

50
YEARS
AGO:

THE MAGAZINE FORT RAID

WITH THE Chief-of-Staff Seán Russell trapped in the USA by the outbreak of World War II, the arrest of four of the IRA leaders in September and the seizure of over US \$8,000, the sense of direction in the Republican Movement seemed to wobble.

The hunger-strikes had been successful and the English Campaign had continued at a lower level while the release of all internees had been secured through a loop-hole in the *Offences Against the State Act*.

The explosion in October at the boundary wall of Mountjoy in an attempt to effect the escape of the four leaders was engineered from inside the jail. In November, Sheriff Street postal sorting office in Dublin was raided and £5,000 was seized. Later in the month the National Bank at Clonliffe Road, Dublin was held up and £200 taken.

The previous month, two training centres in Dublin for the English Campaign were raided by police and put out of action: Killiney Castle, where the youthful Brendan Behan, among others, was trained by Seán Fuller of Kerry — before that he was Operations Officer in Birmingham — and the Silver Springs in Delgany where Mickie Conway of Tipperary was the instructor who trained the late Harry White of Belfast.

"War News" recorded the Killiney Castle raid, saying that Inspector Mansfield and his men found only some blankets and mattresses and a few old alarm clocks. But the Republican policy of not taking action in the 26 County area, announced at the opening of the English Campaign, was now beginning to look rather threadbare.

DIRECT CONFLICT

A sensational event at the end of December brought the Movement into direct conflict with the Dublin administration who were only looking for an excuse to clamp down on Republicans, having been frustrated by the hunger-strikes and Seán Burke's Habeas Corpus action in early December.

PLAN SUBMITTED

Back in 1937, under Michael Fitzpatrick as Chief-of-Staff, a plan had been submitted to GHQ for a quick raid on the Free State Army's reserve store of ammunition in the Phoenix Park. It had been turned down because of inability to dump securely the very large quantity of munitions involved.

At this stage, in December 1939, younger men on Headquarters Staff were thinking of guerrilla raids on British forces in the Six Counties from the Free State. These included Michael Traynor of Belfast, now Adjutant-General, Jack McNeela, Dominic Adams (home from the English Campaign) and Tony Darcy of Galway, OC of the Western Command.

Although between three and five hundred Thompson sub-machineguns (described by Bowyer Bell as "an excellent weapon, accurate, rapid-firing and easy to hide") were in IRA dumps, there was a great shortage of .45-calibre American ammunition for this basic and most effective weapon. The Free State Army were well supplied with such ammunition, however.

GUERRILLA WARFARE

Training had been switched from bomb-making to guerrilla warfare, and although no advanced planning appears to have been made or strategy evolved — unlike



• Brendan Behan

the English Campaign — when Tomás O Dubhghaill, a Dublin civil servant in the 26-County Department of Defence presented an audacious scheme for raiding the Magazine Fort, it fell into the general scheme of things at the time.

Again and again Bowyer Bell tells of 26-County state provocation, IRA retaliation followed by state vengeance setting a pattern from late 1939 onwards. "The pattern was not to be altered for years," he states.

And so tactics, without regard to strategy and over-all policy became the norm with the Republican Movement. Lack of strategy resulted in disaster and want of policy caused a break-down in discipline. "Immediate tactics without much thought for the future" seemed to be the guiding rule.

However, the raid on the Magazine Fort went ahead. It had previously been raided on Easter Monday 1916 by senior Fianna who pretended to engage in football nearby. They carried off much-needed war material to the GPO garrison in O'Connell Street. In Easter Week, policy, strategy and tactics were inter-linked.

On December 23, 1939 at 8.35pm the Dublin Brigade of the IRA hit the Magazine Fort in the Park. The routine of the garrison (13 men armed with rifles and a Lewis gun) had not been changed since 1924 and they were immobilised swiftly.

Entrance was gained by a *ruse-de-guerre* when a "civilian" on a bicycle arrived at the main gate with a "Christmas present" for the officer-in-charge. Another ruse at nearby Islandbridge Barracks failed and shots were exchanged with military policemen. The empty lorries waiting here were, however, diverted to the target in the Park.

SHOTS FIRED

There all went well and not a shot was fired or a blow struck as 13 lorries were loaded with 1,084,000 rounds and gotten safely away. A Park Ranger, who lived in one of the gate-lodges intervened and was hit over the head and silenced when he would not keep quiet. He recovered from his injuries.

Five Volunteers who delayed their departure when all was over were captured with a number of short arms in a sack. These were the only casualties. The raid had lasted a little over one hour.

It was recalled in June 1954 when 700 weapons were taken in a similar fashion from the British military barracks in

Armagh city. Planning, strategy and tactics had been worked out in 1954 as in 1916.

MASS SEARCHES

At Christmas 1939, panic ensued. Most of the night of December 23-24 was spent by Michael Brennan of Clare, Free State Army Chief-of-Staff, drawing up plans with his officers for an immediate mass search to recover the bulk of their reserve ammunition supply — over a million rounds including 303 rifle and .45 automatic ammunition.

Cruel disappointment followed for the IRA. The local units were simply not able to cope with such quantities of material. Seán Ashe, OC, Kildare had prepared better dumps than most although he was certain he would have been ordered to drive directly to the Border to take part in a Northern campaign.

Over the next two weeks most, but not all of the ammunition was recovered and some old dumps were discovered as well. The men arrested in the Park and those accused of holding the Magazine Fort ammunition were put into "A" Wing of Mountjoy Jail, among the ordinary prisoners, and not with their comrades already in "D" Wing. This policy of the Free State was to result in tragedy later on as shall be seen.

DERRY JAIL

Meanwhile on Christmas Day, 1939, 50 internees in Derry's old jail embarked on a protest, holding their wing for several hours against a force of RUC and B-Specials. They painted the ends of their bed-sheets green and orange and flew these make-shift Tricolours from their cell windows, to the enthusiastic response of the crowds gathered outside.

They had been moved in buses, each handcuffed to a warder or a policeman, from Belfast's Crumlin Road Jail and were loudly cheered by the populace on arrival in Derry. A swoop in October had netted 45 prisoners in addition to the 32 held at Christmas 1938 and so they were divided from their comrades in Belfast jail.

BONFIRES

In Belfast bonfires were lit in Albert Street and Cullingtree Road, to defy the wartime blackout. RUC and B-Specials were brought in to baton-charge the crowds but many fought back with their bare fists.

Then on December 29, the IRA radio which had been transmitting for months was seized by Dublin Castle Special Branch under Det.-Sergt. Denis O'Brien, of whom more shall be heard later.

The radio had broadcast a wide range of programmes, including the advocacy of the "Comhar na gComharsan" philosophy favouring co-operative development of the economy in a free Ireland. On the night of December 29, a list of the ammunition taken in the Magazine Fort Raid was being read out when the blow fell.

ARRESTS

Arrested were: Jack McNeela of Ballycroy, Co. Mayo, the Director of Publicity on IRA Headquarters Staff; Jack Plunkett, brother of Joseph Mary Plunkett and a 1916 Veteran himself, (he was the radio technician); Séamus O Mongáin of Doohoma, Co. Mayo who was Editor of "War News" and radio announcer and script writer and Séamus Byrne, a Dublin solicitor who was the tenant of the house, "Ashgrove House", Highfield Road, Upper Rathmines, Dublin.

Séamus later had a play produced in the

Abbey Theatre in the early 1950s called "Design for a headstone" which resulted in scenes among the audience at this time. The talented Séamus O Mongáin has retired as a secondary teacher in Swinford. A fluent Irish speaker he supports Sinn Féin Poblachtach and still passionately advocates the "Comhar na gComharsan" policy.

We are sorry to record the death of his wife, a staunch Republican in her own right, Máire Ní Chólmáin — in England on December 12. The staff of SAOIRSE, the direct lineal successor to "War News", expresses sincere sympathy to Séamus and family and wishes a speedy recovery to Séamus himself following his operation in a Galway hospital.

Soon on the heels of the seizure of the radio came another reverse. On January 3, following a route march by units of Cork city IRA three armed Special Branch detectives closed in on Tomás Óg Mac Curtáin, OC, First Cork Brigade, outside Mangan's Jewellers on Patrick Street.

DETECTIVE DIED

In the ensuing scuffle, a shot was fired from the Republican's revolver, wounding Detective Roche who died next morning. The other two, Collins and Moore were unhurt as was Tomás Mac Curtáin himself. He was arrested and placed in "D" Wing of Mountjoy Jail on a capital charge. He was the only son of the Lord-Mayor of Cork of the same name who was murdered by British Crown Forces in 1920.

On January 5, the Dublin administration followed up its advantage, pointing out the danger to the "neutrality" of the 26-County state posed by the Magazine Fort Raid and the challenge of the Cork shooting.

EMERGENCY POWERS

They amended the Emergency Powers Act of the previous September to allow for the internment without trial of citizens and not just aliens as already provided for in the parent Act.

As emergency legislation it could not be challenged in the Dublin courts as it was not subject to constitutional restraint. The five-week-old gap in the *Offences Against the State Act* was now closed.

On January 22 and 23 the death sentence on Barnes and McCormack was appealed in London. This time, they were represented by Albert Woods, SC of the Dublin Bar and Douglas Jenkins, BL instructed by Lehane and Hogan, Ormond Quay, Dublin. Con Lehane was doing his utmost to save their lives but the appeal was rejected.

SHOCKED PUBLIC

At home in Ireland, a shocked and unbelieving public joined in a monster reprieve campaign. To facilitate this, IRA units in England carried out no operations in January, 1940.

One Irish Republican prisoner was sentenced in London: Daniel Crotty received 10 years at the Old Bailey for "conspiracy" to cause explosions.

