious Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act was invoked.

Saturday, May 15 saw one of the largest public meetings for many years held in the Square in Ennis. It was the occasion of the final rally of the Sinn Féin campaign in support of its candidate for Clare, Martin Whyte.

The Cork Volunteer Pipe Band headed a large parade from about two miles outside the town. In the square an enthusiastic reception was given to the candidate and the speakers.

The north and south were represented on the platform. Even veteran campaigners like Tomás MacCurtáin of Cork and Mícheál Mac Tréinfhúir, Belfast were impressed by the reception.

Other speakers included Máire Nic Ghabhann, Armagh; Tomás Ó Dubhghaill, Dublin; Archie McKevitt, Carlingford, Co Louth; Mícheál Mac Carthaigh, Cork and Brian MacLúia, Co Clare.

The various speakers stressed the fact that Sinn Féin was an All-Ireland organisation and the demand for the settling up of a 32 County Parliament and the unity and independence of our country was a programme which concerned all our people, North and South.

"We must raise ourselves above party personalities or privileges; we must put the nation first. That is the Sinn Féin policy." This was the theme of the speeches.

In the outcome Joe Campbell polled 1,011 first preferences and Martin Whyte 979. In summary 1,000 votes were garnered in each county. Both had faced prominent personalities, de Valera in Clare and Frank Aiken in Louth each of whom headed the poll in their respective constituencies.

In addition, in Clare a Clann na Poblachta candidate was in the contest. He was Seán Ó'Connor from west Clare, a former Curragh internee of the 1940s who failed in the escape bid when Eugene Powell of Kerry succeeded.

Seán Ó'Connor polled 1,377 in the first count while Roddy Connolly, a son of James Connolly, received 2,576 as a Labour party candidate in Louth.

The editorial in *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* of June 1954 was headed "Hopeful Signs" in its assessment of the results from a Republican perspective. It concluded: "With patience, hard work and courage we can once again inspire our people to the effort necessary to achieve success."

Likewise the lead story on page one on the

same theme was entitled "State of the Nation". "A little reflection will show that the results were far from disappointing — fact is they were encouraging. More than two thousand people said 'We will follow' — two thousand people guilty of sedition."

The exercise gave the organisation an outing in parliamentary election campaigning, thus gaining invaluable experience. Again if 1,000 people were willing to follow in each of the 26 Counties...

The Republican organ noted: "Fianna Fáil is back to its old cant. A *Sunday Press* editorial followed the old line, 'The Republican movement (small m) is not defeated, although it lost seats in the Dáil... its outlook and structure remains national. Fianna Fáil goes out of office, but it remains representative of the people as a whole, not merely of sections.... Pledged to the aim of re-establishing the Republic...'

Every convert to Sinn Féin was gained by the spoken word... the newspapers were supplied with material but refused to publish Sinn Féin speeches.

## 'LOYALTY IN CORK'

Also reported on page one of the May issue of the *United Irishman* was a report from Cork where on April 21 an "international schoolboys' soccer match was played between Ireland (26 Counties) and England" — it was headed "Loyalty in Cork".

It came to the notice of local Republicans that it was the intention of the organisers to fly the Union jack and play "God Save the Queen".

On being approached on the question, the officials of the soccer movement in Cork said they could do nothing on the matter.

A protest meeting was held outside the pitch by representatives of the Republican Movement and queues were addressed by five speakers asking the patrons of the game to protest against this insult to the patriot dead during Easter Week.

While outside the grounds the Cork Volunteer Pipe Band played "Amhrán na bhFiann" inside the Pipe Band of the 4th Battalion, Free State Army, played "God Save the Queen".

Meanwhile, national liberation struggles continued in Kenya and Malaya against the British. In Kenya, Barry Harvey Hayward, a 17-year-old police reserve officer, was charged at Nairobi on March 29 with assault and causing bodily harm to a Mau Mau suspect.

It was alleged that he had paraffin oil poured upon the head of one Kimani and that he and Assistant District Commandant Howell had then lit matches and threw them at the head of Kimani.

An African, James Guchu, stated that Hayward kicked him because he (Guchu) refused to pour paraffin on Kimani's head and that Hayward applied a lighted match to the paraffin-soaked head of Kimani, which then became alighted. Hayward was fined £25.

Guchu got two years.

The *UI* commented: "An Orange MP of the Six County 'Parliament' sought to have the Catholic Bishop of Leeds cremated because of his allegation of intolerance in the Six Counties.

Were he to send the Most Reverend gentleman to Kenya, he would have this cremation attended to by Britishers such as Hayward and no questions asked.

Also reported was a new extension of vicious British starvation policy in Malaya under the heading "Inform or Starve". It meant that natives unwilling or unable to give information on the names or whereabouts of their patriot fighters will forfeit their pigs.

Already severe rationing of rice is a hardship on the Malaysians and the latest move by [British] High Commissioner General Templar is another step in the drastic "inform or starve" policy. Templar is an Armagh man.

(More next month. Ref. *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* May and June 1954; the *Sunday Press*, May 2, 1954.)



# DARING ARMAGH RAID — HUGE IRA CAPTURE OF ARMS

**50  
Years  
Ago**

ON a sunny Saturday afternoon, June 12, 1954 the British military barracks in Armagh city was raided by a party of IRA Volunteers and more than 300

## guns captured.

It was the first such raid since February 10, 1940 when the Belfast Brigade, IRA seized more than 100 rifles in a sortie into Ballykinkar British army camp, Co Down.

The coup which became known as the "Armagh Raid" was certainly the most spectacular since the IRA raided the Magazine Fort in Dublin's Phoenix on December 23, 1939 and seized more than a million rounds of the Free State army's ammunition.

In neither case was a shot fired or anyone injured but the Armagh Raid was totally successful in that none of the weapons seized was recovered nor was any of the raiding party ever arrested or charged.

An *t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* of July 1954 had a front page banner headline "Daring Armagh Raid" and under it "Arms will be used against British forces — IRA".

The report said: "The operation was carried off to such split-second timing and with such amazing coolness that the routine life of Armagh city went on undisturbed.

"In twenty lightning minutes the [IRA] unit had taken control of the Barracks, emptied the armoury and made their getaway — not a single shot was fired. Where they came from and where they went nobody has found out — but the men are free and the arms safe.

"Less than fifteen minutes afterwards, the greatest combined military and police activity ever witnessed in the country was taking place, but all in vain.

"Simultaneously the world's news lines were carrying it as a priority headline to every corner of the globe, thus focussing world attention on the British occupation of Ireland.

"Later that same evening, IRA Headquarters issued a bulletin stating that one of their units had carried out a successful raid for arms in Armagh, but no further information was released.

"During the ensuing week, a second statement was issued from HQ refuting some newspaper insinuations regarding the proposed use of the captured weapons — they would be used, HQ said, against the British Occupation Forces in due course.

"The Armagh action was brilliantly planned and executed with unrivalled bravery by a 20-man-strong unit. It stunned the enemy and quickened the Spirit of Freedom at home and abroad."

A full inside page of the Republican organ carried the "startling inside story" of the dramatic action by one of the men who took part.

## LIST OF GUNS

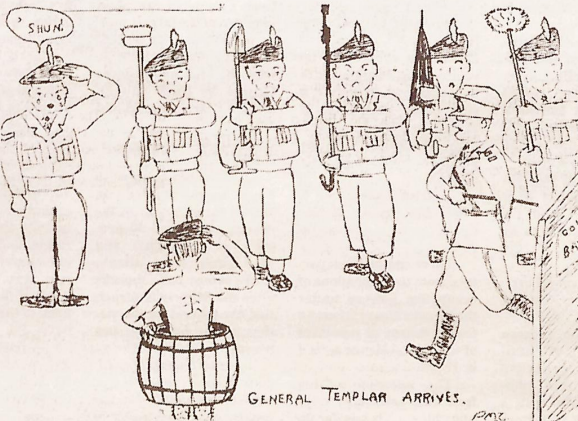
Listed were the arms distributed to the Volunteers: seven Sten guns (sub-machine guns); six Webley revolvers; six Colt .45 revolvers; one Thompson sub-machine gun; an abundant supply of ammunition; hand grenades were also given out.

"Large maps and photographs were then produced, revealing in detail the layout of the objective. The general plan of attack was then unfolded. Next each man was instructed as to his particular job, after which questions were invited and answered."

"The line of retreat was then marked out. The job of taking over the guardroom was the key to success — once it was held the barracks was virtually our own. We were not told anything regarding the dumping of the captured weapons."

The party drove up to Gough barracks in a red cattle lorry at 2.40pm. A Volunteer alighted and entered the guardroom, asking for information on "joining the army". He was referred to other British soldiers whom he held up at revolver point.

The situation was taken seriously when another Volunteer entered and levelled the Thompson sub-machine gun at them. The British



• **Cartoon from the Republican newspaper An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman on the Armagh Raid of June 12, 1954. British General Templar had to postpone his planned visit to the British military barracks.**

soldiers were tied up. One was stripped of his "regimentals".

A Volunteer in full regalia was then put on guard duty in place of the British soldier. Two British officers who arrived during the raid were also taken prisoner and bound up.

The red cattle lorry then drove straight to the armoury where the Volunteers clad in British uniforms opened up with the key obtained in the guardroom. Relays of IRA soldiers took 250 rifles from the racks and loaded them on the lorry.

They were the Lee-Enfield .303 service rifle, No 4 Mark 1, the type used on WWII ten years earlier. Also taken were 40 Drill Purpose rifles, the type used in recruits classes, nine Bren light machine guns and magazines, 30 Sten sub-machine guns and sundry bayonets and pistols.

Some British soldiers waved at the Volunteers, who waved back, finished their work, clambered aboard and had the ramp up at the rear of the lorry raised. The vehicle then drove back to the guardroom, collected the Volunteers on duty there and exited the barracks.

The time was 3pm. The raid was over in 20 minutes. It made headlines on the front pages of the *Sunday Press* and *Sunday Independent* next day.

The *Sunday Press* quoted an RUC spokesman: "A daring raid that had all the hallmarks of being carefully planned and well organised." The timing, he said, appeared to have been based on inside information. Three important factors stood out as a foundation for this theory.

1. "All arms had been called into the armoury for an Ordnance check-up.

2. "With a large number of officers and men on weekend leave, the Garrison was at minimum strength.

3. "The actual time of the raid was fixed to coincide with the hour when the least possible number of men would be on duty at the barracks."

The article, by one of the participants in the raid, said that immediately the armoury was opened up a Bren LMG was taken out, fitted with a full magazine (30 rounds) and placed in position to deal with any interference with the progress of the arms capture.

In addition four armed guards with Sten guns were stationed along the 200-yard route between the main gate and the armoury.

A point of interest is the similarity with one of the first actions by the Jewish underground in Palestine in the mid-1940s. The Irgun raided a British army barracks and captured a large quantity of weapons at Sarafand while disguised in British uniforms.

The Irgun men exchanged military salutes with British military personnel they met on the road afterwards. "Revolt, written by the former head of the Irgun, Manachem Begin tells the story. Thirty years later as Prime Minister of Israel he became notorious for his actions against the Palestinians.

