

VERY SUCCESSFUL PRISONERS' COLLECTION

**50
Years
Ago**

THE national collection organised for Christmas morning in 1954 was a huge success. Sponsored by An Cumann Cabharach (Republican Aid Committee) it

aimed to relieve distress to the families of Republican Prisoners.

An *t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* in its January 1955 issue reported "Magnificent Support for Prisoners" and went on to list the amounts received already from various areas. This public acknowledgement of contributions became a feature of the paper each month from then on.

In various places money was donated without being actually sought. Offaly County Board of the GAA, the *Irish Press* of February 1 said, "agreed that each club should contribute ten shillings to a fund for the dependents of the men imprisoned as a result of the raid on Omagh barracks."

In Roscommon town on December 27 at the annual Christian Brothers School past-pupils dance, a raffle took place for the "men in Belfast jail".

The *Roscommon Herald* of December 24 reported a general meeting in Elphin of the County IRA Commemoration Committee. A resolution was passed unanimously "acclaiming and extending goodwill to the Republican prisoners in Belfast and English jails, pledging renewed loyalty to the ideals for which they are imprisoned, guaranteeing unremitting support for the Dependents Committee and calling on Republican Roscommon to rally to and take its rightful place in the final overthrow of British Imperialism and aggression".

"A sub-committee was formed and it was decided to send to the Dependents Aid Committee a cheque for £20 representing subscriptions from members and sympathisers in Elphin and Roscommon, also £5 two shillings subscribed by the members present to provide necessities for the prisoners in Belfast jail".

Support for the Republican cause soared as the sales of the Republican newspaper went up and up. Local councils again took a stand in Cork, Kerry, Longford, Westmeath and Roscommon. Mayo Co Council's protest at the sentences on the Omagh prisoners and support for their families was mentioned last month.

The *Irish Press* of December 21 noted: "Resolutions congratulating the men sentenced for their part in the Omagh raid were unanimously carried yesterday at meetings of Kerry and Cork Co Councils.

"In Cork, Mr J Moynihan (FF) said he was proposing the motion not to encourage such action, but because the gallant stand of these men deserve congratulations.

"Mr S Holland (FF) seconded. Messrs P McAuliffe TD (Lab) and Senator JL O'Sullivan (FG) supported. 'It is well that we still have such men to make their contribution from Co Cork' said Mr McAuliffe.

"Mr MJ Corry TD (FF) said that, as one who believed there was only one way that they could recover the Six Counties, he wished to be associated with the vote.

"The Kerry resolution, proposed by EJ Walsh (FF) and seconded by D Keating (FF), protested against the sentences imposed on the eight men and also congratulated them.

"Twelve (British) soldiers stationed in Omagh barracks when it was raided on October 17 have been commended by the officer commanding the British Army in the Six Counties, Lieut-General Sir John Woodall", the *Irish Press* report concluded.

"A resolution protesting to the British Government against the sentences imposed for the Omagh raid and sympathising with the convicted men and their relatives was passed by Longford



• Dr Kathleen Lynn and Madeleine ffrench-Mullen.

Co Council on Saturday", according to the *Longford Leader* of December 25.

"The resolution was proposed by Mr Brian Kiernan (FF) and seconded by the Chairman, Mr M Drum (FF)".

The *Roscommon Herald* of December 24 said: "At their meeting last Thursday night, Boyle Town Commissioners protested against the 'savage sentences' imposed on the Irishmen in the North in connection with the Omagh raid.

"Mr Michael Tansey condemned the 'savage sentences on those Irishmen who were tried for treason - treason against whom?', he asked. 'I think the people who should be tried for treason are the quislings of the Northern junta.

"I would like the Commissioners to pass a vote of sympathy with the relatives of those brave young men and with themselves on their imprisonment.

Mr Tansey asked that the (26-County) Minister for External Affairs protest to the Northern Parliament against the sentences. Mr J Clarke, Chairman, seconded the proposal.

"At the monthly meeting of Mullingar Mental Hospital Board on Thursday last, Mr MJ Drum (FF Longford) proposed a resolution protesting against the Six-County Government in sentencing eight citizens of the Irish Republic to long terms of imprisonment in connection with the raid on Omagh Military Barracks". This was a report carried in the *Longford Leader* of December 25.

It went on "He said these men were charged with felony to a British Queen. No citizen of the Irish Republic could be charged with that offence, because they owed no allegiance to her or to the British Empire. She was on her way out", he said.

"The last time she visited Northern Ireland (sic) there were fifty cars travelling at fifty miles an hour behind her in case the entourage should be 'torpedoed'.

"Mr J Fagan, Westmeath, seconded and said the day was coming when there would be a 32-County Republic.

"Mr T Darcy (Lab, Westmeath) supporting the motion (a copy of which was directed to be forwarded to the Minister for External Affairs) said the people that framed the Constitution never intended it for a 26 but a 32-County Ireland.

"It was the duty of every Irishman to protest in the strongest possible manner against the doings of 'this court of mock justice in sentencing these boys to long terms of imprisonment, who did their duty to the Irish people just the same as the men of 1916.

"Let the Northern Government release these men without any further hesitation" said Mr Darcy. The motion was passed unanimously."

Meanwhile in early December an important IRA meeting had taken place. All Officers Commanding local units had been summoned to the capital.

They were addressed by Tony Mangan, Chief

of Staff and Tomás MacCurtáin, Chair of the Army Council.

The two GHQ Officers told the assembled OCs of a new General Army Order which had been voted into Regulations by the Army Council. It would rank as General Army Order No 8.

It stated: "Volunteers are strictly forbidden to take any military action against 26-County forces under any circumstances whatsoever".

It went on: "Volunteers arrested during training or in possession of arms will point out that the arms were for use against the British forces of occupation only. This statement should be repeated at all subsequent court proceedings".

Other points made in the General order included "Minimum arms shall be used in training in the 26-County area" and "Maximum security precautions must be taken" including posting scouts "to warn of emergency".

The attitude of Volunteers to the forces of the 26-County State was thus defined at the level of General Army Orders. This was done at a high point in the fortunes and morale of the Army and left no room for doubt as to its terms. (Ref. Brendan O'Brien's *The Long War* (Appendix 2) published 1993).

Also in December on the 11th of the month a great demonstration numbering 2,300 students marched through the centre of Dublin. They carried a coffin draped with a Union Jack as they chanted anti-British slogans and sang national songs.

This was the largest student demo ever and it supported the Republican prisoners. Séamus Soraghan, BL, presided at the rally and said that the bravery of the prisoners in battle and noble dignity in the dock had won the respect of their most bitter enemies.

Billy Flynn (Medical Student UCD), Breandan Ó Dubhghaill (UCD Arts) and Seosaimh MacCristail (UCD Law) spoke and gave eloquent addresses. The *Irish Press* of December 12 noted that students of Trinity College and of the College of Surgeons also took part in the march.

Of the many banners carried some had slogans such as "Students Support Omagh Prisoners"; "Ireland, not yours or mine, but ours"; "Ireland wants patriots not politicians"; "Kevin Barry, Phil Clarke, you?" "A country divided cannot stand"; and "UCD proud of Phil Clarke".

In his Christmas address, delivered in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, Cardinal D'Alton said the injustice of Partition was so glaring that it could not continue.

"I appeal to our young men not to join any unauthorised forces, to which apparently they are sometimes asked to bind themselves by oath", he was reported by the *Sunday Independent*, December 26, as saying.

With all due respect, the Cardinal was 30 years out of date. The Volunteer Oath of Allegiance to the Republic, which called for its defence "against all enemies, foreign and domestic", was abolished by the General Army Convention of 1925.

The same convention withdrew the Army's allegiance from the shadow Republican Government of the Second (All-Ireland) Dáil and adopted an Army Constitution which contained the following Declaration or word of honour from Volunteers:

"I - A.B. - promise that I will promote the objects of Óglaiha na h-Éireann to the best of my knowledge and ability and that I will obey all orders and regulations issued to me by the Army Authority and by my superior officers". (Ref. "The Secret Army" by J Bowyer Bell, p68).

The Republican organ for January announced that the sponsors of *An Slama Mór* annual céilí in the Dublin Mansion House on Sunday, January 16 would donate the proceeds to the Republican Aid Committee for the Prisoners Dependents. Republicans were urged to support the event.

Offstage, other events were taking place. Fourteen men were arrested on November 18 when a County Inspector and 70 RUC men surrounded a former AOH Hall at Annaghmore on the road between Portlaoine and Dunganon.

All 14 were from north Antrim and were charged with possession of an old Lee Enfield rifle which was found under old mineral boxes in the hall. After several remands, twelve were released

and two sent for trial.

Joseph B O'Hagan (32) Lurgan was found not guilty and Hugh Brady (23) Lurgan was sentenced to three years in Belfast Jail where he joined other Republican prisoners.

The *Irish Press* of December 8 reported that Kevin O'Rourke (27) Banbridge was sentenced to five years imprisonment at Belfast Winter Assizes. He was accused of possession of a .380 revolver; six rounds of ammunition; one with a rifle, from a van which was rammed by a Customs patrol car.

The first jury found him "mute of malice" when he refused to speak, the second disagreed on the charge that the arms belonged to Kevin O'Rourke and the third found him guilty. He too was sentenced to A-Wing Belfast Jail.

Then on December 7 a British Customs Officer was shot and seriously wounded at Favour Royal Customs Post near Aughnacloy, Co Tyrone. Four young men escaped, one with a rifle, from a van which was rammed by a Customs patrol car.

In the van were found a Thompson submachine gun, four .303 rifles, a revolver and 1,000 rounds of ammunition as well as a suitcase filled with gelignite. Two brothers, Daniel and Patrick O'Kane, Striffe, Mountfield, Co Tyrone, who owned the van were arrested and charged with "attempted murder".

After several remands, both were discharged by the court. The *Irish Press* of December 9 reported that it had been established that the arms in the van were not part of the material taken in the Omagh Raid in June. It was believed to belong to Liam Kelly's organisation, Saor Ulaidh.

A statement from General Headquarters, Óglaiha na h-Éireann said "we are in a position to state that the Irish Republican Army was in no way connected with this affair".

Similar statements were issued regularly at that time denying any connection with incidents which occurred during a period of tension and great excitement.

In the *Irish Press* of January 26 a letter appeared from the parents and a brother of the Cork men in Belfast Jail in reply to another letter which implied that these men, Séan O'Hegarty, Liam Mulcahy and Séan O'Callaghan, "regretted having taken part in the Omagh Action and that their relatives would confirm this implication".

The relatives had visited the prisoners several times and quoted them as saying "they would willingly volunteer for a similar venture should the opportunity arise". The writer of the first letter was "incapable of understanding the pride and courage" of the prisoners.

Séan Mulcahy, John O'Hegarty and Luke O'Callaghan signed the second letter.

Dr Kathleen Lynn, a veteran Republican of the Anglican faith, died during 1955. She was born on January 28, 1874 and died on September 9, 1955.

Born in north Mayo and reared at Cong in south Mayo, where her father was Church of Ireland rector, she was one of the first women in Ireland to graduate in medicine in 1899 from the Royal University in Dublin.

She took part in the 1916 Rising as medical Officer to the Irish Citizen Army. In 1919 she founded St Ultan's Hospital (in Charlemont Street, Dublin) for children. A member of the National Executive of Sinn Féin in 1917, she was elected TD for North Dublin in 1923.

Opposing the Treaty of Surrender and the Fianna Fáil breakaway, she contested the Dublin County constituency for Sinn Féin in August 1927. Her great interest in later years lay in social and economic activity for the relief of distress, the provision of school meals, etc.

When she died in 1955 she was buried alongside her Republican activist friend Madeleine ffrench-Mullen in Dean's Grange Cemetery, Co Dublin.

(More next month. Ref. *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, January 1955; *Irish Press*, December 21, 12, 8, 9, January 26 and February 1; *Sunday Independent*, December 26; *Roscommon Herald*, December 24; *Longford Leader*, December 25; *The Long War* by Brendan O'Brien (1993) and *The Secret Army* by J Bowyer Bell (1970, '74, '79 etc.)

SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC MEETINGS

**50
Years
Ago**

THE [Prisoners' Dependents] collection was successful beyond our greatest hopes — the people were eager to contribute, anxious to show

their support for the national demand: "The British forces in Ireland must be got out," so reported the Republican Aid Committee in the February 1955 issue of *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*.

"Reports are still coming in for the National Collection. For various reasons the collection arranged for Christmas Day was delayed in some areas with the result that returns for these are now coming to hand....

"One point the collection has definitely made clear: the Armagh and Omagh raids struck a very responsive chord in the hearts of our people in every part of the country."

Public meetings had been widely organised. A new Cumann, "named in honour of Waterford's pride, Cathal Brugha," had been fortunate in acquiring the clubrooms in Colbeck Street, Waterford, which were occupied by Sinn Féin and the Volunteers right through the stormy years of 1917 to 1922.

The new Cumann held a public meeting in Broad Street on January 22 which was addressed by Tomás Mac Curtain, Liam Earley and Michael Mac Carthaigh, all of Cork. The Cork Volunteer Pipe Band travelled to Waterford for the occasion and was given an enthusiastic reception.

The *Irish Press*, January 24, said "A large gathering of young people" assembled for the meeting. "The principle speaker, Tomás Mac Curtain said, there were still young men prepared to fight to remove the last vestige of British rule from Ireland.

"This was proved, he said, by the fact that young men fought in the Barrack Square in Omagh. Mr Michael Mac Carthaigh, Cork, said there was going to be a struggle with the British army in the not too distant future.

"He said they had the men and the equipment to drive the last British soldier out of the country." The report in the *Irish Press* was entitled "Fight coming, Sinn Féin meeting told."

The Waterford Christmas collection for the prisoners' families was "successful beyond expectation." In the city it took in £146 and in Dungarvan and surrounding areas £190.

"Great credit must go for this to the GAA, to the NACA clubs and to IRA Veterans of the calibre of Pax Whelan and Vincent O'Donoghue, Lismore, President of the GAA. Go gcúitighidh Dia a saothar."

"A coirm-cheoil in aid of the same fund, organised by the NCA clubs was held in the Municipal Theatre, Waterford, on Sunday, January 16," the Republican newspaper reported.

The *Sunday Press* and the *Sunday Independent* of February 6 reported "300 young people" marching through the centre of Galway the previous night "in protest against the sentences imposed on the men captured during the raid on Omagh Barracks."

It was in fact a student protest on the lines of that held in Dublin during December, a Fife and Drum Band and a Flag-bearer carrying the National Flag led the parade. Many carried lighted torches and placards calling for support for the Republican Movement.

At Eyre Square the meeting was addressed by Páid MacNamara, who presided. Other speakers were Séamus Soraghan BL, Billy Flynn, Breandan Ó Duíll, Seosamh Mac Críostáil and William Connell, all of UCD and William Fogarty (Galway) of the Veterinary College, Dublin.

The *Sunday Press* a week later — on February 13 — recorded that the Fermanagh County Convention of the GAA "took subscriptions from all clubs in the county for the dependents of the prisoners of the Omagh Raid. There was a very generous response and a substantial amount is to be forwarded."

During January, the Sinn Féin Ard Chomhairle sent a letter to the St Vincent de Paul Society asking them to reconsider its decision to have Richard



• **Gobnait Ni Bhruadair (right) with Mary Mac Swiney.**

O'Sullivan QC London as a lecturer in the Gresham Hotel, Dublin. He had been Crown Prosecutor at the trial of Peter Barnes and James McCormack who were executed in 1940.

The letter, according to the *Sunday Press* of January 9 pointed out that there would be a large number of people in Dublin who would object very strongly to Mr O'Sullivan's appearance in Ireland.

An unsigned letter was received in reply stating the lecture was to "foster devotion to a saint and at the same time to raise funds, which are sorely needed indeed, for the activities of the Conference among the poor."

It was agreed by the Ard Chomhairle that Sinn Féin would neither picket the Hall nor interfere with the lecture. Among those on the platform was John A Costello, head of the Dublin Administration, An Breitheamh Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh and the Earl of Wicklow who presided.

As the lecture began, reported the *Irish Press*, of January 10, "A young man sitting in the front row of the large audience shouted loudly, 'What about Barnes and McCormack? What about the two young Irishmen in Birmingham'. As he continued to protest he was removed from the hall by a number of men."

The protestor was, of course, the redoubtable Brendan Behan himself. An Independent Republican he had been a prisoner, aged 16, in Walton prison, Liverpool in February 1940 when Barnes and McCormack were hanged in Birmingham. Naturally he had very deep feelings on the matter.

The chairman, Lord Wicklow, said "we guessed what was coming but we thought it was better to let the gentleman in (Behan was instantly recognisable) and let him have his little bit of noise than have a lot of noise outside. Now it is over."

But Behan had made his mark. When the former Minister for Finance in the first Free State government, Ernest Blythe (Earnán de Blaghd) condemned the IRA as a "criminal conspiracy" at the Literary and Historical Debating Society (the "L&H") in UCD he was booed by a section of the audience.