Otherwise the month of January, 1940 ended quietly. But tragedy loomed at home in Ireland and in England... (More next month. Refs. "Pléascáin i Sasana", sraith altanna i "gComhar" 1950-3 le Breandan Ó Beacháin; "Harry" by Harry White; "The IRA" by Tim Pat Coogan; "The Secret Army" by J. Bowyer Bell and "The Trial of Peter Barnes and others" by Letitia Fairfield).

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BARNES AND McCORMACK HANGED IN ENGLAND

ASH WEDNESDAY, February 7, 1940 will ever be remembered by nationally-minded Irish people who were alive at the time, as the morning when English imperial vengeance was wreaked on two young men from the Irish midlands.

Peter Barnes (32) from Banagher, Co. Offaly and James McCormack (29) of Mullingar, Co. Westmeath were hanged in Winson Green Prison, Birmingham at 9am. Their bodies were quickly consigned to graves in the prison yard.

A tremendous campaign for their reprieve had taken place. Public bodies and even de Valera himself had appealed for their lives. Bowyer Bell relates: "As their (court) appeals failed there was growing anger and on February 5 at the Mansion House in Dublin, five thousand met to protest. Two days later both were executed"

"On the following day Ireland went into national mourning, flags flew at half-mast, theatres and cinemas closed, sports meetings were cancelled, and masses were offered in the major churches for the repose of their souls."

And this writer remembers teachers in school leading their pupils in prayer. Later outside in the schoolyard, on that day at least, England and especially Churchill — who was not Prime Minister there yet — were vehemently cursed even by those whose families supported England in the World War.

PUBLIC FEELING

On February 5, the *New York Times* had analysed Irish public feelings as follows: "Opinion here is either that two innocent men will hang or that it is the partition of Ireland and the British who forced these two young Irishmen to perpetrate such outrages. Anglo-Irish relations could markedly deteriorate through the hanging of these men."

Letitia Fairfield (an English source) noted that "in personal relationships Barnes had evidently shown excellent qualities. He had nursed his dying wife devotedly through a long illness; much love from family and friends surrounded him up to his last moments."

To his brother Peter Barnes wrote: "Thank God, I have nothing to be afraid of. I am an innocent man and, as I said before, it will be known yet that I am. The only thing that worries me now is the thought of my poor father and mother, but I know God will comfort them."

UNWAVERING

Writing of James McCormack, Letitia Fairfield says: "In the long week . . . waiting for his trial his unwavering attitude

had been, 'we know what's coming to us and we can take it.' He could and did."

She continues by saying that even those totally opposed to him "must be struck by the watchful loyalty he showed throughout the trial to the Hewitts (the people of the house where he stayed), to his own organisation, and to his comrades in the conspiracy who were not before the court. There is dignity as well as courage in many of his replies under cross-examination."

This English source concludes: "Cheerful indifference to a capital charge and the ensuing sentence is not necessarily a sign of virtue In James Richards it appeared to spring genuinely from the satisfaction a man feels at having performed what he believes to be his highest duty."

Writing to his sister in Mullingar in his last letter, McCormack said: "... Thank God I am prepared as I know I am dying in a just cause. I shall walk out in the morning smiling, as I shall be thinking of my God, and of the good men who went before me in the same cause."

Brian O'Higgins wrote at that time: "The fear and panic that have ridden official England since January 1939 were plainly to be seen in Birmingham on the day two unarmed, pinioned, well-guarded Irish exiles, whose thoughts had already flown far from this world, were led from prison cells to the scaffold."

ENGLAND FEARS HER VICTIMS

"The entire prison and all its approaches and all the streets leading to it were so heavily and closely guarded by armed police and soldiers that not a single person could approach within hundreds of yards of it. England fears her victims even while she launches them into Eternity."

Protest demonstrations were held in Dublin, Belfast and Armagh as well as in the prisoners' home towns and other centres. Simon Donnelly, Easter Week 1916 and Black-and-Tan War veteran who had long been inactive spoke at a huge Dublin protest.

Enno Stephan says: "He proclaimed to the crowds' jubilation: 'We know very well what outcome we want to this war (WW2). We want the enemy who has kept our people in bondage for 700 years and who continues to pour insults on us to be pitilessly vanquished. Until such time as the Irish Republic is established, Ireland's youth will continue to sacrifice itself. If the government does not bring foreign overlordship to an end, others must be entrusted with the task'."

Donnelly captured the mood of the moment. Many Irish people saw World War 2 in simple military terms — as a



• Peter Barnes

re-run of WW1. They did not recognise Nazism for what it was and would become and thought only of England's difficulty being Ireland's opportunity.

Tim Pat Coogan's assessment in 1970 was: "They (Barnes and McCormack) have since passed into an only slightly lesser place in the martyrology of Ireland as have Dunne and Sullivan, the men who shot Sir Henry Wilson (in 1922)."

20,000 FOLLOWED REMAINS

When the two 1940 martyrs were repatriated to Ireland 30 years later, 20,000 people followed their remains to Mullingar Cemetery on a memorable Sunday in July 1969.

Speakers at the graveside were Jim O'Regan of Cork, former International Brigade in Spain and later Republican prisoner serving 20 years in England, and Jimmy Steele of Belfast, beloved veteran Republican who criticised the direction then being taken by sections of the leadership of the Movement who now form the Workers' Party.

The comrades of the executed men were active in four English cities during February in what were by now merely acts of defiance. On the second of the month in Birmingham itself five incendiary packets were placed into slits cut in bus seats but only two of these exploded. Four days later on the eve of the executions another ignited in a London bus. On the same day there were fires resulting from explosions in the mails in London, Manchester and Birmingham with an attempt in Liverpool.

Back in Birmingham on the 14th there were explosions at two business premises. Three other bombs were discovered and defused. In London on the 22nd an explosion occurred at a public utility while another at a litter bin at Oxford Street in the West End injured seven persons.

BRENDAN BEHAN JAILED

At Liverpool Assizes early in the month the famous Brendan Behan, then aged sixteen-and-a-half, was sentenced to three years in Borstal for possession of explosives. He startled the court by a well-prepared speech from the dock in which he called for an All-Ireland Workers' and Small Farmers' Republic.

His "Grannie Furlong" and her two daughters had received five, three and two years respectively at Birmingham the previous July. Behan's book "Borstal Boy" has served as a most interesting introduction to the Irish Republicanism of the 1930s and '40s for many people.

"The two that swung in Birmingham With ordered step from off the gallow's floor"
("The Dead March Past", Behan's poem on the martyrs of the 1940s.)

Back in Ireland the amendment to the Offences Against the State Act to cement the closing of the gap in it which the Séamus Burke Habeas Corpus case in



• James McCormack

December opened, finally became law on February 9. It had been passed through Leinster House in emergency session on January 4 and then referred to the Dublin Supreme Court to copperfasten it against constitutional action.

DUBLIN'S INTERNMENT ACT

The OAS (Amendment) Act 1940 provided for internment without trial; this time the Minister of State authorising it would be "of opinion" instead of "being satisfied" that the person being held indefinitely was engaged in certain activities.

A majority judgement of the court held that this time the minister was not exercising a judicial function and so technically internment could proceed under ordinary and permanent law without fear of constitutional challenge.

On the morning of Ash Wednesday two arrests took place in Co. Meath. Sylvester Fitzsimons and Bertie McCormack were interrogated as to their movements. Both had been trained for the English Campaign but were instructed to return home and await the call to action.

Sylvester refused to answer and was given three months in Mountjoy by the Military Court. Bertie, in compliance with a new directive from GHQ accounted for his movements and was promptly interned in Arbour Hill Prison — one of the first under the amended legislation. What de Valera did and not what he said was what counted.

The pattern was being set for the coming years. "The Dark Year 1940" had indeed settled in. More, much more was to follow

(Next month: The Ballykinlar Raid, the Meath Hotel Swoop, the Mountjoy Hunger Strike begins. Refs: "The Secret Army" by J. Bowyer Bell; "The IRA" by T.P. Coogan; "Spies in Ireland" by Enno Stephan, publ. Four Square Books 1965 and "The Trial of Peter Barnes" by Letitia Fairfield.)

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HUNGER-STRIKE IN MOUNTJOY

FOLLOWING the execution by hanging of Barnes and McCormack on February 7, 1940 and the first re-internments under the amended Offences Against the State Act two days later a dramatic event took place which lifted Republican morale.

With the creation of a new Northern Command in the IRA — which embraced units in the Six Occupied Counties plus Donegal — a recovery in Republican fortunes occurred in that part of Ireland.

Following receipt of accurate intelligence from the British Army Camp at Ballykinlar, Co. Down, a unit of the Belfast Battalion staged a lightning raid on the armoury there on February 10. While the much-sought-after Sten submachine-guns were missed, over 100 Lee-Enfield rifles were netted and taken safely to Belfast.

Not a shot was fired and one of the raiding party in high spirits pinned a note to the inside of the armoury door which quoted a ballad of the 1920s: "The IRA was far away in Johnson's motor car!"

IRA RADIO

The British kept silent about the raid in an attempt at cover-up but a new IRA radio had been broadcasting in Belfast for some weeks. It had come on the air following the seizure of the transmitter in Dublin on December 28 and its first news bulletin had been an account of the Christmas Day demonstration and fight by the Republican internees in Derry Jail.

The Belfast radio broke the good news next day: "Seo dhúib Raidió Phoblacht na h-Eireann. This is the Irish Republican Army calling . . ." At 3pm and again at night transmitting took place on the medium waveband that day.

Normally the radio broadcast once weekly after the programme had been distributed throughout the city. Bowyer Bell re-created the atmosphere of the time: "It was possible to walk through the side streets off the Falls Road at the appropriate time and hear every radio tuned in to the IRA broadcast, to the dis-

1942 but the radio in Belfast evaded capture until eventually in the autumn of 1940 it failed for want of spare parts.

Between them the Dublin and Belfast underground transmitters had the IRA on the air for eighteen months — from Easter 1939 to October 1940 — which was no mean feat in the circumstances of the time. The Dublin radio in contrast to its successor broadcast a short-wave at 21 metres, which wavelength was advertised in "War News".