An *Irish Press* photographer later to become famous, Colman Doyle, won a prize for a photo-

graph he took of the confusion in the barracks in the immediate aftermath of the raid. The photo was taken by pushing the camera lens through the observation slit in the heavy main gate.

On Saturday evening about 9pm. A 5-ton Bedford truck with high sides was stopped by a Garda in Balbriggan, Co Dublin. It was held overnight as were the two occupants, William Stewart, Camp Street, Dundalk and James Dullaghan, Ballinafull, Dundalk.

Both were well-known Republicans in Dundalk and ten rounds of .38 revolver ammunition were found in the pocket of a blue boiler suit in the back of the lorry. The ammunition was not part of the haul taken in Armagh, it was established.

The lorry was handed over to its customary driver from whom it had been taken. He had been kept prisoner while the vehicle was being used.

Neither Willie Stewart nor Jimmy Dullaghan would discuss their role, if any, in the events of June 12. Willie had been years "on the blanket" in Portlaoise jail in the 1940s and was interned without trial in the Curragh Concentration Camp 1957-59.

Even in the close comradeship of the Camp, Willie would not talk about the Armagh Raid. Jimmy later emigrated with his family to Australia. Willie was a principled Republican until his death in the 1980s.

The *Irish Times* on Monday, June 14 reported more soberly on the Armagh Raid than the *Sunday* newspapers. A Special Correspondent wrote:

"It had been believed in political circles that the IRA was now a moribund force, without leadership, policy or publicity, except for occasional printed notices on walls exhorting young men to 'join the IRA'.

"The latest exploit, however, would 'appear to provide evidence of a well-organised body, with sufficient strength and resources to use sympathisers within the British forces', one observer said. 'Without such inside help Saturday's exploit could not have been carried out successfully'.

"The raid also seems to show that the leadership of the IRA is efficient; for the planning required considerable ingenuity, determination, and, probably, a design as to future operations and policy.

"These significant factors create problems not alone for the Northern Ireland (sic) Government and also for the British military authorities, but also for the new Government in the Republic. [On June 2, the second coalition of Fine Gael, Labour and Clann na Talmhan took over from Fianna Fáil.]

"The existence of such an apparently powerful, illegal, armed body is bound to create concern within Government circles and may soon be the subject of Cabinet discussion."

On the other hand it reported on a meeting of the Irish Anti-Partition Association in Dundalk on the day after the Armagh Raid.

The Association passed an emergency reso-

lution "declaring that there should be no political cooperation between the Dublin and Belfast Governments and police and military forces in the two areas."

This immediate response from a respected source set a headline for public opinion south of the Border.

The Dundalk meeting also called on the Dublin government to make an official protest against the proposed British Royal visit to "the six occupied counties".

It also requested all city and county councils in the 26 Counties to pass resolutions "against the visit of British Royalty and to send copies of the resolutions to the British Ambassador in Dublin."

The *Irish Times* also reported the action of an Armagh city woman who phoned the RUC about what was happening in the barracks. She later told a reporter that "the police did not arrive for more than 20 minutes, when one policeman arrived on a bicycle!"

"A senior police officer said yesterday (Sunday, June 13): 'We are now satisfied that (1) The raid was executed by people from across the Border; (2) they were now locals of Armagh or Belfast, because none of them were masked or disguised;

"(3) it was an inside job; (4) the arms 'loot' is now across the Border or in dumps near it; and (5) any hope of getting the guns back or of identifying the raiders in the Six Counties (sic) is slight."

"Police in the Republic (sic) were inclined to believe that the rifles were not taken into the Republic but dumped at one or more points in south Armagh, near the Monaghan border.

"This is a mountainous area, with a very strong nationalist population. There are thousands of places where large quantities of arms could be dumped and hidden.

"A similar raid took place at Ballykinkar Camp in the night of February 10, 1940, where a contingent of the Royal Irish Fusiliers was in occupation. On that occasion the technique was the same. The men, after driving into the camp, overpowered a sentry on duty, entered the armoury and stole (sic) rifles.

"The sentry was bound and gagged, and the raids took him with them to Belfast, where they released him the following morning..."

The *Evening Herald* of June 14 reported: "Gough barracks, Armagh are the depot of the Royal Irish Fusiliers. General Sir Gerald Templar, Malaya's 'tough man', who is an Honorary Colonel of the Regiment, was reputed in a London paper today to be livid at the easy theft (sic)."

The IRA communiqué of June 12 claiming responsibility for the Raid, said that General Templar was due to visit the barracks on June 17. His visit was postponed for obvious reasons.

It was noted in last month's instalment that as British High Commissioner in Malaya he had ordered that the pigs of natives unwilling to give information regarding freedom fighters should be seized as part of an "Inform or Starve" policy.

Then June 15, the *Irish Independent* carried a report: "Those responsible for the raid on Armagh military barracks were congratulated by Limerick Corporation last night on 'striking a stunning blow at the British Army of Occupation in the North'."

Soon verses were composed praising them "Nothing hit the British like Coleman's Bedford Truck..." James Coleman, Deepark, Dundalk had identified the lorry as his.

Then to the air of *Bould Phelim Brady, the Bard of Armagh* came:

We found what we prayed for,  
The arms we were made for,  
The day that we raided  
Gough barracks, Armagh.  
It was a parody on *The Old Homing Waltz*, then very popular.

Even when reading the accounts of the event, fifty years afterwards, one feels a great surge of national pride at the Armagh Raid. Coming after six years of Anti-Partition propaganda without action, it was a real tonic.

(More next month. Refs. An *t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, July 1954; *Sunday Press* and *Sunday Independent*, June 12, 1954; *Irish Times*, June 14, 1954; *Irish Independent*, June 14 and 15, 1954; and *Evening Herald*, June 14, 1954.)



# FAVOURABLE REACTION TO ARMAGH RAID

## 50 Years Ago

**DURING the remainder of June, and all of July and August 1954 there was continued reaction to the daring arms raid of June 12 on Armagh British army barracks.**

Many local councils throughout the 26 Counties passed resolutions supporting the men of the Armagh Raid. Noticeable in these discussions were the Fianna Fáil members who were vociferous in their praise.

Of course their party had just relinquished office in Leinster House and it was not surprising to find such people harkening back to their origins at such a time.

North of the Border, Stormont brought back into force some of the lapsed powers of search and interrogation under the Special Powers Act 1922-23.

At the same time the Stormont Minister for Home Affairs threatened that "if necessary the new powers will be strengthened". These were the regulations which had been withdrawn in 1949 when Dublin government delegates at the Council of Europe denounced them as a denial of human rights.

The Roscommon Herald of July 2 gave a flavour of local council reaction when it reported "Sligo Council Congratulates Arms raiders" and reported the speeches made.

"As a member of the old IRA who operated on the Border in 1922, I still maintain that the Six Counties will never come in voluntarily and the only alternative is physical force."

This statement was made at Sligo Co Council meeting by Mr Joseph Pilkington when he proposed a resolution congratulating those who "carried out the coup in Gough Barracks, Armagh" and "advising the British authorities to withdraw their troops before it is too late". The resolution was passed unanimously.

Proposing the resolution Mr Pilkington said (one wonders if he was any relation of Comdt Gen Liam Pilkington of Sligo, GOC 3rd Western Division, IRA, 1921-24): "I had any say in the administration of the country I would give a special medal to these 16 men who went in there with their lives in their hands and carried out such an operation without firing a shot."

"It was a great achievement and it has, in my opinion as an old veteran, been a master-stroke. It is the best propaganda for the people in the Six Counties who want to amalgamate with us than if we had been down there shooting for the last 20 years."

Mr Pilkington continued: "As an old IRA man I am prepared to take today where I failed in 1922 in taking the Six Counties. This country will never be free until the men who deserve the congratulations of all the 26 Counties take up arms and proceed to pull John Bull by the tail and tell him it is time to get out of the Six Counties. They are doing it all over the world, in India, Egypt and South Africa."

"With those few revolutionary remarks, I wish to tell these young men, that though advancing in years — I am 53 and have all my family reared — I am prepared tomorrow to take the gun across the Border, and carry out operations at the risk of my life, for the freedom of the Six Counties."

"I am saying that as the second in charge of a column that went to the Six Counties in 1922," he added.

Clfr F Gannon: "I wish to give my wholehearted support to this resolution congratulating the Republican Army for going into the enemy's stronghold and bringing off a military victory."

"The next time I hope they will bring six companies of 15 men and take the whole Six Counties. They don't want a lot of publicity, but we don't want the occasion to pass without showing our appreciation for what they have done."

Clfr W McDonagh: "They were great men anyhow." The resolution was seconded by Alderman M Nevin.

End of report. This was great stuff entirely on June 26 — a fortnight after the Raid.

The Irish Independent of June 18 carried the text of a statement signed "D Mac Diarmada, Adjutant-General, GHQ Dublin, Irish Republican Army".

"Arising out of the recent arms raid on Gough Barracks, Armagh, efforts are being made in certain quarters to create an atmosphere of doubt as to the purpose for which the arms are intended. The captured arms are intended solely for use against the British Army of Occupation in Ireland. Nothing could be clearer than this



• This picture was taken in Fermanagh barracks immediately after the IRA raid in 1954. The photographer, Colman Doyle, pointed his camera through a slot in the gate and his picture shows a British soldier taken captive during the raid explaining what had happened.

answer to those who were hinting about "problems for the Dublin government".

Stormont Premier, Lord Brookeborough, was on holidays in Norway (a change from his usual trip to Kenya to shoot lions) and Home Affairs Minister GB Hanna was ill in a Belfast clinic.

The Finance Minister, WB Maginness, acted as Prime Minister and conferred with Mr Hanna at his bedside along with the British army GOC in the Six Counties.

As a result the lapsed regulations empowering the RUC to search premises without a warrant, to stop and search vehicles and to stop and interrogate people were signed into force again and a military Court of Inquiry into the Armagh Raid was to be held "in private".

Stormont MP Eddie McAteer, Chairman of the Anti-Partition League in the Six Counties, commented that "Stormont was not really comfortable without full jackboot powers".

He continued: "No matter what enactment is passed curtailing our few liberties the struggle for freedom will go on with renewed vigour."

Jadugh Feehan, secretary of the Anti-Partition of Ireland League in Britain sent a telegram to British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. He called "upon the British government to apply to Ireland their principles for German re-unification."

The telegram continued: "The re-imposition of the Special Powers Acts is contrary to the fundamental principles of democratic government. Britain is responsible for and maintains the partition of Ireland."

The Irish Independent of June 18 noted in addition that "Special police powers have been in force in the Six Counties since 1922" and went on: "In the mid-1930s a commission from the British Council of Civil Liberties visited the Six Counties and made a full-scale inquiry into the operation of the Special Powers Act."

"The commission found that in fact the Act amounted to a denial of civil liberties. Among the members of the Council at that time were Mr Clement Attlee (later British Prime Minister 1945-51) and other prominent Labour Party leaders."

On June 15 the matter of the Armagh Raid was raised in both the British House of Commons and the Stormont Senate. Unionists failed to have it raised in the Stormont parliament, Mr Maginness saying "it was primarily a matter for the [British] military authorities".