The December issue of the Republican paper carried a signed article by Veteran IRA Volunteer Ben Doyle rebutting Blythe. Doyle described himself as a member of the IRB until it was taken over (by the pro-Treatyites), a GHQ Staff Officer 1921, a Battalion Commandant 1922, a Brigade Commandant in 1923 and still acknowledging the Republican stand.

Republican in Dublin would remember the late Ben Doyle as a former OC Dublin Brigade, father of An tAthair Piaras Ó Duíll, OFM, CAP, Breandan Ó Duíll and Brian Ó Duíll. He remained a faithful Republican till the end.

In his article in *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, he wrote with some passion, drawing on a lifetime of experience in Republican ranks.

Blythe's early work for Conradh na Gaeilge, for the IRB and for the Irish Volunteers was acknowledged "trojan."

"The first criminal conspiracy (in the eyes of Republicans) was the IRB-engineered signing of

the Treaty of Surrender in 1921, in which Mr Blythe played a prominent part.

"The second criminal conspiracy in 1922 was that by which the so-called Provisional Government, with the support of Blythe, borrowed artillery from the British to crush the IRA and the Irish Republican Government.

"The third criminal conspiracy was the Boundary Agreement of 1925 by which the British government, the Stormont junta and the Free State junta, including Mr Blythe, set up Partition in its present form.

"The fourth criminal conspiracy was when Blythe and his co-conspirators prevented the Partition Agreement being debated and was voted upon by the public representative in the 26 Counties, with 71 members out of a House (Free State) of 153 members voting for it."

But the numerous conspiracies of Blythe and company failed hopelessly in their main aim — to end for all time the organisation on which they had turned turtle, ie the IRA.

It was interesting and paradoxical to note that each of the conspiracy movements over more than 30 years contained a prominent person from our Occupied Six Counties:

Cosgrave, Blythe and co.

De Valera, Aiken and co.

McBride, Kelly and co.

Ben Doyle ended by suggesting to the UCD L&H that they refuse a platform to any person who has taken part in "operation CC" (Criminal Conspiracy).

All of this arose out of the aftermath of the Armagh and Omagh Raids, 50 years ago. If Ben Doyle were alive today he could write a few more paragraphs dealing with the 1969 to '70 Criminal Conspiracy against the Republican Movement and the 32-County Republic, not to mention the similar Conspiracy in 1986!

Then the Republican journal took to task in its February issue no less a person than Dan Breen, Fianna Fáil TD for Tipperary. The Belfast paper *Resurgent Ulster* (banned by Stormont in December 1954) in its April issue had quoted a letter by Breen in the *Sunday Press* of February 7, 1954:

"I still believe it is the duty of every man and woman whose country is held in subjection, like mine was and still is in part, to use every means within reason to rid their land of the invader. You can't rid a country held in subjection by kid glove methods.

"Well then, use the weapons best at hand, and if you need better weapons, and the garrison have them, it is your duty to take them, and in doing so if you kill them as we did in Soloheadbeg, you are still only doing your duty."

Of course all of that was before the Armagh and Omagh Raids. The Belfast paper quoted Dan Breen's letter under the heading: "Dan Breen Upholds the Policy of the IRA today."

However when young Irishmen at Armagh and Omagh took Breen at his word, there was an altered tune in the *Sunday Press* of January 16, 1955. Dan Breen had another letter:

"I fully know that going cap in hand to England or any imperial power will get us nowhere, yet I cannot agree with wasting young Irish lives. I admire bravery; I always shall — but I don't believe in foolhardy enterprises.

"I have never asked anyone to do anything I would not do myself, and I would not attack the North, under present circumstances, or under any circumstances.

"I believe the spirit of McCracken, Hope, Russell and other patriots will re-awaken in the North some day and when that day comes, Ireland will be free and undivided."

Later in reference to Armagh and Omagh, Breen was reported as saying that "he did not believe in stunting". His letter in the *Sunday Press* of January 16, 1955 was in reply to one from "Mr P Pearse Danaher". Was this the Plunkett Pearse Danaher who was later a Sinn Féin candidate in the local elections in Limerick in 1960?

On the last day of 1954, December 31, Republican Ireland, and especially Republican Kerry, mourned the death of Mrs. Ellen Daly of Knockan, Fries. She was mother of Charlie Daly, executed by Free State forces at Drumboge, Co. Donegal in March 1923 and of Tom Daly, formerly Adjutant General of the IRA who died in 1939.

Mrs Daly and her family were staunch supporters of the Republican Movement down the decades. Burned down by British forces in May 1921, her home was re-built and became an open house for members of the Movement and was constantly raided and ransacked by Free State

down to the time of her death the soldiers of the Irish Republican Army found a ready welcome in her home, and many, including some of those now serving sentences in Crumlin Road jail were as honoured to accept her hospitality and help as she was proud to give it.

"The funeral was of huge proportions, friends from all over Kerry and many of the adjoining counties attending. Former comrades of Charlie and Tom formed the guard of honour while an oration was given by John Joe Sheehy, Tralee."

Then on January 16, 1955 a truly remarkable Irishwoman died at the great age of 93. She was Gobnait Ni Bhruadair and she passed away at her residence, Ballunacoona, Castlecoo, Sth Kerry.

Born in 1863 as the Honorable Albinia Broderick and sister of the earl of Midleton, leader of the Unionists in the south of Ireland she was reared and educated in England.

She rebelled against her family background and as a mature woman trained as a nurse in Jervis Street Hospital, Dublin. Influenced by Conradh na Gaeilge, she learned Irish, went to the Donegal Gaeltacht, became fluent in the language and Gaelicised her name to Gobnait Ni Bhruadair.

On the death of her father, Viscount Midleton of Co Cork in 1910 and being financially independent, she went to live near Sneem, Co Kerry. She nursed the sick in their homes during an outbreak of smallpox and in 1912 she financed a small hospital "Baile an Chúinimh" for the poor.

Gobnait joined Cumann na mBan and the lady who had been presented at court in London threw herself wholeheartedly into the fight for Irish freedom. In 1920 she was elected a Sinn Féin member of Kerry Co Council.

Although her brother had held high posts in the British cabinet, she sheltered IRA Volunteers on the run, worked with White Cross and distributed food to those impoverished by the struggle.

The *Irish Press* in an editorial at her death said: "In the Republican Cabinet itself one of the nine members was a Protestant, Robert C Barton, Minister for Economic Affairs, and outside the Cabinet the Minister for Publicity was Erskine Childers, later to lay down his life for the Republic." Gobnait was in a great tradition.

She opposed the Treaty, clung to the Republic, was taken prisoner by the Free State and made a dramatic escape from a third-storey window in Kenmare by means of sheets tied together.

In 1923 in order to warn the South Kerry IRA column of impending encirclement, she deliberately drew Free State fire and was severely wounded in the hip. Margaret Buckley, in her *Jangle of the Keys* records her arrival at Kilmainingham jail on a stretcher and immediately joining the hunger strike there in her weakened condition.

In *Women of Ireland*, Kit and Cyril Ó Céirín describe her as "fearless, sincere and generous", rebelling against her class and her conditioning. She was frequently a delegate at the Ard-Fheis of Sinn Féin and stood out against any compromise.

Gobnait set up a Republican journal, *Saoirse*, with her own money and, when she died in 1955, left the remainder of her wealth "for the benefit of the Republicans as they were in 1919-21".

For many years Mick Lynch, The Spa, Tralee and John Joe Rice fought to have her will implemented. An associate of hers in Cumann na mBan, "EB", in a letter to the *Irish Times* of January 27 described her rough country attire at a Convention of the banned organisation and said, "When this woman had occasion to speak, her cultured voice was in contrast to her apparel!"

An *Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* said: "Her life was an inspiration to all who knew her and the Republican Movement has great reason to regret her death."

The pall-bearers at her funeral to Sneem Cemetery were all IRA Veterans: JJ Rice, OC Kerry No 2 Brigade; JJ Sheehy, OC Kerry No 1 Brigade; Jeremiah O'Riordan, OC Kerry No 3 Brigade and Seán Ryan, Batt Vice OC Kerry No 3 Brigade.

Seán Ryan, Tralee delivered the gravesides oration. The officiating clergy were Dean CL Haines, Waterville; Canon AR Armstrong, Kenmare and Rev F Roycroft, Ballymacelligott, who recited the prayers in Irish.

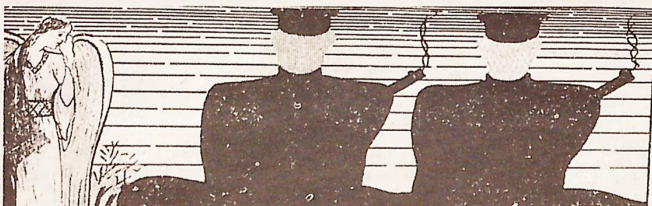
(More next month. Refs. *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, February 1955, December 1954; *Women of Ireland* by Kit and Cyril Ó Céirín (1996); *Irish Press*, January 10, 19 and 24; *Irish Times*, January 27; *Sunday Press*, January 9 and 16, February 6, 13; *Sunday Independent*, February 6 and *The Jangle of the Keys* by Margaret Buckley (1938).)

forces.
A
report
stated:
"Right

KILLING AND WOUNDING BY B-SPECIALS

50 Years Ago

ARTHUR Leonard (18) Cladymore, Markethill, Co Armagh was shot dead when a B-Special patrol opened fire on a van he was driving in South Armagh at 11.30pm on Saturday night,



• Illustration from the United Irishman following the killing of Arthur Leonard.

March 5, 1955.

A 16-year-old girl, Clare Mallon of Main Street, Darkley — a passenger in the van — was wounded. Her sister Alice (15) and Peter McKernan (17) who were also traveling in the van escaped unhurt.

It was found that three rifle bullets pierced the windscreen, one lodged in the radiator, another struck the panel of the driver's door and another bullet hole was found in the back of the vehicle.

Peter McKernan of Ballymacnab described the shooting to an *Irish Independent* reporter. He said he was sitting in the back of the van. It started to slow up and he looked ahead and saw a red light.

"Almost immediately after that I heard four or five shots fired. As the van came to a stop Arthur slumped over the wheel. A B-man came to me and said: 'He knew what was coming to him when he did not stop'. I said: 'Sure he was stopping'."

Peter McKernan said he was sure the bullets came from the front. Clare Mallon, at home in bed, told the reporter that she and her sister Alice went to confession at St Patrick's, Keady and afterwards to the pictures at the Town Hall.

Afterwards they met the two boys whom they knew and accepted a lift home from them. They came to a fork in the road and saw a car stopped by a van across the road. B-men were standing around.

Arthur said: "It must be an accident. We'd better go by Newtownhamilton". He turned into the Newtownhamilton Road when a shot was fired and the van stopped. More shots were fired from the road in front of us.

She was sitting in the front seat beside Arthur. She then realised that a bullet had hit her in the right leg above the knee. Arthur was struck in the head by the first bullet. He never spoke after that.

It seems B-Specials were on both roads of the fork. The patrol was part of a general mobilisation of RUC and B-Specials throughout the Six Counties that weekend.

The *Irish Independent* of March 7 also reported that "thousands of members of the RUC and B-Specials" were out on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. All vehicles were stopped and drivers questioned. The Crown Forces were armed with rifles and Sten guns.

"Police authorities would not say whether the mobilisation of the Specials was a snap test of their efficiency or was the result of some information received by the police".

Road-blocks were at random and often consisted of a vehicle or vehicles placed across the road. A tractor or a section of barbed wire fencing placed into position, or a plank balanced on two old tar barrels sufficed in some cases.

Then on Sunday night the B-men shot and seriously wounded one of their own. Austin Stinson (23) of Monea, Derrygonnelly, Co Fermanagh was driving a car on the Aughnacloy-Aughur road in Co Tyrone.

RUC Headquarters in Belfast in a statement said Stinson "was signalled to stop but either he did not see the signal or ignored it".

The shooting took place at the Y-junction at 10.30pm. The police also said that Stinson apparently took the wrong road and was reversing when "a number of warning shots" were fired. One of the shots hit him in the chest, seriously wounding him.

The injured B-man in Tyrone County Hospital, Omagh, told visitors according to the *Irish Press* of March 8 "that he saw no signal nor heard any shout to halt. He did not realise that anything was wrong until a bullet hit him". A second bullet lodged in his right arm.

He had left his fiancée, Ms Jean McClurg, home to Downpatrick and was returning to his own home in Fermanagh. In the back of the car were Mervyn Hassard, Gillyhill, Springfield, Enniskillen and Ms Mary Thompson, Letterbreen, Florencecourt, Fermanagh.

Mervyn Hassard (25) himself a B-Special, said he and Mary Thompson were in the back of the car. Near Augher, Stinson said, "I think I have taken the wrong road". He stopped the car and reversed. They had barely gone 100 yards when they heard a shot and a bullet crashed into the left-hand window of the car.

"There was a cry from Stinson, 'I'm shot', and he immediately stopped the car. I thought he was only joking until he slumped over at the wheel. No signal was given. There was no barrier on the road".

Among the visitors was the wounded man's brother, Claude, another B-Special.

Austin Stinson was a member of the Orange Order. His uncle, the late Loftus Reid, Toronto, Canada was for many years Secretary of the Grand Orange Lodge Council of the World, the *Irish Press* report concluded.

The inquest on Arthur Leonard was held on Monday, March 7 in Armagh city. It opened at 3pm and concluded about 11.30pm. The jury took an hour and a quarter to return a verdict. The Coroner was GC Anderson, solicitor, and an open verdict that death was due to wounds caused by gunshot fired by the Special Constabulary was returned.

The Crown and the B-Specials were separately represented at the proceedings. Mr P Gerard Curran, solicitor, Newry, appeared for the next of kin.

Medical evidence was given by Dr Patricia Cole of Armagh City Hospital. "There was an extensive shattering of the whole of the left side of skull with brain destruction" she said. Lacerations to the right thigh were several inches long and there was also a fracture of the shaft of the right femur.

The *Irish Press* report of March 8 said witnesses agreed that wounds on the left eyebrow were caused by a shot fired from in front. A half-crown taken from the dead man's pocket was badly bent and a piece of it was missing.

It was possible, due to the wounds being at the same level, that the same bullet entered the left thigh. (The missing part of the coin was later taken from Clare Mallon's thigh.)

Sergeant Gordon H Watson of the B-Specials was in charge of the patrol. It evidence he said that he checked the ammunition afterwards and found four bullets were missing. Mr Curran then produced a live round of ammunition which was found on the road.

Sergeant Edward Joseph Duffy RUC Keady said, "the bullet which struck the radiator must have been fired by a man standing in front of the van and the bullet which hit Leonard's eyebrow would seem to have come from in front of the van through the windscreen".

He agreed that the bullet which hit the back door of the van must have come from a gun over four feet from the ground. It could not have been made by a gun pointing downwards.

B-Special Reginald Gibson, who was on the patrol and the van was travelling at about 25 miles an hour. He agreed that the van did not stop with a jerk, but came to a smooth standstill.

Here a jurymen intervened: "Is it true that the van stopped only when the first shot was fired and then it stopped in an ordinary way?"

Gibson: "Yes".
Jurymen: "Yet the driver then had a bullet in his brain. How could a van with such a driver stop in an ordinary way?"

Gibson: "I don't know."

Constable John Bingham, RUC Keady said he examined the van at the scene. It was in third gear, indicating that the driver was trying to stop. In a road test, applying both hand and footbrakes at 30 miles per hour, it took the van 90 feet to stop.

The efficiency of the brakes was only 32%. He described them as "very dangerous".

Earlier Sgt Watson, in evidence, was asked what allowances would be made if a man was unable to stop through bad brakes? — It is against the law to have bad brakes, he replied.

Mr Curran — Yes, but the penalty is not death.

Sgt Duffy said in evidence that when he arrived at the scene of the shooting he found the van parked about 15 yards beyond the fork of the Darkley road.

Alice Mallon (15) said she looked out and saw a man in uniform with a gun up to his eye. The next thing she heard was a shot. Arthur's head fell back and forward and the van stopped.

There were three or four shots after that. She saw no red torch waving. The man with the gun was standing in front of the van about three yards away on the verge of the road.

The man with the gun was standing in front of the van about three yards away on the verge of the road.

Mr Curran said there was no question of any political or religious significance in the case. It was only by mere accident that the people in the van happened to be Catholics. He suggested that there had been untruth in the case on the part of the Specials.

The evidence, he said, showed that Arthur Leonard was also shot through the leg which he would use for braking. That showed that the car must have been stopped.

According to the law, he said, officers of justice who wilfully exceeded their duty without just cause would be guilty of murder. He was merely asking the jury to justice.

"I invite you to say," he concluded, "that the Specials wilfully exceeded their duty, with the result that an innocent boy is lying dead tonight. If you find that they are guilty of murder."

After an hour and a quarter the jury returned the open verdict as quoted above. Hundreds of people thronged the courthouse awaiting the verdict. (End of the *Irish Press* report).

Reaction to the shootings and particularly the death of young Arthur Leonard was immediate and spontaneous. The veteran Nationalist MP for Fermanagh, Cahir Healy (78) said: "These incidents indicate the [Stormont] government are giving these people carte blanche to do whatever they wish."

"They can say that a driver refused to stop and there is no evidence to controvert them. This leaves the ordinary citizen at the mercy of trigger-happy thugs — men who have had no experience in the proper use or handling of guns."