RECOVERY

With the recovery of the Army in the Six Counties from the arrests and internments of December 1938 and October 1939, a move was made to galvanise into action the Western Command which was centred on Co. Galway with a young businessman from Headford named Tony Darcy as OC.

A meeting was summoned for the Meath Hotel at 40 Parnell Square, Dublin on February 17. Representatives of units in the five Connacht counties as well as Donegal, Tyrone, Belfast and elsewhere were instructed to go direct to the location on this occasion, but were to enter Dublin individually.

The OC South Roscommon Unit, Tommy McDermott who had been "on the run" since he was released from the first internment in Arbour Hill in December, cycled all the way to Dublin. At Kinnegad, Co. Westmeath Tony Darcy overtook him in his car, gave him a "thumbs up" sign, and continued alone as per instructions.

DISASTER

Disaster awaited them in the capital. Michael Traynor of Belfast as Adjutant-General represented GHQ Staff. He said years later at an Easter Commemoration in Co. Longford at the grave of Comdt. Barney Casey in Killoe (1951) that the purpose of the meeting was to implement plans "for the invasion and occupation of the Six North-Eastern Counties."

But matters did not proceed even to that subject. Traynor was taking notes and testing the arms and munitions under the control of each unit when Special Branchmen armed with sub-machine-guns entered the Hotel.

Free State troops in full war-kit had sealed off most of the western side of Parnell Square outside and 16 Volunteers were taken in the swoop. As in 1922 Free State action had prevented another blow aimed at British power in the Six Counties.

The men arrested got three months in Mountjoy for refusing to answer questions but the gates of the Curragh Concentration Camp would open for them on their release from jail.

MOUNTJOY CONDITIONS

Conditions in Mountjoy were bad in "D" Wing with poor food and a 4pm lock-up in the cells until 7.30am next morning, but worse still a small number of men held in connection with the Magazine Fort Raid in December were confined not in "D" Wing with the Republicans but in "A" Wing with the ordinary prisoners.

Political treatment was denied directly

in "A" Wing and this on top of poor conditions in "D" Wing would not be tolerated by the prisoners. In an effort to force change a hunger-strike for political status — not for release — was begun by the six-man prisoners staff in "D" Wing on February 25.

The staff consisted of: Tomás Mac Curáin, awaiting trial on a capital charge; Tommy Grogan of Drogheda (a brother of Lawrence) who was charged in connection with the Phoenix Park Raid; Michael Traynor and Tony Darcy recently held at the Meath Hotel; and Seán McNeela and Jack Plunkett who were arrested when the Dublin-based radio was seized.



• Tony Darcy

The portents were not good. The Magazine Fort Raid and the shooting dead of a Special Branchman in Cork had intervened since the successful hunger-strikes for release of three Cork internees and Paddy McGrath before Christmas. The Emergency Powers Act and the Offences Against the State Act had been amended to copperfasten internment without trial.

MEETINGS BROKEN UP

The surge of protest and public feeling at the Birmingham hangings, the "suppressed passion" as it was called at the time, was not allowed to work in favour of the strikers in Mountjoy. Support meetings were broken up at the command of the Dublin Administration; telegrams of protest to Mrs. Kathleen Clarke, widow of Tom Clarke, 1916 Signatory, as Lord Mayor of Dublin were not delivered.

Even press notices of Masses being offered for the spiritual welfare of the men on hunger-strike were forbidden to be carried in the Dublin daily papers under the new war-time censorship.

The six prisoners were not throwing themselves upon the mercy of the Irish people who were not allowed to hear their case; in effect they were throwing themselves on the scant mercy of de Valera and his followers — and the hunger-strikers and their comrades had embarrassed the former President of Sinn Féin enough in the past year and more, it was felt in 26-county Establishment circles. The hunger-strikers were trapped.

Tim Pat Coogan graphically describes developments in Mountjoy itself: "On March 1 . . . it was decided to prevent them (McNeela and Plunkett) being taken to the (Military) court. The prisoners barricaded themselves in "D" Wing 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 Darcy standing with his hands up after surrendering, when a policeman brought his baton down across his head."

HOSES

Hoses were turned on the prisoners. "With men who had been on hunger-strike for four days this was a harrowing ordeal", Coogan continues.

Later he quotes Gerry Boland's statement in Leinster House early in February that conceding to hunger-strikers had "got to stop". Coogan concludes that the Mountjoy strike "was obviously coming at a moment of peak determination on the government's part to resist such pressure and the men who rejected their food on February 25 realised this but were determined to die if necessary in order to achieve their aim."

On March 1 then, McNeela and Plunkett were sentenced to two years and eighteen months respectively for running an underground radio and were transferred to Arbour Hill and to St. Brigid's Military Hospital on March 27.

Tony Darcy and Michael Traynor got 3 months each for refusing to answer questions, were sent to Arbour Hill on March 5 and to St. Brigid's on March 27. Mac Curáin and Grogan were also removed to St. Brigid's. Tragedy loomed . . .

FINAL BLOWS IN ENGLAND

Meanwhile in England, the valiant few delivered their final blows. On March 1 in Salford an incendiary device ignited at a Bayswater stores. On March 4 another bus in Salford was burned and two days later there was an explosion at a bank in London's Park Lane.

St. Patrick's Day saw an explosion at the rear of Paddington Town Hall in London. The following day an unexploded bomb was found in a litter bin at Grosvenor Place, SW1 while another exploded at Westminster City Council refuse depot.

The English Campaign ended and the Six-County people were left to depend on their own resources for the time being due to action by the Dublin government. An assessment of the Sabotage Campaign in England will be made later in this series.

Note: Brendan Behan (16%) as related last month had gone to England but it is authoritatively learned that he had done so of his own accord. He had two years earlier attempted to go to Spain to fight for the Spanish Republic but was not accepted. He was already making a name for himself as a literary person.

(More next month: Refs. "Ar Thóir Mo Shealbhá" le Tarlach Ó h-Uí, FNT 1960; "The IRA" by Tim Pat Coogan; "The Secret Army" by J. Bowyer Bell and "The Trial of Peter Barnes and Others" by Letitia Fairfield.)



• Seán McNeela

may of the RUC who had failed to turn up a clue to the wandering transmitter."

War News on about 10 getstened sheets to each issue of 7,000 was distributed and continued circulation until

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DEATH OF HUNGER-STRIKERS



• TONY DARCY ON HIS DEATH-BED.

"Brave Tony Darcy! Brave Seán MacNeela! From storied Galway and proud Mayo..."

COMMANDANT TONY DARCY (32), former OC Western Command, IRA died on hunger strike in St. Bricin's Military Hospital, Arbour Hill, Dublin on April 16, 1940 and his comrade on the strike Commandant Seán MacNeela (26), former Director of Publicity, GHQ Staff, IRA died three days later on April 19 — four hours after the hunger strike ended.

They had been fasting 53 and 56 days respectively for political treatment for Republican prisoners. Seán MacNeela, of Ballycroy, Co. Mayo was unmarried but Tony Darcy left a wife and three small children. The four survivors of the strike were Michael Traynor, Belfast, former Adjutant-General, Tomás MacCurtain, former OC 1st Cork Brigade, Jack Plunkett, Dublin, formerly attached to the Publicity Directorate on GHQ Staff and Tommy Grogan, a Volunteer of the Drogheda Unit.

Of these four, Tomás MacCurtain (75) is now the sole survivor. Only son of the murdered Lord-Mayor of Cork of the same name, much more will be heard of him in this series. He was last imprisoned when he and Michael Traynor with 200 others were held without trial in the Curragh Concentration Camp 1957-59.

BEATING

Brian O'Higgins wrote of the two martyrs: "They were fine, healthy, temperate, strong young men and many believed that death was really the result of a beating inflicted on them in Mountjoy Jail. . . . The coercion censorship was in full swing at the time they died and the newspapers were only allowed to print a few lines of formal announcement without any comment, so that people who were not present at the funerals in Dublin and again in Galway and Mayo had no idea of how their sacrifice stirred hundreds of thousands who had never heard their names."

"One of my gravest offences against British Law and Order" continued Brian O'Higgins, "was the publication over my name of a booklet giving an account of

happenings in Ireland from 1921 to 1940 and a description of the scenes connected with the funerals of the latest two to die for love of Ireland."

"That booklet was seized by the police, the printer of it was prosecuted and fined, the publisher (Joe Clarke of the Irish Book Bureau, only a little while out of prison), sentenced to six months imprisonment, while the writer, whose name was mentioned several times in court, was not even visited by the police." (His time was to come. . . .)

Earlier Brian wrote in the 1950 *Wolfe Tone Annual*: "All organs of Irish Republican opinion were suppressed, and the ordinary newspapers, metropolitan and provincial, were ordered to refuse publication to every single item of news or views from Republican sources, the penalty for ignoring the order in the slightest being suppression of the newspaper concerned."

PAPERS CENSORED

"A paper which published, as an advertisement, the announcement of a Mass to be celebrated for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the men on hunger strike was severely censored and for a time was in danger of suppression. The words 'Republic of Ireland, were not allowed to appear anywhere, and were cut by the Government censor out of a poster announcing the annual commemoration of the death of Terence MacSwiney!'"

This was the situation and the atmosphere as Tony Darcy and Jack MacNeela fought their last fight for the honour and decency of Republican prisoners in their life-and-death struggle against being branded as criminals by former comrades now in positions of power ("I refrain from saying authority", to quote Brian O'Higgins).

DE VALERA CHALLENGED

Friends outside the prisons were forced to adopt novel tactics. Enno Stephan in his *"Spies in Ireland"* (page 95) describes one of them: "On Easter Sunday there was an embarrassing episode in Dublin, at the cemetery of Arbour Hill Prison, when Prime Minister de Valera laid wreaths on the graves of rebels shot in 1916. Philomena Plunkett, sister of Joseph Plunkett, one of the martyrs, protested and openly abused de Valera as

a traitor. Her second brother, Jack Plunkett, was at that very time on hunger strike. . . ."

