

Ómós Do

TONY D'ARCY

Galway

agus

SEÁN MAC NEELA

Mayo





Táimse im' chodladh ... The remains of Tony D'Arcy lying in state after his death
on hunger strike.

FOREWARD

With the passage of time — now 50 years — D'Arcy and MacNeela's endurance and death for Irish freedom stand out more clearly as a heroic sacrifice. Taken with the hunger and thirst strike to death of Belfast-man Seán McCaughey in Portlaoise Jail in April-May 1946 they represent the highest points of the prison struggle in the 26-Counties in the 1940s.

With the coming into being of the 1937 Constitution in one part of Ireland, a determined attempt was made by the 26-County Administration to criminalise Republican activities from that time forward. This was met and defeated by the Mountjoy hungerstrike — with its two casualties, the strip-strike defiance of up to 16 Republicans in Portlaoise prison where they endured solitary confinement and silent treatment for 3 years; and a total of 7 years — 1940-47 — without fresh-air exercise.

All this time their nakedness was covered only by prison blankets as they refused to wear convict garb. With the partial relaxation of war-time censorship of the media in 1946, Seán McCaughey embarked on his fast for unconditional release, forbidding his blanket-clad comrades to follow him.

His death and the scandal caused by the inquest revelations of conditions in Portlaoise caused a public outcry which forced an inquiry into the situation in the prison over the years.

The outcome was that the Republican prisoners received civilian attire, outdoor exercise and endurable conditions. The current book of Prison Regulations is dated 1947, and so all prisoners, ordinary and political, gained from the sacrifices of D'Arcy, MacNeela and McCaughey and the 7-year Portlaoise protest.

The key sentence in all of this was contained in the inquest verdict of the coroner's jury on Seán MacNeela: "We are further of opinion that criminal status should not be accorded to political prisoners." Taken with the report of the 1946-47 inquiry which recommended that the Portlaoise prisoners be given "special status" and transferred to military custody, there emerges the basis for political treatment of Republican prisoners in the 26-Counties ever since.

That such has been maintained to this day is due to the action of men like D'Arcy and MacNeela who blunted the edge of the criminalisation weapon from the very outset in 1940. There has been occasional slippage in political status over the years but this has been met by prison protest, augmented on the outside, and by actual hunger-strike when necessary in the late '50s, the early and mid-'60s and throughout the 1970s.

Thus do prisoners of all categories owe so much to the two martyrs from Galway and Mayo and their comrades. Political status in 26-County jails was dearly bought as prisoners sacrificed themselves for their comrades and for future generations. It has been maintained at a cost, too.

Asked what Republicans had gained by the loss of two splendid lives, Brian Ó h-Uiginn replied that the youth of Ireland had gained inspiration to be true. So it was with Bobby Sands, T.D. and his nine comrades in 1981; so it was with Michael Gaughan in 1974 and Proinsias Stagg in 1976 — and with Thomas Ashe and Terence Mac Sweney in their day.

The Donaghpatrick Commemoration Committee honours the memory of Tony D'Arcy and Seán MacNeela, on the 50th anniversary of their deaths on hunger strike.

"Greater love than this no man hath, than that a man lay down his life for his friends ..." And by the most long-drawn out and painful way.

We salute you, Commandants Tony D'Arcy and Seán MacNeela! Leaba i measc na bhFíriní go raibh agaibh de shíor.

— RUAIRÍ Ó BRÁDAIGH,
Uachtarán,
Sinn Féin Poblachtach,
Aibreán 1990.

Omós agus i nDílchiumhe

TONY D'ARCY

agus

SEÁN MacNEELA

Beirt laoch Poblachtach a cailleadh ar stailc ocras, leathchéad bliain ó shin, i mí an Aibreáin, 1940.

Cailleadh Antóin Ó Dorchaí ar 16 Aibreán, 1940.

Cailleadh Seán Mac Conghaola ar an 19 Aibreán, 1940.

Adhlacadh Mac Conghaola i reilig an Chloiginn, i ndúiche a mhuintire, an Baile Chruaich in Iorras Mhaigh Eo.

Tá Antóin Ó Dorchaí curtha i bPlásóg na Poblachta, Domhnach Phádraig, gar dá phobal dúchais, in Áth Cinn, Co. na Gaillimhe i dteannta na laoch Gaillimheach go léir a cailleadh in iarracht na saoirse ó bhunaigh Dáil Éireann Poblacht na hÉireann uile agus ceapadh Arm na Poblachta sin le saoirse agus aontacht na Poblachta a chosaint ó naimdhe dúchasacha nó thar tir isteach. Fórsaí iad na náimhde seo ar mó a muinín as an láimh láidir ná toil dhaonlathach an phobail — pobal na hÉireann uilig ag votáil i dteannta a chéile.

Agus níl ansin ach ceann amháin de ghnéithe an scéil bhrónaigh seo nach luaitear de gnáth, ar eagla go n-ardódh taifead simplí na staire ceisteanna níos mó agus fíricí níos bunúsaí. Is léir ón tost agus ón chinsireacht atá ar bun ag lucht na cumhachta in Éirinn faoi láthair — mar a tharla do D'Arcy agus MacNeela freisin — go dtuigeann siad féin go gcaithfear fíricí áirithe a choinneáil ón bpobal nó ní bheidh aon rath ar an athscríobh staire atá ar siúl go tréan le blianta beaga anuas.

Is trua sin ar mhórán cúiseanna. Cuirtear as do cháil agus do mhúinín an phobail as an lucht acadúil agus an lucht craoltóireachta nach bhfuil sásta iomlán na bhfíricí a chur ar fáil agus a mheas. Is lú dá réir líon na gceachtanna is féidir le dream ar bith againn a fhoghlaim ó scéal casta crua na staire agus is deacra a bhíonn sé ag duine ar bith comparáidí le scéal na stailce ocras seo 50 bliain ó shin a dhéanamh lena bhfuil ag titim amach ar fud an domhain faoi láthair — agus inár dtír féin le blianta beaga anuas.

Seo éagóir ar an nglúin óg, gan amhras. Mar a deirtear os cionn na gcampaí géibhinn agus uafáis éagsúla a bhain leis an Dara Cogadh Mór: "Those who do not learn the lessons of history are bound to repeat them"! Éagóir ar an bhfirinne agus ar an stair is ea í freisin, mar dála an bheagáin eolais, níl rud ar bith is baolaí ná an leathinsint ar scéal a bhfuil iliomad taobhanna leis.

Éagóir is ea an stair easnamhach freisin, go háirithe más ar mhaithe le corpord na maistirí reatha agus polaitíocht "phragmatúil" an fhaisin reatha a chuirtear scéalta as a riocht, as a gcomhthéacs, nó má fhágtar gnéithe tábhachtacha den scéal ar lár ar fad, ar na gaolta, ar chomrádaithe na laoch agus ar an lucht polaitíochta a chloíonn i gcónaí le ceart na cúise nó na gcúiseanna a spreag lucht na hiobartha ag an am.

Tá sé dona go leor, b'fhéidir, go dtréigfeadh cairde nó comrádaithe lucht aisling na Poblachta, bíodh na cúiseanna sin maith nó olc dar leis an lucht tréigthe. Ach tá sé domhainte go bhféachfadh na daoine a athraíonn a bport ansin le cur ina lui ar an saol mór gur acu atá an port ceart i gcónaí nó — níos measa fós! — nach bhfuil aon athrú ar an bport!

The Irish people are intelligent enough to appreciate the differences in various political and constitutional options that should be open to them, but never really are in practice, because most agendas in Irish public life are set not by the Irish people themselves but by outside imperial masters and by the pre-determined political structures of which the partition settlement of 1920-22 is only one, if perhaps the most obvious.

It is obvious, even spectacular, in its failure as much as in its manifest injustice, the on-going evils of which we have witnessed every day for the past 70 years. Far from solving anything, the current British partition division of our island nation, continues to confuse and absorb energies that should rightly be used to solve the problems of the country in a post-colonial national re-construction effort.

Instead we get endless interim solutions. Because they are based on false premises they get nowhere but are unfortunately availed of by career politicians who should instead be working on genuine Irish-based solutions. It is this sad situation that sees the collaboration of Irish media, historians and politicians with the current forces of the Great British Big Lie — about Ireland, — in order to deny a younger generation the full background and context of the national Republican struggle.

While we are now engaged in an attempt to try and keep the record straight, the memory fresh, and to honour all those who at any time made sacrifices, frequently heroic sacrifices and to the death on hunger strike in the case of Tony D'Arcy and Séan MacNeela, we feel it is necessary to stress that in 1940 as today, the same situations and contextual circumstances can and do repeat themselves.

We owe it to everybody therefore to keep the record straight and to continue to remember and honour the memory and idealism of all who now lie in the Republican Plot in Domhnach Phádraig and in all the other hallowed Republican Plots throughout Ireland.

It is particularly important at this time, when the whole world is changing rapidly, when former comrades have altered their basic positions and/or their political analysis of our situation, and especially when the Irish and British public (in general) are only now being allowed by the media, to see some — and only some! — of the massive and corrupt injustices directed deliberately against the Republican activists of recent times, that we see, in context, and in as objective a manner as possible, the events of 50, or 70 years ago.

It is necessary so that the memory, the sacrifices and the simple political principles of people like Tony D'Arcy shine crystal clear. Tá a fhios againn go bhfuil daoine ann nár agus nach n-aontaíonn le aisling Phoblacht an fhir.

Díreach mar atá a fhios againn go raibh riamh daoine ann a shíl nár cheart an ceangal le Sasana a bhriseadh, in 1916, 1918, 1922 nó uair ar bith ó shin i leith. Cé nach geoscann sin cuid de na daoine céanna ó bhuntáistí móra a bhaint as an dul chun cinn i dtreo na saoirse in Éirinn a rinneadh más fíor — agus a fhágann lear mór post poiblí ar fáil d'oifigigh stáit nár aontaigh gur cheart oibriú i dtreo an stáit chéanna ón tús.

Tá iarracht déanta againn freisin scéal na stailce ocrais in 1940 inar cailleadh Antóin Ó Dorchaí agus Séan Mac Conghaola a shuíomh i gcomhthéacs staire éigin. Gan an comhthéacs sin, ní féidir tada a mhíniú. Díreach mar nach féidir nó nár cheart cibé scéal é, ómós a thabhairt ag Plásóg na bPoblachtach i nDomhnach Phádraig gan ar a laghad eolas éigin a bhailiú i dtaobh na haislinge a spreag iad. Agus iarracht a dhéanamh chun an aisling a chur i bhfeidhm chomh fada agus is féidir agus a luaithe agus is féidir.

TUIGE DOMHNACH PHÁDRAIG?

Tuige Domhnach Phádraig mar sin? Agus na céadta ócáidí comórtha eile faoi Cháisc gach aon bhliain ar fud na 32 chontae le hais reiligi na laochra a d'imir a n-anamacha ar son Phoblacht na hÉireann?

Tá iarracht bheag déanta anseo, 50 bliain tar éis bhás beirte eile ar stailce ocrais i bpríosún daoine a thug Poblachtaigh orthu féin — agus a throid ar son na cúise nuair nach raibh tacaíocht an bhosca bhallóide féin acu, in 1916 — cuntas chomh lom cothrom agus is féidir a thabhairt ar an tragóid.

Mar tragóid is ea gach aon bhás. Go fiú bás na féin-iobhartha nach gcuireann beatha daoine eile i mbail, agus a dhéantar de shaorthoil agus le lánchoinsias ar mhaithe le cearta, le prionsabail agus le cosaint chearta agus bheatha daoine eile ...

While this account of the sad events of the spring of 1940 concentrates for obvious reasons on the story of Tony D'Arcy, who died on hunger strike on April 16 in St. Bricin's Military Hospital, Dublin after 52 days fasting, it is obvious that the story of his sacrifice is inevitably bound up with the story of Séan Mac Neela, his loyal comrade, who died three days later, a few hours after the fast had been called off. MacNeela, a native of Ballycroy, Co. Mayo was aged 26 and was unmarried. D'Arcy who was born on November 19, 1907, was aged 32, married and had three young children. The full Séan MacNeela story will be a matter for another occasion and another booklet perhaps. This essay concentrates principally on the D'Arcy story because of its Galway connections that help to show the wider significance of Domhnach Phádraig.

THANKS TO D'ARCY FAMILY

We are also glad to record that both the martyr's widow, Mrs. Julia D'Arcy (née Langan) — a native of Headford but now living in Galway — and her three children, all cooperated in the preparation of this tribute, giving of their valuable time, recollections and personal family photographs. Before getting down to the details of the specific hunger strike and deaths in the spring of 1940 it is necessary to set the events in a brief historical and political context.

AN PHOBLACHT FÓGARTHA

We can only recall the story of the struggle to defend the Irish Republic, first proclaimed in arms in 1916 and confirmed by the democratically-elected All-Ireland Dáil Éireann in the Declaration of Independence at the First Dáil meeting on January 21, 1919, in a few short sentences.

Suffice to say that following the establishment of the 26-county Irish Free State in 1922, the partition of the country against the clear wishes of three quarters of the people, and the enforcement of the undemocratic political arrangements by the vastly superior Free State forces (armed and financed by the British) in the Civil War of 1922-23, friends and foes alike still recognised that the overwhelming majority of Irish people had no time for this botched undemocratic and neo-colonial arrangement.

For politicians and democrats in Sinn Féin, the only problem was how to get the free expression of that viewpoint, bearing in mind that the structures that had been imposed by the British Government of Ireland Act 1920 — for which no Irish voice, Unionist or Nationalist, voted at Westminster — and the Treaty of Surrender signed under threat "of immediate and terrible war" and enforced with British arms in the hands of a military junta were all designed to ensure that the overwhelming Irish claim to national self-determination expressed so clearly in the December 1918 General Election would not be allowed to be expressed again in any other All-Ireland election.

That the Cumann na nGaedheal Government of Mr. Cosgrave realised the vulnerability of their 26-county Free State position was clear from the outset, not just in the hundreds of Republican political activists who were shot, and thousands imprisoned without trial. These latter on release were systematically denied a right to a living in their own county by political oaths and other tests all aimed at protecting Free State power.

Entry into the political processes of the new 26-county Leinster House assembly — which sought to usurp the noble title of “Dáil Éireann” while refusing to admit even those T.D.s from the Six Counties who might be willing to attend — required a straight Oath of Allegiance to the British Monarch and Crown.

Thus all “legitimate” Republican protest or efforts to re-assert the Irish Republic of the First Dáil Éireann had this route excluded. Later “empty formula” tricks by de Valera and Fianna Fáil did bring that man and party to power in the 26 counties. It did not however lead to the 32-county Irish Republic over which, as President of Sinn Féin, he ruled so dramatically in the years of the First Dáil 1919-’21.

Equally significantly however, was the removal by the Cosgrave Government, of the Right of Initiative included in the Free State constitution, in the mid-1920s. This provided for a referendum to be held on any issue if 100,000 registered voters could be got to sign a petition demanding it.