From Waterford Co Council came a resolution protesting against the shooting. Said proposer Seán Ormond, Fianna Fáil TD: "These children — I cannot refer to them as anything else — were murdered in the innocent pursuit of their simple duties."

"It is horrible to think that such a pleasant and happy evening should have such a terrible termination." The excuse given (that the van did not stop) he said was "very reminiscent of the Black-and-Tan days".

From Westmeath Co Council came a similar condemning resolution, calling on the [Dublin] government to protest against "the murder of innocent people on the Border by the Black-and-Tans of 1955".

Eddie McAttee, Nationalist MP for Derry City said: "Something must be done to protect the public from these over-armed, overbearing, over-excitable and under-intelligent commands. We will insist for the future that maneuvers of this type shall be notified in advance in order that the innocent public may be safeguarded."

"I have no personal objection to the B-Specials playing cowboys and Indians around the Border but I have the most strenuous objection to this kind of live-target practice, which seems to have been the rule this weekend," he added.

But while the storm of protest mounted, Belfast police officials and Stormont Ministry of Home Affairs kept a rigid silence. Premier Lord Brookeborough was touring Australia and New Zealand.

Anthony P Leonard, father of the dead youth said: "Arthur was the second of our family of nine boys and four girls and had just started dealing in cattle like myself." Clare (16) and Alice (15) Mallon were dofers in the local linen mill. (See front page of *Irish Press* of March 8).

The *Irish Times* of March 9 reported: "Cork Corporation was among a number of public bodies... which passed resolutions" of protest. Mr J Galvin described the shootings as brutal murder by a gang of hoodlums. Mr R Anthony said that such occurrences would continue as long as the Border remained.

They should ask the [Dublin] government to exploit every means to seek termination of the Border. Lord Mayor Patrick McGrath TD (Fianna Fáil) said that the shooting showed complete lack of responsibility.

Speaking on a similar resolution at Cork County Health services Committee, Mr CJ Bryan said that in the "South of Ireland" they should tolerance everywhere. "I can tell that to my friends in the North" he said.

Senator John L O'Sullivan (Fine Gael) congratulated Mr Bryan on his remarks. He was the only member of the committee of the minority faith.

Kilkenny Corporation and Kilkenny Town Council unanimously extended sympathy and condemned the action of the B-Special patrol. Sligo Corporation, Sligo Mental Hospital Board and Killybegs Urban Council passed similar resolutions of protest.

Mr M Horgan, proposing the Killybegs resolution, said they should "ask the government to protest strongly against the murder of this young boy."

The *Irish Press* of March 9 carried a photograph of Arthur Leonard's funeral the previous day. On page 2, the author and writer, Benedict Kiely from Omagh gave a moving and lyrical account of the event.

"They came from all over the North to Cladymore in a quiet valley in the Fews..." it began and went on in two columns with about twenty paragraphs. It deserves to be read by anyone researching the period.

A leading article in the same newspaper on the same day was headed 'B Men'. It said: "The activities of a force like the 'B' Specials, and especially these night patrols at an hour when large numbers of people are returning to their homes, are a menace to the lives of the community."

The *Irish Independent* of March 10 reported on proceedings in Leinster House when Seán Dunne TD (Labour) asked "what steps the Government proposed to take to protect our people in Border areas from this menace?"

John A Costello, head of government, referred to the Stormont Administration's intention to persist in a course that had already caused the loss of one innocent life and personal injury to others could not fail to shock impartial public opinion.

He spoke of innocent wayfarers placed "at the mercy of armed undisciplined youths who are let loose by night on the roads of the Six Counties".

But when Jack McQuillan TD (Independent) asked if Mr Costello would make "strong representations to the British Government to restrain the puppet Government in the North of Ireland", the reply was one word "No".

Did not John A Costello say publicly in May 1949: "We will hit England in her pride, her pocket and her prestige?"

In Stormont on March 8, Home Affairs Minister B Hanna did not consider that there was any reason for holding a public inquiry. A report would be made to him by the RUC and that would be sufficient.

He went on to criticise the Dublin government for not arresting IRA men responsible for activity in the Six Counties but was interrupted when Seán Dunne TD and S Bohan, Rathgar Road, Dublin rose in the Distinguished Strangers' Gallery and shouted at the government front bench:

"Don't try to justify the murders you have carried out," shouted Seán Dunne, "You nearly murdered your own in your anxiety to murder our people".

Mr Bohan shouted: "You need crossroads murder gangs to keep you in this house. The Republic doesn't need crossroad gangs."

As they were leaving Mr Bohan cried: "You are trying to justify murder. Ordinary law and order is not sufficient. You need a murder gang." Seán Dunne shouted: "This is not a government; it is a masquerade." They were removed by the sergeant-at-arms and handed over to the RUC who eventually released them.

Seán Dunne, a giant of a man from Bray, had been interned without trial in the Curragh Concentration Camp in the 1940s. He later joined the Labour Party and became a TD at Leinster House.

Co Down Board of the Anti-Partition League (later the Nationalist Party) called a demonstration for Castlewells on March 27 to protest against shootings by B-Specials. Stormont MPs and Senators were invited as well as Seán Dunne, TD.

The *Irish Independent* of March 14 also recorded protests against the shootings by the Federation of IRA 1916-21 and Longford UDC. Of March 14 also recorded protests against the shootings by the Federation of IRA 1916-21 and Longford UDC. Youghal UDC voted sympathy with Arthur Leonard's family.

On March 12 students from various Irish universities protested to a large crowd in O'Connell Street, Dublin under a banner inscribed "Students Condemn Black and Tan Killers".

Seamus Scraghan BL, presided and Murt Qualter, Galway; Oliver Moylan, UCD; Oisita Eke, Kenya and Cora Kaye of Colombia (USA) and London Universities spoke. (*Sunday Press*, March 13).

The "Ulster Special Constabulary" developed from the remnants of the UVF. Formed in November 1920, it was armed and financed by the British government and divided into A,B,C and C1 categories. A was full-time B was part-time and C and C1 were reserve.

After the Boundary Agreement in December 1925, categories A, C and C1 were abolished. The B-Specials remained until 1970 when they were replaced by the UDR and the RUC Reserve. The UDR was replaced by the RIR, Royal Irish Regiment of the British Army.

On Monday night March 7, B-Special patrols were again mobilized, the *Irish Independent* of March 9 reported. Since the Saturday night shots were fired at a number of other cars which did not stop in time. The *Irish Press* of the same date headed a report "Motorists' close shaves in Weekend of Shootings".

Some people urged the IRA to retaliate for Arthur Leonard's death. Tomás Mac Curtain, asked about this, said "We preferred to have the focus of attention sole on the excesses of the British Forces — echoing down the days, weeks and months. Later the action would come."

(More next month. Refs. *Irish Independent*, March 7, 9, 10, 14; *Irish Press*, March 8 and 9; *Irish Times*, March 9; *Sunday Press*, March 3; An tEireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman, March 1955.)

SINN FÉIN WINS TWO SEATS AND 152,000 VOTES

**50
Years
Ago**

ON May 26, 1955 a grand total of 152,310 no votes were won by Sinn Féin in its Six-County wide election contact and two seats — Fermanagh

South Tyrone and Mid-Ulster — were gained.

Eight of the 12 Republican candidates were prisoners — five of them Omagh Raid men — and the two elected were Tom Mitchell in Mid-Ulster and Philip Clarke in Fermanagh-South Tyrone.

Every constituency was contested for the first time since Sinn Féin stood in 1921 and the breakdown of the Republican vote was as follows:

North Antrim: Seán Dougan, Dunloy — 6,809;
South Antrim: Michael Traynor, Belfast and Dublin — 5,155;
North Belfast: Frank McGlade, Belfast — 4,534;
South Belfast: Paddy Kearney, Dublin — 1,679;
East Belfast: Liam Mulcahy, Cork — 3,156;
West Belfast: Éamonn Boyce, Dublin — 8,447;
North Down: Joe Campbell, Newry — 1,637;
South Down: Kevin O'Rourke, Banbridge — 19,624;
Armagh: Tomás MacCurtáin, Cork — 21,363;
Derry: Manus Canning, Derry — 19,640;
Mid-Ulster: Tom Mitchell, Dublin — 29,737;
Fermanagh-South Tyrone: Philip Clarke, Dublin — 30,529.

A big impetus to the whole campaign was gained when the nationalist convention meeting in Enniskillen on May 6 selected the Sinn Féin prisoner candidate, Philip Clarke as their candidate in the election.

Outgoing and veteran MP for the constituency, Cahir Healy who sat in a British Parliament, was reported by a delegate, Tommy Campbell of Belleek, as saying that if Clarke were selected and elected, "the RUC and B-Specials would rise up and drive the nationalist people out of the Six Counties."

But the convention went ahead and chose Clarke. Sinn Féin appealed to the Mid-Ulster convention, due to meet in Omagh two days later, "to refrain from nominating a Nationalist candidate in opposition to Tom Mitchell".

It went on "The Fermanagh-South Tyrone Convention gave a lead of far-reaching importance by deciding to support Philip Clarke".

"If Mid-Ulster follows, it will strengthen, where it is most needed, the determination of Irish people to free Ireland. It will encourage, wherever encouragement is needed, the will to make whatever sacrifices may be necessary to break the shackles of slavery that bind Ireland to the British Empire."

At the convention 167 delegates from 32 of the 35 parishes in the constituency attended. The Secretary read two letters from Sinn Féin asking the chair and delegates to "leave a clear field for the Sinn Féin candidate, Tom Mitchell".

After a discussion lasting 40 minutes, the convention decided not to put forward a candidate. This historic decision was greeted with rage in some quarters.

The *Irish Times* of May 7, in an editorial headed "The Northern Fiasco", in effect denounced the Mid Ulster decision. "The Nationalist hand has been forced by Sinn Féin's decision to contest every one of the twelve Six-County seats. The historic and once united Nationalist Party in the Six Counties had at last been driven into 'liquidation'."

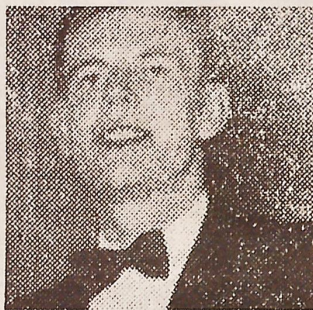
Rather than endorsing the policy of physical force by supporting the Sinn Féin candidates, "thousands of patriotic Nationalists will decline to set their seal upon the use of unconstitutional means. There may be enough of such people to let the Unionists in".

In west Belfast, where Jack Beattie had held the seat for Labour by a very narrow majority (25 votes), that seat would go to the Unionists also.

The editorial concluded: "Sinn Féin, that irresponsible rump of a once great organisation, has played most tragically into Glengall Street's (Unionist HQ) hands."

It would be interesting to quote the *Irish Times* editorial comments on Sinn Féin in 1917-21!

The *Sunday Independent* of May 1 reported that the Co Down Anti-Partition Board "announced that it



• Tom Mitchell, elected TD for Mid-Ulster.

would not put forward a candidate" in the election. In spite of the begrudgers the tide was turning in favour of the Republican candidates.

As soon as nominations closed on May 16, the Unionist Chief Whip at Stormont, Colonial WWB Topping issued a statement saying that if any of the Sinn Féin candidates were elected, an application would be made to unseat them as "disqualified persons" and to declare the next candidate elected.

Michael Traynor, secretary of Sinn Féin and candidate in South Antrim, said it was an attempt to frighten Nationalist voters. "If another election was held they would contest the seats with the same candidates as before".

A statement by the Anti-Partition Association in Dublin "thanked Col Tipping for his restatement of the traditional attitude of the English government towards Irish felons." All nationally minded people will resent this attempt to bully the electorate.

"If the defeated Unionist candidates from Fermanagh-South Tyrone and Mid-Ulster appear in the (British) House of Commons to misrepresent half the total area of the Six Counties, it will be an interesting demonstration of the working of democracy under the Union Jack."

Eight of the twelve candidates were prisoners serving sentences of penal servitude. Seven of these were held in Crumlin Road Jail, Belfast while the eight, Manus Canning of Derry, was incarcerated in Wormwood Scrubs Prison, London.

With the election campaign in full swing, Tomás MacCurtáin of Cork addressed a public meeting in his constituency at Lurgan. They had been asked why they did not fly the national flag at their meetings.

"They had too great an honour for it to see it dragged through the streets," the *Irish Independent* reported on May 9. "They would not fly the Tricolour until they could adequately protect it from insult by anyone," Tomás MacCurtáin said.

On May 12, the same paper reported the manifesto issued in Belfast on behalf of the Sinn Féin candidates: "We are pledged to sit only in a Republican Parliament for All Ireland."

Nothing could be clearer. The Sinn Féin candidates asked to be elected not as British MPs but as Irish TDs to a 32-County Parliament.

"The manifesto added that the number of votes cast for their candidates would not be regarded as a plebiscite affecting in any way the right of Ireland to complete freedom.

"That right was inalienable and must never be put in issue through referendum of a section of the population."

Since Phil Clarke had been at the time of his capture following the Omagh Raid a night student at University College Dublin, students from NUI Dublin concentrated their effort in the election on his constituency of Fermanagh-South Tyrone.

Each weekend in the late April and throughout May they travelled in an open lorry to Swainlinbar, Co Cavan, a town on the Border just twelve miles from Enniskillen.

This lorry was under the direction of Matt Larkin of Dublin, later the General Secretary of ACRU (Combined Residents Association) in the city.

From 'Swad' they were ferried by car to the Fermanagh county town where they were accommodated in the local community hall overnight.

A public meeting would be held in the town on the Saturday night chaired by a prominent local person, eg Councillor Seán Nethercott, after which the students would be dispersed to local areas in order to address in each case a series of after-Mass meetings next morning.

A booklet entitled "The writings of Philip Clarke" was produced and sold at these open-air gatherings in



• Phil Clarke, elected TD for Fermanagh/South Tyrone.

good summer weather. Philip Clarke's articles written for the *United Irishman* assisted in bringing the young candidate nearer to the people of Fermanagh-South Tyrone.

On another weekend, Dungannon, Co Tyrone would be the hub of student election activity. All over the Six Counties each weekend a similar process was engaged in in aid of the candidates.

One such public meeting did attract much attention because of Unionist hecklers and the forceful language of the republican speakers. It was held in High Street, in the very centre of Belfast and was the first Sinn Féin public meeting to have been held there ever.

The *Irish Independent* of May 16 reported: "Scores of detectives and uniformed police mingled with the crowd and a police shorthand writer took a note of the speeches. A heckler interrupted one of the speakers shouting: 'We are proud to belong to the British Empire'."

"Mr J Steel, Chairman, appealed to the crowd not to interfere with any hecklers and a police officer escorted the interrupters from the meeting. Later a lorry load of British Army Territorial troops passed down High Street and some catcalls were heard.

"An Orange church parade passed along Royal Avenue just out of sight of the meeting place during the speeches."

The *Irish Times* of May 16 also reported on the meeting: "Mr Séamus Ó Soraghan, a Dublin barrister... said the present campaign was aimed at ending the Border by constitutional means. 'But', he said, 'if it fails it will inevitably and inexorably come to the use of the gun'."

"There will be nothing for it but the use of physical force — the gun, the rifle and the hand grenade — in an effort to take back by force what was taken from us by physical force."

"I hope it will never be necessary for young men to go out again to lay down their lives in the cause of Irish Republicanism. It is an open secret that there are men ready and trained, imbued by the ideals of the past generations, who will fight and who will win."

Other speakers were Tomás Ó Dubhghaill, Vice President of Sinn Féin, Frank McGlade, candidate for North Belfast, Archie McKevitt, Carlingford and Séamus Rafferty, Dundalk.

Another meeting was held later at Fruithill Estate on behalf of Michael Traynor, candidate for south Antrim. Paddy McShane, Meigh, and Peter McPartland, Bessbrook, spoke at a meeting in Keady on behalf of Co Armagh candidate, Tomás MacCurtáin.

Meetings in support of Tom Mitchell, mid-Ulster candidate, were held at Carrickmore, Loughmacrory, Mountfield and Greencastle. Tomás MacCurtáin and P. Hennessy, Dublin spoke. At Omagh, Frank Morris, Convoys, Co Donegal, a native of Tyrone, spoke.

The remarks made by Séamus Soraghan, BL in High Street, Belfast, were not strictly in accordance with instructions from Ard Oifig, Sinn Féin, in Dublin. Séamus was noted for the exuberance of his speeches and the location in the centre of Belfast probably carried him away.

The campaign in general was well organised and enthusiastic. The *Irish Times* of May 23 noted: "Belfast Sinn Féin meetings are well attended. In pro-Unionist areas they are well conducted; in Nationalist areas well applauded."

In Newtownbutler, Co Fermanagh, a group of speakers and supporters went straight from a church-gate meeting to visit Canon Tom Maguire PP in the parochial house before they proceeded to Roslea for another meeting.

The veteran Nationalist priest had proposed Phil Clarke at the top of his nomination papers. Eleven years later in 1966 he was to propose Ruairí Ó

Brádaigh as the Republican candidate for the same constituency.