Fiona Plunkett, herself an Easter Week 1916 Veteran, in her confrontation stated that on the other side of the cemetery boundary wall, in Arbour Hill Prison, her brother Jack was dying for the very same principles as her executed brother Joseph Mary, and that de Valera held the key. Fianna Fáil hypocrisy was being publicly challenged.

Fiona again showed her moral courage when she appeared on the platform of the banned Diamond Jubilee of 1916 commemoration in 1976 and was fined £10 in court for doing so. Then in her eighties she refused to pay the fine.

INQUEST

At the inquest on Tony Darcy, the jury brought in the following verdict: "We find that Anthony Darcy died of inanition, secondary to cardiac failure while on hunger strike". It was the first time a coroner's jury had sat on a hunger strike case since Thomas Ashe's death in 1917 (later inquests were suppressed by both British and Free State administrations) and the jury added a rider that "immediate action should be taken with regard to the five men at present on hunger strike and in a serious condition. We desire to express our sincerest sympathy with the widow, relatives and friends of the late Anthony Darcy in their bereavement."

Tim Pat Coogan says "The hunger strikers' ordeal naturally excited much controversy throughout the country but government censorship restricted newspaper comment and coverage of the events." He went on to give details of column inches and how the newspapers played down the stories (pp.150 & 151) and said that at the inquest only relatives of the dead men were allowed to attend. Seán MacBride appeared for the next-of-kin in both cases.

Coogan then relates: "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 instructions to them from IRA Headquarters, the strike was called off."

BOLAND IN WITNESS BOX

"He said that 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 Darcy 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 searching cross-examination from Seán MacBride."

Newspapers were allowed to cover court proceedings in full and so the "Irish Independent" had a complete page

plus on MacNeela's inquest. As is the case nowadays, no visits by relatives or friends were allowed to hunger strikers until they were at least 45 days fasting; in other words, in proximate danger of death.

"Irish Republican soldiers held in Irish jails were subjected to every humiliation mean minds could think of," wrote O'Higgins, and their hunger strike was "to focus public attention" on the denial of political status. But the Irish public had little scope to learn of all this.

De Valera and the Fianna Fáil Cabinet had squeezed the Republicans in prison — an age-old tactic of oppressors of Irish efforts for freedom. The prisoners had reacted and the screws were tightened. Revenge was taken for the political embarrassment of the 26-county government over the previous year and a half.

PLANNED VENGEANCE

But this was planned vengeance because Cabinet decisions must have been taken over the eight weeks the men were on strike. Other Republicans had died at Fianna Fáil hands: Seán Glynn, of Limerick in Arbour Hill following three months in solitary confinement in 1936 and Peter MacCarthy of Dublin, an unarmed man shot down in Clanbrassil Street by Special Branch detectives in 1937.

The deaths of Darcy and MacNeela were planned and they made the final rupture between Fianna Fáil and the Republican Movement. From now on the atmosphere would be poisoned and many tragedies would ensue, as shall be seen.

Then at the funerals, the Dublin administration drove home the point. O'Higgins says: "Not satisfied with persecution of the two brave men when living and with defamation of them when dead, the coercionists sent large bodies of armed police and soldiers, with armoured cars, to surround the graveyards where the burials took place and attempt to frighten people away."

"Maurice Twomey delivered the oration at Tony Darcy's funeral and I spoke at Claggan, in Mayo where Seán MacNeela was laid to rest, and in each place machine guns were trained on the grave."

Brian O'Higgins' haunting ballad, quoted at the outset of this article, entitled "Martyrs for Freedom" and written to the air of "Boolavogue" was sung in the prisons and internment camps of the 1940s, '50s and '60s.

It concludes: "Young men of Ireland! Our Dead are calling To their living comrades in fields and town,

To join the standard of Poblacht Eireann And fight the forces of the British Crown. Brave Tony Darcy, 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!"

(More next month. Refs: "The IRA" by Tim Pat Coogan "Wolfe Tone Annual, 1950" by Brian O'Higgins "Spies in Ireland" by Enno Stephan).

TESTIMONIAL DINNER 1990

West County Hotel, Chapelizod, Co. Dublin on Friday
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50 YEARS AGO:

DUBLIN, USA, BERLIN

MAY 1940 was yet another dramatic month full of incident. Seán Russell reached Berlin from the US, a gun-battle took place in a street off Merrion Square, Dublin, a German officer landed by parachute in Co. Meath and evaded capture, his equipment was seized in a police raid in Dublin, further arrests, jailings and internments occurred, with two Republicans shot and wounded on sight, etc.

But first the aftermath of D'Arcy and MacNeela's deaths on hunger strike in late April: at the inquest on Seán Mac Neela on the 22nd a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence (that death was due to inanition and cardiac failure) was returned.

However, the jury, after three quarters of an hour's absence, 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."

140 IMPRISONED

Thus was 26-county Government policy censured in the most public fashion in spite of Gerry Boland's evidence. A total of 140 Republicans were now in captivity in the 26 Counties, between internees, sentenced prisoners and those awaiting "trial", he had stated.

The booklet, *Eleven Galway Martyrs*, published in 1985 described the scenes at the funerals:

"Tony's remains came home (in his own hearse — his business included undertaking) via the main Dublin—Galway road . . . Guards of Honour escorted it through towns, business premises closed, local IRA 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 were lined with Free State soldiers, in full war-kit with bayonets fixed.

MOURNERS ATTACKED

"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 D'Arcy's grave alongside the ten of 1923 was not filled in properly until the following day.

"Similar scenes took place at Seán MacNeela's interment a few days later."

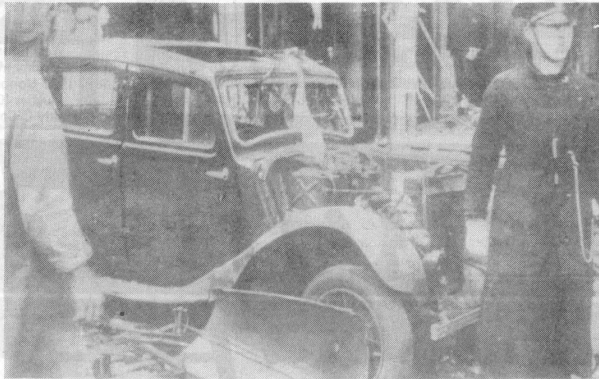
In answer to a query as to what had been gained by the sacrifice of two splendid lives, Brian O h-Uiginn answered that the youth of Ireland had gained inspiration to be true.

"The lesson is," he declared at MacNeela's grave, "that there will be no peace, no progress, material or spiritual, no friendship between us and our neighbours in England . . . until every sod of Irish soil is one, united, independent land, free of British occupation . . ."

RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKLET

For further reading, the excellent "Omós do Tony D'Arcy, Galway agus Seán MacNeela, Mayo" recently published booklet is recommended.

Then on April 25 came another casualty. Seán Martin of Ballymacarrett, Belfast was accidentally killed in a grenade explosion while training. "The Dark Year



• Scene of the Coventry bomb for which Barnes and McCormick were hanged.

1940" had claimed another Republican life.

On the same day, a mine exploded in Dublin Castle, headquarters of the Special Branch, injuring six persons. It was intended to knock out the police communications system but was misplaced. Gearóid MacCárthaigh, who worked in the P.O. Engineering Department made out a diagram of the place on an envelope bearing his name and address. The paper was not destroyed and Gearóid was quickly arrested and interned at the Curragh when it was seized in a police raid.

Then on May 7, a Special Branch motorcycle and sidecar bearing mail to the British Embassy was attacked in Holles Street, Dublin. It was hoped that the mail would contain material which when published would expose the Dublin Administration's collaboration with the British and compromise them with the public.

The two Branchmen held onto the mail and fought off their attackers with revolvers. Both Branchmen and one Volunteer were wounded. A Thompson gun was to hand but was not used and the Volunteer managed to conceal his leg wound when arrested some days later.

De Valera went on radio following this incident and said that the State was under attack internally and externally — even though the "phony war" was all that existed so far on the western front. Rewards of up to £5,000 were offered for information but were never claimed.

RUSHED TO SUPPORT

Fine Gael rushed to support Fianna Fáil next day when Cosgrave declared in Leinster House that they would not nominate candidates in the West Galway or Kilkenny by-elections then pending. One was an FF vacancy and the other an FG.

He did not want to embarrass de Valera if due to a contest there was "a marked reduction in support" caused by recent action "taken in connection with order in the State". He was clearly referring to the hunger strike deaths and Galway in particular was too near the bone. But the actions at Dublin Castle and Holles Street in effect shored up de Valera's position once more and took from the support for the Republican Movement.

PRISON PROTEST

Earlier at Easter a belated protest at the executions of Barnes and McCormack was made by Republican prisoners in Dartmoor Jail, England. They set fire to "D" block and refused to wear prison uniforms, painting the walls Green, White and Orange. Some were sent to other prisons but others remained isolated in punishment cells, completely naked during the day since everything was re-

moved at dawn but a Bible and a compressed paper pot.

In a previous attack on them after the Coventry explosion eleven Republicans were so badly beaten that they had to be hospitalised (see pages 133 of *Coogan* and 181-2 of *Bell*).

In another reaction to the Birmingham hangings, an attempt had been made by prominent IRA Veterans Simon Donnelly, Seán Dowling and others to launch a new political party called *Córas na Poblachta*, a forerunner of *Clann na Poblachta* in 1946. It sought many worthwhile policy changes but within the 26-county State framework and did not get off the ground.

Meanwhile the IRA Chief-of-Staff, Seán Russell, on the run in the United States while officially on bail, was making diligent attempts to get back to Ireland. Travelling to Ireland had been suspended from the outbreak of war so he planned to return through Italy which was still neutral.