As soon as de Valera and company let it be known that they would have no difficulty in getting the required number of signatures to call for the abolition of the Oath to the British Crown, Mr. Cosgrave simply abolished the democratic provision. He naturally realised that not only would the referendum have to be held but that the Oath would be rejected by such a huge majority of the people that it would have serious implications for the future of his Free State and for the political fortunes of those former Republican politicians who had forced such a degrading submission to imperial power on an Irish people which clearly never wanted it.

When this further avenue to the democratic will was cut off by Cosgrave Mr. de Valera sought the course of compromise by entering Leinster House and subscribing to the Oath as an “empty formula”. Five years earlier he had called on young men to sacrifice all — and to wade in the blood of their brothers if necessary — in order that right prevail.

But it was an attractive option for the politically ambitious which, given the context of the time, was probably not that outrageous to a rising generation who had come on the scene in the 1920s.

De Valera and his followers had to leave Sinn Féin and found a new party, Fianna Fáil, in May 1926, before being able to do this. He failed at the November 1925 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis to get the necessary majority to subvert that party’s Republican stand. Sinn Féin’s T.D.s remained loyal to the second Dáil Éireann which had been overthrown by military might in the summer of 1922 and the I.R.A. — the Republican Army pledged to uphold that Second Dáil of the Irish people — also remained intact.

Clearly the developments of 1926 and in particular the decision of de Valera and Fianna Fáil to enter Leinster House in 1927 were traumatic. Many traditional Republicans followed de Valera in good faith. These people held that any move on any front that helped to get the British out of all of Ireland, and to undo the undemocratic counter-revolution of 1922-23 should be welcomed.

De Valera encouraged this. As late as March 1929 after he had entered Leinster House and Fianna Fáil had taken up a role as main opposition party to Cosgrave and Cumann na nGaedheal, the “Chief” could assert on the record of the House that “Those who continued on in that organisation which we have left can claim exactly the same continuity that we claimed up to 1925.”

The March 1929 edition of the new Fianna Fáil paper *Nation* could say that “Fianna Fáil did not condone brutality but we do not wish to associate ourselves with the equally brutal, inefficient useless methods of repression adopted by the Free State Government.”

One man who apparently saw the basic common-sense of this approach in the context of the late 1920s and early 1930s was the subject of this booklet, Tony D’Arcy. Born on November 19, 1907, in the strongly Republican area of Cloonkeela, between Headford and Caherlistrane in North Galway, he was obviously too young to take part in the Black and Tan and Civil Wars.

He grew to manhood in the atmosphere of those years of initial triumph and then of sad dejection and defeat as fellow-Irishmen moved in to put down the reality of the living, functioning, Irish Republic with the brutal methods which the British recognised they had been unable to fully implement themselves because of the world media and political reaction.

It is now fairly well accepted that one of the main reasons why the Rev. Fr. Micheál Ó Griofa was singled out for brutal murder by the British in Galway in November, 1920 derived from the fact that he was probably due to form part of a delegation that would testify at a Washington Congress about the brutal ways in which the Black and Tans and the British Auxiliary forces were behaving in Ireland at that time.



Back Row (left to right): Michael Hughes, Kilbannon; John J. Dooley, Cloughanower; Vincent Corcoran, Caherlistrane; Michael Dowd, Headford; Michael Joe McHugh, Caherlistrane; Seamus Burke, Tuam. Front: Tim McHugh, Caherlistrane; William King, Tuam; Peadar Hughes, Kilbeg; Jim Maloney, Tuam.

Tony D'Arcy's own family had personal experience at the British terror of that era. His cousin, Louis D'Arcy, a native of Clydagh, Headford, had been one of the more outstanding Volunteers in the Black and Tan era — and one of the most brutally treated victims of that period of war.

The British authorities, having apparently been informed of his movements by an informer, were waiting for Louis at Oranmore railway station on March 24, 1921. He had been in Dublin on Republican business and was in the much-used phrase of British officialdom "shot while trying to escape."

Shoot-to-kill was certainly on the list of "arresting" methods in those days too but the truth in the Louis D'Arcy case is a little more complicated — and more brutal. It appears Mr. D'Arcy was shot after he arrived in Oranmore, but not fatally. Instead he was then tied to a lorry and dragged from Oranmore to Galway. He was dead on arrival.

This incident was so outrageous and obvious even to moralists whose outrage was frequently coloured by the identity of those involved, that the British authorities shortly afterwards agreed to pay "compensation" to the victim's mother. This she naturally refused, ordering those who made the offer to leave her house. Louis D'Arcy is buried in Clydagh cemetery.

SLÉACHT THUAMA

Later on in the course of the Civil War the young Tony D'Arcy was to experience the particularly brutal and poignant incidents that took place in his own part of North Galway and South Mayo. This was especially so in the spring of 1923, when the Republic was overthrown by superior military might and the Free State forces moved into outlying areas like Headford for the "final kill". Part of this strategy included the sentencing to death of local volunteers in barracks and buildings which the Free State Government had been taking over and using as massive detention centres for the local Republican young men who were overwhelmingly opposed to the new regime.

These incidents included the execution in Tuam Workhouse, on April 11, 1923 of six Republicans, all of them well-known and highly respected throughout the country for their work in helping to dislodge the British from this part of Ireland two years earlier. The six men were Seamas Ó Máille of Uachtar Ard, who is buried in that Conamara town. The five others, John Newell, Martin Moylan, Frank Cunnane, Seán Maguire and Michael Monaghan share the same Republican Plot soil as Tony D'Arcy himself.



Peter Barnes and James MacCormack — the "Coventry Two".

Pictiúirí den bheirt Éireannach a crochadh go héagórach i Sasana ar 7 Feabhra, 1940. Widespread appeals not to hang them came from all Ireland including de Valera's Government which within two weeks would allow D'Arcy and MacNeela to die ...

The Tuam workhouse executions, coming as they did at the very end of the Civil War, were particularly tragic and traumatic for Galway especially when it seems the decision to execute them in reprisal — as was the policy of the Free State Government at the time — had been postponed due to the death of the Catholic Bishop of Galway.

Sensitive Catholic individuals in the new Free State establishment — then desperately seeking approval and legitimacy — could not proceed with shooting local lads on the same day that Galway was in mourning for its Bishop. Tuam, however, was another diocese, another Archdiocese in fact and so, it seems, there was less objection to blood in the yard of the old Workhouse in Tuam ...

It is in this context that we have to assess the rise of Fianna Fail in Co. Galway a few years later, especially as it seemed to many that they offered the only quick alternative that stood a realistic chance of driving the Cosgrave regime from office.

And it is in that context also that we have to place on record the historical fact that Tony D'Arcy was one of those Republican men in the Headford area who, growing to manhood in the 1920s, welcomed the new de Valera departure. That he was ever a member of Fianna Fail has been impossible to establish. But he certainly welcomed any re-assertion of Republican faith in the dark days of the mid-1920s, and is said to have lent one of his lorries to the lads for an initial meeting of the new "Republican Party" in Headford, shortly after its launch.

Orthodox Republicans who find it difficult to accept this or who even might be tempted to suggest that such information should be revealed, must however consider the circumstances of those times, including the fact that the I.R.A. itself was openly supportive of de Valera, even after he has entered Leinster House in 1927.

Historians are now generally agreed that the I.R.A. at rank and file level was one of the crucially important factors working "on the ground" that helped to bring Fianna Fail into power in 1932. Some felt they had no other choice, if they were to end the ten-year rule of Cosgrave and Cumann na nGaedheal which by 1931 had resorted to particularly harsh coercive measures against Republican, land annuity and other left wing campaigns organised by the likes of Peadar O'Donnell.

No thinking Republican, in the light of the coercive measures introduced by Cumann na nGaedheal in 1931, as the economy plunged into depression and as the Cosgrave Government realised that it had lost even the dubious control of the 26-County state, could really justify sitting on the fence as the day of reckoning approached.

That de Valera had an attractive package of policies was obvious. That some of these were within the immediate control of the Dublin Government — like the release of Republican prisoners who had been condemned by the military courts and emergency measures of 1931 — was obvious.

What wiser Republican councils needed to bear in mind however was that there were other issues, outside the possibility of resolution within the framework of the partition settlement; also that once even "constitutional Republicans" like Fianna Fail get into office on the backs of the foot soldiers, they can quickly turn against those who helped to bring them to power.

It is also a matter of historical record that for Tony D'Arcy and those of the younger generation who were now in the ranks of the I.R.A., Fianna Fail's "slightly constitutional" approach to the basic national question had yet to be tested fully. This was in the context of the 1930s with world depression, the rise of Fascism and the "economic war" initiated by Britain as soon as Dublin made its first feeble attempts to pursue an independent economic policy even for the 26 counties.

But the fundamental task of defending the Republic proclaimed in 1919, and still given full allegiance by those loyal Deputies "outside this House", was a matter that occupied the attention of the younger Republican people of the day.

The first real test of Fianna Fáil's sincerity about the all-Ireland national question came not in the abolition of the Oath — already an anachronism even in the eyes of the progressive members of the British Commonwealth — nor even in the handling of the Governor-General issue. It came when Orange Loyalist forces, fearing that their shaky gerrymander in the North might be impossible to sustain if Catholic Nationalists were given even a modicum of fair play, began the latest pogroms in Belfast in the summer of 1935.

De Valera, like Cosgrave after the death of Collins in 1922, like Jack Lynch in 1969, stood idly by and ignored the reality that Irish people were murdered and burned out of their homes with sickening cyclical familiarity under the noses of hostile R.U.C. and B-Specials. Presumably protests were made to London but in essentials there was no change.

The message was clear. The Nationalist people in the Six Counties were on their own, denied jobs, homes and any possible share of power even in local government. Dublin could, but would not, do anything substantial. Instead it would co-operate with the Stormont authorities against any efforts of the Republican Movement to help the beleaguered local "minority", whose only real offence was that they happened to be a minority in localised circumstances.

By June, 1936, with the Blueshirts on the wane, de Valera's government re-banned the I.R.A. and began to operate the system of special justice that he had abolished on coming to power four years previously, against the same former comrades who had fought on the same Republican side in the Civil War.

An exception were those of course who had been taken into the new Broy Harrier sections of the Special Branch or who had through the payment of Old I.R.A. pensions or otherwise been bought off.

As J. Bowyer Bell, the distinguished American historian, in his book on the I.R.A. *The Secret Army* has written:

"However de Valera might regret the continuing blindness of the IRA wedded to the gun, the police had taken the position that the IRA, banned in June, 1936 and without friends in the Cabinet, were fair game. The Broy Harriers, former IRA men all, were no exception and in some ways seemed more determined than the long-time career detectives to prove their hostility to the die-hard Republicans. Regardless of their origins the detectives, armed and dangerous, kept a cold hard eye on the IRA. The politicians might feel that the danger had gone but the old "Specials" of Neligan had often made a career out of the IRA and the new Broy Harriers followed in their steps.

"On June 15th 1937 in what later gave every evidence of being unprovoked killing, the police in panic as much as in malice shot down and killed Peter McCarthy in Clanbrassil Street, Dublin. No reasonable Government explanation was forthcoming, and whatever ties with the old comrades in the Broy Harriers had existed were snapped. The men who had served time in Arbour Hill came out to report the grim conditions imposed by the military guards.

"During the Blueshirt fight in the old heyday of the Military Tribunal, a few months in prison had been a vacation, no work, handball and adequate food. After June, 1936 there was no handball; the men were kept in solitary, forbidden to speak, living in a silent tomb where even the guards wore rubber-soled shoes.

"The cumulative impact of the silent world drove Séan Glynn of Limerick, first mad, and then on September 13, 1936 to take his own life. After that somewhat more humane but by no means pleasant conditions prevailed. But it was too late. Within the IRA a deep bitterness began to spread — de Valera was not like Cosgrave, he was far worse!"

Not even the 1937 Constitution (which Republicans and Sinn Féin opposed in any case), the ending of the Economic War and the taking back of three ports from Britain in 1938 stopped the drift in events over those years. The declaration of neutrality in that conflict further complicated matters in 1939. So did the passing of the special emergency Offences Against the State Act (1939) though again, in fairness to the record, it should be noted that over 20 members of the Fianna Fáil parliamentary party refused to vote for any stage of the Bill during its progress through Leinster House.

For a party with internationally-renowned rigidity to party line in such situations this was a remarkable development, rarely mentioned today. The Offences Against the State Act, which gave arbitrary powers to Government that were greater than anything in the various English Coercion Acts, was passed through a coalition of old-style Cumann na nGaedheal and Blueshirt elements now incorporated into Fine Gael under the leadership of Mr. W.T. Cosgrave, and those predominant elements in Fianna Fáil who had now enjoyed seven years of high office. They were in from the cold, as it were, and had no notion of going back to the hills, or even to the opposition benches in Leinster House, if they could help it.

As Kevin Boland, son of Gerry Boland who as a hard-line Minister for Justice was to lead the attack on Republicans during the "Emergency," said with reference to the situation which forced himself to resign from the Lynch cabinet in August 1969, the policy on the North was dominated at all times by a desire to ensure that those who had attained power here in the South retained that power. In effect "what we have, we hold".

Following the outbreak of the new I.R.A. campaign in Britain in January, 1939, the British Prevention of Violence Act became law in July. On August 3, 1939 the first six deportees from Britain arrived in Dublin; their numbers continued to climb as the campaign continued with a wider impact than many thought might have been possible for a sabotage campaign which was strictly directed against property and installations and aimed at preventing loss of life.

In Dublin, before the World War was declared, measures were taken throughout August that were to lead to the tragic show-downs of the years ahead. A meeting for prisoners' dependents was banned in Tipperary and on August 14th there were raids in Dublin in which Mr. Joe Clarke, 1916 veteran and publisher of the *Wolfe Tone Weekly* was lifted.

On August 22 two proclamations were issued, putting into force parts of the Offences Against the State Act, setting up special criminal courts and giving the government the power to arrest, detain and search suspects. On August 25th the Military Tribunal was set up.

Thus even before the British declared World War II on Germany, the provisions of the Emergency legislation that were to lead to the disasters of 1940 had already been put in place by the Fianna Fáil Government. By the time Hitler took Paris in June 1940, and the "phoney war" that had been going on since the previous September became serious, 1940 had already proven to be a black year for Ireland and for Irish Republicans in particular.

1940 — BLIAIN NA TUBAISTE

The first disaster took place in Cork on January 3, 1940 when a detective was shot accidentally in what is presumed to have been an attempt to arrest Tomás Mac-Curtáin. Tomás, son of the Lord Mayor of Cork who had been assassinated by the British during the Black and Tan struggle in March, 1920 was later charged with the capital murder of Detective Roche and sentenced to death by the Special Criminal Court the following June.