An *Éireannach*, *Antaiithe The United Irishman* commented on the above: "Precisely, the real power is in the hands of England; Stormont is merely the puppet."

It also noted the Limerick Corporation resolution passed unanimously "calling on the [Dublin] government not to cooperate with the British authorities in their investigations concerning the Armagh raid", and added that there should be no attempt to cooperate with the north of Ireland police in identifying those responsible.

The Co Westmeath Committee of Agriculture unanimously voted "that we congratulate the 15 brave men who successfully raided Gough Barracks, Armagh, and we call on the Taoiseach not to assist in any investigation in connection with the affair".

The Irish Press of June 30 reported that "Westmeath Co Council unanimously adopted a resolution from the Anti-Partition Association asking the Government (sic) to follow a policy of strict non-cooperation in military matters with the military and police forces of the occupying

power in the Six Counties."

It also carried a letter to the Editor headed "Armagh Arms Raid" which read "A chara — At the National meeting of the National Executive of the National Cycling Association of Ireland, a resolution was unanimously passed congratulating those who took part in the recent arms raid in British-occupied Ireland. — Yours truly, H O Toole-King, Honorary Secretary, 4 Carrow Road, Drimnagh, Dublin."

The same paper on the previous day, June 29, recorded a resolution passed the night before by Portlaoise Town Commissioners congratulating the "15 gallant Irishmen" on their action in capturing arms from the British army in Armagh.

"Gerry Lodge, proposer, said the men had proved that the young men today were as determined as the men of 1916-1921 to drive the British army out of Ireland."

"Mr B Maybury, seconding, said the British were trying to re-unite Germany but held that the unification of Ireland was 'a matter for ourselves'."

The Republican newspaper summed up: "from all over the nation came resolutions congratulating the IRA for the Armagh operation. Corporations, councils and heretofore advocates of 'peaceful means' like the Anti-Partition Association and other bodies."

It went on: "The raid — flashed across the globe by International agencies, such as Press Association, United Press and Reuter — made front-page headlines on the five continents."

"Even on the same night it was listed among the six news headlines over AFN on their mid-night bulletins."

"In America it was carried by radio and television networks that same evening, while several of the leading dailies gave it prominent publicity."

The last three paragraphs were headed "Worldwide Headlines".

Bodenstown 1954 was indeed a stirring event. It took place on Wolfe Tone's birthday exactly — Sunday, June 20, one week and one day subsequent to the Armagh Raid.

Many middle-aged people were among the attendance which the *Irish Independent* estimated at 3,000 while the *Irish Times* gave the figure of 3-4,000. I appeared as if many who had given up on the Cause had had their hopes revived by recent events.

Michael McGinn of Philadelphia spoke on behalf of the Clan na Gael and IRA Veterans of America. He pledged the support of that body to the IRA. They in America had never given up the idea of physical force. He said that the deed of the last weekend would give them great heart and renewed hope to continue their efforts to help the movement at home.

Gearóid Ó Broin, Baile Átha Cliath, received thunderous applause as he gave the oration. Those present had the feeling, he said, that they were now nearer than ever to achieving the ideals of Wolfe Tone.

The arms captured in Armagh were for use against the British Occupation Forces in the Six Counties and would be used against them in due course. The courage of the present generation could not be questioned. The intention for which the arms were taken had been misconstrued by pro-British elements in Ireland.

"To the people of Ireland," he said: "When the time comes to drive the British out, stand by your fighting men and don't let them down."

There was a great change in atmosphere from the humble reorganisation efforts of 1947,

just seven years earlier.

On reaching Salinas and the forming up point, Tony Magan, then IRA Chief-of-Staff, sought out Liam Early, OC Cork No 1 Brigade, to inquire as to Tom Barry's reaction to the success in Armagh.

The veteran who had led the West Cork Flying Column at the Kilmeachal and Crossbarry Ambushes, had planned a similar armed raid on Armagh barracks when he was Chief-of-Staff in the late 1930s.

He had to abandon it because of loose talk. His reaction to the 1954 Raid was, of course, as expected: "an outstanding operation," he said.

Unionist reaction was as would be expected also. The Republican newspaper stated: "Frank admissions that the raid was brilliantly planned and executed, thus revealing the IRA as a well-trained and highly disciplined force, was the unionist reaction."

"This was followed by typical unionist panic, thereby indicating their own undisciplined and insecure position."

Sections of editorials from the *Belfast Telegraph*, the *Belfast Newsletter* and the *Northern Whig* were quoted which revealed just such a state of mind. Suggestions were made, of course, that the IRA could attack the 26-County State. This would suit the unionist position and deflect the danger to British rule.

Dr Robert S Nixon, Unionist MP for North Down said "the British army had been made look foolish" by the raid. Stormont Premier, Lord Brookeborough said: "All unionists are determined that no band of law-breakers will frighten us, or make us give up our birthright as citizens of the UK."

Stormont Chief Whip, Col WWB Topping stated that "the IRA is still a danger". Unionists who thought the Border issue was dead and that the IRA was moribund and only a bogey, have now had their eyes opened, he said, and warned against ignoring the actions of their political foes.

The veteran nationalist, poet and author, Séamus McManus of Mountcharles, Co Donegal, then aged 93 years, wrote a letter to the newspapers praising what he termed "the break of Armagh", Briseadh Ard Mhacha.

The *Irish Press* and *Irish Independent* refused publication but the Republican paper carried it. McManus had spent many years in the USA where much of his work was published. He was a founder member of Sinn Féin in 1905. In 1954 he was back home in his native Donegal.

He wrote: "The major portion of the multitude who were elated by the brilliant coup . . . in Armagh — the most courageous and dramatic feat of this generation — do not realize its richest result, namely that it has awakened the world to the fact, long cloaked from them, that Britain, loudly bawling for Russia to free her oppressed satellites, has all along been maintaining by her side her own satellite in disrupted North-Eastern Ireland."

"The British Lion is, after all, only just a Jackass, which now provokes more laughter-shouts than shivers."

But the Irish language Inniu was among the few papers that opposed the IRA action in Armagh. It carried a long-winded hostile article.

It followed the main line of reasoning put forward by "a certain ex-politician and formerly a member of the Free State government," the Republican paper said. (He was Eamonn de Blaghd [1889-975], also called Ernest Blythe, who used the pen-name "Beann Mhagadain").

The argument was that the "Catholic" population would gradually overtake the "Protestant" population. Meanwhile we should try to win over a section of the "Protestants" to Irish unity. A couple of hundred thousand would be sufficient.

All the while we should have the best possible relations with Stormont, not doing or saying anything that would offend their pro-British susceptibilities. Thus in 50 or 100 years the problem would be solved.

Well, we are 50 years down the road.

It took the Civil Rights agitation and fierce people's resistance to bring down the old Stormont. The "Catholic" population still does not exceed the "Protestants" and with smaller families this is unlikely.

But will all "Catholics" be nationalist in another 50 years if they are absorbed into the new Stormont system according to the British cum Free State plan? The system will be stronger and the Republican Movement weaker, without doubt.

A totally new Ireland, the complete separation of church and state, federation on a four-province basis and maximum devolution to local level gives the way forward. And the British presence cannot be ignored. It must disengage from Ireland.

(More next month. Refs. An *Éireannach* *Antaiithe The United Irishman*, Jan 1954; *Roscommon Herald*, July 2, 1954; *Sunday Press*, June 20 and 27; *Irish Press*, June 16; *Irish Times*, June 21; *Irish Independent*, June 18 and 22; and *Evening Herald*, June 14.)



# WHAT USE A SMALL ARMY?\*

**50  
Years  
Ago**

"MANY people have asked what use was a small army? In it rests the sovereignty of the Irish people."

"I want every soldier and officer to realise that as long as one officer and one unit remain intact, in that unit rests the sovereignty of the Irish nation."

"With that unit the enemy will at some stage have to negotiate."

The remarks were carried in the *Irish Independent* of July 27, 1954. They were attributed to General Seán Mac Eoin, 26-County Minister for Defence at the closing of [Free State] Army Week at the Curragh.

An *t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* of August 50 years ago featured them as the principal news story on its front page under the headline "Question for the General — Who is Ireland's enemy?"

The Republican organ did not question the validity of the remarks. In fact by the prominence it gave to them it appeared to endorse them.

Of course, it would apply them to the Army of the All-Ireland Republic, the Irish Republican Army rather than to that of the 26-County State.

It did ask, "Who is the enemy the General has in mind? The only enemy the Irish nation has ever known for almost eight centuries is the forces of British Imperialism, which at present holds by brute force Six Counties of our territory which is enriched by a national tradition as noble as the historic associations surrounding any other part of our land."

"We of the Republican Movement know of no other enemy but these self-same forces of British Imperialism, and we demand that General Mac Eoin elucidates for the Irish people the hidden meaning in his remarks."

The *UI* then asked if the statement indicated a change of mind for the Free State Army "which has always heretofore fitted itself into the British strategical concepts?"

"Republicans can heartily accept the cooperation of any Irishman, or body of Irishmen, in their efforts to attain our historic mission... But they must first be assured in this particular instance that the statement of General Mac Eoin represents a genuine change of heart..."

It noted that the presence of Colonel Duncan Stewart, "the British Military Attaché to Éire" at the military exercises on the Curragh during "Army Week" was not very reassuring in this connection.

## INTENSE INDIGNATION

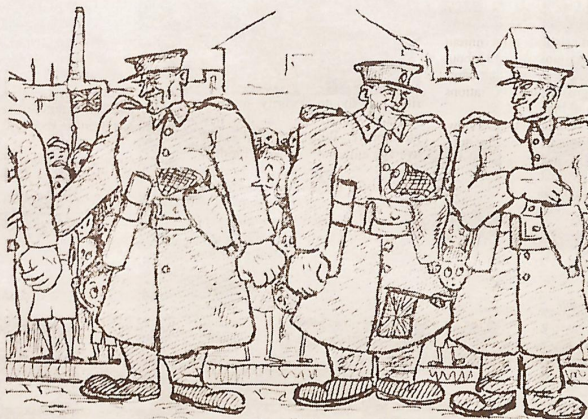
It went on to refer to the "intense indignation" aroused by the visit of inspection to the Curragh of General Woodall, GOC British Forces of Occupation in the Six Counties which was a factor in the downfall of the political party of General Mac Eoin some months earlier.

"This should act as a grim warning that the latent nationalist of our people is at last becoming aroused and that they will no longer countenance a continuance of this degrading practice of collaboration with our age-old enemy."

However, the validity of the statement contained in the first three paragraphs remains. Republicans remember how Michael Dwyer and his band of United Irishmen held out in the Wicklow Mountains from 1798 to 1803.

Meanwhile, the fall-out from the Armagh Raid in June continued. This was seen in the sales of the *United Irishman* which rocketed to more than 39,000 during July. The public were eager to read a story which had electrified the nation.

Three reprints had to be ordered, while at the Ulster GAA Final in Clones alone, 3,500 copies were sold. The usual distributors throughout the country were seeking double and in some cases treble their normal supplies. The promotional poster which accompa-



H.M. THE QUEEN COMES TO BELFAST.  
"The loyal citizens of Belfast lined the royal route."