DESPATCH

A despatch from the German Consul-General in Genoa on 24 January 1940 and received at the Foreign Office in Berlin on the same day tells its own story:

"John McCarthy, the ambassador of the Irish movement, who has arrived from New York today, asked whether the German Government would be prepared to provide transport to Ireland for Seán Russell, Chief-of-Staff of the IRA, who unknown to the American Government is still in New York.

"If this is possible he will make his way here by a new direct line from New York under an alias and be identified by McCarthy . . ."

An entry in the German War Diary of Abwehr II (military intelligence) of January 30 indicated approval in principle and following investigation Russell's request was agreed on March 30.

McCarthy, a Waterford man, was a steward on the US liner "Washington" and with the help of Irish-Americans in the labour unions, got Seán Russell to neutral Genoa on May 1, 1940 and thence to Berlin two days later. The Germans found him "pale, emaciated and exhausted."

Irish Republicans of 1940 would not have been shocked by this. Thinking in straight military terms they would have said: "Did not the Germans help us in 1916 and was not Seán Russell the successor of Roger Casement?" Other evil matters were to come to light later which all Irish people would rightly abhor.

NOT ALONE IN BERLIN

In 1940, however, Russell would not have been alone in Berlin. The Breton

Nationalist Party leaders Mordrel and Debauvais were there as were Flemish nationalists. The Palestinian religious leader, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem broadcast to his people from Berlin radio and Chandra Bose, Commander of the Indian National Army (later to meet as tragic a death as Russell himself) sought assistance for an independent India.

The booklet "*Breton Nationalism*" (1946) says that they all did what Nazaryk and Benes did for Czechoslovakia with the French and the English during World War I. It was "England's Difficulty and Ireland's Opportunity" in Republican minds.

Then on May 5, Captain Dr. Hermann Goertz of the German Army parachuted into Ballivor, Co. Meath. He lost his radio but travelled 70 miles across country to the Laragh, Co. Wicklow home of Iseult Stuart, daughter of Maud Gonne MacBride and wife of the novelist Francis Stuart then lecturing in Berlin University.

This took four days and nights which was not bad for a man of 50 years. Goertz was a German patriot but no Nazi. He soon made contact with Stephen Hayes, the IRA's Acting Chief-of-Staff and deplored to him the "ridiculous street shooting." He wished Irish Republicans to concentrate on British targets in accordance with Plan Kathleen (or the Artus Plan) and found Hayes a weak leader lacking in a coherent and systematic approach to action.

EQUIPMENT SEIZED

At 10.20pm on May 22 the house of Stephen Carroll Held, "Villa Konstanz" Templeogue Road, Dublin was raided by police. All Goertz's equipment and money was seized but the agent was out walking and escaped back to Laragh. Iseult had been arrested but Helena Moloney was keeping house for her and assisted Goertz to return to action.

Sensation was mounting on sensation which would be to the detriment of the Republican Movement. The street shooting continued: this time the Special Branch shot unarmed Republicans. Paddy MacNeela, brother of Seán and a GHQ Staff Officer was overtaken while cycling, by a carload of Branchmen near Rathfarnham, Dublin. As he jumped a roadside ditch he was shot and wounded.

While several Free State soldiers uncovered his hiding place in bushes and ignored him, the police took him that evening as he washed his head wound in a stream. Brian McMahon of Listowel, Co. Kerry wrote a play "*The Bugle in the Blood*" based on this episode and on Seán's death on hunger strike. It was produced on Raidió Éireann in 1952 and at local drama festivals down the years.

SHOT OFF BICYCLE

Micksey Conway, another GHQ man — now a Cistercian monk — was cycling down Harold's Cross Road, Dublin near the Greyhound Track, when called on to halt by Branch. He attempted to do so but had defective brakes and was shot off the bicycle. Both he and MacNeela were promptly interned without trial.

As Bowyer Bell says (p. 183): "the pattern of provocation, retaliation and vengeance had been set. It was not to be altered for years." And Republicans would bear the cost . . .

(More next month. Refs. "*The IRA*" by T.P. Coogan; "*The Secret Army*" by J. Bowyer Bell; "*Harry*" by Harry White; "*The Wolfe Tone Annual*" 1950, by Brian O'Higgins; "*Spies in Ireland*" by Enno Stephan; "*Eleven Galway Martyrs*" (1985) and "*Breton Nationalism*" publ. 1946 by the Welsh Nationalist Party.)

50
YEARS
AGO:

640 INTERNED

MAY 27 TO JUNE 4, 1940 saw the famous Dunkirk evacuation when the British withdrew from Continental Europe taking 0.3 million troops back to England. In the middle of this operation when Britain appeared to be on her last legs came the mass internment swoop of June 3 when 640 Republicans from every one of the 26 Counties were seized in early morning raids. The Free State was guarding England's flank.

But first the World War situation: May 10 saw the end of the "phoney war" when Germany attacked on the Western Front. Holland fell on May 14, Belgium on May 28 and France fought on until June 22 and what is known as the "Fall of France". Italy entered the war on June 10 and attacked France in the South.

Two days after Holland and Belgium were invaded, de Valera speaking in Galway protested against "the cruel wrong" which was being done to "these two small nations". And what of Ireland?

Ten days later when German Captain Goertz's equipment was seized in Dublin it was found to include a parachute, a wireless transmitter and receiver, a code and other intelligence material, over 20,000 US dollars, German and Austrian medals of World War 1, a military cap and a Luftwaffe (German Air Force) badge.

COMMISSIONER

The Commissioner of the 26-County police, General W.R.E. Murphy (a former British Brigadier in Kerry in 1922) had all this equipment taken to Justice Minister Gerry Boland's office where he exhibited it to him personally. The Fianna Fáil Cabinet felt they had a good opportunity for further action against Republicans.

Then on May 27 the Dunkirk withdrawal began; "the greatest British retreat in history" it was called. Meanwhile the British press vilified Leopold III of Belgium for capitulating to the Germans on May 28. The "King of the Rats" they called him for not fighting on and covering their retreat to England.

On the same day, de Valera strengthened his hand by setting up an all-party "Defence Council". They would later set up the LSF (Local Security Force)

which would divide into LSF (police) and LDF (military). The latter is now known as the FCA and both forces would on a part-time basis total a quarter of a million before the end of World War 2.

YOUNG MEN AND VETERANS

But first the Dublin Administration would attempt to remove all Republican influence from society by arbitrarily locking up ALL active Republicans. Before the Dunkirk withdrawal had ended, young men and also veterans of the Black-and-Tan War were seized in a dawn swoop and transported by the lorry-load to the Curragh, Cork Jail and other places. Women were interned in Mountjoy Jail.

Some were invited innocently to the local Garda barracks "for a message" and then held for up to five years. Others were taken on their way to work while John Reynolds of Dromod, Co. Leitrim (brother of Jimmy Joe killed at the Border in 1938) had a bandage around his head as he sat in the back of a military lorry among other prisoners going through Longford town. He had attempted to escape out the back of his house when he was struck by the butt of a Free State soldiers' rifle.

HUGE OPERATION

This huge operation was a combined military and police effort to uproot the entire Republican Movement and put its personnel under lock and key indefinitely. At the same time such an action would, it was hoped, strike fear into all Republican-minded people while the war-time censorship would cloak it from the Irish people. Those in the Curragh would become the forgotten men of the period, it was expected.

June 1940 marked the first time that the weapon of mass internment without trial was used since 1922-24. In many cases the same people were being re-interned; some for the second, others for the third and even fourth time: 1916, 1920-21, 1922-24 and 1940-45 (1938-45 in the Six Counties) were the landmarks.

One of the last major rallies of the Republican Movement had taken place when the life-size statue of Seán Mac Diarmada was unveiled in the centre of Killyclogher village in Co. Leitrim on Sunday, May 13. For the next six or seven years even the annual Easter Commemorations would be greatly reduced in size as an atmosphere of fear prevailed. The Dublin establishment in

collaboration with the British government and the Stormont regime was making the most of the war-time situation to crush Irish Republicanism finally.

THREE FREE STATERS

A major implement in this regard was the Military Tribunal sitting in Collins Military Barracks, Dublin. The bench consisted of three Free State Army officers drawn from a panel of five who had no legal training whatsoever.

According to Harry White in "Harry", (page 72) the names of that panel were Col. Francis Bennett, Col. Daniel McKenna, Major John Joyce, Major Cornelius Whelan and Major Patrick Tuite. Major Felix Devlin replaced his fellow-Six-County man Dan McKenna in February of 1940. Joyce survived to sit on the Curragh Internees Appeal Commission in 1957-59 (whose work proved to be negligible) and with Bennett to man the revived Military Tribunal in 1961-62.

Meanwhile in Germany Seán Russell was living in a "week-end house" on the outskirts of Berlin with an Austrian NCO named Planer as adjutant and bodyguard and Professor Franz Fromme as interpreter. He commenced training with explosives experts. Enno Stephan states: "He applied his mind to the German sabotage materials with zest and skill. Above all he enquired about formulae which would make it possible to produce explosives from chemicals available through ordinary trade channels. The experts gave him valuable suggestions. Russell, who had been Director of Munitions for the IRA for several years (GHQ 1920-24), felt very much at home in this atmosphere."

Stephan notes that Seán "had made a good recovery from the strain of his sea voyage as a member of the engineering crew and, apart from his unnaturally pale appearance, looked quite fit." Apart from his training, "he astounded his hosts by living as modestly as a monk and by his regular attendance at Mass every Sunday..." Of course there were many great differences between the Irish leader and his hosts other than cultural ones!

AT LIBERTY

Back in Ireland Goertz, who had posed as "Mr. Brandy" at Stephen Held's house remained at liberty on the run. Held himself who knew no German but had a German adoptive father, was before the Military Tribunal. He received five years imprisonment in a trial held in camera for reasons of "state security". He was charged with possession of a



● Curragh Internment Camp.

code and sheltering "a person as yet unknown" as well as having the other items seized in his house.