"I'm behind ye 100%" he told the visitors, "and if there are any of the IRA among ye remember I'm still your Chaplin." His remarks and general demeanour certainly raised morale.

The *Irish Independent* of May 27 did a round-up of voter turn-out. "There was a large turnout of voters in Armagh city their percentage being estimated at well over 80. At Lislea, a Nationalist area four miles outside the city there was as usual 100% poll. In Keady, another nationalist area, the poll was 95% while many areas in South Armagh polled more than 90%."

"There has seldom been such a quiet election in Fermanagh-south Tyrone The earliest voters in Enniskillen were the hundreds of women returning from 7am Mass in St Michaels Church where a mission was being held.

"They formed long queues as they waited to vote. The North Ward, Enniskillen recorded an 83% vote, 509 voting out of 608 on the register.

"Mid-Ulster — there was a heavy poll in some areas, especially in mid-Tyrone, where 90% of the electorate turned out. In North and West Tyrone over 70% voted. In Omagh town there was an 80% poll and in Cookstown 90% of the electorate voted.

"Election excitement was notably absent in Belfast during the day, the only division where polling was fairly heavy being west Belfast..."

In the *Irish Independent* of May 29 there was some bitter criticism of Sinn Féin alleging that polling booths in some Unionist-majority polling booths were "unmanned". These sources were anonymous and the usual nationalist representatives could have done the job in the polling booths.

Cahir Healy came out openly in his criticism to give him his due, but there was no concerted move by the RUC and B-Men to expel the nationalist population across the Border, as he had predicted in the situation of Sinn Féin winning.

In the matter of postal votes, Art McCaughey of Dungannon election agent for Phil Clarke was able to say that there were only 180 less such votes than in 1951. A total of 7,640 (including 4,300 to the nationalist electorate) were issued.

The late Des Cox of Armagh lived in Enniskillen in the 1950s and did a magnificent job in charge of postal votes. Unionists objected to 34 postal votes for the Passionist community at the Graan Enniskillen and the votes were officially turned down for the first time ever. "Missionary priest" could not be classed as "service, occupation or employment"!

The Nationalist Party criticism was in marked contrast to Canon Maguire's call on the Sunday before the election: "Let us be wise far-seeing and not blinded by Party prejudice".

Brian MacLau, Clare, speaking in Belfast before the election, was quoted in the *Irish Independent* (May 23): Sinn Féin would contest the next 26-County General Election. It was their intention eventually to form a Third (All-Ireland) Dáil."

Caoimhín MacChathmhaoil, solicitor, Mayo in a letter to the newspaper said: "A point that may be overlooked is that the Sinn Féin candidates were not standing as abstentionists but were seeking to be returned to Dáil Éireann, the Parliament of the Irish Republic.

"The two successful candidates are now entitled to act as members of the Third Dáil and to appointment to the Executive of An Dáil."

Leo Martin, still with Republican Sinn Féin, made a similar statement at the public meeting in Belfast.

The *Irish Times* of May 29 in its editorial said: "The intervention of Sinn Féin as it turns out, has made no practical difference to the result in the two predominantly Nationalist constituencies of Fermanagh-South Tyrone and Mid-Ulster, where the Unionists have just — only just — failed to steal a victory."

It was 'questionable' if Jack Beattie of Irish Labour would have managed to beat the Unionist without a Sinn Féin candidate in the field, the editorial said. The Unionist got 34,191, Beattie 16,050 and Éamonn Boyce 8,447.

Sinn Féin won Mid-Ulster by 260 votes and Fermanagh-South Tyrone by 261. Overall the results were a great boost for Republican Ireland. For the first time since Sinn Féin contested all seats in 1918 and 1921, all people in the Six Counties could vote for a free and independent Ireland.

The results meant a great deal to Sinn Féin workers going out in support of candidates in the 26-County local council elections the following month, June 1955 ...

(More next month. Refs. *Irish Independent*, *Irish Times* and *Sunday Press*, May 1955.)

SEVEN LOCAL COUNCIL SEATS WON BY SINN FÉIN

**50
Years
Ago**

IN THE 26-County local council elections of June 1955, Sinn Féin won seven seats. This success followed closely on the heels of the great victory in the

Westminster contests in the Six Counties.

Enthusiasm was high as the campaign was pressed home in many counties. An *t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* of June 1955 listed 35 candidates spread over nine counties.

Louth had ten, including such notables as Mrs Patsy O'Hagan, Tommy Green, Peter Duffly of Dundalk and Séamus Rafferty of Faughart — later a barber in Mountjoy and the Curragh. The large number was a direct result of the two parliamentary contests the previous year.

Cork had the next highest number of candidates with eight. Offaly had four, Clare three, Westmeath three, Galway three, Sligo two, Limerick one and Laois one.

Cork was the last place Sinn Féin had held a local election council seat. Seán MacSwiney had held his place on Cork City Council until his death in January 1945.

He was brother of Terence and Mary MacSwiney. And it was from Cork the first victories would come again — ten years later.

Liam Earley and Seán Ó Murchú were candidates for Cork City Council, Owen Harold for Mallow Town Council and Cork Co Council, William O'Brien, Seán MacSwiney, and CC O'Sullivan for Skibbereen Town Council and J O'Regan for Passage West Town Commissioners.

Church-gate public meetings were held for all four Sundays in June, as well as for two church holidays, Ascension Thursday and Corpus Christ. This applied in all areas contested.

Canvassing proceeded on every one of the long bright summer evenings for the full four weeks. In Cork city, which was all one ward or constituency, the Cathaoirleach of the Comhairle Ceantair, Donchadh Ó Murchú (known affectionately as 'Bulldog' and faithful to the end 40 years later) accompanied Liam Earley on the canvass each evening.

They ploughed methodically through the streets, dressed in their 'Sunday best'. There was no lacking in enthusiasm there and it paid off.

With 63 candidates in the contest for two seats on the city council, there was a huge long ballot paper. But every Republican member, supporter and sympathiser in the city could vote for Liam Earley and Seán Ó Murchú.

Both Sinn Féin candidates were elected! The enthusiasm, hard work and dedication, as well as the good name and standing of the Republican Movement, all contributed to their success.

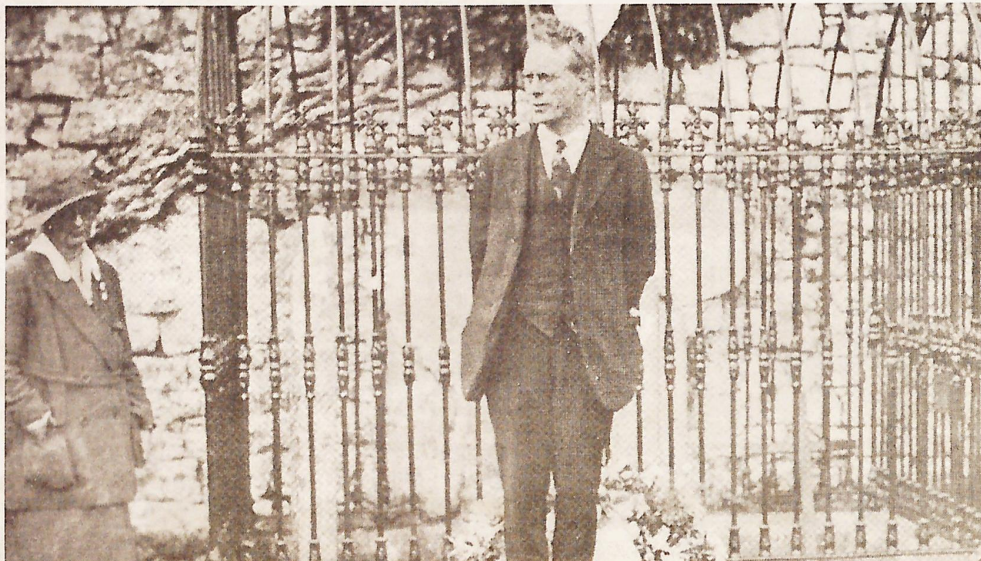
Earley worked for the Cork Harbour Board — as did Tom Barry — and Ó Murchú was secretary of both the Irish Engineering and Electrical Trade Union and the Cork Council of Irish Unions.

Owen Harold was re-elected to the Mallow Urban Council. He was outgoing Chairperson, having been elected previously as an Independent republican.

A veteran of the Republican Movement, Owen had been sentenced to death by British courtmartial in 1921 on charges of taking part in the famous capture of Mallow British military barracks under Liam Lynch and Ernie O'Malley. Owen was also "dilis go h-éag" ten years later.

J O'Regan was successful also in maintaining his seat on Passage (West) Town Commissioners where he too had been sitting as an Independent Republican.

In Galway, Paddy Ruane, Cornmore, Oranmore and Martin Kelly, Ballygar, both stood for the County Council. Martin Kelly was a former OC South Roscommon Brigade IRA and Paddy Ruane was son of Vice-Brigadier Tom Ruane IRA, 1916 Veteran, Frongoch internee and Sinn Féin Co



• Liam Mellows speaking at Bodenstown in 1922. The old monument which was destroyed by an explosion in 1969 is seen in the background.

Councillor 1920-1923.

Paddy Ruane was elected and served on Galway Co Council for 30 years. He too was a diligent worker and stood by Republican Sinn Féin until his death in 1994.

Paddy Mulcahy gained a seat on Limerick City Council. He was interned without trial in the Curragh in the 1940s and remained faithful to the end. The same was true of Séamus Dolan who stood for both Sligo Co Council and Sligo Corporation. He was elected to the Corporation.

Jim O'Regan was later replaced. Harry McCormack was co-opted instead of him. In 1955 too Jackie Clarke (Seán Ó Cléirigh) was elected for the first time to Ballina Town Council in Co Mayo as an Independent Republican. In 1960 he stood as a Sinn Féin candidate and was again successful.

The group of candidates in Co Cork made a special appeal to former members of the republican Movement to assist in the task before them. There had been a "revival of republican thought and to translate this into action and cement our gains" was the immediate aim.

People would be asked to study the Social and economic Programme and the plan for National Unity and Independence. "Our views on Housing, Rents, Emigration, Unemployment and the Cost of Living will be put forward.

"It will be emphasised that the restoration of our language and culture is an important part of our programme." Voluntary workers and funds were urgently needed.

Among those who came forward to help was the youthful Daithí Ó Conaill, then aged 17 years. It was to be a momentous decision for him and for the Movement.

Up North there were repercussions from the Republican victories in the elections. The President of Sinn Féin, Pádraig MacLógáin visited Enniskillen and addressed a meeting of election workers in the Town Hall.

Problems raised from the Unionist threat to "steal" the seat won by Philip Clarke and Sinn Féin to the minutiae of local registration committees were dealt with.

The editorial in *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* of June quoted from the *London Observer* of May 29 (Sunday), three days after the (Westminster) election. The lobby correspondent of the paper wrote:

"Several (!) Sinn Féin candidates were elected in 1918 although they were in prison, but no attempt was made to unseat them and there has been no change in the law since then."

A lobby correspondent is a reporter on

parliamentary affairs. Of course there were many more than 'several' Sinn Féin TDs in prison in 1918. The Minutes of the First (All-Ireland) Dáil show that 36 were 'faoi ghlas ag Gallaibh'.

But of the Unionists could not win Fermanagh-South Tyrone and Mid-Ulster by fair means they were prepared to use foul.

On June 17, the election agent for the defeated candidate, Lieut-Col RG Grosvenor, lodged a petition with the Registrar of the Supreme Court in Belfast. It sought to 'unseat' the successful Sinn Féin candidate Philip Clarke because he was a 'convicted felon' and award the seat to Col Grosvenor, Unionist.

This petition was signed by Col Grosvenor who had just returned from 'military training' in Scotland, the *Irish Press* of June 18 reported.

The same paper said on June 24 that 'The Sinn Féin Party' announced that 'as they did not recognise the courts jurisdiction, they intended to ignore the petition'.

"The Sinn Féin Member at Westminster for Fermanagh-South Tyrone, Mr Philip Clarke, who is serving a 10-year sentence in Crumlin Road jail for 'treason felony' has made no response to the petition," it reported.

Of course the Sinn Féin election manifesto has been quite clear on such matters: "SINN FÉIN ARE PLEDGED TO SIT ONLY IN A REPUBLICAN PARLIAMENT FOR ALL IRELAND."

It went on: "That right (of Ireland to full and complete freedom) is inalienable (cannot be given away) and non-judicable (not a matter for discussion) and must never be put in issue through referendum of a section of the population nor of the people of the country at large."

In plain language this means that Ireland as a nation has a right to national independence, which cannot be transferred or removed. It follows that a British court functioning in Ireland cannot decide who is elected or not in an Irish constituency.

The annual Bodenstown commemoration took place on June 19. Wreaths were laid by Seán Dunne, chairman, on behalf of the National Commemoration Committee, by Pádraig MacLógáin, Uachtarán, on behalf of Sinn Féin and by Máire Ní Ghabhann, on behalf of the Kevin Barry Cumann, Sinn Féin, London.

Also represented were Clann na nGael, Fianna Éireann, Cumann na mBan, Cumann na gCailíní. Seán Ó Neill, secretary of the national Commemoration Committee presided.

Thomas White, Clan na nGael, Los Angeles, spoke and said that the Clan in America was one

hundred percent behind the Movement for Irish freedom.

Eamonn Mac Thomáis, Dublin, delivered the oration. He said the most fitting tribute we could pay to Wolfe Tone was by serving in the ranks of the Republican Movement, the only Movement which was not only willing but was honestly working to achieve Tone's ideals.

"Despite the obstacles and the difficulties placed before it, the Movement has stood steadfast under every adversity. Sometimes our policy is misconstrued, sometimes our statements are wrongly interpreted or suppressed.

"But nevertheless we still keep going forward, knowing our ideals are based on truth and justice."

He went on to say that the success of Sinn Féin candidates in the recent election and the magnificent support achieved proved that the Republicans of the Six Counties had as a leadership a strong resurgent Republican Movement instead of the milk-and-water splinter groups they had in the past.

The speaker praised the Republican prisoners for their manly stand in the dock. He also congratulated the men who raided the Omagh British Military Barracks and fired the first shots at England's occupation forces in many years.

He quoted from Wolfe Tone and from Pearse and said that "until the day that the all-Ireland Republic was not suppressed but re-established and functioning freely, there would be Irish people born in every generation who would make England wish that she had never heard of Ireland and the Irish Republican Army."

The Republican newspaper of July 1955 described the weather for Bodenstown as "extremely bad". The crowd in attendance was "greater than it has been since the pre-war years".

The *United Irishman* also said that "a notable feature was the big number of young people who attended — visible proof of the appeal which the Republican Movement and its policy has for the youth of the country."

Things were certainly moving this month fifty years ago. In the Republican paper of June 1955 on page two, a two-inch double column advertisement read: "OGLAIGH NA hÉIREANN (Irish Republican Army) copies of the IRA Constitution (price 3 pence) can be had on application to: United Irishman, 94 Seán Treacy Street, Dublin".

It was a sign of the times...

(More next month. Ref: *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, June and July 1955; *Irish Press*, June 18, 20, 24; *Irish Independent*, June 20.

MITCHELL 'DISQUALIFIED' BY BRITS; TRAGEDY IN BELFAST

**50
Years
Ago**

IN July 1955, efforts were initiated to deprive the two successful Sinn Féin candidates of the seats they had won in the May Westminster

elections. Also in that month of July, a Belfast man lost his life in an accidental explosion.

During June a "petition" had been lodged with the British courts in Belfast seeking the "disqualification" of the successful Sinn Féin candidate in Fermanagh-South-Tyrone and the "awarding" of the seat to the defeated Unionist candidate, Colonel Grosvenor.

The case would be heard in Enniskillen following the conclusion of the Fermanagh Assizes. Two British judges would deliberate on it.

No such move was made within the specified time by the Unionists in Mid-Ulster and so the British parliament took on the task of having Tom Mitchell, the successful Sinn Féin candidate in this constituency removed from his position as elected representative of the people.

In the Mid-Ulster case, the British Establishment sought to have the seat declared "vacant" and a by-election called for Mid-Ulster. But Labour MPs resisted the moves all the way.

Sydney Silverman (Nelson and Colne), Chuter Ede (South Shields), Eric Fletcher (Sittingbourne), Arthur Henderson (Rowley Regis and Tipton), Emrys Hughes (South Ayrshire), Mrs E (Bessie) Braddock (Liverpool Exchange), Anthony Wedgewood Benn (Bristol South-East) — better known as "Tony Benn" and TC Pannell (Leeds West) were among those who stood up and were counted.

The *Irish Independent* of July 8 noted that previous "disqualifications" were mentioned, notably that of Rev JG McManaway, Unionist MP for West Belfast declared ineligible on the grounds of holding "an office of profit under the Crown".

"There was much laughter when Mr TC Pannell asked the Speaker 'Will you consider whether being in prison is not holding an office of profit under the Crown?'"

The *Sunday Press* of July 17 reported that "a British government motion will be proposed at Westminster tomorrow to declare vacant the Mid-Ulster seat held by Sinn Féin Ógmaíad raid prisoner Mr Tom Mitchell."