— OFFICIAL REPORT

## • From An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman, September 1954.

nied bundles of the paper each month had in July 1954 just three words: "The Armagh Raid" which were sufficient to drive sales up to peak.

In Longford town, a Garda from the local barracks in Dublin Street called to the house of a seller in the same street and bought a copy. In five minutes or so he returned to buy another — the first had been stolen in the barracks when he left it out of his hands for a moment and before he had time to read it.

## DUNDALK URBAN COUNCIL

Most local councils did not meet during August each year but one which did was Dundalk Urban Council. The *Evening Herald* of August 25 reported a discussion on "the raid on Gough Barrack, Armagh".

"Mr P Coffey (FF) proposed that the Council call on the Government to adopt a policy of non-cooperation with the British authorities in the Six Counties in respect of the raid 'and any future exploits of a similar nature'."

"He added, 'We should congratulate the gallant band of men who carried out such a brilliant raid against the army of occupation in the Six Counties.' Mr P McKevitt (FF) seconded."

"Mr J McEntee (Ind) proposed that the matter not be discussed by the Council. Such political matters were not the business of the Council and should be left to the Government."

"Mr T Gosling (Ind) seconding, said there were several members of the Council earned their living on the GNR of which he was a pensioner. Did they realise that half their weekly money came from the Six Counties which they so much despised?"

"There were 1,600 men employed in the GNR works in Dundalk, and half of their wages came from their friends in Stormont, they can call them their friends'. It was not the Council's business to discuss such matters."

"Mr Coffey said they should ask the Government to form an 'Army of Liberation' who would march into the Six Counties and wage guerrilla warfare against the army of occupation there, against the people who occupy our six stolen counties."

"Mr OB McGahan (Ind) said he had always objected to political discussions there and would continue to do so. They had a national parliament in which these things could be discussed."

"Mr L Farrell said that if he held the view that the men who raided Armagh Barracks were right he would have been with them. For that reason he did not intend to vote."

"By five votes to four with Mr Farrell abstaining, the Council adopted the resolution."

The Republican newspaper reported simi-

lar outcomes: *The Irish Weekly* (Belfast) of July 3, commenting in its London Letter on the Anti-Partition League and its efforts to interest the 'common man' in Britain the Irish questions says:

"As JB Morton (Beachcomber) once wrote 'you can't convince the English by talk or reason, ask the Irish. They were talking for eight hundred years and got nowhere'."

"*The Weekly* adds: 'The recent seizure of arms in Armagh did more to focus his [the common man's] attention on the division of Ireland than the whole eight year of the League's work in Britain.' It was headed, 'Talk Useless'."

The Ancient Order of Hibernians (American Alliance) of New York State at its biennial convention at Troy, New York during June resolved as follows:

"That we do extend to the Irish Republican Army our heartiest congratulations upon the successful and electrifying coup executed in the raid on the Armagh barracks. The enterprise was well planned, well manned and well executed and reflects well on all participants."

From the west coast of the United States the Knights of the Red Branch, San Francisco sent a letter to the *United Irishman* on July 10:

"Congratulations to the Irish Republican Army on its recent success in seizing from the enemy occupation forces in Armagh the instruments that provide the most effective means to restore the Irish Republic."

All the while the annual summer training camps were organised and held by General Headquarters Staff, Irish Republican Army, as usual many Volunteers from the Six Occupied Counties and received first class training.

In use at these camps were a large number of the actual rifles, Sten sub-machine guns and Bren light machine guns captured so dramatically from the British Army of Occupation on that sunny Saturday afternoon in June. Morale was unusually high, as would be expected in the circumstances.

Of course, repression of the nationalist community by British Crown Forces was stepped up in view of the resistance to English rule in the Six Counties. In Newry during August four young men were arrested and charged under the Special Powers Act.

They were Matthew Loy (18), Linenhall Square, Newry; James Kearns (23), Davin Street, Newry; James Rowntree (33), O'Neill Avenue, Newry and Kevin O'Rourke (33), Killaney, Katesbridge, Banbridge.

## MEN CHARGED

The blinds of the dayroom in Newry RUC Barracks were drawn on August 17 when the four men were charged at a special court with possession of a .38 Enfield revolver, six

rounds of ammunition, three electric fuses and one fuse box.

The Resident Magistrate asked them to stand up while the charges were being read. They refused to do so and the *Irish Independent* of August 18 reported: "District Inspector RH Potts instructed police constables to 'assist them' up."

"Immediately about a dozen policemen went over to where the men were sitting and got them to their feet. O'Rourke and Kearns struggled violently, while Loy and Rowntree stood but had to be assisted while standing."

"The struggle with O'Rourke and Kearns continued for a while and eventually all four were told to sit. Part of the charges had been read to them while the struggle was going on and the remainder were read while they were sitting."

"All four appeared to be disinterested in the whole proceeding, there were about 15 police constables in the dayroom."

RUC evidence was that three of the accused had "nothing to say" to the charges while the fourth, O'Rourke, said, "I take full responsibility for all found." They were all remanded in custody for one week.

The *Irish Press* of August 26 reported: "Cheers and cries of 'Keep your hearts up, lads; it will only be for a wee while' greeted four men when they left Newry Court yesterday, remanded on possession of firearms charges. A large crowd had gathered outside before the court opened."

## REMANDED

They had been remanded from a special court a week earlier and they were not legally represented.

Detective-Sergeant John Crawford, RUC, was questioned by the prisoners, "Kearns, who refused to stand when instructed to do so by Mr P Gorfunkle, RM, asked how much of the arms mentioned in the charge had been found on him."

"Sergt Crawford — 'None of it'."

"To similar questions from Loy and Rowntree, the sergeant made the same reply."

"I did not have it and then I'm charged with intent to endanger life. I want to know how much evidence the person prosecuting has to substantiate the charges."

"The RM said the sergeant would probably be able to answer that at a later date."

All four were again remanded in custody for a week — until September 3 — and removed to Belfast jail in a police van under heavy escort.

At the same court, later in the day, Thomas Arthur Murtagh (27), Tullymaerieve, Mullaghbawn, South Armagh was returned for trial to Armagh Assizes in custody charged with possession of a Thompson sub-machine gun and 57 rounds of ammunition.

Sergeant Peter Quinn, Bessbrook, gave evidence of raiding Murtagh's house with other RUC on July 29 and finding the arms under some sacking in an outhouse. The weapon was in working order.

"There is definitely no possibility that this gun was among those taken from Gough Barracks at Armagh," an RUC spokesman said. "No Thompson sub-machine gun was taken in the Armagh raid."

The accused, said the sergeant, had made a statement that the arms had been found by him in the ceiling of a house on an outfarm about two years earlier. He had brought them home. The outfarm had come into his possession four or five years before the discovery of the arms by the RUC.

Bail was refused, DI Montgomery saying that the accused was already on bail in connection with a Customs offence.

At the trial on December 2, Sergt Quinn said Murtagh was not a member of the IRA. The *Irish Press* of December 3 reported that the prisoner "in reply to the judge, said that he did not believe in violence."

He was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment.

(More next month. Refs. An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman, August and September 1954; *Irish Independent*, August 18; *Evening Herald*, August 25; *Irish Press*, August 26, July 31 and December 31.)



# THE UI — 'NOT BANNED BUT FEARED'

**50  
Years  
Ago**

FIFTY years ago the humorous and satirical monthly magazine *Dublin Opinion* in its July 1954 issue had an interesting piece under the heading "Mamma on the

New Government".

These articles each month consisted of pointed questions by two precocious children, "dear Seán" and "dear Mary", with patient answers given by "dear Mamma".

These passages dealt with current affairs, and in June the administration in the 26 Counties had changed and the Armagh Raid took place 10 days later, giving rise to the following:

**Mary:** What is the meaning of the words, Fianna Fáil, dear Mamma?

**Mamma:** Fianna Fáil means Soldiers of Ireland; they were organised groups of professional soldiers who flourished in the third century under Cumhaill and later under his son Fionn; they fought for the most part against the High Kings at Tara.

**Seán:** When were they defeated, dear Mamma?

**Mamma:** They were defeated by Cairbre of the Liffey at the Battle of Gabhra in AD 284.

**Mary:** Did they ever rise to power again, dear Mamma?

**Mamma:** Never, dear Mary.

(Dear Seán and Mary look bewildered.)

**Seán:** Dear Mary and I read recently in the newspapers a large headline proclaiming, "Fianna Fáil Defeated", surely this was not in reference to the Battle of Gabhra in AD 284, dear Mamma?

**Mamma:** No dear Seán; it referred to the defeat in the general election of the political party known as Fianna Fáil.

**Mary:** Is the title Fianna Fáil, or Soldiers of Ireland, synonymous with the title Irish Republican Army, dear Mamma?

**Mamma:** No, dear Mary. The Irish Republican Army claims to be the direct continuation of the Irish Republican Army who carried out the Easter Week Rising of 1916 and proclaimed the Irish Republic.

**Seán:** Where is the Irish Republican Army, dear Mamma?

**Mamma:** This army is necessarily underground, dear Seán, since they have been banned and declared illegal by the government of Southern Ireland, by the government of Northern Ireland, and by the government of Great Britain.

**Mary:** How does this much-banned army maintain its arms and equipment, dear Mamma?

**Mamma:** They visit the chief arsenals in the country, dear Mary, and take what they require. In December, 1939, they visited the Phoenix Park Arsenal, which is the chief arsenal in the South.

**Seán:** Military equipment has advanced considerably since 1939, dear Mamma; how can they keep abreast of changes in armament?

**Mamma:** Quite recently they visited Gough Arsenal in Armagh, which is the chief arsenal for the North, dear Seán.

**Seán:** What is the political party that has succeeded the Fianna Fáil party, dear Mamma?

**Mamma:** Our dear country is now governed by a coalition government, dear Seán.

**Mary:** Explain, dear Mamma.

**Mamma:** The word "coalition" comes from the Latin "coalesco", dear Mary, an inceptive verb meaning to unite, to agree together, to thrive. A coalition government is



• Kevin O'Rourke (30) was cheered by the crowd outside Newry Courthouse on September 8, 1954. He faced charges of possession of arms and told the British judge that his "foreign court was trying to administer law against the will of the Irish people".

formed in grave national danger such as war or threat of war.

**Seán:** What danger threatened that induced the formation of a coalition government, dear Mamma?

**Mamma:** The danger that the Fianna Fáil party would continue in office, dear Seán.

**Mary:** To whom was this a danger, dear Mamma?

**Mamma:** To all the other political parties, dear Mary. There is no disaster for a political party comparable with not being in power.

**Seán:** Had our dear country a coalition government before the present, dear Mamma?

**Mamma:** Yes, dear Seán; the present parties were in power from 1948 to 1951.

**Mary:** Are they likely to remain longer in power on this occasion, dear Mamma?

**Mamma:** Yes, dear Mary. Political parties never make the same mistake a second time.

**Seán:** What will be the fate of the unfortunate deputies who lost their seats in the general election, dear Mamma?

**Mamma:** They will be accommodated as far as possible by being given seats in the Senate, dear Seán.

**Mary:** Pray, dear Mamma, speak to us of the Senate and the election thereto.

**Mamma:** Not at the moment, dear Mary. I shall arrange a suitable occasion to do so. In the interval between now and your hour for retiring, I recommend that you should study Plato's Republic.