Mrs. Iseult Stuart was cleared by the same court on July 1. The man's clothes found in Held's house had been traced to Arnott's in central Dublin and thence to her. Stephan calls her a "curiously inexperienced woman" whose trial was also held in camera.

About the middle of June, near to Bodinstown Sunday, Tomás Mac Curáin of Cork was before the Military Tribunal on a capital charge. Republicans used to sit down when those present rose at the entrance of the three military officers who would sit on the bench. The seat in the dock was therefore removed. Tomás was still recovering from the hunger strike and found difficulty in standing all the time. However, he let his papers fall on the floor at the entrance of the "judges" and stooped to retrieve them!

He was sentenced to death by hanging on July 13 for the death of Detective Roche during a scuffle as he was being arrested.

Three Sundays had to intervene between sentence and execution and so the reprieve campaign got quickly underway.

TO ENGLAND'S AID

At the end of June 1940, Brian O' Higgins's words were very appropriate: "... those of the Irish who had power in their hands and arms at their disposal came to England's aid instead of to Ireland's. That is the plain truth of the matter". How true, even today 50 years later, of all who have held power in the 26-County State?

Correction: In February instalment Michael Traynor was listing not testing arms and munitions. In April, Tony Darcy was stated to have been 53 days on hunger strike and Seán McNeela 56. These should have read 52 and 55 respectively.

(More next month. Refs. "Harry" by Harry White (1985); "Spies in Ireland" by Enno Stephan (1965); "Wolfe Tone Annual" (1950) by Brian O'Higgins).

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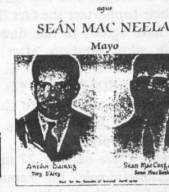
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James Larkin
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James O'Connell
James O'Donoghue
James O'Flaherty
James O'Leary
James O'Sullivan
James O'Connell
James O'Donoghue
James O'Flaherty
James O'Leary
James O'Sullivan

50
YEARS
AGO:

Russell meets Ryan in Berlin



● Frank Ryan

JULY 1940 saw over 700 Republicans interned or imprisoned in the 26 Counties, 3-400 in the Six Counties and close on 100 men and women in England. The last sentences in the English Campaign, which came to an end the previous March, were handed down.

In this article some assessments of that campaign will be attempted. But first, dramatic events in Dublin and Portlaoise and in continental Europe need to be looked at.

Tomás Mac Curtáin of Cork, son of the martyred Lord Mayor of the same name had the previous month been sentenced to hang by the Military Tribunal for the death of a Special Branch man during a scuffle which preceded his arrest.

REPRIEVE CAMPAIGN

Immediately a very active reprieve campaign got going in which the condemned man's widowed mother and sisters figured prominently. Signatures were gathered, prayers were said in class in schools and pressure generally mounted.

Meanwhile Seán MacBride SC and his team – working at all times in such cases without any recompense – brought appeal and *habeas corpus* actions while as Tim Pat Coogan records “the country seethed with controversy”. Fianna Fáil were about to execute the son as the RIC had assassinated his father twenty years earlier.

Then on the eve of the hanging came reprieve and commutation to penal servitude for life. It was 8pm with just 12 hours to go, the English hangman was in Mountjoy, the grave had been dug in the prison yard, the coffin was ready for the 25-year-old Corkman when Seán Kavanagh, the Prison Governor, himself a veteran of the 1920-21 period, arrived in the condemned cell on D-Wing – just across from the execution chamber – with the news.

Visiting Tomás at that moment was the veteran Republican from Donegal, the redoubtable Peadar O'Donnell whom Bowyer Bell called “the greatest agitator of his day”. The reprieved man told the writer years later while both were in D-Wing again that he did not know what to do after 8am the following morning.

He had made up his mind that life would end at that time – steel himself to it – and he fully believed that he would enter the hanghouse and “go straight up to heaven”.

So close had the time been that an Irish-American paper sympathetic to the Republican cause in Ireland came out next day with a report that “Tomás Mac Curtáin had marched bravely to the scaffold”.

Fifty years later Tomás is still with us, hale and hearty and a fluent Irish speaker. Go mairidh tú an céad, a Thomáis! He survived to re-organise the Movement and act as a leader in the 1956-62 Resistance Campaign and he has never abandoned his Republican ideals.

But the story does not end with reprieve. There were two developments which showed how policy was framed by the Fianna Fáil cabinet. Tomás was moved to A-Wing, Mountjoy, to serve his sentence and found that he was required (with a small number of other Republicans) to do penal labour.

This was inconsistent with political status and the protest began again in July where it had left off with the end of the hunger strike three months earlier. Mac Curtáin quickly organised his comrades but was moved overnight to Portlaoise “Convict Prison” as a “trouble-maker”.

The other policy decision by the Fianna Fáil cabinet was the creation of Drummahaire Courts Martial. But more on this point next month.

Meanwhile over in Spain Franco and his Fascist generals had overthrown the elected Republican Government in a bloody Civil War, helped by German Nazism and Italian Fascism. Some Irishmen – mainly ex-Blueshirts – had gone to help Franco and returned in two factions after six months, having lost four of their number in accidental shootings.

SPANISH REPUBLIC

About 150 Republicans and Socialists had gone to fight for the Spanish Republic as part of the XV International Brigade. Some 60 of them died bravely in action from 1936 to 1938. Captured at Gandesa while defending Catalonia in March 1938 was Major Frank Ryan of Limerick, who was then acting as Adjutant to General Miaja on the XV Brigade Staff.

The Fascists usually shot all captured International Brigaders. Frank was held by Italian troops and kept as a hostage for possible exchange. Later he was sentenced to death and watched his comrades taken out each morning to the firing squad.

Because of agitation in Ireland the death penalty was commuted to 30 years imprisonment. After the fall of France, Germany occupied territory up to the Pyrenees border with Spain. Thinking the famous Irish Republican and Socialist might be useful to them (with Seán Russell already in Berlin) the Germans agreed to accept him into their charge following a pre-arranged “escape” from Burgos Prison.

Frank was taken to Paris, where he began his recovery from his prison

ordeal, and later to Berlin at which point he was re-united joyfully with his old comrade and opponent Seán Russell. More will be told of this next month.

PENAL SERVITUDE

Back in England three Irishmen received sentences of penal servitude at Birmingham Assizes for possession of explosives, a firearm and ammunition. James Hasty got 10 years, Thomas O'Hanlon eight years and Terence Perry of Belfast six years.

Inadvertently this series failed to report a sentence of 10 years on Mrs Ella May Woods of Waterville, Co. Kerry in September 1939 at the London Old Bailey on charges of possession of explosives and “conspiracy” to cause explosions.

Mrs Woods and her London-Irish husband Charlie Woods were active and faithful Republicans to their deaths in 1980 and '81. Active in Sinn Féin in the 1950s, they worked mainly for the Prisoners' Dependents and in the National Graves Association in the 1960s and '70s.

In all a total of 96 Irish Republicans were jailed in Britain in 1939-40 in connection with the Sabotage Campaign. Ten of these were brave women ranging in age from Molly Gallagher in her teens to Mrs Furlong in her '70s.

Two were hanged (Barnes and McCormack), three died in prison Terence Perry and Joseph Malone both of Belfast in Parkhurst Jail in 1942 and Charlie O'Hare of Armagh in the Isle of Man Internment Camp in 1944) and four died accidentally in connection with the campaign (three at Castletail, Co. Donegal in 1938 and Christy Bird in Dublin in 1939). Seven English civilians were also killed by accident.

ECONOMIST VIEW

The serious English journal *The Economist* had this to say on January 21, 1939 after the first bombs had exploded: “To leave the people of Northern Ireland to decide their own fate is one thing, and to use British money and British Military force to bolster, within the United Kingdom, a regime whose actions are contrary to Magna Carta, the Petition of Right and the Habeas Corpus Act, is quite another matter.”

“If the bombs serve the purpose of attracting attention to the state of affairs in Northern Ireland, they will have served a useful purpose. It is high time that the bases of Orange Power in the six counties were fully examined.” Very true, but no hint of an end to British rule! Later “the hate was switched” (Harry White) in an anti-Irish campaign in the gutter press, etc.

About 200 operations took place in England over 14 months with the famous “S” Plan as their directive. Speaking in the British House of Commons on July 24, 1939 as he moved the Prevention

of Violence Bill, Sir Samuel Hoare, Home Secretary, referred a lot to the “S” Plan, a copy of which had been captured by the police.

CAREFULLY WORKED OUT

“It is a very carefully worked out plan,” he said, “the kind of plan that might be worked out by a General Staff, setting out in detail the way in which a campaign of sabotage could be successfully carried out against this country.”

Bowyer Bell calls the plan “impressive”; to implement it was a “massive operation” for which “the IRA simply lacked the weight of metal, the access to vulnerable targets, and sufficient skills. The quality of personnel left much to be desired . . . several GHQ men had experience with explosives but only (Seamus) O'Donovan (the author of the plan) could be classified as really qualified.”

He continues: “Hasty, covert classes over a period of a few weeks turned the volunteers into explosives placers but hardly sabotage experts. Moreover, the quality of the explosives, home-made or stolen, was not the best. Finally, the cost of the campaign would far exceed the very limited resources of the IRA.”

Bell is critical too of the political ramifications of the campaign. However, if it had been followed up by a Resistance Campaign in the Six Counties, it would all have been very different. (A mini-campaign did materialise there in 1942).

All attempts to launch such in early 1940 were squashed by the policies and actions of Stormont and Leinster House, making full use of the war-time cover. De Valera's “constitutional” road forward had ended in April 1938 when British Premier Chamberlain would not address the question of the Six Counties. The IRA pushed past him after that but paid the price for so doing. De Valera scoured them from 1939 to '48.