The execution was fixed for July 5th but after an application for habeas corpus the date was put back for a further week. There was grave controversy at the time and nobody still seems to know for certain what finally persuaded the Government to change its mind, on July 10th, by advising President Douglas Hyde to commute the sentence to one of penal servitude for life.

According to Tim Pat Coogan in his book on *The I.R.A.* "It is authoritatively supposed that a sister of Cathal Brugha's widow, the Reverend Mother of a convent in Armagh, interceded with Cardinal MacRory to have a last talk with de Valera, and that this final appeal decided him". Other sources suggest that some of the Munster members of the Cabinet at the time said they could not allow an Irish Government of which they were part to hang the son of the murdered Lord Mayor of Cork.

The incident is not crucial to our story here except that Mac Curtain, while on remand awaiting trial, was one of the six persons to engage in the hunger strike in which Tony D'Arcy and Seán MacNeela died in April, 1940. Also on April 25, 1940 in Belfast Seán Martin of Ballymacarrett died in an accidental bomb explosion, while training.

On August 3, 1940 John Joe Kavanagh was shot by Special Branch police as he tried to drive an escape tunnel into Cork Jail. On September 6, 1940 Paddy McGrath, a 1916 veteran, from Dublin, and Thomas Harte from Armagh were both executed by firing squad in Mountjoy Jail — the first victims of the new Emergency Provisions whereby people were tried by the Special Military Tribunal, from which there was no appeal and which could pass one sentence only if the verdict was guilty.

In November Jack Gaffney from Belfast died while interned on the "Al Rawdah" prison ship anchored in Strangford Lough. Then on December 16, 1940 a particularly black year was brought to a close with the shooting in the back of Barney Casey from Longford by military police in the Curragh Internment Camp. There is still particular anger about the Casey shooting among Curragh veterans today if only because the incident was never fully investigated. A full inquest still remains to be held.

But even if it had been held at the time, and a verdict returned in accordance with the generally-held version of the various eye-witnesses then also interned, it is important to recognise that very little would be heard about it by the general public. This was "emergency time" and official censorship was particularly strict. Indeed one of the factors which most strikes a younger generation when they come to look at this entire 1940s period is the degree to which the Fianna Fáil government succeeded in censoring the reality of what was taking place in areas of the life of the country that had nothing to do with the "Emergency" or the threat to the official neutrality policy.

There was a clamp-down on information and debate that we were not to witness again until the Heavy Gang and Cruise-O'Brien days of the 1970s. And as is always the case in such "emergency situations" use is made of "state security" to suppress all sorts of other dissent and investigation that has more to do with immediate party political difficulties than with anything else.

It is a lesson we should not forget, if only because the censorship clamp-down of the 1970s has gone on for so long that some of its more glaring provisions have become almost accepted as normal by all but the most critical.

Not even the most recent revelations about miscarriages of justice, dating back to the 1970s, which have now become fashionable causes with people who did not even want to know for so many years, seem unlikely to arouse most people to the gross distortion of the historical record. This was probably one of the main reasons for the development of a "Section 31 culture" in the first place.

Media censorship, for whatever reasons, also distorts the historical record of events 50 years on with particular problems. It is also one of the reasons why an overall assessment of the hunger-strike in which Tony D'Arcy and Seán MacNeela died, 50 years ago, needs to be set in context before those who remember the early war years have all passed on to their eternal rewards.

It is true of course that it was a period of tension and shortages, of lack of newsprint and transport facilities and all the modern means of communication that a younger generation takes for granted. We also know that such facilities and relative comforts in our own recent past are in no way a guarantee that hunger-strikes, the general ill-treatment of prisoners and various political efforts to brand Republicans as nothing more than criminals will not succeed. Indeed in one sense it might seem that the opposite is the case.

CUIMHNI I nGAELGE

Tá sé de bhuntáiste ag lucht na Gaeilge go bhfuil dhá leabhar ar a laghad a scríobh daoine a bhí gníomhach i n Gluaiseacht na Poblachta ag an am sin, a bhfuil eolas go leor iontu. Ní gá a bheith ar aon intinn lena bhfuil le rá ag Tarlach Ó hUí ina shaothar *Ar Thóir Mo Shealbha* (FNT 1960) lena thábhacht a thuiscint. Mar an gcéanna le saothar eile le Seosamh Ó Duibhinn, *Ag Scaoileadh Sceoil* a d'fhoilsigh an Clóchomhar sa bhliain 1962.

Cuntas macánta fíorphearsanta ar a shaol féin in Sasana sul má cuireadh ar ais go hÉirinn é in 1939 atá ag Ó Duibhinn mar aon le go leor nithe eile a tharla dó sna 1940aí. Níl an cuntas ar a shaol i gCampa an Churraigh ach cuid dá scéal. Ach rinne sé tagairt shonrach d'Antóin Ó Dorchaí agus do Shéan MacConghaola ina leabhar ag tús na 1960aí nuair a bhí a laghad cainte ar an mbás Mhichíl Uí Ghacháin agus Phroinsias Stagg in 1974-'76.

Níl cuntas Uí Dhuibhinn iomlán cruinn áfach chomh fada agus is feidir linn a dhéanamh amach. Ní fíor gur gabhadh Mac Conghaola sa ruathar a thug an Brainse Speisialta faoin Meath Hotel, 40 Cearnóg Pharnell i mBaile Átha Cliath ar an 17 Feabhra, 1940. Bhí sé gafa cheana féin agus dhá bhliain príosúin gearrtha air i ngeall ar an mbaint a bhí aige, dúradh, le stáisiún raidió Poblachtach a bhí ag craoladh ag an am le cur in gcoinne na cinsireachta ar mheáin eile.

Tosaíonn scéal na stailce ocras áfach inar cailleadh an bheirt leis an ruathar úd i mí Feabhra, 1940. Ach le linn an chuntais a leanann anseo, b'fhiú don léitheoir na himeachtaí ginearálta faoi 1940 a bhfuil trácht orthu thuas a choinneáil ina intinn.

Deir Ó Duibhinn (leathnach 25-26): "Oíche Shathairn, Feabhra, 17, 1940 fuair mé cuireadh chuig cruinniú sa Meath Hotel i gCearnóg Pharnell agus chuaigh mé ann. Ní raibh mé ach deich nóiméad san áit nuair a mhaidhm bleachtairí isteach agus gabhadh a raibh ag an gcruinniú, cúig ógfhear déag. An fear a bhí i gceannas ar na bleachtairí an oíche sin, Donncha Ó Briain, maraíodh é cúpla bliain ina dhiaidh sin agus é ag teacht amach as a theach féin.

"Ní fhaca mé an oiread saighdiúirí agus gardaí agus bleachtairí agus gunnaí riamh roimhe sin ar aon láthair agus a chonaic mé ar an tsráid an oíche sin nuair a tháinig muid amach as an ostarann. Sa tuairisc a tugadh air ina dhiaidh sin foilsíodh go raibh céad go leith saighdiúirí ann agus raidhfí agus inneallghunnaí acu. Bhí cúig Brengunnáir dírithe ar an ostarann féin. Sráid mhór leathan atá sa taobh thiar den Cearnóg ach bhí gardaí ina ranganna ó thaobh go taobh den dá thaobh di. Istigh sa tródam sin bhí na saighdiúirí agus a gcuid beaigní i mbarr a ngunnaí acu. Bhí an áit beo le bleachtairí.

"Ní mheasaim gur sheas mé i gCearnóg Pharnell riamh roimhe sin, agus ba mhillteach an t-athrú a bhí i ndán do shaol an domhain sula seasfainn arís ann. Ní fhaca cuid de na cairde a bhí liom an oíche sin riamh ó shin é. Fuair beirt acu, Aontaine Darsaigh agus Seán Mac Conghaola bás ar stailce ocras i bpríosún. Ach sna blianta sin bhí fir óga ag fáil bháis ar muir agus ar tír."

CINSIREACHT

Bhí cuntas lom simplí leithéid Uí Dhuibhginn, 25 bliana ó shin, tábhachtach. Ach ba léir ón raic a tógadh i gciorcail áirithe tráth foilsithe a leabhair go raibh daoine áirithe i bhFianna Fáil ach go háirithe an-ghoilíunach i dtaobh ar tharla le linn bhlianta an Chogaidh na hÉigeandála. Bhí rún daingean ag cuid acu an scéal a bhaint de thaifead staire.

Tharla an rud céanna do Phroinsias MacAonghusa, a bhí gníomhach sa Lucht Oibre an t-am sin. Tharla cúpla raic faoi chlár sa tsraith teilifíse *An Fear agus a Scéal* nuair a d'fhéach sé le labhairt le daoine — cosúil le Con Ó Liathain mar shampla — faoin saol sna 1940aí agus faoin bhealach inar chaith an rialtas le príosúnaigh Phoblachtacha le linn bhlianta na hÉigeandála.

Gheill R.T.É. don bhrú cinsireachta ag an am — ach ar a laghad bhí raic agus conspóid i dtaobh na scéalta — rud a chruthaigh don dream óg aineolach ar a laghad go raibh scéal le hinsint, taifeadh staire le scrúdú ... Spreag cuid de na conspóidí seo daoine óga mar Tim Pat Coogan, is cosúil, le tabhairt faoina leabhar ar an I.R.A. Bhí Coogan, mac le T.D. Fine Gaelach, a bhí trath ina Leas-Chóimisinéir ar an Garda Síochana, ina Eagarthóir Cúnta ar an *Evening Press* go dtí an bhliain 1968. Ceapadh é ina Eagarthóir ar an *Irish Press/Scéala Éireann* ag tús na bliana sin — díreach ag an am nuair a bhí feachtas Cearta Sibhialta an Tuaiscirt ag dúiseacht.

Tar éis an fháiltithe a cuireadh roimh a leabhar *Ireland Since the Rising* a foilsíodh sa bhliain 1966, do chomóradh an Leithchéid, thug sé faoin leabhar ar Óglaiigh na hÉireann. Deirtear gur thosaigh sé amach agus rún aige saothar chomh dian agus ab fhéidir a scríobh, ach d'fhoghlaim sé go leor a bhí ceilte air ina óige féin, nuair a lui sé isteach ar an obair.

Taoiseach Fianna Fáileach, Seán Ó Loinsigh a sheol an leabhar nuair a foilsíodh é den chéad uair i mí an Mhethimh, 1970. Faoin am sin ní ábhar staire amháin a bhí san I.R.A. arís ach beoscéal nuachta, tar éis eachtraí mhí Lúnasa, 1969—agus eachtraí Uí Loingigh féin i gceannas Fhianna Fáil ag tús mhí na Bealtaine—cúpla seachtain roimh sheoladh an leabhair.

Mar iriseoir cumasach bhí tagairt ag Coogan sa leabhar do chuid de na ráflaí a bhí ag dul thart i gciorcail pholaitíochta cois Life in earrach na bliana 1970. Ach faoin am a foilsíodh an leabhar i mí an Mheataimh, ní ráflaí a bhí iontu a thuilleadh, cé nach ndearna an Taoiseach aon tagairt dhíreach do sin ag seoladh an leabhair! Chuir Tim Pat Coogan mar dhuine daonna suim nach beag i gcúrsaí na bpríosúnach agus na stailceanna ocraí i mbun taighde dá leabhar ar an I.R.A. dó.

Tá an cuntas aige ar impleachtaí uilig na stailce inar cailleadh Antóin Ó Dorchaí agus Seán Mac Conghaola ar cheann de na cinn is fearr a rinne aon iriseoir neamhspleách agus beimid ag tarraingt as cuid de chuntas Coogan sa chur síos atá déanta againn anseo thíos.

Reflecting generally on the situation at the beginning of 1940, Tim Pat Coogan in his book *The I.R.A.* wrote: "Hunger-striking is a double-edge sword. It damages the striker physically almost as much as it increases his moral stature among his sympathisers. Until February, 1940 I.R.A. hunger strikers had generally carried the day against the government, understandably in a country that had won its independence partly from deaths on hunger strikes during 1916—21 of men such as Terence MacSwiney and Thomas Ashe. Fianna Fáil had come under considerable pressure afterwards—both from those who wanted the prisoners let out, and from those who wished to have them kept in."

"Within the six-month period before the Mountjoy strike, an I.R.A. internee in Arbour Hill Military Jail, Charles McCarthy of Cork (on hunger-strike from September 15 to October 12) was released. On the same day Con Lehane went on hunger and thirst strike. His case was raised in the Dáil on October 19 by the Labour Party, Deputy William Norton. Lehane abandoned the strike two days later and was subsequently released."

Coogan adds by way of footnote that in fact Lehane had left the I.R.A. and "was furious at being caught in one of the many I.R.A. sweeps of the time."

This probably explains the Labour party interest in this specific case, which also of course raises issues about the whole internment issue—and the simple fact that then as now "mistakes" can always be made, even by the standards of those who do not believe in a fair trial by due process, where arbitrary detention is invoked.

Nor are these "mistakes" confined to the more spectacular ones in Britain of late. Indeed it could be argued that the very public media and other interest in some of these cases derives from the fact that they were obviously political frame-ups—even if the Fourth Estate itself ignored the contradictions in the official cases for over a decade.

CÚLRA

According to J. Bowyer Bell in his book *The Secret Army*: On February 17th (1940) the officers of the Western Command were meeting with G.H.Q. Staff men in the Meath Hotel in Dublin when the police and army descended. Two hundred men surrounded the hotel and collected the whole lot. The I.R.A. lost sixteen men including the O/C of the Western Command, Tony D'Arcy and Michael Traynor of G.H.Q.

"When the Meath Hotel men were put in Mountjoy, frustration and traditional Republican prison policy forced a crisis. As always I.R.A. prisoners were organised into a regular unit with an elected O/C.; and as always the unit insisted on political treatment. Not only was political treatment denied but both food and conditions in Mountjoy were appalling.

"In an effort to force changes the six-man prisoner staff MacNeela, D'Arcy, MacCurtáin, Traynor, Thomas Grogan and Jack Plunkett went on hunger strike with the understanding that they would continue to the end and then be replaced by six more Volunteers. The Irish government ignored the strike and continued bringing prisoners before the Military Tribunal.

"When an effort was made to remove D'Arcy and MacNeela, both weakened by the strike, the prisoners refused to allow them to be taken. The result was a wild and violent riot during which several I.R.A. men were badly beaten. The hunger strike continued through March into April, attracting growing concern as D'Arcy and MacNeela weakened. The government would not back down.

"On April 16 Tony D'Arcy died; on April 19 MacNeela followed him. At this stage the prisoners were given to understand that political treatment would be given to I.R.A. men. Simultaneously Hayes, who had disapproved of the strike, sent in word from G.H.Q. through Father O'Hare to call off the strike."

In a footnote to his account Bowyer Bell makes the point that "very little can be gleaned from the closely censored press of the period." It is true no doubt that men like Eamon de Valera and Gerry Boland must have known from their own active Republican days from 1916 to 1926 that a hunger-strike which does not gain the attention of the media is half beaten before it begins.