**Seán, Mary:** Thank you, dear Mamma. — APK.

## LEADING MAGAZINE

*Dublin Opinion* was a leading magazine for all of its existence - from 1921 to 1972. Its cartoons were particularly successful, with two being outstanding and well remembered.

The first was entitled *The Night the Treaty was signed* and showed the mass rush to Dublin of opportunists seeking jobs under the new Free State regime. Even the dead were rising up, pushing their tombstones to one side.

The second was *Céilí in the Kildare St Club*, a familiar meeting place for members of the old Ascendancy. Even the portraits on the walls of old Colonels and Majors of the British army looked aghast, monocles falling off, at their successors engaging in Irish dance.

ing.

Meanwhile, the secret British War Office Court of Inquiry into the Armagh Raid completed its investigations. A British military spokesman said the report was "private" and would "not be issued publicly".

Brigadier GMT Morphew, Palace Barracks, Holywood, Co Down, presided at the Inquiry and General Sir John Woodall, British Military Commander in the Six Counties and his Chief of Staff, Major IC Harris attended, the *Irish Press* reported on July 8.

It was August before General Sir Gerald Templar, Honorary Colonel of the Royal Irish Fusiliers (the Armagh garrison) and governor of Malaya who was said to be "livid" at the raid, saw fit to inspect the barracks.

Lord Justice Porter at the opening of Armagh Assizes on July 14 described the Raid as "an irregular military adventure against a portion of Her Majesty's dominions, which amounted almost to an international incident," the *Irish Press* noted on July 15.

But nationalist Ireland was steadily rallying in support of the Armagh raiders as evidenced at meeting of local councils.

The *Irish Press* of July 8 noted that a resolution congratulating the men who took part in the arms raid on Armagh barracks was "passed unanimously" by Mallow Urban District Council.

The *Roscommon Herald* on July 3 reported: "They will go down in history and their names will live as long as the names of Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet," said Mr Michael Tansey at a meeting of Boyle Town Commissioners on Wednesday night, when he congratulated the men who had taken the arms from Gough Barracks, Armagh.

Said Mr Tansey: "I would like to express our congratulations to the young heroic men who carried out such a daring raid on a military post in the occupied territory."

"That gallant act has brought more attention on the evil of Partition than all the publicity propagated by all the Anti-Partition organisations since they were formed."

"In the 26 Counties those young men are hailed as heroes and though we don't know them now, they will be known when we become united and Ireland is a nation once again."

Mr T Egan seconded the resolution which was passed with acclamation, the *Herald* report concluded.

Then came a set-back. The *Irish Press* of July 7 carried a report that Drogheda Corporation by five votes to four rejected a motion proposed by Mr K Quigley congratulating "the soldiers of the IRA who successfully raided Gough military barracks".

The Mayor, Ald L Walsh, voting in favour of the motion, said these men were in a minority, as were the men of 1916. (Ald Larry Walsh was a Fianna Fáil TD who lost his Co Louth seat six weeks earlier.), said he did not see why the Corporation should condone the illegal activities of a private army.

Mr B V Anderson, Chamber of Commerce member, said he resented the introduction of political matters into corporation affairs.

(The feeling among Republican leaders was that a less forthright wording, eg "the men who raided, etc", might have secured the adoption of the motion.)

The same report carried news of yet another successful resolution, this time by Naas UDC the previous night.

It endorsed the resolution from the Anti-Partition Association calling on the government to adhere to a policy of strict non-cooperation in political matters with the military and police forces of the occupying power in the Six Counties.

Meanwhile repression by the British

Occupation Forces was growing in the Six Counties. A young Dublin man was arrested in the house of friends in Belfast during August.

An *tÉireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* in September, 1954 gave his case front page headline treatment. "Not banned but feared", it read. Kevin McConnell (21), Swilly Road, Cabra, Dublin, was sentenced to three months imprisonment under the Special Powers Acts for having copies of *The United Irishman* in his possession.

At the same time the paper was publicly on sale in newsagents only a few hundred yards from the Courthouse, just as it was on sale in every one of the Six Counties... When asked if the paper was banned, the RUC Inspector replied "No, but..."

Kevin had been on holiday in Donegal and came over to Belfast to attend a Céilí and view the bonfires on the eve of the 15th of August.

A group of young Dublin men and women were having a sing-song in a friend's house when the RUC raided. They seized a few of the papers which were in the house and began to threaten the "bean a' tít". Kevin accepted responsibility for the papers.

He and three others, including two girls, were taken to Springfield Road barracks. After being alternately questioned and threatened, the girls were released. The men were held till the following afternoon (other houses were raided and people detained).

Kevin was tried and sentenced as a matter of form. He refused to plead and remained silent during the case.

The Republican newspaper pointed out: "What stands out is the power of the police. Having decided in good old Imperialist tradition that an example must be made of someone, any pretext was good enough and the policeman's word was sufficient."

## FIRST SHOT FIRED

It emerged in court that RUC Constable Aiken had fired a shot at Kevin when he ran away to avoid arrest. It was the first shot fired in anger in the Six Counties since the 1940s.

In Newry on September 2 the four men charged with possession of arms were again remanded in custody. They asked whether they were being held "on suspicion or on evidence"? No evidence was produced.

The *Irish Press* of September 3 noted: "Crowds had surrounded the Courthouse to await the arrival of the men but the hearing was transferred to the local police barracks."

"The crowd then went to the barracks and commenced to cheer. When some of them looked in through windows of the room where the court was being held and tapped the glass, blinds were drawn and police went to investigate."

Matthew Loy, James E Kearns and James Rowntree each refused to stand when asking questions and were in turn dragged to their feet by RUC men. All four were remanded in custody again, but next day the three mentioned above were released on the direction of the Attorney-General, Edmund Warknock.

Kevin O'Rourke (30) was greeted by a crowd of 50 people outside the court on September 8. He was cheered as he was led in and there were cries of "Hold on, Kevin."

He was held on his feet forcibly by three RUC men. He declared: "This is a foreign court trying to administer law against the will of the majority of the Irish people."

Kevin was returned for trial at the Winter Assizes in Downpatrick.

(More next month... Refs. *An tÉireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* September 1954; *Roscommon Herald*, July 3, 1954; *Irish Press*, July 7, 8, 14, 15, August 25, September 3 and 9, 1954; *Dublin Opinion*, July 1954; *Sunday Press*, September 5, 1954 and *Irish Independent*, August 18, 1954.)



# OMAGH RAID ELECTRIFIES NATION

**50  
Years  
Ago**

**RADIO** Éireann in a newsflash on Sunday, October 17, 1954 at 1pm told listeners that there had been an armed attack on Omagh British army barracks at 3.30am and that

a sharp exchange of fire with British troops had taken place.

The gunfire had lasted 20 minutes, the report said, and five British troops were wounded. It was later confirmed that two IRA Volunteers were also wounded in the fight.

"In the month of October '54, Reveille sounded clear,

from Omagh barracks the call went forth that all who would might hear..."

Within weeks people were singing the ballad. Not for 30 years had the IRA and British occupation troops engaged in combat. On the last occasion, in March 1924, British troops coming ashore from Spike Island in Cork Harbour were hit by machine-gun fire. One soldier was killed and 18 others were wounded.

The Omagh raid sparked off the greatest panic the Occupation Forces had undergone for many years. British army, Navy, Airforce, RUC and B-Specials—all armed to the teeth—swarmed into Co Tyrone with every type of equipment from helicopters to police dogs.

Up to 30,000 armed men combed the entire Six Counties and every road and lane was patrolled. Everyone not in uniform was treated as an enemy to be threatened, brow-beaten and cowed by the armed bullies of the Empire. The real nature of the occupation was exposed in full sight.

The following statement was issued by GHQ, IRA and signed "D Mac Diarmada, Adjutant-General":

"At 3.30am on Sunday, October 17, a detachment of the Irish Republican Army carried out a raid on Omagh Military Barracks. The raid commenced when a small party of our Volunteers infiltrated the barracks and proceeded to capture and disarm the sentries.

"Before this phase of the operation could be completed, the alarm was raised by the screams of a terrified sentry. The guard turned out and opened fire on our Volunteers.

"The fire was returned and the Volunteers continued to advance to their objective, which was to open the main gate and admit the remainder of the detachment. One of the Volunteers broke through the fire and succeeded in reaching the objective. Whilst attempting to open the gate he was hit by a burst of enemy machinegun fire at close range.

"The main body of the garrison having now been alerted, the Volunteers succeeded in effecting a covered withdrawal, taking their wounded comrade with them. The withdrawal was effected in the face of heavy rifle and machinegun fire, in the course of which another Volunteer was wounded.

"Five of the enemy forces were wounded in the course of the engagement. All Volunteers engaged in the operation have now being accounted for."

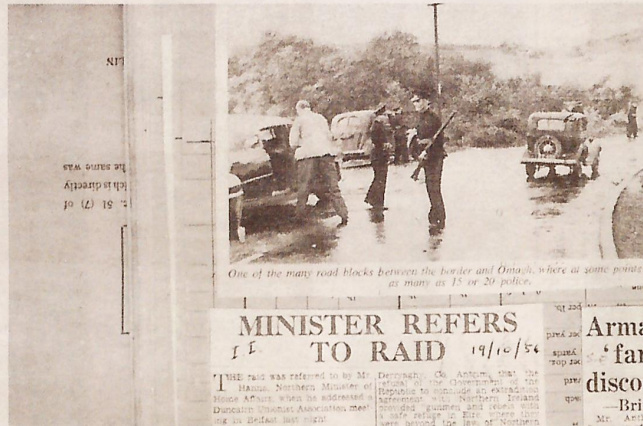
*An t-Eireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* of November 1954 concluded the front page story on the raid: "As sure as night follows day aggression will bring resistance and that resistance will continue until the aggressors have cleared out.

"The Omagh Raid, although no weapons were seized, has driven home that point to the English invaders, to their collaborators in Ireland, and to the free nations of the world.

"It has sent a cry echoing round the world — IRELAND DEMANDS UNITY AND FREEDOM. Omagh, even more than Armagh, has been a resounding success."

The *Irish Independent* of October 18 listed the wounded British troops as "Corporal McDonagh and Fusiliers Boyle, Colville, Callaghan and Heatley. The two last-named are seriously wounded."

It went on to say that the raiders waiting outside



• One of the numerous RUC and B-Special road blocks between the Border and Omagh after the Omagh Raid of October 17, 1954.

the main gate to be admitted "are believed to have been equipped with motor transport to clear the armory."

"The plan almost succeeded," the *Independent* stated. It was learned later that the magazine (containing ammunition) was the main objective, rather than the armory — containing weapons.

The Republican newspaper noted that the "British army search for the raiders was directed by Colonel EHW Grimshaw, Chief of Staff, Northern Ireland District, who served in Kenya until recently with Captain TM Troy, officer commanding the raided depot.