The English Campaign may have been a small effort compared with 1916-23. But so was Robert Emmet's Rising coming after 1798. Emmet proved the Act of Union (1801) was not universally acceptable in Ireland and his effort inspired generations which followed.

FOUGHT ON

Likewise with the IRA Expeditionary Force to England in 1939-40. They showed Ireland would not stop short at the 1938 Trade Agreement and de Valera's constitution of 1937. They fought on with the best means at their disposal and if they did not succeed, they took what was coming to them. They saved Ireland's honour and did not compromise the historic national demand.

All honour then, to the men and women of 1939-40, especially the veterans of Easter Week 1916, the Tan and Free State wars like Seán Russell, Seamus O'Donovan (Director of Chemicals, GHQ Staff, IRA 1920-24, George Plant, George Plunkett, Larry Grogan, Paddy McGrath including Brendan Behan's “Grannie” Furlong who turned out again at 77 years.

These had been with the Legion of the Rearguard in 1922-23 and 50 years ago they took their places with the Advance Guard of 1939-40. And Joe McGarrity, Clan-na-Gael leader in the USA was active in support of them as he had been since 1916. But we salute them all –

*“And wise men have told us
That Cause was a failure . . .
But they loved dear old Ireland
And never feared danger . . .”*

(More next month. Refs: “The Secret Army” by J Bowyer Bell; “Ag Scoilaidh Sceoil” le Seosamh O Duibhinn (1962); “Harry” by Harry White; “The IRA Coventry Explosions (Trial of Peter Barnes and others)” by Letitia Fairfield (1953) “The IRA” by TP Coogan.)

50
YEARS
AGO:

Russell dies on active service

IN AUGUST 1940 Europe was in the throes of WW2. Hitler's armies had overrun the continent and a tense and nervous England fought the "Battle of Britain" in the air from July to September. While Germany was superior on land, England's navy and air-force frustrated Hitler's invasion plan called "Operation Sealion".

For Irish Republicans, August 1940 saw several military reverses and losses, one after another, but nowhere was there a political surrender or a climb-down on principle. Between 1,000 and 1,500 men and women were in prison or internment camps in England and Ireland, North and South and hardship to families and other dependants was great.

Cork Jail was a military Detention Centre housing Republican internees while a new extensive concentration camp at the Curragh was being built. Volunteers of the 1st Cork Brigade were engaged in digging a tunnel for escape into the jail (now part of University College Cork) from a shaft sunk in the grounds of nearby Lapp's private asylum on the Western Road.

Members of the local Special Branch became aware of this and on August 3 opened fire there with submachine guns without any warning. Those driving the tunnel were unarmed and John Joe Kavanagh and Roger Ryan were severely wounded. A third man, Joseph B. O'Sullivan was unhurt and refused to come out until a crowd gathered. He then emerged unscathed.

SURVIVED

Roger Ryan survived his many wounds and was later prominent in the local GAA. But John Joe Kavanagh died in an ambulance on the way to hospital. He was interred in the Republican Plot in St. Finbarr's cemetery which was first opened to receive the remains of the murdered Lord-Mayor, Tomás MacCurtain twenty years earlier.

Coming on top of the two deaths on hunger strike the previous April, this murderous action poisoned the atmosphere between Republicans and the Fianna Fáil-controlled 26-County State. Brian O'Higgins notes (Wolfe Tone Annual 1950 p. 142) that "Republican soldiers were to be shot at sight and so they went armed day and night in their own defence." Further tragedies seemed inevitable.

Then two days after the Cork shootings

Joe McGarrity, long-time and famed Clan-na-Gael leader died in far-away Philadelphia. He was 66 and a native of Carrickmore, Co. Tyrone. From when he landed in the US in 1892 he was active in the Clan and lost two fortunes (he was a successful businessman) in the Cause of Irish Freedom.

Joe managed de Valera's tour of the States in 1919-20, published a newspaper named the *Irish Press* in Philadelphia from 1918 to 1922 (which cost him \$60,000), rejected the Treaty of Surrender and called de Valera's entry into Leinster House in 1927 an "act of treason", which it undoubtedly was.

A consignment of 500 Thompson sub-machine guns purchased by him in June 1921 were seized by US Customs, but released to him in 1925. Over the next ten years he smuggled them all into Ireland. Later he was the American end of the axis with Seán Russell in Dublin which gave rise to the Sabotage Campaign of 1939-40. From 1936, he and Russell had worked together on this project.

It is estimated that McGarrity spent \$100,000 — a huge sum in those days — over his lifetime in contributions for Irish Freedom. He did his utmost on each occasion to avoid splits in the Movement but once they had taken place, he was decisive in his actions.

Two years after his death while still a leader of the Clan-na-Gael and IRA Veterans of America, Inc., as the post-1922 organisation was called, a volume of his poems was published in New York with a foreword by the poet, Pádraic Colum. A similar work was published in Ireland by the Talbot Press with a foreword by Ella Young of the University of California.

In both cases the work was entitled "Celtic Moods and Memories" and dedicated "To all who love and have loved Ireland". The titles include his friends, O'Donovan Rossa, Roger Casement, Harry Boland, Rory O'Connor and Liam Mellows, and he did address verses "To My Orange Countrymen."

Joe McGarrity's invaluable library of 10,000 volumes, many of them quite rare, passed to Villanova University when Clan-na-Gael proved unable to house them in accordance with his will. His voluminous correspondence was edited by Seán Cronin in the early 1970s and presented by him and the late Joe Clarke to the National Library in Kildare Street, Dublin. Cronin also published "The McGarrity Papers" in 1972.

The Republican Movement could ill afford to lose such key men but worse was to come. On the day of McGarrity's death, August 5, Seán Russell attended a



● The memorial in Fairview Park, Dublin, to Honour the memory of Seán Russell, IRA Chief-of-Staff, and his comrades of 50 years ago. Erected by the National Graves Association.

top level meeting in Berlin of Intelligence people which included also Foreign Minister Ribbentrop who was personally insulting to him. They did not attempt to give the Irish liberation directions as he and the Irish liberation movement were "their own men".

But they did arrange submarine transport home for both Russell and Frank Ryan. Three days later, on August 8, they left Wilhelmshaven under one of the most experienced U-boat captains, Commandant von Stockhausen. The trip was code-named "Operation Dove" and Russell and Ryan "Agent Richard I" and "Agent Richard II", following Abwehr (German Intelligence Organisation) usage.

A U-boat was made available to them because of the importance attached to the operation by both the German Foreign Office and Abwehr (military intelligence) II. The naval staff resisted this because of risk to a very valuable craft. Strict instructions were given to comply as far as possible with the wishes of the two Irishmen as regards a landing place.

Ballyferriter, Co. Kerry was chosen for the 15th August, a church holiday when strangers would not be noticed in a Gael-tacht area. Ryan as a Gaeltóir liúfa would have been at home in Baile an Fheiritéirigh. But disaster struck . . .

VIOLENT SICKNESS

Enno Stephan records: "Russell was taken ill with violent sickness . . . severe pains . . . frightful agonies . . . his condition worsened. On August 14 Seán Russell died in Frank Ryan's arms when the U-boat was 100 miles to the west of Galway. He was buried at sea wrapped in a German war ensign almost in sight of Ireland for whose freedom and reunification he had fought a life-long battle."

He had succumbed to a burst gastric ulcer, two Berlin medical specialists of the famous Charité Hospital concluded independently of each other after studying official reports by Ryan, the U-boat commanding officer, his second-in-

command and his medical orderly (there was no doctor on board). Frank Ryan returned to Lorient, (Brittany) German submarine base and so ended what Stephan calls "drama on the high seas."

General Seán Russell, Chief of Staff, IRA, was 47 years when he died, and was in harness to the end. The Roll of Honour of those who died for Ireland 1936-46 records that he "died overseas on active service".

Even his enemies have been forced to respect and pay tribute to this intrepid soldier of Ireland who served from the inception of the Irish Volunteers in 1913, through 1916 and all subsequent campaigns to his honourable death, still striking at the Irish people's only enemy — British Imperialism. People are so proud, even to this day, to have served under the man Seán Russell.

On September 9, 1951, a memorial statue to his memory was unveiled in the presence of a large crowd in Fairview Park, Dublin. It was near his old home and also in the area where he fought in 1916. The names of the Volunteers who gave their lives in the Campaign he initiated (1938-46) are inscribed on its base and three overdue Irish volleys were fired in salute to him in particular and to all 30 of them.

"Behind the files of Easter Week
And ranked, battalioned tread of '21,
Close behind the lime-stained dead of '22,
Seán Russell at their head they come . . ."

(Brendan Behan)

But other disasters lurked around the corner. On August 16, 1940 a house at 98A Rathgar Road, Dublin was surrounded by armed police from Dublin Castle. Brian O'Higgins says they were "sent to arrest them (the occupants) and if they so wished to shoot them dead. Soldiers of the Republic had been shot down without challenge or warning, so Paddy McGrath (again) and Tom Harte were prepared." (It was just under a fortnight since J.J. Kavanagh was killed and Roger Ryan badly wounded).

O'Higgins continues: "They (McGrath and Harte) were determined to fight their way out and in the battle that followed the younger man was wounded and two policemen were killed. Paddy McGrath could have escaped, but he stood by his comrade and both were arrested together. A special military court was set up to pass sentence of death on them . . ."

SPECIAL MILITARY COURT

Following the reprieve campaign and commutation of the death sentence on Tomás Og MacCurtáin the previous month, a Special Military Court was indeed established. The Emergency Powers Act (Amendment No. 2, July 1940) was the instrument. It provided for the summary trial by courts martial of civilians not subject to military law, and the imposition of the death penalty in ALL CASES, sentence to be carried out by shooting within 72 hours (no time for reprieve campaigns!) and no right of appeal was allowed to any other court from either conviction or sentence.