"A full dress debate will follow an amendment by Mr Sydney Silverman (Lab) that no warrant for a new writ shall be issued during the present Parliament."

"Provided that the Government succeed in having a new writ issued, a Sinn Féin constituency convention will be held at Omagh to choose their candidate for the new election."

The debate took place on July 18 and the British government won by 197 votes to 63. The *Irish Independent* of July 19 reported: "Speaking of Mr Mitchell, Mr Silverman said he refused to recognise the court, and one understands that he would have refused to recognise Parliament. He was elected not to come."

"Now in the middle of the 20th century a man may be in jail for perfectly honourable reasons. However wrong Mitchell may be, no one doubts that whatever he did or did not do was done not for private profit, greed or selfish motives of any kind, but if you like, in the mistaken spirit of self-imposed martyrdom to express an idea of liberty which seemed the right idea to him, whatever it seems to us."

"If they have declared that they do not want anyone to come here to represent them, why in the world should we compel them?"

"Mr Hugh J Delargy (Lab) added: 'I am very much afraid that we shall be making converts to the cause of violence which the Sinn Féiners advocate. Since no democratic processes are open to these people they may think that the only line for them is to support this young man who follows a policy of violence.'"

By July 20 the press was speculating that polling day in the Mid-Ulster by-election would be "on or around August 10". The Ard Chomhairle reacted immediately with a seven-inch double column

sinn féin

Mid-Ulster By-Election

The people of Mid-Ulster chose the Sinn Féin candidate on May 26 as their representative.

The British Government have denied that choice.

This is another example of Britain's unjust and unwanted interference in the affairs of the Irish people.

British interference in the affairs of Ireland must be brought to an end.

British forces of occupation must get out of Ireland.

Once again Sinn Féin resists the will of Britain to rule over Irish soil.

Once again, Sinn Féin challenges British domination over Irish affairs.

The people of Mid-Ulster will give Britain her answer in the By-Election.

Help them to make that answer by supporting the election fund.

Sinn Féin Cumainn are instructed to organise church-gate collections in every parish for Sunday, August 7.

Subscribe Generously

Subscriptions and offers of transport (bonded for the Six Counties) may be sent to: An Ard Runaidhe, Sinn Féin, 3 Lr. Abbey St., Dublin.

Issued by An Ard Chomhairle, Sinn Féin

advertisement in the *Sunday Independent* of July 20 appealing for funds.

It instructed all Cumainn of Sinn Féin to organise church gate collections in every parish for Sunday, August 7.

Earlier in the month — on July 2 — came a tragic event in Belfast, Brendan O'Boyle (37), a jeweller, of Wellington Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin was killed when a bomb exploded in his car at Belmont Road, Belfast.

His wife, Carmel, and another man had just left the car when the explosion occurred. They were both slightly injured.

Mrs O'Boyle was arrested in the city that evening, hospitalised and taken into custody again the next evening. She was interrogated for several hours and then charged under the Explosive Substances Act. The other surviving person escaped and nothing more is known of him.

Brendan O'Boyle had joined the IRA while a student at Queen's University in 1940. He was interned without trial but was one of the 21 internees who escaped from Derry jail by tunnel in 1943.

He made it across the Border and went to ground. Later he became a jewellery salesman and eventually opened his own business in a street connecting Dawson Street and Grafton Street in Dublin. He made contact with a splinter of Clan na Gael in America.

Bowyer Bell in *The Secret Army* takes up the story: "Another thorn in the side of the orthodox [Republican Movement] was a wild splinter group called Laochra Uladh (Warriors of Ulster) run by Brendan O'Boyle. He travelled regularly 'on business' into the Six Counties."

"Considerable IRA intelligence work produced relatively little information on O'Boyle. He seemed to be using his American money to run a one-man bombing campaign."

"In July 1955, he was killed in a premature explosion outside the telephone exchange at Stormont. By this time the IRA had decided that he was a tolerable if dangerous nuisance."

Be that as it may, Laochra Uladh had claimed a number of small symbolic explosions in press statements. These occurred rarely; an example was a small bomb outside the wall of British army HQ at Lisburn shortly after the Omagh Raid which damaged a tree.

But Brendan O'Boyle was yet another victim of British rule, the first death since 1946. His funeral took place from St Mary's Church, Belfast to Milntown Cemetery on July 5.

The coffin was carried out of the church by the deceased's four brothers. The *Irish Independent* of July 6 noted:

"When the cortege, which was followed by a large crowd, was halfway up the Falls Road, a Tricolour was draped over the coffin. Friends of the dead man, some of whom were interned with him, formed a Guard of Honour." It was no more than his due.

The chief mourners were Mr Michael O'Boyle



• Carmel O'Boyle

(father); Desmond, Michael, Martin and Mannix O'Boyle (brothers); Mr William Fagan (father-in-law) and Mrs Delaney (sister-in-law). Two children of Brendan O'Boyle, Caitriona, aged 2, and Brenda, four months, were with relatives in Dublin.

• Brendan O'Boyle

The notable absentee from his funeral was his wife Carmel, who spent the day in Armagh Women's Jail. The Stormont Executive had again disgraced itself in the eyes of most Irish people. Her husband and father of her two babies had been blown to pieces near her, yet she was not allowed to bury him.

Even the British judge, Resident Magistrate JH Campbell said that her husband had been killed in the explosion two days earlier. He asked if the authorities had applied their minds to the question of her attending the funeral.

"I think that on the grounds of Christian charity she should be allowed to attend the funeral," he declared.

The *Irish Press* of July 5 reported that 30-year-old Mrs Carmel O'Boyle was "smartly dressed" in court ...

"During the 15-minute hearing she stood very erect in the dock and looked directly at the magistrate." Dignity there and pride ...

In the Stormont Senate the next day while the funeral was taking place, Mr PJ O'Hare (Nat) attempted to raise the refusal — at Stormont governmental level — to allow Carmel O'Boyle's attendance. He was twice interrupted by the Speaker, Sir Roland Nugent.

However, he was reported in the press as saying, "Not merely the people of the area but of all Ireland have no doubt of what our feelings are." He made his point.

On the day after the fatal explosion, Carmel O'Boyle had been removed from the hospital at 5pm by the RUC and for three-and-a-half hours was interrogated by RUC chiefs at the City Commissioner's office at Templemore Avenue.

Among those who took part were Deputy Inspector-General WH Moffat, City Commissioner HA Geelan and his deputy, County Inspector AH Kennedy. The dead man's brothers, Martin, a Belfast art teacher, and Mannix, a veterinary surgeon employed by Dublin Corporation were questioned at length by RUC in Queen Street barracks.

A third man questioned by the City Commissioner's office was believed to be another brother, Desmond, a Belfast businessman.

The *Irish Press* of July 4 reported that a crowd of several hundred people had gathered outside the City Commissioner's office. They lined both sides of the street and were joined at every moment by more people coming from services in city churches. Eventually Mrs O'Boyle was rushed from the building at 8.45pm.

Later that night Mannix O'Boyle and Michael O'Boyle were interviewed at the Commissioner's office. The family's solicitor Colm McGrath was present and the chief of the RUC political branch, Inspector W Fanning took part in the interrogation.

A week later, on July 11, Carmel O'Boyle was freed when she appeared in court for one minute. Detective Inspector S Smyth withdrew the charge.

"She looked calm, dignified and composed. She smiled to the public who filled the wooden forms of the courtroom. Later, walking very erect, Mrs O'Boyle left the court," the *Irish Press* of July 12 reported. Mrs O'Boyle had the sympathy of the Irish people.

For the record it is necessary to quote the statement dated July 4 issued from "General Headquarters, Ogligha na hÉireann (Irish Republican Army) and

signed by D Mac Diarmada, Adjutant-General."

"With regard to the explosion which occurred in Belfast on Saturday last, July 2nd, we wish to state that the victim of the explosion, Brendan O'Boyle, was not a member of the Irish Republican Army."

"We further wish to state that the Irish Republican Army had no connection with or responsibility for this occurrence."

A verdict of "death by misadventure" was returned by the jury at the inquest on Brendan O'Boyle held in Belfast on August 3.

Ten days subsequent to Brendan O'Boyle's death came the annual 12th of July celebrations with much huffing and puffing by leading Orangemen and women.

Speaking at the unfurling of an Orange banner at Magherafelt, Stormont Minister for Health Dame Debra Parker called the local Sinn Féin members "a bunch of felons". ("A felon's cap's the noblest crown an Irish head can wear!")

Stormont Attorney-General Edmund Warnock, on the same occasion in Mid-Ulster said they were witnessing a sort of political revolution. "The old Nationalist Party was disintegrating before their eyes," he said.

Stormont Minister for Home Affairs, GB Hanna, at Finaghy, Belfast announced the preparation of a new regulation "to enable him to order the arrest of any person on just suspicion of being about to commit any act against the peace."

The *Sunday Press* of July 17 said "general opinion in the Six Counties is that the re-introduction of the internment of 'suspected persons' among the nationalist population is only a matter of time." How right it was, as will be seen.

The same article reported that for the "first time two [Orange] lodges, accompanied by bands, paraded through one of the most predominantly Catholic (sic) areas of the Six Counties. From the Upper Falls and the Suffolk Street area right down to Broadway, they passed through an all-Catholic (sic) district."

On the same platform Stormont Premier Lord Brookeborough said "the gun was still in Irish politics". Of course it has never left it, witness the British Army of Occupation, including armed RUC/PSNI.

Shortly after 4am on the eve of the Twelfth two culverts on the route of an Orange march on the Longstone Road, outside Annalong in South Down were damaged by three explosions. Several young men were questioned in their homes by RUC.

Police were called by a County Council overseer when a farmer objected to having stones from his ditch used to fill in the craters. Mr Ned Cunningham, Moneydarragh, resisted when council workmen helped themselves to stones from his ditch. The RUC ordered that the stones be replaced.

Six hundred RUC wearing steel helmets were drafted into the area and maintained overnight. It was "the biggest concentration of police this village has ever seen", according to the *Irish Press* of July 12. Armed B-Specials were also on duty.

Nevertheless two RUC were disarmed by locals "because we thought they were B-Specials". Five local men were taken to a tender and questioned for an hour-and-a-half. They were then released and would not disclose their names to the press.

The *Irish Press* of July 12 reported: "The policemen were not wearing their uniform jackets, the men said, and were trespassing on the land of one of the group."

"When the five men approached, the RUC men presented their rifles. 'Then we overpowered them and took the rifles from them,' one of the group said."

The Orange Order obviously wanted to humiliate nationalists for electing Republicans in two constituencies and voting Sinn Féin to a total of 12,310 in the Six Counties. The parade down the Falls Road had not been "walked" by them for 21 years.

And then there was the matter of the Co Fermanagh Féis at Newtownbutler. The nationalists of the Six Counties were in militant mood and not inclined to lie down as the Longstone Road and Newtownbutler showed.

(More next month. Refs. *Irish Press* July 4, 5, 12 and 13; *Irish Independent*, July 6, 8 and 19; *Sunday Press* July 17 and *Sunday Independent* July 20.)

BY-ELECTION AND ARMS RAID IN ENGLAND

**50
Years
Ago**

WITH baton-charges at the Co Fermanagh Féis victory in the Mid-Ulster by-election and the raid on Arborfield British Army barracks throughout late July and August 1955, national feeling and excitement certainly rose even further fifty

years ago.

The Stormont Minister of Home Affairs had made an order "prohibiting public processions on July 24 in any place within the radius of one mile from the Great Northern Railway Station, Newtownbutler, with the exception of the Féis field, known as Reilly's field".

The annual Féis, chaired by Canon Tom Maguire, PP, Newtownbutler, had invited Tomás MacCurtáin of Cork to give the Féis oration. A pageant of 1916 was to be held in the Féis field and banners of the seven signatories of the Proclamation were to be carried from St Mary's RC Church.

When a group of Clones men in white shirts left the church grounds with the banner of Pádraig Pearse a group of 20 RUC blocked their way and baton charged them.

The men, marching two deep, fought back and injuries were received. Ranks were broken and reformed. The banner poles, used as weapons, were broken. Wristwatches were smashed and cuts were sustained by the men.

The *Irish Independent* of July 25 reported: "The struggle continued intermittently down the 300 yards of road to the junction of main Street from which the men were allowed to march with banners folded to the field, passing other groups of police without interference."

"A police tender fitted with two pressure hoses attempted to enter the field to drive the crowd back but was met by a fusillade of stones and was forced to withdraw. The police then donned steel helmets and with batons drawn, charged the crowd."

"The fight lasted for about a quarter of an hour. It ended when Rev Canon Maguire PP, Newtownbutler left the platform and appealed to the police and people to desist. In doing so he was sprayed with water from the police hoses."

A photograph was carried in the *Irish Press* the same day of the 83-year-old Canon Tom standing alone in the centre of the road, his arm raised remonstrating with the RUC in a tender with water cannon, all the while he was drenched with water.

All over Ireland, and abroad, people drew their own conclusions from these scenes. About a dozen civilians and five RUC were injured in the clashes. Four Clones men appeared in court with torn shirts and deep gashes in their faces, charged with breaking the ban on parades.

Two of these were Urban Councillors. A solicitor for two of the four men said they were members of Mr de Valera's Fianna Fáil party, rejected physical force and recognised the court and the Stormont Government.

In all six local men from the Newtownbutler area, two Tyrone men from Sixmilecross as well as Clones men were charged in court. Some were held in Belfast jail overnight and brought to court in Enniskillen next day. District Inspector Meharg prosecuted.

Tomás MacCurtáin said later that Canon Maguire was practising passive resistance. He had instructed the men to march up to the RUC lines, to break formation and to filter through individually and then to reform and march to the next line of police repeating the procedure.

Of course, the British forces were having none of such Mahatma Gandhi's tactics and when they got their chance inundated the aged pastor using their power hoses. MacCurtáin felt that there was only so much passive resistance Irish people could take.

The *Irish Independent* reported Tomás MacCurtáin as saying in his Féis oration: "Let they be cowed by the show of armed force let them realise that the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation, and the man Pearse whose banner had been broken by the RUC a few hundred yards away represented a nobler and a more all-embracing ideal than merely the Irish culture and Irish language."

"They represented the ideal that this country had the right to be free."

Canon Maguire, who presided, read a telegram from Very Rev R Hodge Curran, of Brooklyn, New York who was to have opened the Féis, regretting inability to attend. He stated: "With you I pray for the complete and individual freedom of Ireland."

In mid-Ulster, the *Irish Independent* of July 25 reported: "Fifty delegates representing 30 Sinn Féin branches at a convention in Omagh yesterday unanimously decided to put forward Mr Thomas J Mitchell as their candidate in the forthcoming by-election for the constituency on August 11."



• Arms from the Arborfield raid being taken from 2327 Caledonian Road, London by British Special Branch in August, 1955.

On August 3, the *Irish Press* reported that: "Mitchell had been refused permission to issue an election manifesto or to write in his election agent (Charles Lavery, Maharaftel) outlining the points he wished to bring before the electorate."

A statement from the Ard-Chomhairle of Sinn Féin said that the issue in the by-election was "the right of the people of Mid-Ulster, and the people of Ireland in general, to manage their own affairs without the unjust and unwanted interference of Britain."

"Such interference is resented by the Irish people of every class and creed. Even the Unionists of Mid-Ulster do not want this election — they are being forced into it."

Heavy polling took place in Tyrone and Derry. Cars were sent to seaside resorts of Newcastle and Portrush and the scenic spots along the Antrim coast to bring back electors. Likewise, cars were sent to Bundoran, Donegal Town and Camdonagh. Cars from Dublin brought voters from the capital.

In Omagh, an 80% poll was recorded; 90% in Carrickmore and other Mid-Tyrone districts and 85% in North Tyrone. Tricolours were displayed in Strabane and Drumquin on polling morning.

The count in Omagh gave Mitchell 30,392 from an electorate of 66,852 while the unionist candidate Beattie received 29,586, giving a majority of 806. This meant the Sinn Féin plurality more than trebled since May when it was 260.

It was a great victory which showed increasing nationalist unity in the face of British government action in nullifying the May result.

One thing was certain: the British government — if it learned anything from the result — would never seek another by-election in Mid-Ulster which would only drive more and more people behind Sinn Féin.

In the British Imperial capital itself — London — a group of young Irishmen heard of Mitchell's great victory on that evening of August 12. They were on their way to raid a British army barracks in the Aldershot area, some 30 miles west of London.

An *i-Eireannach Aontaithe* / *The United Irishman* of September featured the action on its front page under banner headlines "Panic in England, Military Barracks Raided by IRA".

It went on: "British imperial prestige received a severe shock on August 13th when a daring arms raid was carried out by a party of ten Volunteers of the Irish Republican Army."

"The objective selected was Hazelbroucke Barracks, depot for No 5 Radar Training Battalion REME [Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers]. Hazelbroucke is one of three barracks situated at Arborfield in Berkshire."

"The combined strength of the three barracks is approximately 2,500 men. It is the centre of a large militarized area and is convenient to such well-known establishments as Aldershot, Farnborough and Sandhurst."

Following the raid a statement was issued by General Headquarters, Irish Republican Army which read:

"On Saturday, August 13 entry to the camp [at Arborfield] was effected at 2am by the main entrance." It then described the action."