"Colonel Grimshaw said after the raid: 'Troy and I had plenty of experience rounding up the Mau Mau in Kenya, and we should be able to deal with this lot!'

The *Independent* described the British reaction to the raid as "the most intensive man-hunt ever undertaken in Northern Ireland". A large number of men were taken to Omagh RUC barracks for questioning.

Six men were detained and charged with "attempted murder" of a British soldier. They were **Thomas J Mitchell** (23), Inverness Road, Fairview, Dublin; **Eamonn Boyce** (27), Gallymore Road, Dublin; **Philip Clarke** (21), Ben Madigan Road, Dublin; **Seán O'Callaghan** (21) Bóthar Glas, Cork city; **Seán O'Hegarty** (20), Commons Road, Cork city and **Liam Muleahy** (22), Greenfield Lane, Cork city.

That night two more men were captured in the Fintona district of the Clogher Valley. They too were charged with "attempting to murder" a British soldier. They were **Patrick Kearney** (28), Mourne Road, Drimnagh, Dublin and **John McCabe** (33), Garryowen Road, Ballyfermot, Dublin.

The last named was a Co Leitrim man working in Dublin, Jack McCabe, popularly known as "Flash" and a native of Rossinver in the north of the county. These two men had evidently made their way on foot in the direction of the Monaghan Border.

A crowd of several hundred people, some of whom cheered, were gathered outside Omagh RUC barracks as the six men were led out, the *Independent* reported. Next day the same paper noted: "Once again a crowd of about 500 people stood outside the barracks during the hearing", i.e. until Kearney and McCabe were removed.

A heavily armed convoy of RUC and British military vehicles took both sets of prisoners to Crumlin Road jail, Belfast. Meanwhile houses were raided and people questioned as far away as Derry city and Fermanagh.

However on Monday morning a covered lorry belonging to the Agricultural Co-operative Society of Sixmilecross, a small town about nine miles from Omagh, was found abandoned near Raheny, Dublin, with its petrol tank empty. It had been reported missing earlier that morning.

A report that one of the wanted men had been hiding in an elevated water tower of a disused training camp close to Omagh military barracks resulted in an all-night siege by troops armed with machineguns and searchlights which proved to be

fruitless.

The water tank was later drained out in preparation for the arrival of troops belonging to the King's Own Scottish Borderers evacuated from the Suez Canal Zone who were to be accommodated there.

Immediately after the Omagh Raid, British troops of the KOSB stationed at Ballykinkar Camp, Co Down were rushed to Co Tyrone to join the all-out search.

Folk memories were stirred as this British regiment was notorious for shooting civilians dead at Batchelor's Walk in Dublin on the evening of the Hough town-running to the Irish Volunteers in 1914. "The King's Own Scottish Murderers", they were called at the time.

Ballykinkar Camp was familiar to many IRA Veterans and civilians since it was used as a mass concentration camp for internees in 1920-21. Events in 1954 caused memories to be re-awakened — and not in favour of British rule in Ireland.

In the Six Counties older Republicans who had not been active since the early 1940s had their homes raided and were interrogated as early as 7am on that Sunday morning of the Omagh raid.

They felt part of the action again and were proud to tell neighbours and friends that they were still actively associated in the minds of the British forces with "the men who raided Omagh barracks".

It was high drama throughout the Six Counties for two months as the weekly circus of the huge convoy conveyed the eight men to Omagh courthouse and back to Belfast. People said to each other, "if those men had come this way, they'd have been looked after..."

In the 26 Counties too, the question was raised of whether the guns taken from Armagh Barracks in June would ever be used. Now they had their answer: they had been used — and against the British army. "It was like auld times..."

The *Irish News Agency* described the weekly convoy as follows:

"[It] was headed by a police traffic radio car and a field radio car, then two Lancia cars with armed police, and two Black Maria prison vans, two more police vans, then two other police radio cars and two further police vans.

"The police in towns through which the convoys passed were 'on guard', and police cars also patrolled road junctions leading in to the provincial towns on the route and around Cookstown.

"A Royal Air Force spotter plane flew low over the countryside, reporting 'all clear' and the movement of traffic to the pilot radio car. Special security precautions were in operation also in Belfast in the vicinity of the jail.

"It is possible that further hearings will take place in Belfast. A senior police officer stated last night, 'We do not wish to run any risk of losing these men.'"

The atmosphere in the Six Counties was conveyed in the *Irish Independent* of October 19 which stated that "Reporters and photographers travelling to Omagh yesterday morning were held up and questioned no fewer than ten times at road

blocks manned by RUC and Special Constabulary armed with rifles and Sten guns. On the return journey they were again questioned and their identities checked.

"British military supply trucks carrying barbed wire were observed heading in the Omagh direction with soldiers lying on the roofs of the drivers' compartments manning machine guns."

It was into this cauldron on the Sunday morning that two GHQ officers of the IRA had the courage to venture to search for the scattered Volunteers. Tomás Mac Curtáin of Cork, chairperson of the Army Council and Charlie Murphy of Dublin, Adjutant-General, took a taxi from Monaghan town across the Border and right into Omagh.

Many times they were stopped and ordered out of the taxi on to the roadside, required to raise their hands and be searched. In Omagh they checked with a local contact but there was no sign or word of the missing Volunteers.

On the return journey, the performance was repeated and luckily they were not recognised. At the last road-block before crossing the Border the British forces were deeply suspicious of them but they were eventually allowed to proceed.

Fair play to you, Tomás and Charlie, you were no armchair generals, but stood by your men. It is only right that your action be put on record.

Political and other reaction to the Omagh Raid will have to wait until next month's instalment. Latest news on Wednesday, October 20, in the *Irish Independent* was:

"It was learned yesterday that when the shooting ceased on Sunday morning, about 20 men were seen running to a lorry parked on the Derry road about 250 yards from the main Depot entrance. The lorry was driven off at speed in the Derry direction."

One week subsequent to the Omagh Raid, Tomás Mac Curtáin was back near the Border. This time it was to unveil a life-size statue of a 1916 Volunteer in Kilkenny limestone on a granite base in front of the Courthouse in Cavan town.

Described in the local *Anglo-Celt* newspaper as the "County Cavan IRA Memorial", it commemorated the men from the county who gave their lives in defence of the Irish Republic.

Interestingly, the site of the memorial was formerly occupied by an old cannon — a relic of the Crimean War — which was presented to the town by Queen Victoria of England.

"By direction of Cavan Co Council the cannon was removed and sold as scrap. The site was presented free to the Memorial Committee," the *Anglo-Celt* of October 30 noted.

A large parade formed up in Lower Church Street and marched through Pearse Street, Connolly Street, O'Rahilly Street and Casement Street (good on you, Cavan UDC for these names!) and took up position in front of the memorial.

A colour party and three bands took part. Following the unveiling ceremony wreaths were laid by the Committee Secretary, Miss Mary Brady, Chair, Cavan Urban Council, and a representative of the Joseph McMahon Sinn Féin Cumann, Kilmaley, Co Cavan.

Staff Captain McMahon, a native of Clare, was killed on military manoeuvres at Cavan, August 15, 1920. Other names later added to the Roll of Honour on the memorial were Paddy Dermody, killed by 26-County forces at Ballyjamesduff, September 20, 1942 and Ciarán Doherty of Belfast, TD for Cavan-Monaghan, died on hunger strike in Long Kesh, August 2, 1981.

Seán O'Callaghan, Cavan, presided and the Last Post and Reveille were sounded. Tomás Mac Curtáin, whose oration was well received by hundreds of IRA and Cumann na mBan Veterans, praised the action at Omagh.

He spoke of the "young men who fought it out, toe to toe, with the British army on Omagh Barracks Square, one short week ago today!" (*Longford Telegraph*, October 30.)

Two days before the Omagh Raid, the death took place in Cork of Eithne Nic Shuibhne, Annie Mac Swiney. With exception of a surviving sister, Mother Margaret of the Sisters of Christian Education in North Carolina, Eithne was the last of the great Mac Swiney family.

An attempt was made to show that she had taken no part in political or national affairs for many years, but the Republican organ quoted from a

Cont. on page 15.



# REACTION TO OMAGH RAID

**50  
Years  
Ago**

"A BEACON of light and hope which will be welcomed by the suffering people of the North" was how the *Connaught Telegraph* of

Castlebar, Co Mayo described the Omagh Raid in its issue of October 24, 1954.

The local newspaper said, "The recent raid on Omagh Military Barracks will focus world attention on the Partition of Ireland far more effectively than propaganda or the pratings of politicians."

"Pacifists and 'loyal' Ulstermen will condemn the raid and howl for the blood of the raiders; sincere Irishmen at home and abroad, while not openly condemning the exploit, will have nothing but praise and admiration for the courage and daring of the youths concerned and sympathy for the unfortunate men and women who were caught and now face trial before a bigoted anti-Irish court."

"The time has come when it must be admitted, and the fact faced up to, that so long as British troops occupy a portion of Ireland and enforce 'law and order' with the baton and gun, just so long will there be unrest here, and just so long will men sacrifice their liberty and lives if necessary, for the hallowed ideal of a free united country."

"Thus it has been for over seven hundred years; thus it is bound to be until the ideal is achieved."

"Today many cherish the hope that freedom may be achieved by peaceful negotiations. The raid on Omagh Barracks demonstrates that many people think otherwise."

"The unnatural Border is in existence for over thirty years, during which time the people of the North have been coerced and bullied into being British subjects."

"Thirty years is a long time to be coerced and bullied and persecuted, and regardless of what the people of the South may think we imagine that the armed raid on Omagh Barracks will be welcomed by the suffering people of the North and be as a beacon of light and hope to them in the darkness of their misery."

The spirit of the unconquered people of the Six Counties was captured in poetic words and phrases by the eminent author Benedict Kiely of Omagh. In a report in the *Irish Press* of November 2, 1954 he described the unveiling of a Celtic cross to the 1798 martyr Roddy McCorley:

"There were enough RUC men in the little streets of Toome yesterday to fight the battle of Antrim over again. They were drafted specially there to see that the Tricolour was not carried in procession as the bands and people moved down to the bridge for the unveiling..."

"Up the narrow street they stepped and since there has been no Stormont ban yet on national ballads they stepped to the music of Eithne Carbery's song and to the stirring music of the songs about the Mountains of Pomeroy and the men who died in Manchester:

*"Up the narrow street he stepped  
Smiling and proud and young,  
About the hemp rope on his neck  
His golden ringlets hung"*

"There was a strained air in the street as the procession passed the groups of black constabulary. But the wind from the Lough and the Bann water brought the breath of freedom with it when the procession cleared the houses, swung right along the river to the green-mounded place where a Celtic cross waited for unveiling, where the Tricolour flew above the gathering crowd of people from Antrim, Derry and Tyrone."

"The flag was at half-mast waiting for the moment of unveiling. Behind me in the crowd a woman from Washington said: 'They'll raise it!'"

"And raise it they did under the dull sky while the men from Ballinascreen, Brackaghreilly and Baile Mhic Teice, some of them clad against all Stormont law in green and gold uniform played *The Soldier's Song*."