But while it spares authorities embarrassment in the short-term it also runs the risk of unnecessary deaths about issues which could have been resolved if given a fair airing by the media at the outset. How many people realise, for example, even today, that contrary to all that has been written and said, the six men who went on hunger strike did not—repeat not—demand release as had happened in the other cases mentioned previously? The demands were for decent prison conditions and a rejection of the political attempt to criminalise them.

This is only one aspect of the whole sad story which is almost totally lacking in the media coverage of the time. A full and detailed account of the period from the Republican point of view was published in pamphlet form at the time by Brian O hUiginn. Entitled *Tony D'Arcy and Seán MacNeela—The Story of their Martyrdom*

and published by the Irish Book Bureau, 68 Upper O'Connell Street, Dublin, it was immediately confiscated by government agents so that the few surviving copies have become very rare and historic collector's items even within the Republican Movement itself.

We have been fortunate to be able to draw on this source and on the personal papers of the D'Arcy family in the preparation of this account. The quotations are however drawn from outside public non-involved sources like Bowyer Bell and Tim Pat Coogan.

Mr. Coogan, because of his journalistic flair, his own interest in the hunger-strike weapon in Irish history, and the degree to which lack of media coverage at the time conveyed the flavour of the period of his own childhood years, obviously researched this specific period in some detail. His account on the Meath Hotel arrests on 17 February 1940 is substantially the same as others we have had, though not as detailed as that given in the excellent article in *Saoirse*, Márta/March 1990.

Dealing with the origins of the trouble in Mountjoy, Coogan writes: "Prisoners were treated as ordinary criminals and there was continual agitation for political treatment. After the influx of new prisoners it was decided in February to back these demands by hunger-striking. On March 1, Jack MacNeela and Jack Plunkett, both of whom had been seized with the ill-fated pirate transmitter in December, were due to appear before the Special Criminal Court in Collins Barracks, Dublin. It was decided to prevent their being taken to the court.

"The prisoners barricaded themselves in D-Wing (which also contained the execution chamber) using their beds, tables and anything else they could get, and armed themselves with the legs of tables and chairs. Some very savage fighting broke out when the warders, augmented by members of the Special Branch, stormed the barricades.

"Cornered, the prisoners fought fiercely and the police were not too particular how they subdued them. Traynor remembers seeing D'Arcy with his hands up after surrendering, when a policeman brought down his baton across his head." It is necessary to bear in mind that seven prisoners had already gone on hunger strike on 25 February, a week before the disturbances, and shortly after Mr. Boland, as Minister for Justice, had issued yet another solemn declaration that no concessions would be granted to those who engaged in hunger-strikes.

NA FIR AR STAILC

"The seven were D'Arcy and MacNeela, Tomás MacCurtáin, Thomas Grogan, John Lyons, Michael Traynor and John Plunkett. Their principal demand was that they be allowed to walk around the jail freely without being confined to their cells, at four o'clock each evening. They also sought to have John Dwyer and Nicholas Doherty, each serving five years penal servitude in Mountjoy, transferred to military custody.

"Doherty was convicted of being in possession of a rifle and ammunition taken from the Magazine Fort. He and Lyons went on hunger strike on February 25 but took food on March 6. Dwyer had been sentenced for having attempted to induce members of the defence forces to disclose information concerning Baldonnell Aerodrome."

On March 1 Seán MacNeela was sentenced to two years and Jack Plunkett to eighteen months on a charge of "conspiracy to usurp a function of Government" (i.e. running a pirate radio). They were transferred to Arbour Hill and were removed to St. Bricin's Hospital on March 27. Tony D'Arcy and Michael Traynor were sentenced to three months on March 5 for refusing to answer questions about the Meath Hotel case.

They were transferred to Arbour Hill and were removed to St. Bricin's Hospital on March 27. Thus, ironically, it was one of the two prisoners with the least time to serve, D'Arcy, who died first on April 16, 1940. He had been 52 days on hunger strike. With normal remission of three weeks he would have been due for release on 25 April. The MacNeela death seems equally tragic if one considers the relative triviality of his offence.

There will be differing views about a two year conviction for the use of an illegal radio transmitter, even in 1940, given the way in which such violations of the law for commercial purposes have been tolerated for a dozen years and more in the 1970s and 1980s as part of a concerted campaign to change the direction of Irish broadcasting.

Though stricter regulations were brought in by the Fianna Fáil Government in 1987, they only did so bringing legislation that enabled pirates who went off the air by a specific date to become involved in new licence applications. "It's good to be back," was one of the comments most frequently heard at the official opening of "new local radio stations" throughout the country in 1988-'89.

At the same time an unofficial blind eye was turned to illegal television pirates—now definitely outlawed by the new legislation—with all-party consent in Leinster House, until such time as licenced commercial television comes on air. None of these pirates is Republican of course.

Indeed they operated a voluntary Section 31 code throughout the years, even in the case of elected local representatives who are banned from RTE. Any pirate which violated this "understanding" e.g. by interviewing an elected Sinn Féin Republican representative, quickly learned that the authorities had no difficulty in locating them and putting them off the air. Meanwhile the commercial pop-stations played all the way to the bank...

Tomás MacCurtáin, awaiting trial for the death of Detective Officer Roche, was removed from Mountjoy to St. Bricin's on April 6. Thomas Grogan, awaiting trial in connection with the Magazine Fort raid, was removed on April 1 from Mountjoy to St. Bricin's suffering from pleurisy.

The single most disturbing aspect of this confrontational situation today—apart altogether from the on-going unresolved problems of the national question and the reality that Irish prisons are never very far from the attention of international humanitarian bodies—is the strict and rigid censorship that was practised almost as if the entire Fourth Estate in Ireland had entered into a voluntary agreement with the rest of the establishment to wish the crisis—and the issues underlying the crisis—away.

LEAGAN UÍ UIGINN

Brian Ó hUiginn in his pamphlet claims that "Cabinet Ministers went out of their way to fling jibes and insults at brave men suffering unselfishly for a high ideal, but no Republican was allowed to say a word in reply. One Minister took advantage of his presence as a guest at a dinner given by businessmen in Dublin to employ language regarding the men on hunger strike and all connected with the Irish Republican Movement that did not indeed lower them in the esteem of decent people, but branded the speaker and his Ministerial colleagues for whom he spoke as cowards and defamers so mean and low as to be beneath contempt itself.

"He called the brave, patient unselfish followers of Thomas Ashe and Terence McSwiney 'suicides' and said Republicans did not want them to live, no more than they wanted McCormack and Barnes to be saved last February; that what they wanted was victims and funerals. And the creature who said that in the speech likened himself and his renegade colleagues to Almighty God! No single word in reply to this cowardly tirade was allowed to be published. Even news of mild protests

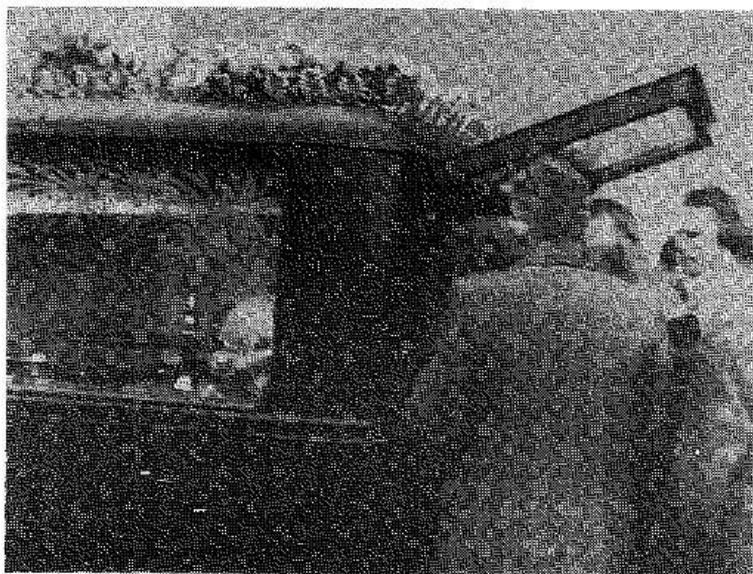
made at the dinner itself had to be deleted from the newspapers by order of the 'Free State' official censor."

Ó hUiginn also says: "During the hunger strike public meetings were held in all the cities and large towns, and throughout the country people assembled evening after evening to recite the Rosary for the men whose brave lives were ebbing slowly and painfully away; but all news of such demonstrations had to be suppressed by the papers. In one day over one hundred telegrams of protest against the continued persecution of the suffering men were sent to Dublin from the Six Counties, but news of this was not allowed to be published."

"More than two weeks before Tony D'Arcy died and when it was not yet too late to save their lives, Rev. Fr. O'Hare, O. Carm., applied for permission to see the Republican prisoners in Mountjoy Jail on whose behalf the brave six were making their terrible fight. He believed that if he could see them and then see the men on hunger strike the fight could be brought to an end and six valuable lives spared to the nation. His humane request was callously and brutally refused."

"So was a request that a prisoner from Mountjoy be allowed to see his comrades in Arbour Hill or in St. Bricin's Hospital. The materialists in office who vaunt their 'Christian Constitution' when it suits them to do so, were either so vindictive or so helplessly and hopelessly in the power of the English that they would not allow themselves to remember that it was their own countrymen, their own former comrades, they were persecuting to death."

"'It was a good thing for England' said Mr. de Valera in 1924 'that it was not I but Mr. Cosgrave who was in power a couple of years ago. I could never bring myself to take the lives of Irishmen to uphold the Treaty position'."



Cóiste na Marbh ... Bhí gnó adhlacóireachta ag muintir D'Arcy in Áth Cinn.
This Republican martyr went back to his people and final resting place in his own hearse and his own coffin ...

"He has already taken three fine and splendid lives to uphold the Treaty position—Seán Glynn, Tony D'Arcy and Seán MacNeela—and he may have to take many more, because the British Empire is a hard and merciless master. About the requests mentioned, no word appeared in the press until the reports of the inquests on the martyrs had to be published."

"The heavy veil of censorship had to be lifted for a moment when a large body of Fianna Fáil supporters in Co. Roscommon, the constituency of Mr. Gerald Boland, 'Free State' Minister for Justice, publicly called on him to cease his persecution of fearless and patriotic men, for whose death at his hands they did not want to have any responsibility. The letter sent to him was printed and circulated throughout Roscommon."

It was as follows:

"We, the undersigned voters of Roscommon, who have returned you to represent us, want you to understand that you have no authority from us for the coercive measures now being used against our fellow-Irishmen who are on hunger strike. We do not want their death on our heads."

"Mr. Boland who is frankly a materialist and cannot see the spiritual issues involved in any struggle or enterprise, nor appreciate the strength of courageous men fortified by their religious as well as their national faith, attempted to reply to the demand of his principal constituents in a boorish and insulting speech, instead of there and then resigning and fighting the matter out, as any self respecting man of spirit would have done. In reply to his speech several letters and resolutions were sent to the press, but not a single one of them was allowed to be published."

Turning to other members of the Government at the time Ó hUiginn in equally strong language wrote: "Mr. Frank Aiken, it appears, is the Minister directly responsible for the censorship at present and for many months past in force in the 26 Counties, and which was so meanly made use of to prevent popular feeling over the persecution of the six men who suffered so much (two gave their lives) for a principle of manhood, from making itself felt, and again made use of in cowardly and futile fashion to prevent news of the wonderful funerals of Tony D'Arcy and Seán MacNeela getting to those who did not witness them."

"Mr. Aiken was Chief of Staff of the I.R.A. in 1923—then as now an illegal organisation according to 'Free State' law. Minister P.J. Rutledge was then acting President of the Republic of Ireland. Minister P.J. Little was editor of *Eire*, the official public organ of the I.R.A. and the Republican Movement generally."

"And during the great hunger strike of 1923—carried on for the self-same principle as the hunger strike of 1940 and the self-same British Imperial Machine—Messrs. Aiken, Rutledge and Little wrote and published reams of praise and vindication of the brave men fighting that terrible battle, reams of denunciation of those who called them suicides, reams of exhortation to the young men and women of Ireland to be proud of the fearless fighters for a great principle, to stand by them, to march with them through the future until the Republic of Ireland was victorious and the British-made 'Irish Free State', born in dishonour and sustained by murder and corruption, was swept out of existence for ever."

"Messrs. Aiken, Rutledge and Little were especially fierce and indignant when they dealt with the low, mean, unscrupulous, cowardly censorship that kept news of the gallant fight in jails and camps from the people of Ireland. Mr. Rutledge asked Republicans to abstain from all intoxicating drink while the hunger strike lasted; Mr. Aiken wrote—'Nothing can ever cloud the fact that the Volunteers of the I.R.A. have suffered torture and death, and that the Volunteers in Mountjoy now deliberately face death in its most terrible form rather than deny that the Republic of Ireland is a sovereign integral nation, or recognise that the two unlawful governments that now exist in it have any right to exist other than by the force of British arms they possess.'"

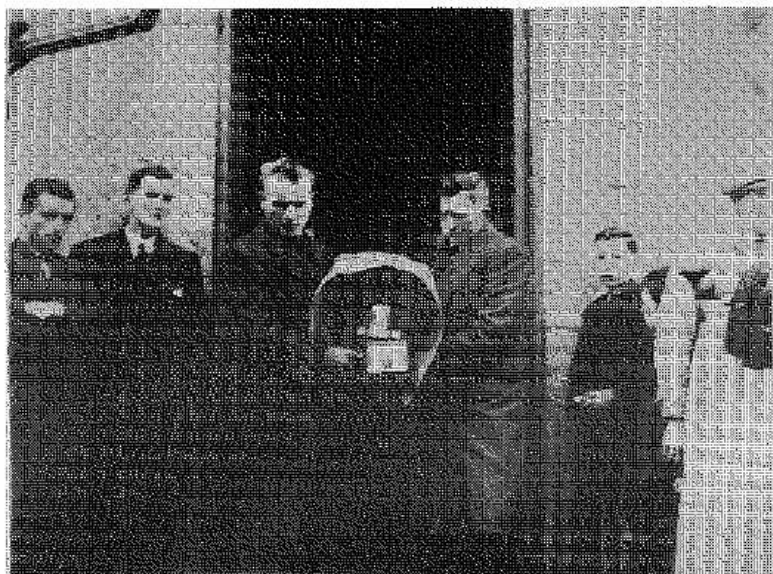
"Mr. Little published editorial after editorial denouncing 'Free State' injustice and cowardice and brutality, 'Free State' censorship and the meanness that would apply the term 'suicide' to a weapon waged against the Evil One by Our Lord Himself. They said everything that needed to be said—and every word of it is as true now as it was then. Today (1940) all three of them are helping Mr. de Valera and the rest of the 'Free Staters' to practise all the meanness and slavishness and suppression against which they wrote so eloquently seventeen years ago. And some of the true men who were prisoners of the 'Free State' machine then are prisoners of the 'Free State' machine to-day. God save Ireland from hypocrites and renegades!"