"Four men entered by the main barrier, passed the sentry and proceeded to the guard room. Just as they entered the guard room a further two men passed through the main barrier, seized the sentry and bundled him into the guard room."

"The guard commander (a sergeant who was busy writing poetry to his girlfriend) and guard were then secured and bound, and a new 'sentry' was posted at the main barrier, dressed in the appropriate uniform. The remainder of the party then entered with the transport."

"The guard room and the guard commander were then searched for keys no 45 and 46 to the ammunition stores and armoury. It was subsequently established that on this particular night the keys were not in their usual place but in the possession of the armourer."

"Failing to find the keys, entry was effected with the necessary implements which had been brought along to deal with such an eventuality."

The ammunition store was cleared and a quantity of selected weapons were taken from the armoury. The loaded vehicles then withdrew.

"A party of three, including the 'sentry', remained behind to capture the four members of the picket returning from their two-hour beat of the camp at 4am and to ensure that no alarm was raised until the loaded vehicles had got clear away. This covering party withdrew at 5am."

"All Volunteers taking part in the operation have now been accounted for."

— D Mac Diarmada

Adjutant-General."

In the camp 600 British soldiers slept through it all. A boilerman arrived on his bicycle at an early hour and made straight for the barrier. The IRA "sentry" obligingly raised it and exchanged "good mornings" with the cyclist.

Finally, between 6 and 7am the Sergeant, although still tightly bound and gagged, managed to raise himself erect and somehow opened the guard room door.

He jumped on both feet bound together out the door, across the main road passing by and banged his forehead on the front door of the RSM's house opposite the gate. Eventually the Regimental Sergeant Major awakened and raised the alarm.

The *United Irishman's* report continues: "The raid touched off a wave of panic in British official circles. An apparent drunken prank by some national servicemen at a camp in North Wales [Kinnel Barracks, Rhyll] started a scare which spread to many barracks in England."

"IRA men in trench coats were being seen by sentries all over the country, men "with Irish accents were being heard at every barrack gate discussing the strength of the garrison, the position of the armoury etc."

"Troops and police carried out widespread searches in Liverpool, in London and in other areas as a result of "information" on IRA plans for further attacks, while blocks of tenements and cinemas were cleared of people after phone messages of "bomb plots".

"Meanwhile, Scotland Yard was barricaded; a special Cabinet meeting was called to discuss the raid; the Chief of the Imperial General Staff was summoned to the War Office, while military courts of inquiry were set up to check on security measures at the different camps."

The article concluded: "Yes, the point has gone home. The British army is the target and will remain the target as long as occupation forces are maintained in any part of Ireland."

The *Sunday Press* of August 14 described the raid as the "biggest IRA arms raid ever in Britain". It gave the total of ammunition taken as 81,000 rounds.

This was broken down as 48,000 rounds of .303 (suitable for rifle and Bren light machine gun); 38,000 nine millimeter (for Sten machine carbine and for automatic pistol); 1,300 rounds of .380 (for revolver) 1,300 of .22 (for target practice).

Selected arms seized included 55 Sten guns, ten Bren l.m.g.s with a spare barrel for each, two .303 rifles and one .38 pistol. A substantial number of Sten and Bren gun magazines was also seized.

A British War Office press release gave the exact time of the raid as "02.10 hours" on August 13. The entire night guard numbering one sergeant, one corporal and 16 privates were overpowered, tied up and gagged.

In addition two patrolling pickets of two men each were held up as they returned to the guard room on relief. "Consider yourselves prisoners of war," they were told.

At 3.50am an Austin two-ton van was stopped by a police patrol at Ascot on the road to London. The van was searched and was found to be loaded with ammunition. The two occupants were arrested.

They were Joseph Doyle (30) of Bray, Co Wicklow

and Donal Murphy (22), Inchicore, Dublin. A receipt for the renting of a lock-up garage in central London found on one of the men led to the arrest of a third man, Séamus Murphy (20) at his lodgings in North London.

Séamus, whose full name was James Andrew Mary Murphy, was a native of Castledermot, Co Kildare. The Special Branch police, of course, while grilling him non-stop for seven hours, called him "Mary Murphy".

The second van, with the rest of the seizure, got safely to London. The rearward of three escaped successfully by car. Meanwhile panic spreads throughout England, Scotland and Wales. The Six Counties also had security alerts.

The *News of the World* on Sunday, August 14 had a large banner headline on its front page: "All-Britain Manhunt" and "Armed and Desperate".

In the London *Evening Standard* Randolph Churchill (son of Winston) wrote in an article criticizing the lack of an armed defence of British military establishments: "However there is the possibility that sentries could shoot several comrades or even civilians for every IRA gunman they would wing."

One would think he regarded IRA Volunteers as pheasants or other wild game. The sentry and picket-duty soldiers at Arborfield carried only pickaxe handles.

He also wrote that "the IRA's greatest strength lay in its ability to lie quiet for months on end and then to strike at some necessarily unguarded spot."

The Irish community in England joined in the fun with a will to cause multiple scares, alarms and alerts. They rejoiced when they read the headlines "Reinforcements Rushed to Balmoral". This was the holiday playground of the English Royal Family at Balmoral Castle and estate in Aberdeenshire, Scotland.

To aggravate the English Establishment further, Domhnall Ó Riain, secretary of Sinn Féin in Britain, told a meeting in London Camden Row on the Sunday morning:

"The fight will go on. We will carry on until the Tricolour of Ireland flies over Belfast City Hall."

This statement was widely reported in the press. It accurately summed up Irish Republican feeling then and since. Meanwhile British radio programmes were continuously dominated by the "IRA raids" and the Ashes series of cricket matches at Lords.

However, some days after Arborfield the Special Branch revealed they had discovered the dump of the remaining arms and ammunition.

The owner/landlord of a bomb-damaged [WWII] and derelict shop at 237 Caledonian Road (near Pentonville Prison) read in the papers of his "tenant's" [Séamus Murphy] arrest and went to the police.

Twelve "crack-shots" from New Scotland Yard were among police in the shop basement waiting and watching the premises for a day and a night. On Tuesday, August 17 in full view of television and press they dramatically "raided" the shop and carried out boxes of ammunition and weapons.

Back in Ireland the "raids" in England were featured in banner headlines on the front page of the *Irish Press* every day that week. Due prominence was given in other dailies and weeklies.

A note in the September issue of the *United Irishman* summed up the position from a Republican perspective:

"The next move has come and it has shattered completely the complacency with which the British were trying to treat the Irish situation."

"Described by some British army leaders as a 'brilliantly planned and brilliantly carried-out operation', the raid on Arborfield Barracks captured the world press headlines and it focused attention on the fact that the 'Irish Question' is not settled — that it never can be settled as long as there are British Occupation Forces on Irish soil."

Finally, the IRA unit which raided Arborfield consisted of: Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, Longford and Roscommon — O/C and organizer; Joe Doyle, Bray, 2 i/c; Séamus Murphy, Castledermot, Co Kildare — assistant organizer; Corporal Frank Skuse, REME, Union Hall, Co Cork — "inside man" and planner who took part in full uniform; Donal Murphy, Inchicore, Dublin — driver of first van; Jack Hick, Dalkey, Co Dublin — skillfully forced the doors of both magazine and armoury; Liam Walsh, Dublin — the replacement sentry in full uniform; Paddy Constantine, East Wall, Dublin — driver of car and Tom Fitzgerald, Dublin — driver of second van.

Fifty years ago, although they knew only the names of the three captured men, Irish people were proud of all these Republicans — and their actions.

(More next month. Refs. *Ant-Eireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, September 1955; *Irish Independent*, July 25; *Irish Press*, July 25, August 3 and August 15 through to 20; *Sunday Press*, August 14; *News of the World*, August 14 and *Evening Standard* London, August ?.)

TWO SINN FÉIN TDS 'DISQUALIFIED' BY BRITISH LAW

**50
Years
Ago**

DURING
A u g u s t,
S e p t e m b e r
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of the electorate in two nationalist constituencies.

The majority of the people in Mid-Ulster had returned Tom Mitchell, the Sinn Féin candidate in May and again in August. A similar majority in Fermanagh-South Tyrone had elected Philip Clarke.

Both candidates had asked to be returned to an All-Ireland Parliament as Teachtaí Dála or TDs. Now British law and British courts in Ireland wanted to reverse the decisions of the electorate.

"The Nationalist electorate of Fermanagh-South Tyrone owe no allegiance to English law, Mr Philip Clarke, MP, told the Six-County High Court," the *Irish Press* of August 12 reported.

The Sinn Féin TD told Lord Justice Black: "As far as I am concerned one has no right to deliberate on the choice of the people of Fermanagh and South Tyrone as to whether a candidate who is elected by an overwhelming majority was in fact duly elected or not."

"It is stated that these 30,000 odd votes were invalid because there is some English law which says that any person serving over 12 months in prison for any felony cannot take his seat in the British House of Commons.

"I have no doubt that this is a wise and excellent piece of legislation in so far as it was made by Englishmen for the benefit of Englishmen.

"Our contention rests on the bald proposition that both I and the people who elected me are all Irishmen, and we owe no allegiance to English laws. Therefore, the whole proceedings are null and void."

Lord Justice Black — "That is no doubt your view. Have you anything to say relevant to the application?"

Mr Clarke — "It is a generally conceded principle in most civilised countries that the origin of political authority is the people.

"It would, however, appear that the origin of political authority does not lie in the people but rests in the will of a High Court judge. The very basis of democracy — the right of the people to vote in a free election — is being denied.

"On these grounds I see no reason why these proceedings should be carried any further."

The judge then made an order that the ballot papers in the election should be produced by the "Deputy Clerk of the Crown" to be scrutinized to show that over 261 voters [Clarke's majority] were aware that the Sinn Féin man was "disqualified".

Mr Clarke — "So far as I am concerned I have no further interest in these proceedings. Until such time as the people themselves in a free election decide otherwise, I shall hold myself as the duly elected representative of the constituency."

The actual hearing of the petition was fixed for Enniskillen on August 30. Philip Clarke was then taken back to Crumlin Road jail "under heavy escort".

He had been a civil servant in Dublin before his capture and was a night student at University College. From his address to the court it would appear that he had been studying political science.

Philip Clarke took no further part in the "election petition court" which convened in Enniskillen at the end of August for several days. Neither was he represented in court. He had already made his position clear.

The *Irish Press* of August 31 announced that "the Court is the first of its kind since the establishment of the Six Counties in 1921 and the first in Ireland for many years."

In an editorial headed "The Petition" on September 3, 1955 the *Irish Times* said: "There is



• Philip Clarke, TD (centre), is escorted from the Belfast High Court on his way back to Crumlin Road jail following British court proceedings to unseat him.

reason to believe that many Unionists doubt the wisdom of their party's decision to attempt not only to unseat the two Sinn Féin representatives, but to replace them at Westminster with the defeated candidates.

"Sinn Féin, however, will be satisfied, in so far as it has received a generous helping of material for its propaganda machine. It will be able to proclaim that the majority of the Fermanagh and South Tyrone electorate has been disenfranchised, and will not hesitate to make capital therefrom."

The *Sunday Independent* of September 4 reported "Northern Unionists had second thoughts yesterday on Col RG Grosvenor's success in acquiring the Tyrone-Fermanagh seat at the Enniskillen Election Court, and in unseating Philip Clarke, the Sinn Féin prisoner candidate.

"But it is about the long-term effects of the seating of two minority-vote MPs at Westminster that the Northern Unionists are most unhappy. They have a deep fear that in the long run, it will weaken what they call the North's Constitutional position."

The report went on: "Mr Eric Fletcher, Labour MP for Islington, London, said in Belfast recently that he and his Labour colleagues would be strongly opposed to the seating of a man who had received a minority of votes, and this view was borne out in the debate when the Commons ordered a new election in Mid-Ulster.

"Labour, naturally, resents the Tories being able to increase their majority by 'back-door' methods."

The report concluded with an American reference: "Mr SP Keating, chairman of Public Relations and member of the Board of Directors of the American League for an Undivided Ireland, said yesterday in Dublin that the ousting of Mr Philip Clarke, Sinn Féin, from the seat at Westminster was a 'travesty of democracy'."

"Mr Keating was speaking at a press conference in the Gresham Hotel, arranged by the Irish Anti-Partition Association. He said his organization would bring the facts before the American public."

The *Sunday Press* of September 4 said that "Nationalists hold that the result [of a heated debate in the British Commons] is a foregone conclusion. Procedure is likely to follow the precedent set by another felon, John Mitchell, in 1875.

"Sinn Féin's attitude is to ignore the entire affair. Mr Clarke's election agent, Mr Art McCaughey of Dungannon, stated today: 'We do not recognise the verdict of the court. We recognise only the verdict of the people last May.'"

"A Petition to unseat Thomas Mitchell, twice elected as Sinn Féin MP for Mid-Ulster, was lodged on August 25," reported the *Irish Press* on September 2. "Mitchell is also undergoing a ten-year sentence in Belfast for his part in the raid on Omagh Barracks."

The same paper reported on September 28 that

"the Unionist organiser for Omagh, Mr JAH Fowler, called at Crumlin Road jail, Belfast, yesterday to serve documents on Mr Thomas Mitchell."

Tom must have refused to accept them for the same person later attempted to serve the documents on Charlie Lavery of Magherafelt, the election agent for the Sinn Féin candidate.

The *Irish Press* continued: "Mr Lavery refused to take them, and when Mr Fowler tried to push them into his hands, the papers fell on the street.

"I told him that the people had already given their decision and that this was a lot of nonsense," Mr Lavery commented. He said he had no idea what documents were required and that he would simply ignore the matter."

"The election court to hear the petition by the defeated candidate, Mr C Beattie, to have the seat awarded to him, opens in Omagh on October 5. Mr Mitchell may attend the first day's hearing, a Sinn Féin spokesman told me [*Irish Press* reporter]."

Tom Mitchell did attend the court. The *Irish Press* of October 7 told how "four truck loads of RUC and a party of British soldiers carrying rifles stood guard in Omagh yesterday while the election petition court was in session."

Earlier, he went on record saying that he would not recognize the court but "would raise certain points and question witnesses". He was not legally represented.

"I would like to emphasise," he said, "that I am not pleading a case either for my organisation or myself."

"This court has on trial today the people of Mid-Ulster. A precedent has already been created for this court when a similar assembly deprived another candidate of the seat he won in the general election. If there was no precedent we would still adopt the same attitude."

"The people are on trial and it is only right that I should come here because I am their representative and would like to state their views in electing me. When the obvious result of these proceedings is announced it will mean, in effect, that the majority of the people of Mid-Ulster have been disenfranchised ...

"It is the generally accepted fundamental belief that political authority is derived from God and comes through the people, but apparently, under British democracy, the people's word can be nullified.

"In this particular case it has been nullified by two men [Lord Justice Black and Mr Justice Sheil], so under British law two men are as good as 30,000.

"Instead of taking a seat at Westminster, we asked the people to elect myself and the other candidate to a 32-County parliament when it is convened, and which we hope will be organised some

day, and which will be, in effect, Dáil Éireann."

He told them in conclusion: "In going before the people we stated our policy, which is a simple one: all Ireland for the Irish people. We asked for 32-County recognition.

"One day this regime will collapse and the words of John Mitchell will come true."

Tom Mitchell was continually interrupted by the British judges and his exchanges with them make interesting reading. At one stage he stated:

"My point is that Republicanism and Protestantism, can never be divorced here, because the principles of Republicanism are embedded too deeply in the minds of the people.

"Some of the greatest leaders came from the Six Counties — John Mitchell who was quoted yesterday; Wolfe Tone and others such as Davis and Emmet."

He said that "until the people of Mid-Ulster decide otherwise, I will always hold myself as their representative."

On his way back to prison, Tom Mitchell was returned to the court by a radio message to his RUC escort. He struggled with the warders to leave again, saying he already knew the decision of the court.

The following day his forecast was realised. The British judges "awarded" the Mid-Ulster seat to the Unionist, Charles Beattie.

Exactly 80 years earlier — in 1875 — Tom Mitchell's namesake, John Mitchell, was returned unopposed as MP for Co Tipperary.

"Unseated" as a convicted felon who had escaped from transportation by the British parliament, he won a new by-election for the same seat a month later. A week following his second success he died in Newry aged 60.

Tom Mitchell was his true successor in an extraordinary series of parallels. Fifty years later the TD for Mid-Ulster is still with us and is a subscriber to this newspaper.

Among the fulminations of the time by Unionist leaders was this from Stormont MP Brian Faulkner: "Perhaps it is optimistic to expect a sympathetic approach to the problem from the present Dublin government.

"After all the Minister for Justice down there is General Seán Mac Eoin, better known perhaps as the Blacksmith of Ballinalee. He achieved fame as one of the IRA leaders of 30 years ago who wanted to lead his men across the Border.

"It is little wonder that from him there is no cooperation in concluding extradition agreements with Northern Ireland." He was speaking at Killinchy, Co Down.

Meanwhile in other areas of the British Empire, resistance to imperialist rule was taking place. In Nyeri, Kenya, a British army sergeant charged with the murder of an African was alleged to have been so keen to kill Mau Mau that he had offered members of his platoon £1 [sterling] for each body (*Irish Press*, August 27).