"The swollen Bann burst out from the Lough (Neagh) and swilled around the eel weir and the people 'from farmstead and from fishers cot along



• Part of the heavily-armed RUC and British army convoy which brought the Omagh Raid prisoners to and from jail in Belfast.

the banks of Bann" stood bareheaded for two silent minutes remembering the dead, remembering the 19-year-old boy — Ulster's Kevin Barry — hanged on that bridge a century and a half since.

"The power of tradition there is as strong as the flow of the broad Bann. It was a Father Devlin who came in 1798 to the young fair-headed boy, McCorley, before they hanged him."

"It was a Father Devlin yesterday who, in a wonderful speech by the riverside, made the past live again and showed us Roddy McCorley as he lived on, not in scholarly records, but in the living traditions of the people."

"Eithne Carbery in 1898 caught up those traditions and turned them into a song that has kept the name of Roddy McCorley alive."

"Father Devlin went further back and gave his listeners the Roddy McCorley who has lived on in story and ballad by the beards of the Loughshore people:

*"In sweet Duneeane this youth was born and reared up tenderly"*

"There were people from Duneeane there yesterday by the bridge of Toome, and people too from 'sweet Drumawl', where according to tradition Roddy McCorley lived happily among his Presbyterian neighbours."

*"Farewell unto you, sweet Drumawl,  
If in you I had stayed,  
Among the Presbyterians  
I would not have been betrayed"*

"His body was buried by the riverside by the men who killed him. Years later when a new bridge was being built, the bones were discovered and reinterred in sweet Duneeane."

"The Celtic cross by the riverside, the Loughshore men, bareheaded as the flag was raised, proved the indestructibility of a memory cherished by a people who love freedom", Benedict Kiely's report concluded.

It was just two weeks after the Omagh Raid and a new spirit was abroad. The monument to Roddy McCorley still stands "on the Bridge of Toome today", in 2004.

Meanwhile not all organs of opinion took the stand of the *Connaught Telegraph* in favour of the action at Omagh on October 17. The *Irish Times* in an editorial the following day called it "a grave disturbance of the public peace" and was "a signal failure to advance the day of a united Ireland."

It went on: "The real harm is to the Government in power in the Twenty-Six Counties which inevitably is charged...with the provision of, at least, negative aid and comfort to the instigators."

"Let it be granted that any Republican (sic) regime which should co-operate positively in the detection and punishment of IRA activists in the Six Counties would endanger its own prospects of survival!" At least the *Times* recognised the level of support for what had happened.

It continued, "An explicit re-statement of Parliament's sole and sovereign authority in this regard (dealing with the problem of partition) might clear the air against an occasion when it will be impossible to stand aloof any longer."

In other words, state your position in Leinster House now against the day when British threats will force you to crack down on Republicans.

A mere ten days later the Leinster House politicians took the hint. A motion had been on the Order Paper there since June in the name of Deputy Jack McQuillan. (Roscommon) calling for the right of audience in Leinster House for the

elected representatives of the Six Counties.

A debate was initiated based on this motion which was used by Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil to condemn the use of force against the British occupation forces in Ireland.

John A Costello as head of government and Éamon de Valera as leader of the opposition were in complete agreement in this regard.

The Labour Party deputies were left to a free vote with Dan Desmond, Chairman, as their chief spokesperson.

The *Irish Independent* of October 29 tells us "the House was crowded" and in the Distinguished Strangers Gallery were the British Ambassador, the US Ambassador and Eddie MacAteer (Derry) Stormont MP.

The motion was, of course, defeated by 100 votes to 21. With the combined Fine Gael-Fianna Fáil vote was the Clann na Tálún Deputy Michael Donnellan (North Galway).

For were 21, made up as follows: Labour — 15 Deputies Casey, Corish, Davin, Desmond, Dunne, Everet, Keyes, Kyne, Leary, McAuliffe, MP Murphy, Norton, Mrs O'Carroll, Patison, J Tully, Clann na Tálún 2 — Finucane (Kerry), O'Hara (Mayo), Clann na Poblachta 2 — Seán MacBráide (Dublin SW) and John Tully (Cavan). Independents 2 — McQuillan and Maguire (Sligo-Leitrim).

Mr Costello made a long speech in which he twice indicated his worries about Sinn Féin people being elected in the Six Counties.

The *Independent* quotes him: "The position was, however, that there was no unity among the nationalists and there were the Sinn Féin representatives who had repudiated (sic) the Dublin Parliament and who said it did not exist (sic)."

"The passing of Mr McQuillan's motion would not affect the position of Sinn Féin". The 'Dublin Parliament' certainly did not exist as regards the people of the Six Counties and Costello and de Valera joined in a vote that day to keep it so!

Seán McBride, who had through Clann na Poblachta during the summer got Liam Kelly elected to the Dublin Seanad while he was in Belfast Jail, said "isolated acts of violence in the Six Counties were not likely to further the ultimate unity of the country."

He went on: "Partition was imposed on this nation by Britain and only existed today by the political, economic and military support given to it by Britain."

He blamed those in Leinster House "because over the past 30 years they had lacked leadership in the matter of Partition."

Seán Dunne (Labour) said that in the last couple of months there had been a stirring of Republicanism and Nationalist opinion, generated by the actions of brave young men in Armagh and Omagh.

Ben Maguire (Ind) said that neither the Taoiseach nor Mr de Valera had any solution and they had no message of hope to send to the nationalists in the Six Counties.

(Note: Seán Dunne had been an internee in the Curragh Camp in the 1940-45 period and Ben Maguire represented a Border constituency, as did John Tully.)

In reply, the Army Council of Óglaigh na hÉireann circulated a four page folder (A4 size) throughout Ireland during November. It was headed 'Irish Resistance to British Aggression'

and it stated the Republican case.

The 'elected representatives' of the Irish people had condemned the 1916 Rising it said and had cheered in the British House of Commons at the news of the execution of the leaders. They later denied they did but the record stood.

It quoted Lloyd George's letter to Edward Carson dated May 29, 1916, in regard to the promised Home Rule:

"My dear Carson

I endorse Greer's draft propositions. We must make it clear that at the end of the provisional period Ulster does not, whether she wills it or not, merge in the rest of Ireland.

Ever sincerely

D. Lloyd George.

Will you show it to Craig?"

There was to be a 'clean cut' of six counties from Ireland forever. Lloyd George's secret pledge to the Unionist leaders of permanent partition was given while he was a minister acting on behalf of the British Cabinet.

In December 1916 he became Prime Minister of England until 1922. (Carson published the text of this secret letter in 1924.)

The IRA pamphlet concluded: "The dispassionate, logical conclusion to be drawn from the history of the two countries (Ireland and England) is that Ireland can only achieve unity and freedom when the whole people of Ireland tell the British Army to get out or be driven out."

Issued by the Army Council, the pamphlet appears from its wording to have been penned by the man who was then chairperson of that body, Tomás MacCurtáin of Cork.

The annual Ard-Fheis of Sinn Féin was held in Dublin on November 6 and 7 and was so enthusiastic as would be expected in 1954. An t-Uachtarán, Tomás Ó Dubhghaill in his address said that the continued presence of the British occupation forces was an act of war against the Irish Nation.

"Their presence is an insult and a challenge to the Irish people. Thank God we still have young men willing and able to take up that challenge and answer it in the only way England has ever understood."

There was an atmosphere of confidence and hope in the future. Republican actions on the military front had been complemented by more widespread Sinn Féin activity and the decision to contest all twelve seats in the forthcoming Westminster elections in the Six Counties had given all members an immediate task which demanded considerable work.

Ten days before the Ard-Fheis a constituency convention of Sinn Féin delegates met at Kanturk, Ardara, Co Tyrone to select a candidate for mid-Ulster. According to the *Irish Press* of October 28 it unanimously selected Tom Mitchell, one of the Omagh prisoners.

He was proposed by Joseph Mary Plunkett Cumann, Pomeroy and seconded by Tom Williams Cumann, Moneymore, Co Derry.

The *Irish Independent* of November 15 reported that a Sinn Féin convention in Newry had selected Kevin O'Rourke of Killaney, Banbridge, Co Down to contest the South Down constituency. Kevin O'Rourke was a prisoner in Belfast Jail awaiting trial on arms charges.

The Ard-Fheis passed a resolution of appreciation for the generous gesture of the CIE workers who visited their two comrades in Belfast Jail and who undertook to collect funds to support their families while they remained there.

Also appreciated was the action of the National Cycling Association for their gesture towards Philip Clarke, another Omagh prisoner and one of their members.

Meanwhile in New York Fr Liam Pilkington was honoured at a dinner sponsored by Clann na Gael and IRA Veterans of America. He was returning to the mission fields of Africa but he remained faithful to the All-Ireland Republic, he said.

A native of Sligo, Fr Pilkington had been General Officer Commanding the Third Western Division, IRA during the Black-and-Tan and Free State Wars.

(More next month. Refs: *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, November and December 1954; *Irish Press*, November 2, October 28; *Connaught Telegraph*, October 24; *Irish Times*, October 18; *Irish Independent*, October 29, November 15.)



# PEOPLE MOVED BY OMAGH TRIAL

## 50 Years Ago

**TREASON-felony was the charge brought against the eight Omagh Raid prisoners when they appeared at the Winter Assizes in Belfast before**

**Lord Chief Justice MacDermott on December 13, 1954.**

This new charge was a dramatic turn in the trial. It was made under the Treason-Felony Act of 1848 which was brought in to convict the Young Irelanders at the time, the first such person being the patriot John Mitchel. He received 14 years for his writings and speeches.

It was also used to jail for long periods the Fenian prisoners of the 1880s, including Tom Clarke, John Daly of Limerick and O'Donovan Rossa. The Omagh prisoners stood in the dock "in right noble succession".

In his address to the Grand Jury on November 30, the judge said:

"The days have passed when war is necessarily a matter of large armies or uniform ... If the evidence satisfies you that there was an intent to compel her Majesty to change her councils for example by removing her troops from Northern Ireland you would be justified in finding that ingredient present."

"If you find evidence of intention to remove Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom and so deprive her Majesty of her right and title you would be justified in finding a true Bill".

The judge's words definitely accept that the attack on Omagh Barracks was an act of war against the British Forces – but the prisoners were not being treated as 'Prisoners of War'. The Crown, apparently, wanted it both ways.

The *Mayo News* described the scene on the first morning of the trial: "On each side of the doorway stands an armed policeman, tunics closed tight to the neck, long close-fitting coat belted by the conspicuous holster and belt. From the holster protrudes the menacing revolver, a challenge in itself which encourages no smart cracks..."

"All around the public gallery, and interspersed through the crowd there and at all exits, in passages and at entrances to seats, policemen are stationed, the inevitable revolver prominently in front in all cases."

"Security measures are at perfection point. No chink shows in the curtain. Any attempt at rescue has been made not only impossible but unthinkable. The queen's men stand firm."