Whatever about the lack of media attention during the conduct of the strike, it is clear from what little appeared in the national press as soon as D'Arcy died that the censorship position of war-time Ireland had been used to ensure that the first real show-down with hunger-strikers on the issue of political status and proper conditions since de Valera came to power in the 26 Counties eight years earlier was more or less written out of the record.

This is how Tim Pat Coogan summarises it:

"The hunger strikers' ordeal naturally excited much controversy throughout the country, but government censorship restricted newspaper comment and coverage of the event. D'Arcy's death for instance was recorded in a short single column story on page eight of the *Irish Independent*. It was wartime and most people realised that episodes such as the Magazine Fort raid would jeopardise Ireland's claim to neutrality during the war. At the inquests of the dead men only relatives were allowed to attend. Seán McBride appeared for the next of kin in both cases.

"The verdict on D'Arcy was: 'died of inanition, secondary to cardiac failure while on hunger strike'. This was the first time a coroner's jury had sat on a hunger strike case since the death of Thomas Ashe, and the jury ordered a rider that 'Immediate action should be taken with regard to the five men at present on hunger strike and



An laoch ar lár ... Removal of the remains of Tony D'Arcy from St. Bricin's Military Hospital.

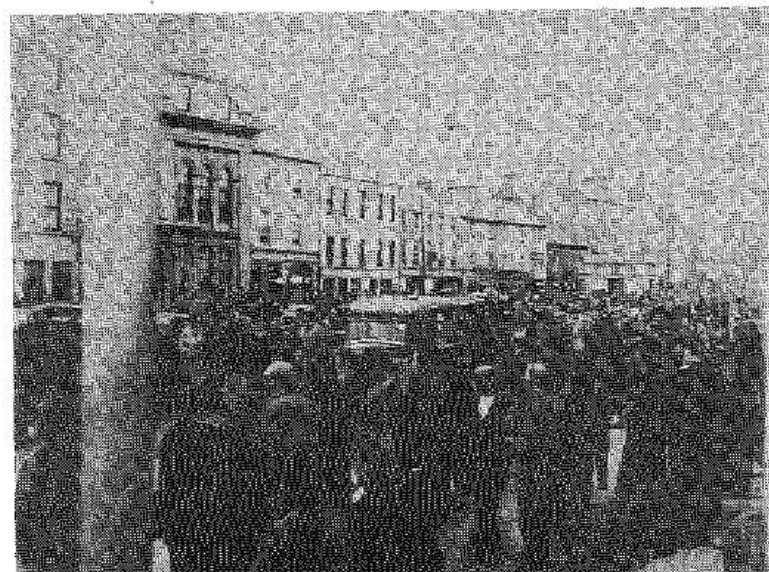
in a serious condition. We desire to express our sincere sympathy with the widow, relatives and friends of the late Anthony D'Arcy in their bereavement."

"Most people in the country would have had sympathy with the rider, but when MacNeela died and the hunger strike was called off, the death of a bishop Dr. Hugh McSharry, at the age of eighty-nine, was the main-page lead in the *Irish Independent* with a hundred and four lines of type. The end of the strike and the death of Jack MacNeela rated only twenty five. The *Irish Times* gave it a slightly bigger show, but on a left-hand inside page, and the *Irish Press* also played it down."

It is necessary to evaluate this obviously inadequate press response to what was going on on their own door-step in the context of war-time scarcity of newsprint as well as censorship of course. We have been unable to evaluate the coverage given to these dramatic and sad events by the local papers of Galway and Mayo but it would appear from lack of references that they were no better than the dailies.

Mr. Coogan makes no specific reference to editorial comment in his summary which is vague on the reaction of the *Irish Press* in general. In fact the *Irish Press* did editorialise on 24 April, 1940, after the strike had been called up and MacNeela, the second victim was buried. After some delicately-balanced general observations the bottom line from the national daily most identified with Fianna Fáil—and most widely read in Republican circles in Galway and Mayo—was: "In the tragedy that has been witnessed the position taken up by the Irish Government is the position that would have been taken up by the Government of any other free people."

Given all the circumstances of the time, including the events in prison strikes over the previous year, this conclusion ignored the full story almost as much as the entire Fourth Estate ignored the reality of what had taken place during the slow death of the two—and the events of their burial. The editorial view on the record of history was probably intended to save some faces in a newspaper which boasted a professional pride as well as a political bias.



Ag gabháil trí shráideanna na Gaillimhe ... The funeral of Tony D'Arcy makes its way through Galway.

And the underlying tone, referring to the "Irish Government" and "any other free people" was in keeping with de Valera's public view (and probably genuine conviction?) since the passing of Bunreacht na hÉireann and the 1938 agreement with Britain, that "partition is now the only unresolved problem between our two countries." De Valera and Fianna Fáil, still boasting that they were the "Republican Party", were particularly hurt when various Republican elements opposed the 1937 constitution as a sham, a legal room of mirrors that sought to solve the outstanding national problems by the clever use of words.

It was also vital that an attempt be made to assert the moral as well as the *de facto* authority of the 26-county governments, responsible to a 26-county Dáil as soon as the new Constitution came into force. Ireland might not yet be fully Free and Gaelic, but the Free State was gone, and some of these daubed "irregulars" in 1922-'23 were now comfortably settled into office. Never mind that these were still 26-County offices for the most part. Republican consciences could be stretched by Articles 2 and 3 to cover the entire country while Gaelic ones could avail of Article 8. It has frequently been suggested that one of the reasons for the particularly harsh measures pursued by Fianna Fáil against former Republican comrades in this period was because their whole future credibility as constitutional Republicans depended upon getting everybody, including the I.R.A. and Sinn Féin, to accept the idea that de Valera's unit of influence and activity could and would become the logical successor of the all-Ireland Republic of 1916 and 1919.

Certain people like Seán MacBride, who had been Chief of Staff in the 1930s accepted the logic of the "1937" agreement. His whole Clann na Poblachta strategy was based on the idea that once Bunreacht na hÉireann was passed, there was no justification for the gun in the 26 Counties anymore. This remarkable person, who had to defend most of the very controversial capital cases during the war, when even the Fianna Fáil Ministers on occasion, had to admit that short-cuts had been taken with their own emergency laws, was largely responsible for putting de Valera out of office in 1948, even if this entailed participation with old Civil War enemies from Fine Gael in the First Inter-Party Government.

MacBride's hopes of major progress through Leinster House, were dashed but it is a matter of record that the 1948-'51 Government was the only one in the entire history of the state that did not have to resort to special emergency measures or to hold political prisoners. Those who had suffered long years in deplorable conditions, frequently without clothes and in solitary confinement in Portlaoise finally came out with the change of Government in 1948.

The Costello-MacBride administration even gave back, in 1948, the bodies of those who had been executed during the War. When General Seán Mac Eoin, Minister for Justice, but an old Free State veteran of the Civil War was challenged on this by what was now the Fianna Fáil Opposition he simply insisted that he was aiming to bind up old wounds, not trying to re-open them. MacBride was to claim that the final declaration of the Republic of Ireland at Easter 1949 "took the gun out of Irish politics". But like the declaration itself, this applied only to the 26 Counties as well.

The I.R.A. despite the disasters of the '40s survived; Sinn Féin began to re-organise politically and by the mid-1950s they held two of the 12 Westminster seats in the Six Counties and took 4 Dáil seats on an abstentionist policy in the 1957 General Election. This infuriated de Valera, back in office for his last period as Taoiseach. What happened his '37 Constitutional solution? The renewed I.R.A. campaign in the North, as well as the new Sinn Féin electoral successes, North and South, proved that many Republicans still held that you cannot square a circle.

In fairness to MacBride however it should be said that once the 26-County state was declared a Republic, the I.R.A. adopted a definite and conscious policy of not confronting the Southern state or its institutions. No force was to be used in the South though the idea that the Irish were now a fully "free people" or that the 26-County Dáil was Dáil Éireann were still propositions which Republicans would continue to challenge vehemently.

The essentials of their case had not changed since Brian Ó hUiginn, one of the last seven members of the Second Dáil which remained loyal to their Oath and handed over their powers to the Army Council of the I.R.A. in 1938, penned his reply to the *Irish Press* editorial position in 1940: He wrote: "There are two gross and deliberate misstatements in the quotation. The 'Irish' Government is one of the two partition governments set up under English law in this country — England's alternative to Irish independence as represented by the betrayed and suppressed Republic of Ireland.

"The second deliberate misstatement is shown by the use of the word 'other'. If this country were free no such sacrifices as that made by Tony D'Arcy and Seán MacNeela would be necessary. Every tragedy of the past eighteen years is due to the shameful fact that renegade Irish Republicans—some in 1922, others in 1927—forsook the ideals of their better days, abandoned the cause of their dead comrades, accepted England's alternative to Irish Independence and admitted the impertinent claim of a foreign monarch to call himself King of Ireland.

"They broke their lawful oath of allegiance to the Irish Republic and in so doing made it inevitable that there would be still further succession of British Coercion Acts in Ireland, that there would be suppressions, raids, arrests, imprisonment, persecution and death. Every surrender of once trusted Irish leaders, every deception practised on the faithful people by faithless politicians has been followed by such tragedies; and so it will be until real independence is achieved, until the humiliating connection with the British Empire is broken. All the mean censorship and misrepresentation of which panic-stricken renegades are capable cannot hide the truth of that statement."

BRÓN AR AN mBÁS

Tony D'Arcy died in St. Bricin's Military Hospital, Dublin at 5.00 a.m. on the morning of Tuesday 16 April, 1940. He had been 51 days on hunger strike—52 if you include the final hours of Tuesday morning. The following is the death notice as it appeared in the daily papers the following morning—Wednesday 17th.

D'ARCY (Headford)—April 16, 1940 at St. Bricin's Military Hospital. Anthony D'Arcy, Headford, Co. Galway, died after a fast of 51 days. Remains removed from St. Bricin's Hospital at 8 p.m. to-night to Carmelite Church, Whitefriar Street, Mass at 11 a.m. Thursday. Funeral immediately afterwards to Corner Church (Caherlistrane Parish). Interment in Republican Plot, Donagh Patrick, Friday at 2 p.m. (old time).

That final reference in itself gave an interesting insight into the social history of the time. The point should be made perhaps that Tony D'Arcy himself was an extremely progressive and forward-thinking person. Of humble background he had in the difficult circumstances of the late '20s and early '30s built up a number of family businesses in a way that was quite remarkable at the time. These included road haulage work. D'Arcy owned a number of lorries. He also owned a motor-hearse and operated a local undertaking business.

This probably explains the neat, efficient and clear-cut details of the funeral that appeared in the press. Tony D'Arcy in fact went home to Galway in his own hearse and his own coffin. The heavily-censored reports in the press on Wednesday 17 April, 1940 tell us the bare minimum. Thus under a single column "Co. Galway Man Dies" we read of D'Arcy "Aged 32, he was in the garage business in Headford. He leaves a widow and three children—two boys aged 8 and 6 and a one year old girl.

"Mrs. D'Arcy saw her husband at 11 on Monday night. She was informed officially of her husband's death at 7 a.m. yesterday. Accompanied by her sister, Mrs. D'Arcy visited St. Bricin's Hospital yesterday afternoon."

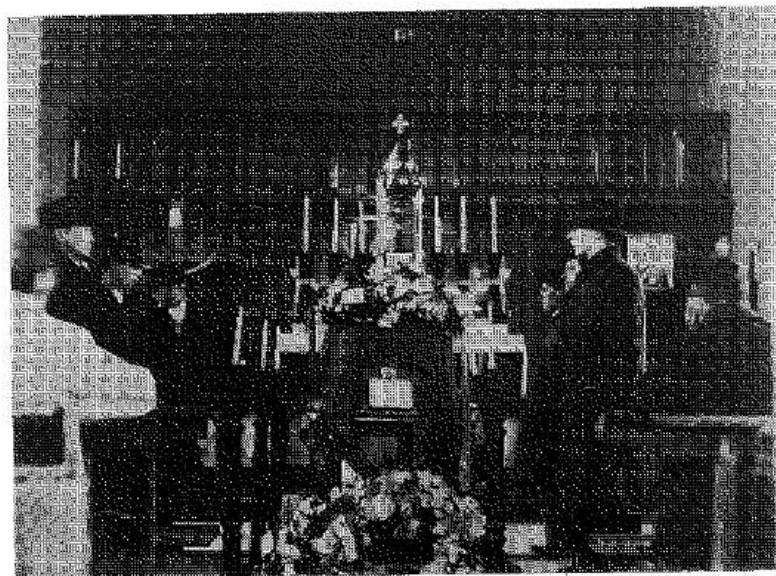
This *Irish Independent* report also gave details of the funeral as outlined in the death-notice, said an inquest would be held on the morning of the report (17.4.'40) and noted that "Last night the main roads leading to Dublin were patrolled by military and vehicles were halted and examined." There followed an account of the background to the death:

"Mr. D'Arcy was one of those arrested when a hotel in Parnell Square, Dublin was raided on Saturday night, February 17. On March 6 he was charged with Mr. Michael Traynor, also arrested in the hotel, before the Special Criminal Court with refusing to give his name and address to the Gardaí and with refusing to account for his movements over a certain period. He was sentenced to three months' imprisonment."

"The hunger strike was begun on February 25 by a number of prisoners in Mountjoy Prison, of whom the deceased was one. The prisoners were transferred to Arbour Hill. There the strike was continued and as its effects began to tell on the health of the men they were removed to St. Bricin's Military Hospital."

"The following statement was issued by the Government Information Bureau yesterday:

'Anthony D'Arcy of Headford, Co. Galway died early this morning, in St. Bricin's Military Hospital, having been on hunger strike since February 25.



Aifreann na Marbh.

'He was serving a sentence of three months' imprisonment imposed by the Special Criminal Court, following his arrest at 40 Parnell Square on February 17.'"

There was a final paragraph under the sub-heading "Hunger Strike—53rd Day" which read: "The five men on hunger strike in St. Bricin's Military Hospital, Dublin, enter on the 53rd day of the strike to-day. They are Messrs. J. Plunkett, T. MacCurraín, T. Grogan, M. Traynor and J. MacNeela."

Behind the cold clinical summary of the *Independent* report however a sadder and more depressing drama was unfolding. Many years later Michael Traynor recalled his memories "without horror or bitterness" for Tim Pat Coogan. The account appears in his book on the I.R.A.:

"There were two nice doctors in the ward, one was Fianna Fáil and the other one was Fine Gael. The Fianna Fáil man was very embarrassed but the Fine Gael man was all in favour of us. Each evening we'd take it in turns to tell each other in great detail about the best meals we'd ever had or what the best meal we could ever hope to have would be like."

"The old bedboard had been done away with by Fianna Fáil and our beds were fibre mattresses with a spring upon an iron bed. After a while we had to have all our joints bandaged because there was only skin and bone and bedsores or gangrene could have set in easily."