Sergeant Alfred Edward Pimblett (34) and Rifleman Ronald Swain (22) were charged with murdering a Kipsigis tribesman Solia Arap Toyet on May 7. Solia, a "herd-boy", was taken prisoner during Operation Peppercorn and a corporal refused an order from the sergeant to shoot the prisoner.

"All right, I'll do it myself," Pimblett said. Seven or eight shots were heard and half Solia's head was blown away, Corporal Smith told the court.

In Cyprus the struggle was developing with a raid for arms on a British army barracks, the stoning of British troops by schoolchildren and demands for an end to British rule by Archbishop Makarios, who was both head of the Greek Orthodox Church and political leader on the island. We shall follow developments there.

(More next month. Refs. *Irish Press*, August 12, 27, and 31, September 2 and 28, October 7; *Sunday Independent* September 4; *Sunday Press*, September 4; *Irish Times*, September 3; *Resistance, The Story of the Struggle in British-occupied Ireland*, by J McGarrity (published December 1957) and *A Chronology of Irish History since 1500*, Doherty and Hickey (Gill and Macmillan).)

LIFE SENTENCE FOR ARMS RAID MAN

**50
Years
Ago**

ON October 5, 1955 sentences of life imprisonment were imposed at Reading Assizes, England on the three Irishmen arrested after the arms raid

on the British Army training camp at Arborfield.

Joseph Doyle (30), 'Tara', Strand Rd, Bray, Co Wicklow; Donal Murphy (23), 116 Emmet Rd, Inchicore, Dublin and Séamus Murphy (20) a native of Castledermot, Co Kildare, with an address at Winkfield Rd, Wood Green, London had each said "I refuse to plead" when charged.

The *Irish Press* of October 6 reported: "There was a gasp in court from members of the public (at the life sentences), but the three accused, though white-faced, showed no sign of emotion. All three men stood to attention while the sentence was being passed. Radio Éireann news said: "They did not flinch".

"Before sentence was passed all three accused were asked if they had anything to say. Standing to attention, Joseph Doyle said:

"We are all members of the Irish republican Army. These arms were to be used against the British Army of Occupation in Ireland. We have no regrets and do not apologise for our raid on the camp at Arborfield. Our only regret is that it was not a success."

"Mr Justice Cassels, passing sentence, said: 'This was an act of war. They were prepared by sheer desperation to achieve their aim'."

During the two-day trial, witnesses included a Miss Mary Sherlock, cashier and receptionist at the National Hotel, London. She said seven men had arrived at the hotel on August 11. All gave Dublin addresses.

Asked if she could recognise any of the three men in the court, Miss Sherlock said, "No".

Lazarus Apostol, a tailor, said that he owned the garage at 237 Caledonian Road. It was a corner site and James Murphy on August 8 called to rent it for the storing of furniture.

The *Irish Press* of October 5 noted: "Apostol identified Joseph Doyle as the man who said that he was James Andrew Mary Murphy who came to see him".

The owner of the 'Green Monkey', a restaurant on the road between London and Reading, Berkshire gave evidence that James Andrew Mary Murphy had a conversation with him in German. In fact the conversation was with Jack Hick. Séamus Murphy knew no German but the proprietor identified him in court.

J Bowyer Bell acknowledges this in his 'Secret Army' and says "James Andrew Mary Murphy's conviction, apparently largely as a result of eyewitness testimony, was, technically at least, a judicial blunder."

The *Irish Press* (October) report mentioned that the three men "had maintained a stolid silence — broken only when Donal Murphy questioned a soldier."

"Private Brian George Mahony, duty driver (at Arborfield) said that he picked out James Murphy (at the identification parade) after he had heard him speak. Murphy spoke with an Irish accent, but the others did not do so."

The questionable part of recognition in the case of a person among a group of about the same age being seen only once arises immediately.

The same *Irish Press* report quoted Judge Cassels saying that "the men had organised and planned very effectively for the purpose to which Mr Doyle had referred."

"But for the vigilance of the two police officers that morning, they might not have been discovered, and the weapons which they had stolen (sic) might have caused much bloodshed."

Bell concluded: "The sentences created as much of a stir as the Treason Felony charges for the Omagh raiders. It looked like an act of mean revenge against the three young men who had



• Donal Murphy.

made fools of the British Army.

"Ah, why didn't they hang them?" was the reaction of the Irish public, long gone sour on the virtues of British justice."

Indeed Séan McBride, SC, TD issued the following statement regarding the arms trial sentences: (quoted from the *Longford Leader* October 15).

"The fundamental basis of democracy depends on the right of a people to determine their own affairs freely without outside interference. And this applies, whether the victim be Ireland, Cyprus or Poland; or the aggressor be Britain or Russia."

"Any infringement of this basic right has always led, and will continue to lead, to revolt against those who seek to impose their domination on another nation."

"The young men who have just been sentenced to suffer life imprisonment by Britain are the latest victims of Britain's invasion of the sovereign rights of the Irish people."

"It is symptomatic of this situation, and I hope that world opinion will note it, while these harsh sentences are being imposed on young Irishmen by a British Court in England, other British Courts, operating in Ireland without the sanction of the Irish people, are busy disfranchising the nationalist population by unseating their elected parliamentary representatives. To British rule in Ireland, neither democracy nor the will of the people matters."

"These sentences also demonstrate that Britain has not yet learned that repression, in whatever form it may take, will not quell the determination of the Irish people to assert and defend their sovereignty in their own country."

"Centuries of experiences should have taught British Statesmen that neither executioners nor prison sentences will intimidate a people in the assertion of their democratic rights. When will they learn?"

"The harshness of the sentences imposed overshadows any doubts which may have existed as to the wisdom of the policy which led to these events. Ireland will merely recall:

"Wise men have told us that their cause was a failure."

But they stood by old Ireland and never feared danger."

Three-and-a-half years later, in February 1958, Séamus Murphy escaped from Wakefield Prison, Yorkshire and made his way home to Ireland. Today he remains a faithful Republican and an avid reader of SAOIRSE every month.

Fifty years ago — in October 1955 — the national spirit was strong, even outside the Republican Movement itself. Local councils continued to protest against the savage sentences imposed on the three arms raid men in England.

"Longford Co Council on Saturday protested against the savage sentences passed by a British Court on the young men who took part in the recent raid in England," reported the *Longford Leader* on October 22.

"Mr PM Farrell (Clann na Poblachta), who moved the resolution of protest, said that people might sneer at such a resolution coming from Longford Co Council, but it should be remembered that some years ago, when other young men were in the same position, resolutions from public bodies supported and sustained them and accurately expressed public opinion."



• Joseph Doyle.

"Mr Farrell added that while those savage sentences were being inflicted, another British Court, officiating in Ireland, was taking away the democratic rights of Irishmen and disenfranchising the electorate."

"Mr Séan F Lynch (Independent Republican) seconded and said these men did not flinch. They made everybody very proud of them."

"Mr Brian Kiernan (Fianna Fáil) and other members associated themselves with the resolution."

The *Sunday Press* of October 16 carried a resolution passed at a meeting in Newtownbutler, Co. Fermanagh. Very Rev Canon Maguire, PP presided. The resolution read:

"Accepting the declaration of the judge who tried those who carried out a raid for arms at Arborfield as an act of war, we congratulate Joseph Doyle, Donal Murphy, and James Murphy as the first prisoners of war."

"In our present effort to clear our six Ulster counties of British military occupation, we assure them that they shall be specially remembered in our prayers," the resolution ends.

The previous month, on September 12, four Clones men, six Fermanagh men and two Tyrone men were charged at a court in Enniskillen in connection with incidents at the Co. Fermanagh Féis on July 24.

The Clones men — Seán O'Connor (33), urban councillor and railway guard, O'Neill Park; Joseph Hughes (33), labourer, Cara Street; Herbert McMahon (38) urban councillor and spade manufacturer, Church Hill and Terence Kirk (38), GNR signaller, O'Neill Park — were each fined £10 for a breach of the Public Order Act and 5 pounds for assaulting the RUC.

They pleaded guilty to organising a procession contrary to an Order by the Stormont Minister for Home Affairs, and assaulting the police.

The solicitor for McMahon and Kirk said both were members of the Fianna Fáil party and rejected physical force. They had spent a week in jail as a result of the offence.

The solicitor for O'Connor and Hughes said they regretted what had occurred. Neither was a member of any illegal organisation.

The six Fermanagh men and two Tyrone men were: Alexander Lynch, Corslia, Newtownbutler; James Patrick Houston, Main Street, Newtownbutler; Patrick McCorry, Derryginilly, Newtownbutler; James Kelly, Drumliff, Lisnaskea; Leo Murphy, Derryinna, Lisnaskea; James Joseph Hann, Derrycannon, Lisnaskea; Joseph McMenamin, Remackin, Sixmilecross and Michael Joseph McPhillips, Tandaragee, Sixmilecross.

Murphy was bound over for 12 months, as was Houston. Lynch, Kelly and McCorry were each fined 10 pounds and bound over. Hann was fined 3 pounds and bound over. The charges against McMenamin and McPhillips were dismissed. All were charged with disorderly behaviour, riotous assembly and unlawful assembly.

The two Tyrone men were members of the Sixmilecross Pipe Band which attended and competed at the Féis.

District Inspector W Meharg gave evidence that there were about 200 people at the entrance to the Féis field, consisting of both sexes, young and old.

Slogans 'Up the IRA' and 'Up the Republic' were shouted at the people.

Stones were thrown and he ordered a baton charge to put the crowd back into the field. He ordered the water wagon into service. It was damaged by stones and a police tender had its wind-screen smashed. Sixteen police were injured.

Mr Miller, Resident magistrate, said the men before the court were not apparently the ringleaders. (*Sunday Press* report of September 13).

In Leinster House on October 26, Deputy Jack McQuillan (Independent, Roscommon) asked Liam Cosgrave, Minister for External Affairs, if, in view of the severity of the sentences imposed in England on the three Irishmen, and the detrimental effect it must have on the Partition problem, the government would urge the British Home Secretary to have them reduced at the earliest possible date.

Mr Cosgrave — "While I share the view as to the severity of the sentences imposed, I do not think the present is an opportune time to make the representations suggested."

According to the *Irish Press*, October 27, "Mr McQuillan asked might it be taken that the Government had impressed on the British Government that, so long as it insisted on keeping occupation troops in part of this country against the wishes of the majority of the Irish people, it would not get the cooperation and friendship which should normally exist between the two countries."

"He also asked if the British Government had been told that similar action was likely to be taken in future years by young men with the same ideals which we all share, though these young men might differ from the members of the House in the methods used."

"Mr Cosgrave — The government loses no opportunity of impressing on the British Government the desirability of the re-unification of Ireland."

A stronger line was taken at the unveiling at Emly, Co Limerick of a memorial to six members of the IRA. Rev GM Wall CC, Effin, Co Limerick, a nephew of Brigadier Séan Wall, OC East Limerick Brigade, killed in action by British forces in 1921, was the speaker. He said:

"Until this National wrong of Partition is righted it is hard to blame the young Irishmen of today who, seeing part of this land under foreign domination and no hope of it being freed in the immediate future, have lost their patience and have gone out to solve the problem in their own way."

"Be that as it may, we feel that every Irishman and every woman have been horrified at the inhuman sentences meted out to those young Irishmen who took part in the recent raid on the English barracks. "From the evidence brought forward at their trial, it appeared that they freely surrendered rather than take life, yet they were sentenced to life imprisonment. It is surprising that Britain has not yet learned the lessons of history."

"If in our time an attempt is made to solve the problem of Partition by an appeal to arms, then Britain can blame nobody but herself. We hope and pray it will never come to this, but so long as Partition remains, in the words of Patrick Pearse 'Ireland unfree shall never be at peace'"

"The *Irish Press* of October 17 carried the oration and reported an attendance of over 3,000 people, an FCA guard of honour, local TDs, IRA Veterans, both pro and anti-Treaty, including Seán O Carroll, former Sinn Féin TD and OC mid-Limerick Flying Column.

In Republican houses it was not unusual to find a newspaper cutting containing photos of the three life sentence men or the text of Joe Doyle's statement to the court, or both, pinned up on the wall."

At a Republican Céili in Mohill, Co Leitrim there was great excitement when the speaker warmed to the theme of Judge Cassels's "act of war" statement. Shouts of 'give us the arms' and 'put us in a uniform' indicated that feelings were running high.

Meanwhile, IRA GHQ was considering another arms raid in England at Christmas and or in the New Year. But the action of a splinter group was going to change the situation....

(More next month. Ref: *Irish Press*, October 5, 6, 7 and 24; *Sunday Press*, September 13, October 16; *Longford Leader* October 15 and 22; *The Secret Army* by J Bowyer Bell.)

ROSLEA RAID AND EOKA IN CYPRUS

**50
Years
Ago**

IN THE decades after WWII the great world-wide anti-colonial movement, which was started by the Irish with the 1916 Rising, gathered momentum and grew apace.

In this series reference has been made already to the Mau Mau (Land and Freedom Army) uprising against British rule in Kenya and the insurgency, also against the British, in Malaya.

In what was then known as French Indo-China, the people of Vietnam fought first against Japanese occupation during WWII, against the French in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and against the Americans in the 1960s and 1970s.

Following the fall of Dienbienphu in 1954 to the Vietminh (Vietnamese Independence League), the French withdrew and Vietnam was to be partitioned temporarily.

In Cuba, on the other side of the world, a limited political independence had been in effect from 1901, but the country remained an American neo-colony. An uprising, led by Fidel Castro, occurred in Santiago de Cuba on July 26, 1952.

It failed; Castro was jailed but was released in an amnesty in 1955. On December 2, 1956 he led about 80 men in an invasion of Oriente province. It was crushed but Castro and a few guerrillas escaped to the Sierra Maestra.

There they organised the 26th July Movement and waged guerrilla warfare for more than two years against the Batista regime. They won through in January 1959.

But the two struggles nearest to Ireland interested Irish republicans the most. They were in Algeria, North Africa, against French rule and in Cyprus a Greek island in the eastern Mediterranean, where British rule was opposed.

Algeria, an Arab country, was occupied by France from 1830 and just under a million European settlers were located in the fertile coastal strip. They were about 10% of the total population. They spoke French and enjoyed very many advantages over the native people.

This failure to bring equality between settlers and natives sharpened nationalistic dissatisfaction and an armed rebellion against the French broke out on Nov 1, 1954, led by the FLN (Front de Liberation Nationale — National Liberation Front).

Resistance was small-scale at first consisting of raids on post offices and police stations. Urban guerrilla warfare developed in the capital Algiers (population 900,000) and along the borders with Morocco to the west and Tunisia to the east.

The co-operation of Tunisia and Morocco was an advantage but eventually the French erected electrified fences in Algeria near the borders. In addition the uprising had the active support of the Arab League — an organisation comprising 22 Arab countries.

With large scale units along the borders — using on occasion artillery! — and small units in Algiers, Oran, Constantine and other cities, a bloody war was fought for eight years, ending in French disengagement and Algerian national independence.

While the Algerian struggle was admired, that of the Cypriots was dear to the hearts of Irish Republicans. Of 550,000 Cypriots, 78.8% were Greeks, 17.5% Turks and 3.7% British, Armenians and other minorities.

While Cyprus was ruled by Turkey from 1570 for 300 hundred years, Turkish settlers were introduced to the island. England leased it from

the Ottoman Empire in 1878 and during WWI annexed it from Turkey.

Cyprus was declared a "Crown Colony" by Britain and all appeals for an end to British rule were brushed aside. Finally when Papagos, the Greek prime Minister made an appeal for independence to Anthony Eden, British Foreign Secretary in 1953, Eden is alleged to have told him "Never".

It is reminiscent of Thatcher's "Out Out Out" statement in 1984 when commenting on the result of the New Ireland Forum. This blunt denial probably more than any other British statement finally destroyed Greek Cypriot patience.

Widespread attacks took place against British installations on April 1, 1955. They were orchestrated by EOKA (Ethniku Organosis Kypriou Agoiston — the National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters).

As a result all Greek Cypriot political parties were banned. But the Turkish Cypriot political party with the provocative name 'The Cyprus is Turkish Party' was not banned by the British.

The Turkish Cypriot terrorist group Volkan (later TMT) founded in 1955 in response to the EOKA uprising, perpetrated many violent acts in the following few years.

Few of its members were ever tried and none were convicted. On the other hand as many as seven Greek Cypriots were hanged and hundreds imprisoned for EOKA activities.

In addition the British trained a reserve force to combat EOKA. This force was exclusively Turkish Cypriot and many of its members had connections with, or were attached to, Volkan, the Turkish Cypriot group.

This strategy is familiar to Irish people. The B-Specials were founded, armed and paid for by the British government in 1920. They were exclusively Unionist and many were connected with loyalist terror groups. The UDR succeeded them, to be followed by the RIR.

Archbishop Makarios III was reported to have brought Colonel George Grivas from Greece in 1954 to head up EOKA. Grivas was a 52-year-old Cypriot-born retired Greek Army officer and an experienced guerrilla fighter.