The *Irish Press* of November 18 had given an indication of the atmosphere in the Six Counties in late 1954 in a report on an earlier remand appearance by the prisoners in Omagh:

"The convoys which drove the prisoners from Belfast through thick fog arrived in Omagh about 9am, yesterday morning. The Court was heavily guarded and townspeople were warned that if they approached the Courthouse they would be summoned, while residents of the main street were warned that they must not even look out of their windows."

Of course the crowds outside the courthouse had been growing with every court appearance by the prisoners. From 200 at first they had reached 400 and the British forces wanted to halt the demonstrations. Hence the drastic action.

The *Irish Independent* of November 19 reported on the weekly journeys between Crumlin Road Prison, Belfast and Omagh Courthouse:

"The prisoners...have travelled upwards of 1,000 miles since their arrest. Yesterday they had the usual escort of jeeps, police trucks and radio cars with 50 police fully armed with rifles, stem guns and revolvers accompanying them on the journey."

"Police cordons were again placed around the Courthouse during their transfer from the prison vans." Each prisoner was handcuffed to another and again manacled to an RUC man in each case.

Letters written by the prisoners to relatives and friends from Belfast Jail were read out in court by the Crown prosecution. Nine letters in all were read out as evidence of the prisoners' intentions, i.e. to remove the British government and army of occupation from Ireland. The men in the dock protested loudly against the publication of their personal letters.

Liam Mulcahy (22), Cork, told the court that a B-Special struck him after his capture, threatened to shoot him and said he could "run for his freedom."

Seán O'Callaghan (21), Cork, said that in the car which brought him to Omagh from his place of capture, a B-Special put a revolver to his forehead and asked him if he ever played Russian roulette.

Tom Mitchell (23), Dublin, claimed in questioning that at the townland of Rylands, Omagh, where he and others were held, there was "utter chaos until the arrival of Sergeant Acheson, RUC." The



• The shed (shown here at bottom right) which is believed to have been used to scale the wall of the Crown Forces Barracks during the Omagh Raid.

prisoners estimated 150 RUC and B-Specials were present, the Crown put the figure at 30.

Sergt Anderson, B-Specials said, "If there had been chaos, I would say you would not be here today." Mitchell stated he wanted Sergt Acheson RUC to verify a statement he (the Sergt) made on the way to Omagh RUC Barracks.

"If it were not for the disciplined RUC, I would not be here today," Mitchell added. As it was Mitchell was struck so severely on the arm with a rifle butt that he was able to raise one arm only in the air at the command "Hands Up."

Evidence was given that the men were exhausted, tired and drenched wet when captured. (There had been a steady downpour of rain continuously all that weekend). Some were dressed in blue boiler suits, had canvas shoes with rubber soles and in some cases had blackened faces.

Also a GNR (Great Northern Railway) timetable was found on Boyce; on this was a detailed sketch of Omagh British military barracks and markings of train times from Cork and Dublin to Belfast and from there to Derry, getting off at Omagh.

A railway ticket collector, working at Omagh, gave evidence that he collected tickets from 19 or 20 young men, aged between 20 and 30, at Omagh station on the evening before the raid. He did not pick anyone out at the identification parade in Belfast.

Éamonn Boyce was found not far from five others. He was in such a weakened condition he could hardly raise his hands over his head. A belt, holster and loaded revolver were found nearby. On him was a device like a fountain pen able to discharge noxious gas.

Jack McCabe and Paddy Kearney were not captured until seven o'clock in the evening. They were then 12 miles from Omagh and had made it to the vicinity of Fintona in the Clogher Valley area. A few more miles would have brought them across the border.

All eight men refused to recognise the court. The jury took just 35 minutes to find them guilty on all charges. Lord Chief Justice MacDermott told them: "In a sense you are fortunate. If one of the British soldiers had been killed tonight you would have stood between you and the scaffold..." (shades of Kevin Barry and his comrades).

All of the prisoners made statements before being sentenced: Éamonn Boyce said: "We have been convicted of waging war against Her Majesty's forces in Ireland. We are about to be sentenced. God's will be done."

"However I would like to emphasise this, that it was against the British Forces of Occupation in Ireland that this attack was executed, and it is for this that we are convicted."

"Mark you well, this war was not waged against any Irishman of any class or creed, but against a foreign queen who has no right whatsoever to maintain her forces on our soil."

Liam Mulcahy said: "My sentiments have been expressed by my comrade Boyce."

Philip Clarke: "We today have been convicted as treason-felons and as Irish Republican soldiers for levying war against Her Majesty, but certain British propagandists have imputed that we are common criminals or desperados."

"Let our silence scandalise I would like to give

the lie to that suggestion."

"We are not criminals. The fact that we have been convicted as treason felons, shows the shallowness of the pseudo-independence that exists today in Ireland."

He said that in 1848 John Mitchel, the first felon, had been convicted under the Act and sentenced to 14 years. Over a century later, in the year of grace 1954, eight men from Ireland had been arrested and convicted on this charge.

"Despite what the Judge said to the jury regarding the meaning of this charge, I say treason from its very meaning implies allegiance to the Fatherland," Clarke stated.

As Irishmen their only Fatherland was Ireland and it was to Ireland they gave allegiance.

It was a crime therefore against justice and every tenet of democracy that they should be convicted of treason against a foreign queen to whom they owed no allegiance.

Seán O'Callaghan: "As a soldier of the Irish Republican Army I am honoured to be allowed to play a small part in the object of that organisation. This is a great privilege and I am delighted to have done what I have done."

"It is a great weight off my shoulders that I will be rewarded by God for service to my country and also that my place in the ranks of the Irish Republican Army in which a vacancy will be caused by my imprisonment – it is a great pleasure to know that that vacancy will be filled ten-fold by more Irishmen in the near future."

Seán O'Hegarty: "I would like to say that today in this court, I have been found guilty on a charge of treason felony to the Queen of England under a law instituted by the British Parliament, and which is today maintained by the force of British Arms in Northern Ireland. I repudiate the right of this court to convict me on any of these charges."

Tom Mitchell: "Before this court goes any further I would like to point out that anything that happened in Omagh in which we may have taken part, was directed solely and entirely against the British Army."

"We, soldiers of the IRA, pray that our comrades will have the strength and courage to carry on until such times as the British soldier is driven from the shores of Ireland."

"Long live the Irish Republic."

Jack McCabe and Paddy Kearney when asked if they had anything to say replied that their sentiments had already been expressed.

Éamonn Boyce was then sentenced to twelve years imprisonment and each of the other seven Republicans to ten years. They were destined to serve every day of their terms of imprisonment; with the usual one-third remission they were released in 1961 and 1962. An inspiring céd mille fáille greeted them in Dublin and Cork.

When the trial was resumed on the last day, December 15, the Chief Prosecutor, JE Warnock, QC, Attorney General at Stormont called evidence "of the long-standing conspiracy against the Constitution of Northern Ireland" (which was the British Government of Ireland Act 1920 which partitioned Ireland).

County Inspector Kennedy RUC, Tyrone, gave evidence that the declared object of the IRA was to

set up a Republic for the whole of Ireland. "One of the methods which they publicly announce is to drive what they call the British forces of occupation out of Northern Ireland," he said.

Sergt P Quinn, RUC, Bessbrook, said that on February 17 at Goughwood Station he arrested Leo James McCormick, a member of the IRA, on whom were found documents relating to military training.

He went on to quote, "To successfully conduct a bloody war and to kill as many of the enemy as possible is the object. That is the purpose of the training."

The Attorney General said this evidence would prove that the attack on Omagh was not made in pursuit of some private or other non-political motive.

Indeed it was highly political. Fifty years after the Omagh Raid, Éamonn Boyce and Tom Mitchell, who are both subscribers to SAOIRSE, will readily attest to this.

As they read these words, we salute them and their surviving comrades Liam Mulcahy and Seán O'Callaghan of Cork for their noble stand in defiance of British Imperialism in those dark December days of 1954.

Already five of them had been selected as candidates for Sinn Féin in the Westminster elections which were due in the Six-Occupied Counties: Éamonn Boyce (West Belfast), Tom Mitchell (Mid-Ulster), Philip Clarke (Fermanagh-South Tyrone), Liam Mulcahy (East Belfast) and Paddy Kearney (South Belfast).

The panel for all twelve seats was completed by Kevin O'Rourke (South Down), Joe Campbell (North Down), Manus Canning (Derry), Tomás MacCurran of Cork (Armagh), Seán Dougan (North Antrim), Michael Traynor (South Antrim) and Frank McGlade (North Belfast).

One of the first public reactions to the Omagh raid came from a meeting of IRA veterans of the North and South Roscommon Brigades held in Elphin. They unanimously passed a resolution "congratulating the men who scaled the walls of Omagh Barracks" and attacked the British Army. This was carried in the local press.

The *Sunday Press* of December 19 reported that "Brian O'Higgins (of the Wolfe Tone Annual and the Christmas Cards) has sent a subscription to the Republican Aid Committee, Seán Treacy House, 94 Talbot St, Dublin to help the dependents of the eight men sentenced at Belfast for treason-felony."

"In a letter accompanying his subscription, Mr O'Higgins refers to 'the gallant lads who have followed John Mitchel and O'Donovan Rossa and their immortal comrades of our own day into a British prison for love of Ireland, as soldiers, and will endure this unjust punishment with the same calm courage and fearlessness as they would face overwhelming odds at Armagh and Omagh.'

"Mr O'Higgins adds that 'the young men who bore themselves with such heart-warming dignity and quiet defiance in a British court of injustice stand for the spirit animating the hearts of all self-respecting men and women who love Ireland and wish to see her in possession of every room of her own house.'

"The Republican Aid Committee which plans a National Collection on Christmas Day in aid of the prisoners in Crumlin Road Prison Belfast, Stafford and Wormwood Scrubs Prisons, England has received a donation of £100 from the Dublin County Board, GAA."

"The Board also decided last Monday to hold a hurling match between Dublin and Wexford at Croke Park on February 6 in aid of the Committee."

"In Mayo, Cllr McGrath proposed a vote of protest against the sentences and said the Irish (sic) Government should enforce 'a Belfast boycott' and ban all dealings with Stormont."

"Nineteen Mayo Co Councillors yesterday subscribed £25 'to make Christmas brighter' for the prisoners' relatives."

The following Sunday, December 26, the *Sunday Press* reported: "No police leave, extra guards, all military, British Air Force and British naval stations and a warning to the 11,000 members of the 'B' Specials to consider themselves on a 'partial alert' are the Christmas precautions being taken this weekend in the Six Counties."

The report added that it was feared "possible IRA retaliation" would be taken against the sentences passed on the eight men charged with treason felony in connection with the October raid on Omagh [British] Military Barracks.

In Belfast, the Stormont Minister for Home Affairs received a regulation under the Special Powers Act and banned The United Irishman and Resurgent Ulster. At New Year, Gearóid MacCárthaigh, addressing a group of IRA Volunteers in training, declared: "The Irish Nation is on the march, boys, and nothing can stop it now!"

Certainly a new spirit was abroad and the Irish people, at home and abroad, were moved as never before in a long time.

(More next month. Refs: *An t-Eireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, December 1954 and January 1955; the *Sunday Press*, December 19 and 26; *Irish Independent*, November 19; *Irish Press*, November 18; *Mayo News*.)