"After a bit I remember I couldn't even turn in the bed without help. We had to be rubbed down each day with olive oil to prevent bedsores. I could smell death off myself, a sickly nauseating stench. We would have died except that we drank a great deal of water each day."

"But our other appetites went, and we concentrated on saving our energies and our lives to beat the strike. I'd been on two hunger strikes before in Crumlin Road (Belfast's jail) but these were only canter strikes—this was a real galloping strike. Tony D'Arcy died first. He called out 'Jack, Jack MacNeela, I'm dying.' MacNeela was in the bed opposite to D'Arcy and he insisted in getting out to go to his friend. I pleaded with him not to. There was no one in the ward at the time. The armed guard was outside a locked door. After the orderlies got the door opened they lifted MacNeela back to bed, but he died two days later. Then we got word from Stephen Hayes telling us that all we had struck for was granted and that we were to call off the strike."

Tony D'Arcy's funeral in Dublin went off in a dignified manner, without any great harassment by the large number of security personnel on duty. One of the most unusual things about the picture of the scene today is the fact that the funeral hearse and one or two cars of relatives and close friends were just about the only traffic that could be seen in the streets of wartime Dublin.

After Mass on Thursday, 18 April the long, sad journey home began. The funeral was met by silent crowds who lined the streets in most towns along the way. It passed through Galway City where there was a particularly strong security presence before turning northwards out the Headford road to the Corner Chapel in his native Caherlistrane parish.

The following Friday morning (19 April, 1940) the *Irish Independent* gave the following report, under the heading "Funeral of Hunger Striker": "The remains of Mr. Anthony D'Arcy who died in St. Bricin's Hospital, were removed by road to Headford, Co. Galway yesterday, after Mass in the Carmelite Church, Whitefriar St., Dublin, celebrated by Very Rev. D.B. Devlin, O. Carm., ex-Provincial."

"The cortege arrived at Headford at 10 p.m. The remains were taken to Corner Chapel, Caherlistrane parish, about a mile outside the town, where they were received by Rev. Joseph Ryan, C.C. The interment will take place to-day at Donagh Patrick. The chief mourners were: Mrs. D'Arcy (widow); Noel and Joseph (sons); Mr. Patrick D'Arcy (brother); Miss K. D'Arcy (sister); Mrs. B. Langan, and Mrs. Whelan (relatives)." Then under a smaller heading which read "Hunger Strike:

55th Day," we read: "The five men on hunger strike in St. Bricin's enter their 55th day of the strike to-day. They are: Messrs. J. Plunkett, T. MacCurtain, T. Grogan, M. Traynor and J. MacNeela."

Beside these reports was a much longer one, also in single column of a statement issued by Mr. Boland, Minister for Justice, which issued before the adjournment of the 26-County Dáil the previous evening. Mr. Boland was anxious to knock on the head the suggestion by Father O'Hare at the inquest on D'Arcy the previous day that if he had been allowed to visit the men in Mountjoy on whose behalf the protest was being made, and then convey the facts of their conditions to the hunger-strikers in St. Bricin's, the protest could have been called off.

It is clear from this account that a number of offers to negotiate had been made in the earlier period of the strike involving such well-known national personalities known to both sides as the acting Lord Mayor of Dublin, Alderman Tom Kelly, Deputy William Norton and Senator Seán Campbell of the Labour Party, Miss Fiona Plunkett "and another lady", and finally, Peadar O'Donnell.

Mr. Boland insisted that every possible effort had been made to reach a solution short of adding however that "the men on hunger strike had no real right to be informed as to the treatment of other prisoners." In other words the key issue was political recognition, the "special emergency" status in this instance being recognised by the holding of all prisoners sentenced by the special Military Tribunal in military custody.

It was NOT, as has sometimes been suggested an unconditional demand for release. Tony D'Arcy would in any case be due for release in a week—though the record of what happened others strongly suggests that he would probably have been then interned without trial in the Curragh Camp. But some of his comrades had been sentenced to years of imprisonment and the man with least to serve and most to lose would not allow his former Republican friends, now in office, to criminalise the faithful Republican comrades for doing what they had all done together a few years earlier.

NA SOCHRAIDÍ

The drama of the confrontation within the prison was also reflected at the funeral and burial from Corner Church to Donagh Patrick on Friday 19 April, 1940. The Mass at 2 p.m. (old time!) ensured a huge gathering from all over the country and a massive police and military presence. Full Republican Honours had been rendered at the Corner Chapel. Nevertheless the close surveillance of police and military along every inch of the route to Donagh Patrick is something which is still remembered in the area.

Some say Fianna Fáil people in particular resented the fact that Tony D'Arcy was being buried in the Republican Plot—with I.R.A. heroes of the Free State War, 1922–23. Whatever the reason or reasons for the display of force the entire episode left a lot of bad blood in Galway Republican circles for a generation. The entire scene—not unlike what we used to see on television pictures from the North before censorship was tightened—merited an eight-line single column inch in the *Irish Independent* (20.4.1940) the following Saturday morning.

Under the heading "Funeral of Anthony D'Arcy," it read: "The remains of Anthony D'Arcy, who died on hunger strike in St. Bricin's on Tuesday were removed yesterday from the Corner Church, Caherlistrane, Co. Galway to Donagh Patrick Cemetery, two miles away. A large number of people gathered in Headford to walk with the remains to the cemetery."

This report appeared under a more prominent double column item (*Irish Independent* 20.4.'40) which read "The Hunger Strike Abandoned. Second Man Dies Four Hours Later—Native of County Mayo." The text read: "John MacNeela, one of the five hunger strikers in St. Bricin's Military Hospital, Dublin died at 10.45 last night.

The strike, it was officially announced, had been abandoned by the men at 7 p.m. It had lasted for 55 days. MacNeela was a native of Ballycroy, Westport, Co. Mayo where his mother and father still reside. Aged 26, he was unmarried.

"He was arrested in a raid on Ashgrove House, Highfield Road, Dublin on December 29 and charged with others before the Special Criminal Court with being in unauthorised possession of a wireless transmitting set, and with being a member of an unlawful organisation. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. The other men on hunger strike were Messrs. J. Plunkett, T. MacCurtain, T. Grogan and M. Traynor."

No doubt Brian Ó hÚiginn had a different view about the funerals. In his commemorative booklet, which the authorities confiscated and banned, he wrote of the two deaths:

"It was then the coercion censorship was brought into full play. It can have been only fear that prompted Mr. de Valera and his Ministers to keep all news of the remarkable tribute of love and veneration paid to the dead soldiers from such of the people as were not privileged to witness it, and from the Irish people in other countries. It was a petty and a futile act, and the significance of it was noted by the people everywhere. Twelve lines of type were given to an account of the wonderful funeral of Tony D'Arcy by the paper that was founded by Republicans to tell 'the truth in the news' and that says on its front page every day that it is published '*chum glóire Dé agus onóra na hÉireann*'; and in the same issue double that space was given to news of a lord's unsavoury divorcee suit!

"The petty-minded 'powers that be' did everything they could to make it appear to people who could not see the funerals that there was nothing exceptional about them. There was no account of the thousands of men and women who marched in military order through miles of Dublin streets where all the business houses were closed and where hundreds of thousands of people gathered to see the coffins of the martyrs go by; of the heart-stirring tributes of respect paid in every town and village as the funerals moved across Ireland to Galway and Mayo.

"Probably the greatest tribute of all was that from the poor of Dublin as they filed for hours past the coffins, the women telling the little children they carried in their arms or lifted up to lay their hands on the caskets and receive a blessing from the dust of Ireland's latest martyrs.

"What a contrast was the crude insult offered to the dead bodies and to their holy resting places by the 'Christian' gentlemen who hold the 'Irish Free State' for the pagan Empire! Hundreds of uniformed and plain-clothes police were sent into the two graveyards, while soldiers in full war-kit were posted behind walls and trees and in the surrounding fields, and armoured cars patrolled the roads, and the place where there should be peace was changed by the fear and pettiness of cowardly conscience-stricken men into a potential battlefield.

"It was their last gesture of hostility towards the two soldiers who had triumphed over them and won their martyr's crown. The lowest depths of vindictive pettiness was reached when mourners on their way to Seán MacNeela's funeral were stopped by armed police and their cars and persons searched; and when an order was issued to every place of business in or near Ballycroy to refuse food and drink to people who had travelled 200 miles to be present at the interment. Such is Dominion greatness!"

MAIRTÍN O CADHAIN

Is féidir aon áibhéil, más ann dó, sa chuntas seo a thuiscint i gcomhthéacs na teanga laidre a scríobh Brian an Banban riamh nuair a bhí sé i mbun pinn agus i mbun bolscaireachta. Sea, bolscaire a bhí ann, dála gach aon duine a théann i mbun nó ar ardán—ón bPápa féin a bhfuil eagraíocht le teideal n bolscaireachta ina theideal aige, ar eagla na míthuisceana, go dtí na craoltóirí in R.T.E. a ionsaíonn aidhm na Poblachta agus luachanna spioradálta na hÉireann, agus amháinn ansin nach féidir labhairt leis an na daoine a mhaslaítear.

Tá a fhios againn gur tógadh Máirtín Ó Cadhain as shochraid Antóin Uí Dhorchai in nDomhnach Phádraig. Is cosúil go raibh sé ina sheasamh ar bhosca nó ardán beag éigin nuair a réab na Gardaí isteach lena ghabháil. Níl a fhios againn go cinnte ó na cuntais éagsúla ar tógadh é ar an gcéad iaracht nó ar gabhadh é ar ball.

Seoladh ar aghaidh go dtí an Currach é, chuig géibheann gan triail sa "Teach Gloine" a bhí, mar a dúirt sé féin ar ball, ar an áit is fuair in Eirinn agus a d'fhág an oiread sin tionchair ar a chuid scríbhneoireacht agus ar a leagan amach go deireadh a shaoil. Ach ghoill eachtraí an lae féin i nDomhnach Phádraig ar Mháirtín freisin. Cé nár mhaigh sé riamh go mba fhear mór creidimh a bhí ann, ghoill an cur isteach ar an adhlacadh air. Níor mhaith sé riamh do na húdaráis nach ligfeadh do mhuintir an marbh a chur tar éis é a chéasadh go bás roimh sin.

Cé go bhfuil go leor píosaí seanchais i nGaillimh faoi adhlacadh Antóin Uí Dhorchai agus faoin pháirt a bhí ag Máirtín Ó Cadhain, más fíor, le cúrsaí na Poblachta ag an am, tá sé deacair aon cheo cinnte a aimsiú i dtaobh go leor acu. Aisteach go leor cé go bhfuil obair nachbeag déanta le blianta anuas i dtaobh an Chadhanaigh agus an tionchair a bhí ag Arm na Poblachta air, nuair a bhí sé gníomhach, ní mór an scrúdú a dhéantar i gcuid mhaith den léirmheas liteartha ar a shaothar, cé go ndearbhaíonn gach éinne go raibh tionchar mór aige ar chúrsaí tráth.

Bhíodh an port seo an-fhaiseanta ar RTE ag deireadh na 1960aí nuair a bhí Eoghan Harris ag plé le *Féach* mar shampla, agus nuair a cailleadh é sa bhliain 1970. Leanadh den phort céanna gan aon ghéarscrúdú a bheith déanta ar an scéal go dtí gur tháinig an lá nuair nár theastaigh ó Chathal agus a chairde a admháil go raibh aon bhaint acu le cuid de na rudaí a bhí ina n-ábhair mhórtais tamall roimhe sin!

Tá rud amháin áfach nach bhfuil fíor cé go bhfuil sé ráite i leabhar údarásach amháin ar Ó Cadhain *De Ghlaschloch an Oileáin* a scríobh a tSr. Bosco Costigan i gcomhar le Seán Curraoin, (Nia le Máirtín mar a tharlaíonn). Ar leathanach 50 den saothar brea seo a d'fhoilsigh Cló Iar-Chonnachta in 1987 deirtear linn go mba "Cara le Máirtín ab ea Tony D'Arcy" Leantar "Ciontaíodh é os comhair na Cúirte Speisialta. Chuaigh sé ar stailc ocras le stadad polaitíochta a bhaint amach do phríosúnaigh Phoblachtacha i Mí Aibreáin, 1940, agus cailleadh é". Ansin deirtear: "Ar a shochraid in Ait Cinn, Co. na Gaillimhe, ba é Máirtín a thug an óráid."

Dar linn nach bhfuil sin cruinn. Ba é Muiris Ó Tuama a thug an óráid in Áth Cinn chomh fada agus is féidir linne a dhéanamh amach. Ach labhair Máirtín comh maith. Béidir go raibh sé ina chathaoirleach an lá úd. Tagann seo freisin le cuntas Uí Uiginn nuair a deir sé ag tagairt do na smaointe uaibhreacha agus buíochais a nochtadh cois na huagha:

"These thoughts were expressed on behalf of Republican Ireland by Muiris Ó Tuama at the graveside of Tony D'Arcy and by Brian Ó hUiginn at the grave of Seán MacNeela and one felt they were in the hearts and minds of all. The mean and unscrupulous defamers of the dead were answered, too—the mean-minded men who were not satisfied to have persecuted the two martyrs to death, but were mean enough to resort to the age-old English plan of seeking to destroy their good names as well."

"The English and their Irish tools called Wolfe Tone a suicide; they called Thomas Ashe a suicide; they called Terence MacSwiney a suicide; they called the men they killed in their prisons in 1923 suicides; and they carried on the evil tradition to the year 1940 by seeking to blacken the honoured names of Tony D'Arcy and Seán MacNeela by calling them suicides as well."

COISTÍ CRÓINEARA

Before leaving the funerals and the media coverage of same perhaps it should be noted that unlike the generally tiny coverage afforded the main events of these sad dramas, the national press gave massive coverage to the reports of the two inquests. We have already noted the Jury's rider in the case of the D'Arcy inquest held on 17 April, 1940 and reported in detail across five columns in the *Irish Independent* on 18 April. The urgency of saving the lives of the five other men still alive was stressed.

It is also of historical interest perhaps that the D'Arcy relatives were accompanied at the inquest by "Rev. M. O'Flanagan, Madame Maud Gonne MacBride and several other people." Madame MacBride's son, Seán, B.L. (instructed by Messrs. Lehane and Hogan) appeared for the next of kin.

As Tim Pat Coogan has written (*The I.R.A.*):

"The inquest on MacNeela on April 22 aroused some controversy because a Carmelite priest, the Rev. John J. O'Hare gave evidence that he had seen the prisoners on the day of MacNeela's death and that as a result of his conveying instruction to them from I.R.A. Headquarters, the strike was called off. He said the strike could have been called off three weeks earlier and both lives saved if de Valera and Boland had allowed him to visit the prisoners. He gave evidence of meeting with the prisoners to substantiate his claims.