On October 26, 1954, he left his home in Athens without even telling his wife where he was going, took ship at Piraeus for the island of Rhodes, from where a fishing boat took him the remaining 200 miles to the rocky west coast of Cyprus near Paphos.

At the United Nations, the Greek-sponsored Cyprus issue was voted on to the agenda by the General Assembly but the Political Committee voted to put it off 'for the time being'.

In Greece there were violent protests. In Cyprus there was widespread anger, culminating in a general strike and riots in which three youths were shot by British troops.

Makarios had organised 97% of the Greek Cypriot population behind national demands and Grivas had imported arms and explosives. In January 1955, Makarios told Grivas that Papagos, the Greek Prime minister, wanted action too.

Accordingly, in the early hours of April 1st, sixteen bombs went off across the island. Radio installations were among the target list. Also government offices, police stations and military bases were targeted.

Grivas drew up his first revolutionary proclamation, calling on the Greek Cypriots to throw off the English yoke and 'be worthy of the Greek heroes'.

He warned that the struggle would be hard, but said: "If our rulers refuse to give us back our freedom, we shall claim it with our own hands and with our own blood." He signed it with the *nom-de-guerre* Digenis, a legendary Greek hero.

All EOKA proclamations would henceforth be signed similarly DIGHENIS — a name that went under the world.

The objective was stated to be "Enosis" or union with Greece. Later this was to become



• Archbishop Makarios, leader of the Enoxis campaign.

independence for the Island of Cyprus.

As the struggle against British rule gained momentum, Archbishop Makariss flung defiance at the occupation regime. As more British troops poured into Cyprus to swell the 10,000 already there, he addressed a congregation of several thousand at a church in Akanthou village.

The *Sunday Press* of October 17, 1955 quoted him as saying "there would be an unceasing struggle, whatever the consequences. Britain is mistaken if she thinks that our movement can be suppressed with troops, illiberal laws and arrests. Our flag will always remain high."

The congregation shouted "long live the Ethnarch (Makarios)" as British commandos outside removed repeatedly wall slogans and banners proclaiming "Long live EOKA" and "Freedom is achieved with blood."

Their reply to British proposals for a measure of self-government under British sovereignty would always be "No", as long as self-determination was denied, he declared.

British troops carried out all-day search patrols seeking weapons and ammunition seized from Lefkiniko police station. Ten villagers were arrested for defying a 48-hour curfew imposed for the stoning of British troops in Neokhorio.

Then on November 26 a state of emergency was imposed by the British, the *Sunday Press* reported the following day. It followed the deaths of five British soldiers during the week. Carrying of arms would involve the death penalty.

The report went on: "Leaflets circulated yesterday called on Greek Cypriots to use 'whatever weapon you can lay hands on — knife, club or stone' to 'strike at Britishers wherever you find them'".

Earlier on November 20, the *Sunday Press* carried a piece headed "Thousands sign to save 'Kevin Barry of Cyprus'." His name was Michael Karaolis and he was sentenced to death by a special British Colonial Court which was trying political prisoners in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus.

The charge was alleged "murder" of a policeman. A nationwide campaign was underway in Greece, headed by the Prime Minister and the Archbishop of Athens. Many thousands of signatures were being collected from people all over Greece.

"There are indications, however, that Field Marshal Sir John Harding, the British Governor of Cyprus is determined to send Karaolis to the gallows. If he is executed, full-scale war in Cyprus is expected to result.

"It is alleged in Athens that Sir John has set up concentration camps in Cyprus and that more than 150 Greek patriots have been thrown into them."

Meanwhile, back in London the two "Courthouse MPs, as Tom Mitchell aptly calls them, arrived in the British House of Commons. On October 25, Colonel Grosvenor and Mr. Charles Beattie, appointed by two British judges as MPs, took their seats.

Sydney Silverman MP (Labour) commented: "It really is a Gilbertian situation. Two people are allowed to stand for parliament: to have their names put on ballot papers for people to vote for them, and the man who gains the smaller number of votes wins. Whatever else it is, it is not representative democracy".

JPW Mallalieu (Labour MP for Huddersfield East) said it was a silly situation and was typical of the nonsense that had arisen from the Treaty of 1921. He thought the present trouble arose from the constitutional position of the Six Counties. (*Irish Press* October 25).

The *Irish Press* next day reported "a storm of protest burst from the Labour benches. Cries of 'shame' and 'you were defeated' were heard.

The Anti-Partition League in London said the action taken in the Commons deprived "the majority of electors of Mid-Ulster and Fermanagh-South Tyrone of their constitutional right to elect the candidate of their choice".

But another episode was about to unfold in this saga

Then in the early hours of November 26 Roslea RUC barracks near the Border in Co. Fermanagh was attacked. A mine blew a hole in a sidewall, the attackers entered and a gun-battle ensued.

An RUC man was severely injured by the blast but one of the attackers was also critically wounded by gunfire. The attacking party withdrew leaving two shoulder weapons behind.

GHQ, IRA were aware that Liam Kelly's military grouping, Saor Uladh, was planning to attack either Roslea or Castlederg RUC barracks near the Border in Co. Tyrone. The IRA denied responsibility for the raid.

Then it emerged that the wounded man, Connie Green of Derry, "probably Kelly's best man" (Bell) had died and was quietly buried in Carrickroe, Co. Monaghan. An inquest, held secretly on an "unknown man", was soon exposed in the press and the Costello-led Coalition government in Dublin was publicly embarrassed.

Connie Green was a 35-year-old unmarried plasterer of Inniscarn Road, Creggan Estate, Derry. Once a parachutist in the British forces and holder of five WWII medals, he was never prominent in any political activities. In fact he seemed to have been unknown to the British occupation forces.

Right up to the Roslea Raid public support for the Republican Movement had been steadily building. As late as October 29 Nelson Pillar in the centre of Dublin was taken over by students who attempted to remove the statue of Nelson.

A huge crowd of several thousand gathered to watch proceedings as a large banner with a portrait and the name of Kevin Barry inscribed on it was hung out from the top of the Pillar.

When Gardaí arrived to remove the men there were shouts of "Traitors", "B-Specials" and "We Want a 32-County Republic". Young men in the crowd sang "Kevin Barry", according to the *Sunday Independent* of October 30.

The students were removed as a near-riot situation developed. They were later quietly released, but spontaneous public reaction on a Saturday afternoon in Dublin city centre was obvious to all.

In the same month of October, the IRA gained an enormous asset. A Kerry journalist with impressive military experience returned home from the United States and joined the ranks of the Army of the 32-County Republic.

He was Séan Cronin, then aged 33. (More next month. Refs. *Sunday Press*, October 17, November 20 and 27; *Irish Press* October 25 and 26; *Sunday Independent* October 30 and *The Secret Army* by J. Bowyer Bell.)

COSTELLO THREATENS COERCION IN THE 26 COUNTIES

**50
Years
Ago**

A SECOND Special Edition for December 1955 of *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* was published 50 years ago. Its purpose was to reply to a

lengthy statement in Leinster House by John A Costello, head of the 26-County government on November 30.

The ordinary December issue of the paper had already gone to press and it was felt that Republicans could not wait until January 1956 for a response to Mr Costello's threat to use coercion (ie government by force) against the Movement.

On page one the newspaper's Christmas message read: "PEACE must be based on justice. It cannot be based on surrender. Nor can it be imposed by occupation forces. That way inevitably brings resistance."

In the course of a full page article a summary is made of Mr Costello's "assurances to Britain":

"(a) The 26-County Government will do nothing to end 'partition';

"(b) It will deplore the denial of rights to those coerced in the Six Counties but, beyond talk, will do nothing to free them from coercion;

"(c) It will take steps to prevent people within its jurisdiction from rendering assistance to the Six Counties;

"(d) It will not extradite persons to the Six Counties or to Britain – it will instead jail them in the 26-Counties;

"(e) It will, in a nutshell, act as 'the policeman and jailer' for Britain."

The front page headline was "Nation in Peril": the peril of course was from the threat of collaboration with the British Occupation Forces in Ireland by the Dublin Government and opposition.

The article asked: "Do the Government and political leaders of the 26 Counties claim the authority to debar the people of the Six Counties from taking whatever steps they consider necessary to evacuate the British forces?"

"Will they use coercive measures against Republicans in the 26 Counties who go to the assistance of their fellow Irishmen in their hour of need?"

It went on: "There is no bar against Irishmen joining the British armed forces as witness the numbers who were recruited here during and since the last war [WWII]."

"But it is evident that the 26-County authorities intend to take whatever steps they can to prevent members of the Republican Movement within their area of jurisdiction from helping to free our fellow-countrymen from the British aggressor."

It concluded: "Nothing that can be conceived in the wildest imagination could do more to consolidate 'partition' and to indicate complete abandonment of the Six Counties."

"Clearly the position is now that it is the position of the political leaders that the 26 Counties of Ireland has achieved the status of a sovereign State and that status or their positions of power and leadership must not be endangered by any effort to achieve freedom for the Six Counties."

The entire front-page article was given official standing by the sentence attached to it at the conclusion: "Issued by the Republican Publicity Bureau."

Mr Costello was not only head of the Dublin Administration for the two periods – 1948-51 and 1954-57. He and Seán McBride were the two leading Senior Council in practice in Dublin.

What he had to say about calls for political extradition to England or the Six Counties is interesting and positive from a Republican viewpoint. Having quoted the "generally-accepted principles of international law" and referred to the experience of the League of Nations in the 1930s, he continued: "I must, therefore, emphasise, in order to prevent any further controversy or discussion on the point, that there can be no question of our handing over, either to the British or the Six-County authorities, persons whom they accuse of armed political activities in Britain or in the Six Counties."

Nothing could be clearer than this. It stands in marked contrast to the actions of Dublin



* Commemoration at Croke Park on Sunday, November 20, 1955, held on the spot where Michael Hogan was shot dead on Bloody Sunday, 1920.

Governments in the 1980s and '90s in handing over to the British forces in England and the Six Occupied Counties of Republicans wanted by them "for armed political activities."

Mr de Valera, who was leader of the opposition in Leinster House, said his views, and those of his colleagues, were well known. He hoped, he said, that Mr Costello would be listened to and that those warning would be heeded, and "that those who can influence public opinion will realize fully the direction in which we have been drifting."

Indeed before ever the Roslea raid took place, de Valera had expressed himself at length at the Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis as was reported very fully in the *Irish Press* of November 23.

But neither he, nor Costello, offered any hope or any way forward to the nationalists of the Six Counties. Seán MacBride, on the other hand, spoke in Leinster House immediately after de Valera.

The leader of Clann na Poblachta was very restrained and reasoned in his address, given that he and his party accepted and participated in the 26-County partitionist state.

The democratic system, he said, depended for its existence on one basic fundamental right: the right of the people of a nation to determine their own affairs freely without outside interference. In the case of Ireland and any other country partitioned against the will of its people, it was inevitable that there would be an attitude of revolt on the part of the people who were separated from their motherland.

But the responsibility of the situation that existed in the country today and, indeed, for the situation which has existed for the last 35 years was Britain's responsibility.

He did not believe that acts of violence unsupported by the forces of the State could achieve the goal, which, presumably, he all wanted to achieve. If he did, he would say so, and he would either participate in, or lead, any movement that was engaged in the pursuit of such a policy.

They must throughout be careful not to place themselves here in the position of acting the role of Britain's policemen in Ireland.

For over 30 years successive governments had from time to time been placed in a position of virtually fighting a civil war against a section of their own people in an effort to maintain a limitation of the sovereignty of the Irish people.

This had distorted political life and had retarded, possibly stultified, the progress of the State. It was a repetition of this tragic history which must be avoided now.

They must avoid placing themselves in a position where they would be virtually fighting a section of their own people in order to maintain the status quo.

Saying that the Dublin Government was "entitled to use every means at its disposal including, if needs be, and in certain circumstances, the armed forces of the state" to secure reunification. He asked the government and opposition "to give a definite lead to provide the leadership that is necessary in the situation."

"That is why I have been so anxious for a number of years to persuade the House that the first logical step towards the creation of an All-Ireland Parliament is to secure the representation of the people of the Six Counties in this House," he said.

All of MacBride's speech was in accordance with Clann na Poblachta policy as adopted by its Ard-Fheis on October 30, 1955. The *Irish*

Independent of October 31 reported on the decisions as follows:

"The Clann na Poblachta Ard-Fheis, in private session, adopted as Clann policy a resolution which stated that 'Dáil Éireann (sic) shall claim and exercise the authority of government, so far as it is practicable, over the 32 Counties of Ireland'."

"The Dáil, the resolution added, 'will order and direct such resistance – passive or otherwise – in the Six Occupied Counties as will make government by any other body impossible in that area'."

"The resolution added: 'All the resources of the Government shall be utilised to support such resistance.'"

The 50th Ard-Fheis of Sinn Féin took place in the O'Connell Hall, O'Connell Street, Dublin over the weekend of November 12 and 13.

According to *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman* "almost 300 delegates from all over Ireland and from Britain were present". It was "ample proof of the resurgence of the Republican Movement in the country, and demonstrates the fact that strict adherence to principle is, in the long run, bound to displace compromise and expediency."

The *Irish Times* of November 14 reported President Pádraig Mac Logáin as saying in the 50th year of the organisation that "in the history of Sinn Féin there was nothing of which they might feel ashamed. Rather they could feel proud that, in spite of all opposition and defections, Sinn Féin emerged true and faithful to its principles and showed unmistakable signs of progressing from strength to strength."

"Simply because some Irishmen were prepared to serve in the British forces, the charge was made that Republicans were promoting civil war. That charge was no more sustainable now than it had been in 1918," he said.

A resolution from the Ard Chomhairle regarding Stormont elections was passed unanimously by the Ard-Fheis. It stated that Sinn Féin denied "the right of the Stormont Institution to function in Ireland and would not send representatives to sit in that assembly".

It would not have candidates nominated in any Stormont election "since to do so would entail giving an untruthful and dishonest declaration," is an undertaking to sit in Stormont, which no Republican could do.

The resolution called on representatives elected by nationalists to withdraw from Stormont and instructed the incoming Ard Chomhairle "to devise means whereby the electorate in the Six Counties will be provided with an opportunity of electing or selecting representatives pledged to attend none other than the National Parliament of a 32-County Irish Republic."

This latter indication of passive resistance to British rule in Ireland had been foreshadowed in the Overall Plan of the Republican Movement adopted by Sinn Féin more than two years earlier.

Was it a process of "writing in" the names of Republican candidates on the ballot papers from which they were excluded, and counting each "write-in" as a vote.

Or was it the setting up – in nationalist areas at least – of alternative polling stations and having people go through the process of voting therein? This latter more radical step would be sure to lead to a clash with British forces on the ground!

On Sunday, November 20, in Croke Park, Dublin, an official Bloody Sunday commemora-

tion was held on the field. Michael Hogan of the Tipperary team, in honour of whom the Hogan Stand is named, and 13 people attending the football match were killed by British forces on November 21, 1920 and many more were wounded (*Irish Press*, November 21).

As usual, a hollow square of togged out players and GAA officials was formed around the spot where the Tipperary player was shot by British Auxiliaries.

An t-Athair M Bretnach, OP, Dominic Street, Dublin recited a decade of the Rosary in Irish. With him were Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Denis Larkin, Séamus Mac Fearáin, President of the GAA and an t-Athair P Mac Gabhráin, OMI.

On December 2, two days subsequent to his 45-minute address in Leinster House, which was carried live on Radio Éireann, Mr Costello summoned newspaper editors, daily and provincial, to his office. He told them the Dublin government had decided to invoke the provisions of the Offences Against the State Act 1939 "prohibiting all forms of newspaper publicity relating to illegal organisations" (*Irish Independent*, December 3).

Henceforth, it was said, no newspaper would be entitled to mention the name of any unlawful organisation. Mr TJ Coyne, Secretary of the 26-County Department of Justice called newspaper correspondents to Government Buildings that afternoon and gave them the same message that Mr Costello gave the editors.

The first casualty in any war, it is said, is truth. With the renewal of coercion – or war – against Republicans for the first time since 1948, Republicans were to be denied the right to make their case publicly.

When the Free State army shelled the Republican Headquarters in Dublin's Four Courts in 1922, censorship was immediately placed on all newspapers. So much for "putting your case before the people". In later decades radio and finally television was censored heavily.

The *Irish Times* of December 1 in a front-page panel entitled "First Step in New Campaign?" summed up the new situation:

"The general opinion of the Taoiseach's (sic) speech in the Dáil lobbies last night was that it was the first step in a campaign to win public opinion to the point of view of the Government and the Opposition on the unlawful military activities."

"The Taoiseach's speech was given in full from Radio Éireann."

"No severe measures against the two organisations are likely to be taken immediately, but it is assumed that further armed demonstrations will be met by definite measures to be placed before the Dáil."

However, two days later the second step was taken. Press and radio were muzzled effectively to prevent the Republican response and message from being heard ...

(More next month. Refs. *An t-Éireannach Aontaithe/The United Irishman*, December 1955 and Special Edition of the same month; *Irish Times*, November 14 and December 1; *Irish Press*, November 21 and 23; *Irish Independent* October 30 and December 3.)