"As he had already spoken at the D'Arcy inquest making somewhat similar statements, Boland felt constrained to go into the box during the MacNeela hearing and make a statement which in effect denied the allegations. This exposed him to a scorching cross-examination from Seán MacBride."

The second inquest occupied a full page of small type across seven columns which it would be impossible even to summarise here. But the following extracts from column seven at the end of the report can give us some insight into the tense exchanges that took place between Mr. MacBride, for the next of kin and the Minister for Justice, Mr. Boland:

RIGHTS OF COURTS.

In reply to further questions, Mr. Boland denied that he was taking from the courts the right of deciding the punishment that was to be given. The Court, he said, decided the sentence, but the Minister for Justice decided where and under what conditions the sentence was to be carried out. The Minister said that if he had allowed Father O'Hare in he could not see any reason for not allowing others into Mountjoy. He did not let two men die. If two men did not take their food it was not his fault.

Mr. MacBride—I put it to you that you are indicted in this for your complete mishandling of this whole situation?—You can have that opinion if you like. That is not my opinion.

The Minister added that he discussed the matter with Mr. de Valera on April 19.

Mr. MacBride—Was it on his advice that you finally let in Father O'Hare?—I knew the terms of that letter before Mr. de Valera himself. It was sent to me and the minute I saw the request I agreed to grant it. Mr. de Valera also agreed.

Did you ring Father O'Hare before or after you had spoken to Mr. de Valera?—After.

Witness added that Mr. de Valera would not try to force him into doing anything so long as he was Minister for Justice.

NOT ADVISED.

Mr. MacBride—I put it to you that he advised you?—My answer is he did not; that I made up my own mind when I got the letter.

Do you remember saying in one of these interviews with Father O'Hare that these men could all die, but that you were not going to give in?—I don't remember saying that.

Do you deny using those words?—I would not use words like that. My whole attitude was one of regret that people should be so foolish as to persist in this.

A regret that did not extend to releasing them?—The Government had to do its duty, however painful.

Must the Government, to govern, let innocent men die?—They must put men in prison if they are to govern, and that right cannot be taken away from them by men refusing to take food.

MILITARY FORCE.

They were not striking for release?—It was bigger than release. They were seeking to be recognised as a lawful military force.

A voice from the public gallery—Did you ever do that, Gerry?

Minister—Let counsel ask me that and I will answer him.

MADE NO BARGAIN.

Mr. MacBride—I put it to you that you have come here to go behind a bargain you made with Mrs. Stack?—Take it any way you like, I made no bargain with her.

Further cross examined, the Minister admitted receiving a letter from Messrs. Lehané and Hogan stating that MacNeela was in danger of death.

Mr. MacBride—You were prepared to let him die like a dog?—It was not I let him die.



Ag dul go hÁth Cinn ... The funeral approaches Headford, Co. Galway, flanked by local dignitaries and followed by a huge crowd.

In D'Arcy's case you knew that he had only six days to go before his sentence was finished?—I only knew that he was not taking food.

Mr. MacBride asked was it not plain from Father O'Hare's letters that all he was asking was some little concession which would enable him to go to the men on strike and try to secure a settlement.

The Minister said it was clear to him that they had the right to decide what treatment the prisoners would be subjected to.

Mr. MacBride—Was it not a reasonable request for Father O'Hare? I put it to you that out of sheer intolerance you allowed these two men to die. I put it to you that you refused to make any concessions to Father O'Hare until D'Arcy died and you saw the Irish nation would not stand for it?

Mr. Boland—Is that a speech or a question? If it is in order to make a speech I am quite prepared to answer it. As far as the Irish people are concerned they will have every opportunity to test that—they will have one very soon.

Juror (to the Minister)—How many political prisoners are there in State detention throughout the country?—About 140 between internees and sentenced men.

In reply to another juror, the Minister said that it was only on the last occasion that Father O'Hare had stated that it was for the purpose of conveying a message from the prisoners in Mountjoy to the prisoners in St. Bricin's that he wished to gain admittance.

Mrs. Lawlor, called by Mr. MacBride, said Mr. Boland had promised that if the men came off hunger strike he would grant improved conditions to the men in Mountjoy. She had no doubt whatever about that, because the Minister had said, "I give you my word."

BREITH

A verdict in accordance with the medical evidence (that death was due to inanition and cardiac failure) was returned. But the Jury which was absent for three quarters of an hour also added the following rider: "We are of opinion that permission should have been granted to Fr. O'Hare to visit Mountjoy prison at an earlier date. We are further of opinion that criminal status should not be accorded to political prisoners."

It was already clear from Mr. Boland's replies to Mr. MacBride that conditions in Mountjoy would be improved at once now that the hunger strike was over. But once again it had taken the deaths of two young Irishmen in cruel circumstances to win long overdue reforms in the prison system. Before the strike nothing could be discussed and no changes contemplated. Now everything was possible...almost. A fudge was done on the issue of political status.

Gradually all Republican prisoners doing sentences of any length were transferred to Portlaoise—where an even more horrendous regime was maintained during the "Emergency"/war years. Some prisoners who refused to wear convict clothes were left naked in their cells for years—with only a blanket—locked in their cells for 24 hours each day from 1940 to 1943. It took the horrific hunger and thirst strike to the death by Seán MacCaughy in May 1946 to finally arouse the consciences of Irish officialdom to the reality of the barbarity that they condoned in the name of law and order up to then. New prison regulations were introduced in 1947 for all prisoners.

The sacrifices of Tony D'Arcy and Seán MacNeela therefore were in one sense a vital link in the chain that finally brought some prison reform after World War II. New legislation and prison rules accepted, for the first time, that even prisoners had some human rights. There were, there have been lapses since then, while those who once languished in prison themselves in support of Republican principles which

they compromised later on, seem to have a particular preoccupation with trying to prove that what they did and endured and advocated in their day was in some way different from the basic principles and demands of those who see no reason to change their Republican faith.

Because of the censorship and other emergency circumstances of the time, a recent *Saoirse* article (Márta 1990) argues that the six hunger strikers were in effect "throwing themselves on the scant mercies of de Valera and his followers. And it was felt in 26-County establishment circles that the hunger strikers and their comrades had embarrassed the former President of Sinn Féin (de Valera) enough the previous year and more."

The acute political nature of such confrontations is obvious. So indeed is the political agility of compromising politicians who in 1940 held most of the cards—except the ultimate ones of truth, justice and dedication to principles. Indeed it would seem that 26-County politicians are particularly good at this sort of evil cat and mouse games if only perhaps because they themselves or their fathers had all been through the rigours of the British system in the days when, as they say, "we were all on the back of the same lorry!"

The hunger strike of March/April 1940 was the first time when it became perfectly clear that de Valera and Fianna Fáil were as vigorous in the policy of "squeezing the prisoners" as Cosgrave and Cumann na nGaedheal had ever been in the twenties and early thirties. The persecution of the "men behind the wire" as part of the attempt to control the men outside it, and the sure knowledge that bad prison and internment conditions would force dedicated patriotic victims to turn in upon themselves seems to have surfaced to a new height in official thinking by 1940.

Certainly the legacy of bitterness between Fianna Fáil and Republicans who had soldiered with them in the previous two decades—even after they had gone their separate ways in 1925–26—was as acute and negative and destructive as anything that had come out of the Civil War. But it did not destroy the Republican Movement or decrease the national consciousness. The national demands remained and remain the same. How right Terence MacSwiney was when he wrote that "it is not those who can inflict most but those who can endure most that will ultimately triumph!"



An turas deireanach ... The funeral of Tony D'Arcy winds its way from Corner Chapel, Caherlistrane to the Republican Plot, Donagh Patrick, Co. Galway.

TORTHAÍ POLAITÍOCHTA

We have stressed the broad political background that led to the position where Irishmen were still locked in conflict with each other in 1940 even though the British still controlled a great deal of the fortunes of the nation that had declared its independence as a Republic on 21 January, 1919, following democratic endorsement of the Sinn Féin Republican programme at the December 1918 General Election.

We have also suggested that hunger strikes like the jailing or internment without trial of political opponents that caused them were essentially highly political in their nature. And the poachers turned gamekeepers, who used the defenceless position of prisoners as part of their coercive programmes, fully realised, not only the politics of such situations but also the vital importance of censorship and distortion of the key issues in breaking the will to resist of their opponents.

The censorship situation in the dark year of 1940 is something which needs to be borne in mind at this time when dirty tricks, distortion of history and naked unapologetic censorship precludes even elected public representatives from the media. In the case of the more centralised and more crucially influential electronic media (T.V. and radio) this has made Ireland and Britain the two most politically illiberal countries in a Europe which has thrown off most of its Stalinist legacy in media terms in the recent past.

One former Fianna Fáil Minister from Co. Galway has recalled how in his youth he remembered the party faithful discussing the Tony D'Arcy affair and admitting quite frankly within their own private party caucuses that it would be very difficult for them to win many votes in Galway if there was an election in the near future. Some who like D'Arcy himself had helped in a small way Fianna Fáil in the early thirties, in the hope—the vain and frustrated hope—that de Valera would achieve something, even if that something was only to be the defeat of the Blueshirts, never voted for Fianna Fáil again.

Some others left Fianna Fáil and joined in the Clann na Poblachta effort after the war to put de Valera out of office. Others began the long and hard task of rebuilding Sinn Féin as a political movement, which had been shattered following the Fianna Fáil decision to follow the Leinster House path to power.



Omós na gComrádaithe Poblachtacha. Fellow Republicans march in tribute at the funeral of Tony D'Arcy, watched by 26-County armed troops and Special Branch who took up positions in the fields along the route.

PADRAIG Ó RUÁIN

The first real fruits of that effort in Co. Galway came in 1955 with the election of Councillor Paddy Ruane of Carnmore to Galway County Council where he served with distinction for 30 years. When in 1967 another Sinn Féin break-through was achieved in the Tuam area with the election of Councillor Frank Glynn of Milltown, Sinn Féin, the open democratic wing of the Republican Movement became the third most important political party in Co. Galway.

MAG GHLOINN MAR CHATHAOIRLEACH

After the 1979 elections in which Councillors Ruane and Glynn were both returned, in spite of the introduction of a total broadcasting ban on Sinn Féin during the 1970s (it still continues even on local radio and Radio na Gaeltachta) Sinn Féin held the balance of power. They used this position to end the 45-year old monopoly of power which Fianna Fáil had held over everything that moved in Galway politics and forced the introduction in the Galway Council chamber of power-sharing and rotation of Council offices and memberships on committees in accordance with the principle of proportionality.

This was the type of thing Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael and Labour were always telling the Unionists they should do in the North, yet were very reluctant to do themselves in the South, until Sinn Féin electoral success left them with no choice. As part of the new arrangements Councillor Glynn became Chairperson of Galway County Council—the first non-Fianna Fáil person to hold the office for almost half a century.

LEASUITHE — ACH CINSIREACHT FÓS

It was generally recognised even by political opponents that he did an excellent job, being fair to all sides and introducing a number of new initiatives that made his period in office both fruitful and worthy of respect and recognition at national level. It did not mean however the lifting of the Section 31 censorship ban which prevented the people of Ireland's second largest county from hearing what the elected leader of their Council had to say on any matter or policy on local or national radio and television.

It was, and it is a situation without parallel on either side of the Iron Curtain, as it used to be known, at this stage. A sad reminder that the ghost of the censorship practised under the "Emergency" excuse was still hovering around. It would almost certainly be further tightened were it not for the good sense and loyalty of the local voters who knew full well the real reasons for the use of this blunt Section 31 implement.

Unfortunately there was no strong Sinn Féin organisation in Co. Galway at the time the Fianna Fáil government presided over the death of Tony D'Arcy, six days before he was due to be released from custody. And while the 1938 General Election and the wartime conditions meant that there was not going to be another General Election until 1943, there are a number of aspects of the political aftermath that are worth recording even half a century later.

SHEAS W.T. LE DEV

A few days after the deaths of D'Arcy and MacNeela, the leader of the Fine Gael Party, Mr. W.T. Cosgrave, speaking on a motion to issue a writ for a by-election in West Galway said that having heard the strong stand taken by Mr. de Valera in a radio broadcast, his party would not offer any contest. It is probably true that Fine Gael stood little chance of winning a seat in Galway at that time in any case and that a by-election contest at a time of growing war scarcities suited nobody.

But there was also clearly a closing of ranks by the two parties that had grown out of the Civil War and had come to share the spoils of political office in the 26-County chamber that was the direct successor of the old Free State. The Galway vacancy was a Fianna Fáil one but Mr. Cosgrave went further and also announced that neither

would Fine Gael move a writ for a by-election in Co. Kilkenny, where a seat formerly held by a Fine Gael deputy was now also vacant.

The people were to be denied a chance to vote in either case—at least until things died down; Mr. Cosgrave said that Fine Gael had decided that a contest "would not be in the interests of the country... if by any chance there was a marked reduction in the support accorded the Government, it might be interpreted that that lack of support was due to the action of the Government, in recent months, had taken in connection with order in the State."

Few people doubted the significance of this "Tallaght Strategy" that saw the two Civil War factions now within Leinster House cooperating to prevent any possibility of a quick democratic verdict on their common opposition to other former comrades in the struggle for the 32-County Republic which they all had at one time solemnly sworn to uphold against all enemies foreign and domestic. For the bewildered Republican people of Galway in particular the thing that most surprised and saddened many of them was how did de Valera and company end up on the same side as the Free Staters?

AN SCEÁL Ó SHIN

Perhaps it is worth recalling that even though the next opportunity the people of West Galway got to vote in a General Election did not come along until 1943, Fianna Fáil with 46.5% of the first preferences got the lowest poll ever in the history of the three-seat constituency created in 1937 and which survived in the same general lay-out down to the 1970s.

In 1937—at the same time that the Constitution was being adopted—de Valera's party got 71.9% of the first preference vote. In 1938 Fianna Fáil got 68.5% but in 1943 they got only 45.5%. This was significantly down even on the 49.7% which they got in the 1948 election that saw de Valera driven from office and a full 14 points less than the 60.2% they scored in 1944.

The results indicate that while Fine Gael continued to win between 21 and 28 per cent of the poll in this period, the vast majority of those who deserted Fianna Fáil voted for Clann na Talmhan, who won 13.6% at their outing in 1948. The choice obviously was not great. Most Republican-minded people still could not bring themselves to vote for Fine Gael so that those who wished to abandon Fianna Fáil seemed to have opted for any other third options that were available, including by the way a 9.9% first preference for Labour in 1943 and 15.1% for Independent National Labour in 1948.

Throughout the wider Co. Galway region Fianna Fáil who had gained 65.00% of the first preference vote in 1938 fell back to 48.1% in 1943. This was the only time since they first came to power in 1932 that their first preference vote dropped below 50% down to the 1980s. Even in 1948 they gained 54.1% throughout the country. Clearly the decision of Mr. Cosgrave to prevent Fianna Fáil from having to face a by-election in Galway in the summer of 1940 was a wise one.

The last time Sinn Féin had contested a General Election in Co. Galway in June 1927 they won 4.4% of the poll. By the time a rejuvenated Sinn Féin did so again, in the light of the Border Campaign and the public reaction to it, in March 1957 they won 7.2% of the poll. Clearly the hard organisational work that had borne fruit with the election of Paddy Ruane to Galway County Council in 1955 was being built on. In the 1958 South Galway by-election Mr. Murt Qualter gained an impressive 3,700 votes, coming third after the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael candidates.

The decision of the last de Valera Government to bring in internment without trial once again in July 1957 when the entire Ard-Chomhairle of Sinn Féin, apart from Mrs. Buckley, were sent to the Curragh for an indefinite period of detention, hardly helped political re-organisation. Nor did anybody seem to worry too much about the sacred right of elected T.D.s to travel to Leinster House, if they so wished. The

Sinn Féin T.D.s who had been elected in the March General Election of 1957 were also unceremoniously dumped in the Curragh without trial, and without release date.

Bíodh sin mar atá is léir ón méid se thuas go bhfuil tábhacht leis an obair pholaitíochta agus go mbíonn eagla ar chleasaithe Theach Laighean roimh iarracht ar bith a dhéantar chun an bonn a bhaint dá ngreim dhocht dhaingean féin ar gach gné den pholaitíocht agus de shaol an phobail. Sin é an fáth nach bhfuil cead ag Proinsias Mag Ghloinn labhairt ar an raidió ná ar an teilifís, cé go bhfuil sé ina Chomhairleoir tofa ó 1967 i leith.

Cé mhéad den dream a chuireann an chinsireacht seo i bhfeidim a bhí ag obair ar son an phobail in 1967? Cá bhfuil an t-ionadaí poiblí eile i gContae na Gaillimhe a bhfuil an oiread sin oibre déanta aige, gan bhuntáiste ar bith dó féin—ach a mhalaírt go minic—agus a sheas le linn na 23 bliana sin ar son Chothrom na Féinne ní h-amháin dá lucht leanúna féin ach ar son na bpáirtithe go léir sa Chomhairle in éineacht leis. Fiú nuair nach raibh go leor de na páirtithe céanna sásta an Cothrom na Féinne céanna a chuideamh agus a roinnt leis. Molann an saothar an fear...

OIDHREACHT TONY D'ARCY AGUS SEÁN MacNEELA 1940-'90

Máirtín Ó Cadhain as Cnocán Glas, An Spidéal was soon joined in the Curragh Internment Camp by many other Galway Republicans. These included Paddy Fox of Carnmore, Oranmore and Peadar Hughes, Kilbeg, Headford. Others were Michael Hughes, Kilbannon, Tuam, Nick Lally, Abbeygate Street, Galway (and late of An Cheathrú Rua), Pat Shannon, Mounthellev, all three of whom are now deceased but remained strong in their Republican beliefs to the end.

These were among those who re-organised the Republican Movement in Co. Galway in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Several had faced the Military Tribunal in Collins Barracks, Dublin and Fursa and Liam Breathnach of Galway City, whose father Sinn Féin Councillor Michael Walsh was murdered by British Crown Forces, also spent long years in captivity. Shanaglish, Gort was strongly represented in the Curragh too.

Ex-internees May agus Máirtín Standún made their home at An Spidéal, Cois Fhairrge, Co. na Gaillimhe in 1946 and, inspired by Tony D'Arcy, Máirtín Ó Cadhain and others, did much for the Irish language and the Gaeltacht generally over the decades.

Galway's contribution to the 1956-62 Resistance Campaign in the Six Counties was immediate and strong. Sean Scott of Ballyforan and Michael Kelly of Killimor were among the members of the Pearse Column who were arrested in Co. Monaghan following the deaths in action of Seán Sabhat and Feargal Ó h-Anluain at Brookborough, Co Fermanagh on New Year's Day 1957. They were jailed in Mountjoy for six months for not answering questions—same charge as Tony D'Arcy—and on expiration were sent to the now notorious Curragh Camp for internment without trial until 1959.

At the end of 1959 two men were captured with guns in Co. Tyrone. One was a Galwayman, David Egan from Ballybrit, and they both received 15 years penal servitude for demolishing a British Forces Training Centre and base, and possession of arms. They remained in Crumlin Road Jail, Belfast until the General Amnesty in 1963.

Other Republicans from Galway who were on active service against British Forces in the Six Counties at the time included the late Paddy Hanniffy, Tallyhoe, Athenry, an N.A.C.A. cross-country runner who served with the Teeling Column in South Fermanagh. Others were active in West Fermanagh later in that campaign.

The project that Tony D'Arcy and his comrades had in hand when arrested at the Meath Hotel, Dublin in 1940 was still-born then due to the actions of the Dublin Government. But his memory and sacrifice inspired a new generation including many Galway people, to pick up the standard he let fall only in death. (It is still too early to comment on the events of the 1970s and '80 or to attempt to assess them or Galway's part in them).

MAIGH EO

In reference to Co. Mayo, Michael Healy of Ballina was arrested in the Meath Hotel raid with Tony D'Arcy, sentenced by the Military Tribunal and interned without trial at the Curragh on expiration of sentence.

All parts of Mayo were represented in the Internment Camp as they clung to Seán MacNeela's high standards of service. These included the brothers Luke and Frank Weaver of Charlestown; Andy Redmond and Jack Basquille of Castlebar; Mick Quinn, Swinford; Ned Murray, Martin Masterson and Charlie Mulchrone of Newport; Eddie Corrigan, Seamus Cafferkey and his brother Dan from Ballycroy. Dan was first of all deported from England and then sent to the Curragh for the duration.

Seamus Burke of Ballinrobe, known as "Habeas Corpus" because of the famous constitutional law case in his name which caused the release of all the Arbour Hill internees in December 1939, called the "first internment" of the period was included. Aeneas McNulty of Achill Island died soon after release due to the rigours of imprisonment as did Ned Duffy of Ballina in 1950 at the age of 36.

Seamus Ó Mongáin, Dú Thuama, was scriptwriter and announcer when arrested with MacNeela at the seizure of the I.R.A. radio in December, 1939 and went through the Military Court, Mountjoy and the Curragh. Paddy MacNeela of Ballycroy, brother of Seán, was wounded in Dublin by the Special Branch when, as an unarmed man, he attempted to evade arrest some weeks after Seán's death. Both episodes formed the basis for a play, first produced in 1951, by Brian MacMahon of Kerry called *The Bugle in the Blood*.



Slán lenár n-athair ... The Widow, relatives and young family of Tony D'Arcy say goodbye to the martyred husband and father at the graveside in Donagh Patrick Republican Plot ...

Seán MacNeela was arrested in England in late summer 1938 under the name 'Gibbons' when transporting a large quantity of potassium chlorate — a chemical used in the manufacture of 'Paxo', a home-made explosive for the Sabotage Campaign 1939-40. Because the English police did not realise the importance of their accidental find, he received only four months and returned to service in Ireland as Director of Publicity on G.H.Q. Staff, Irish Republican Army.

Mayo people active in England at that time and jailed for long periods included Eddie Joe Gallagher, of Charlestown, the sisters Rose and Ann Sweeney of Newport and the late Molly Gallagher.

Among those who were sentenced by the Military Tribunal was Michael Geraghty of Swinford. Mayo's record of service was in keeping with Seán MacNeela's sacrifice and many of those mentioned came out of prison and internment camp to re-organise the Republican Movement into the 1950s and 1960s.

Mayo men were actively engaged in carrying out MacNeela's wishes in the Resistance Campaign of 1956-62. They were included in the Teeling Column — comprised mainly of West of Ireland Volunteers — in South Fermanagh in 1956-57 and served right up to the Cease Fire Order in February, 1962.

Six men from the county were held in the July 1957 swoop for the latest phase of internment without trial and sent to the Curragh Camp. They were: Peadar Murray (son of Ned already referred to); John Joe Monaghan and Dan Hoban of Newport; Paddy MacCallig of Claremorris; Jimmy Deare and Bart Ó Gormaille of Castlebar. The latter was a Tuam, Co. Galway man working in Mayo.

Sinn Féin representatives elected to Ballina Urban Council in the 1960s and '70s were Jackie Clarke, who served for many years to be succeeded by Gerry Ginty. All were inspired by the example of service and sacrifice given by Sean Mac Neela.

As in the case of Galway it is too soon to enumerate or comment on Mayo's part in the renewed freedom struggle of the 1970s and '80s. Galway and Mayo's service was considerable down the years and formed a portion of D'Arcy and Mac Neela's political legacy.

"Life springs from death, and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations ..."

— Padraic Pearse at the grave of O'Donovan Rossa in 1915.

SCENES AT FUNERAL

"Tony's remains came home via the main Dublin-Galway road to Galway City and on to Headford. Guards of Honour escorted it through the towns, business premises closed, local I.R.A. units fired volleys in salute and huge crowds turned out.

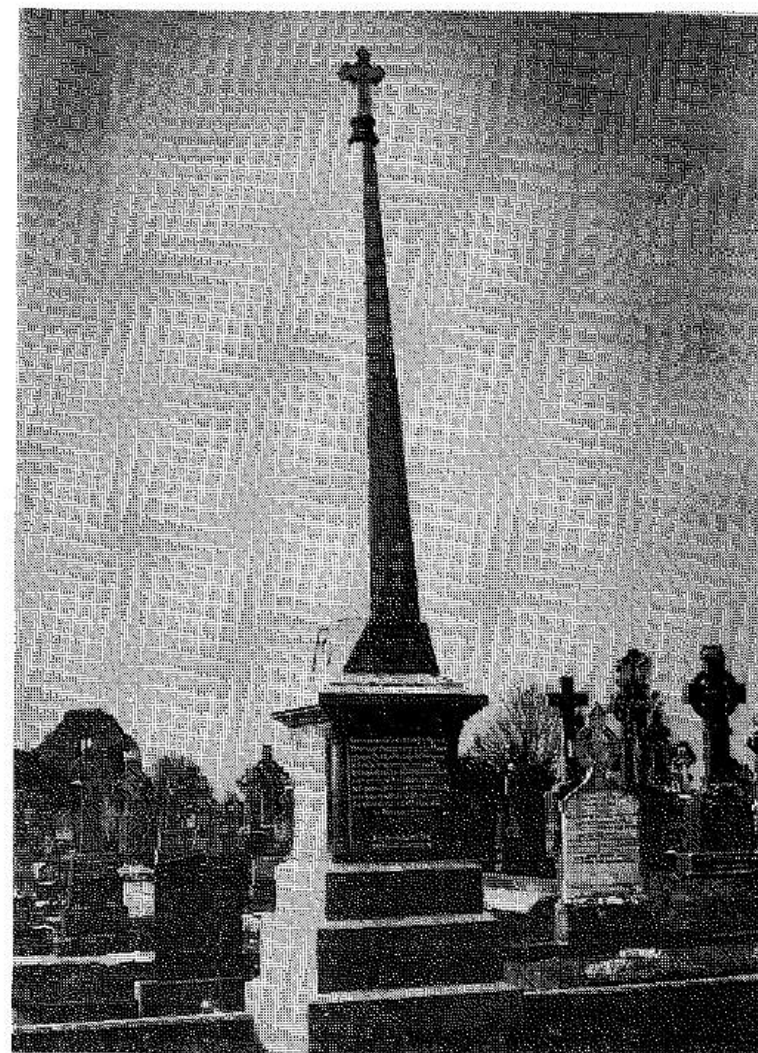
"The funeral itself was an exhibition of frightfulness, worthy of the first Free Staters. As the cortege came to Donaghpatrick Cemetery, the walls lined with Free State soldiers, with bayonets fixed in full war kit.

"After the immediate family had entered with the coffin, the gates were barred. Running fights broke out and mourners attempting to enter were attacked and set upon. War-time censorship was invoked as it had been during the hunger strike, to cloak all this from the Irish people.

"Such was the barbarism of the State Forces that Tony Darcy's grave alongside the ten of 1923 was not filled in properly until the following day.

"Similar scenes took place at Sean McNeela's interment a few days later."

— Eleven Galway Martyrs Booklet published 1985



THE REPUBLICAN PLOT, Donagh Patrick Cemetery. The Memorial Inscription includes: "Antóine Ó Dorchaíde, Ceann-chatha, a d'éag in Osbuidéal Naomh Briáin, Príosún Míleata Chnoc an Arbhair ar an 16ú lá d'Aibreán, 1940, thar éis dhá lá caogad troscaidh ar son a tíre agus atá curtha anseo."

Unveiling ceremony was on August 17, 1952.

MARTYRS FOR FREEDOM

(Air: Boolavogue)

Brave Tony D'Arcy! brave Seán MacNeela!
From storied Galway and proud Mayo,
They've walked the ways of the deathless heroes
And have won the glory that martyrs know.
We'll hold their deed in our hearts forever,
We'll call their names over land and sea,
And we'll tell their story through generations
By the glowing firesides of Ireland free.

Their lives they offered for Poblacht Éireann,
For Truth and Justice and stainless Right.
God give them rest in the Halls Eternal
For with hearts unbending they fought the fight.
May Ashe be near them and brave MacSwiney,
And all who travelled the same hard road
Through the gloom and pain of the Vale of Sorrows,
Where no bright home-star above them glowed.

The foe they fought is the foe of ages,
The vile invader who laid us low,
Whose Empire strangles all peaceful nations
And robs the weak that itself may grow.
While slaves in Ireland bow down to England
And lower the flag that was floating high,
Our loved and faithful, our best and bravest,
For Poblacht Éireann must fight and die!

Young men of Ireland! Our Dead are calling
To their living comrades in field and town,
To join the standard of Poblacht Éireann
And fight the forces of the British Crown.
Brave Tony D'Arcy, brave Seán MacNeela,
And all our heroes from sea to sea,
Will march beside you till in joy and triumph
You'll sing their praises in Ireland free?

Brian na Banban a scriobh (1940)



Leathchead bliain níos déanaí ... The D'Arcy family, April 1990. From left: Mrs. Maura Tierney (daughter), Joe D'Arcy, Noel D'Arcy (sons) and Mrs. Julia D'Arcy (widow).

"THE DARK YEAR 1940"

Political Executions, Deaths on Hunger Strike, Internment Camps,
Military Tribunals ...

*"We are also of opinion that criminal status should not be applied
to political prisoners."*

— Verdict of Coroner's Jury at Inquest on Seán MacNeela,
April 22, 1940.

*"Mr. D'Arcy was well known in Tuam and district, where he
presided and spoke at several Republican meetings during the last
few years."*

— Tuam Herald, April 20, 1940.

*"The lesson is that there will be no peace, no progress, material
or spiritual, no friendships between us and our neighbours in
England — until every sod of Irish soil is one united independent
land, free of British occupation ..."*

— Brian Ó h-Uiginn at grave of Seán MacNeela,
Ballycroy, Co. Mayo.

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