The Act consisted of one paragraph comprised of one sentence. Paddy McGrath had cheated the Special Criminal Court by hunger strike a year earlier. This time it would be different.

With him was Tom Harte of Lurgan, Co. Armagh and a Liverpool-Irishman, Tom Hunt, who had escaped from the house but was captured some days later. Eileen O'Kelly, a Cumann na mBan woman and a Dubliner whose father was an Easter Week veteran, also escaped from the house and was on the run for years.

More next month. (Refs: "Spies in Ireland" by Enno Stephan; "A Dictionary of Irish History 1800 - 1980" by D.J. Hickey and J.E. Doherty; "The IRA" by T.P. Coogan; "The Wolfe Tone Annual" 1950 by Brian O'Higgins.)

50
YEARS
AGO:

McGrath and Harte executed by firing-squad

SEPTEMBER 1940 saw the completion of the construction of the huge new concentration camp at the Curragh military base in Co. Kildare. All Republican internees from Cork Jail, the smaller internment camp at the Curragh and other places were concentrated there.

A total of approximately 700 Republican prisoners lifted before and after the massive swoop of Monday morning (a favourite time!) June 3 were held here without charge or trial.

It remained open until May 1945, subsequent to the ending of World War II and 26-County Justice Minister Gerry Boland's infamous boast that the IRA was dead and that he had killed it! Indeed that huge concentration camp newly-built on the Curragh of Kildare was intended to be the graveyard of the Irish Republican Army.

But as de Valera himself told the first Free Staters in Leinster House in 1931: "You cannot turn back the current of tradition". He continued, referring to the active Republicans of the time: "They are brave men, anyhow. Let us at least have for them the decent respect one has for the brave."

That was when the first Cosgrave used the last of coercion of Republicans. Nine years later de Valera would eat his words — and many other statements he had made since 1922. But then he had swallowed England's Oath of Allegiance, saying it was an "empty formula" only, just as today people call themselves Republicans and publicly swallow a similar British oath.

FIRST POLITICAL EXECUTIONS

The big event which over-shadowed all others in September 1940 were Fianna Fáil's first political executions. Ironically, in view of that party's national pretensions, the first two to be sent before a Free State firing squad by them were an Easter Week 1916 Veteran and a Northern Republican who had been born in that historic year.

Brian O'Higgins re-creates the atmosphere of the period: "During that time of coercion, suppression, secret military tribunals and all the other symbols of tyranny, the men whose only enemy was the English invader of their country and whose only object was the freedom and unity of all Ireland were hunted night and day by the armed minions of renegade Irishmen who had come to power under false pretences."

"Republican soldiers were to be shot at sight and so they went armed night and day in their own defence," O'Higgins continued.

A graphic description of the raid of August 16 on the Rathgar Road shop is given by Bowyer Bell: "... in an effort to be first to sweep up the IRA, Sergeant Denny O'Brien (himself a former Volunteer) decided to go in before his competitors in the Special Branch could get the credit and reward money from the slush fund."

"Inside, McGrath, Tommy Harte and Tom Hunt were determined not to give

up without a fight. Bursting out of the door firing revolvers and a Thompson gun, they cut down three Special Branchmen, killing Sergeant McKeown and Detective Hyland and wounding Detective Brady."

"The three IRA men rushed down the street away from the stunned detectives who had expected a quick coup and a fat reward. The police opened fire and hit Harte. When McGrath went back to help him, both were arrested."

Tom Hunt and Eileen O'Kelly of Cumann na mBan escaped but Hunt was captured in a house in Gloucester Street, Dublin a week later. All three, McGrath, Harte and Hunt, were sentenced to death by shooting by the new "Special Military Court".

DRUMHEAD COURTMARTIAL

This was Drumhead Courtmartial. Regardless of the charge, only one sentence could be imposed when found guilty — death before a firing squad. No appeal against either conviction or sentence was possible under the *Emergency Powers (Amendment No. 2) Act 1940*.

The sentence on Hunt was commuted by the Dublin Cabinet. Seán MacBride, SC had defended the men and he took a constitutional case in the High Court and then to the Supreme Court of the 26-County State. In a three-day hearing on September 2-4 this was turned down.

Tim Pat Coogan attempts to explain the situation: "It might be noted here that the trigger happiness of both the police and IRA should be examined in the light of the prevailing circumstances. Nerves were strained to breaking point as a programme of searches and raids was carried out in the most intensive fashion at all hours of the day and night on the homes and haunts of suspected IRA men."

"Members of the Special Branch and of the IRA frequently came into verbal conflict and both sides began to develop personal grudges and fears as to what might happen if one should fall into the hands of the other."

Bowyer Bell is succinct: "Although police officers had been killed in the course of their duties there was considerable sympathy for the two men (McGrath and Harte) partly because the Special Branch was acquiring a shoot-first-ask-questions-later reputation."

The record shows: Peter McCarthy, unarmed Republican, shot dead by Special Branch in Clanbrassil Street, Dublin, June 15, 1937; Paddy McNeela, Mayo and Micksey Conway, Tipperary, both unarmed, shot and wounded by Special Branch in two separate incidents in Dublin in May - June 1940; John Joe Kavanagh killed and Roger Ryan wounded although both were unarmed, by Special Branch in Cork, August 3, 1940. Thirteen days after this last incident came the Rathgar Road gun-battle.

DE VALERA'S AIMS

Tim Pat Coogan tells how public opinion had "swung away from the IRA and behind the government", that cinema owners in Cork who had closed their premises for Barnes and McCormack refused when asked to do so for McGrath



• Patrick McGrath



• Thomas Harte

and Harte. But then was not this the very result de Valera aimed at with wartime censorship, repression, and all civil liberties swept away?

Of course the Republican Movement had contributed with the bomb in Dublin Castle and the Holles Street gun-battle and resulting injuries to armed Branchmen. Coogan notes that there were no incidents resulting from the Cork cinema-owners failure to close, "but to be on the safe side the police rounded up some forty-four IRA suspects," (no less!)

LIEUT.-GENERAL PATRICK MCGRATH, who ranked as Adjutant-General IRA at the time of his arrest and STAFF-CAPTAIN THOMAS HARTE, GHQ Staff, IRA were shot to death in Mountjoy Jail, Dublin at 6.45am on September 6, 1940.

Brian O'Higgins says: "They were branded as criminals and murderers but a priest who ministered to them declared afterwards to me: 'The light of truth and manliness shone in their faces for all to see. I have never met two more perfect men. They were incapable of an ignoble motive or an evil deed. I am proud to have known them and to have received their blessing.'"

And so against the boundary wall with the women's prison in Mountjoy, a barricade of railway sleepers and sandbags was built. The veteran with a Black-and-Tan bullet still lodged near his heart and a left hand disabled by another round took his stand beside the 24-year-old Lurgan

Volunteer who had returned from active service in the English war zone. The volley rang out, the pigeons fluttered under the gutters of the jail, the women prisoners and internees heard and knelt in prayer.

HANDED OVER

In September 1948, following a change of Administration in the 26 Counties, the bodies of executed Republicans were disinterred in prison yards and given up to relatives and comrades for re-burial among their own. Ruaidhrí Ó Drisceóil of Cork spoke at Tom Harte's grave in St. Colman's Cemetery, Lurgan, Co. Armagh.

*"Along with comrades true and brave,
He trod the olden path,
To meet his fate from Free State guns,
With gallant Pat McGrath."*

*"Prepare once more, march forth again
To fight and play your part
In Ireland's fight for Ireland's right
Like Captain Thomas Harte."*

Brian O'Higgins gave the oration at Paddy McGrath's grave in Glasnevin, Dublin. He pointed out that "McGrath and his comrades, condemned and put to death as criminals were now being justly honoured as patriot soldiers whose lives had been given unselfishly and unflinchingly and ungrudgingly for Ireland."

"The only shame to be thought of in connection with them," he continued, "Is that Irishmen slew them and slandered them, as Irishmen had slain and slandered the men of 1922, for the crime of being faithful soldiers of the Republic of Ireland."

"Let us remember that shame only as an incentive to action and conduct that will make recurrence of it impossible ever again."

The Republic had been suppressed by falsehood and force and was suppressed at that moment, he said. Against that unjust and unlawful suppression the men being honoured that day did battle unto death.

ONLY ONE VENGEANCE

He concluded: "Their blood cries out for only one vengeance — the restoration of the suppressed Republic of Ireland."

By September 1940, de Valera's policy of accepting Leinster House and the Free State apparatus had come to bitter fruition. He had 700 in a concentration camp, prisoners "on the blanket" in Portlaoise, a Military Tribunal, Drumhead Courtmartial, deaths on hunger strike, and now firing squads taking the lives of old comrades.

His "Document No. 2" position for 26 Counties under the 1937 Constitution had put him in exactly the same position as the first Free Staters were in 18 years earlier — in 1922. The wheel had come full circle; he had arrived at the very position he had proposed to disestablish.

STAUNCHLY

Is it any wonder that faithful Republicans oppose so staunchly any hint ever of accepting the 26-County State?

(More next month: Refs. *The Wolfe Tone Annual 1950* by Brian O'Higgins; *The Secret Army*, by J. Bowyer Bell and *The IRA* by T.P. Coogan.)

50
YEARS
AGO:

PORTLAOISE: 'A LIVING HELL'

THE PRISON at Portlaoise, 50 miles from Dublin was a sinister place for the small group of Republicans held there from 1940 to 1948. Harry White calls it "Ireland's Bastille" in his book *Harry*.

He continues: "Portlaoise - the small Republican section - was a jail spoken of by the few that knew it in horrified whispers. It was the decision of some - hopefully now the bugger is in hell - policy-maker in the Department of Justice who persuaded Gerard Boland that anyone who offered armed resistance, or who had his sentence commuted from death, should be sent there."

"No visits, no clothes, no letters, no reading, no talk to anyone, never leaving the cell . . ." that was the regime from July 1940 until June 1943. When Harry was taken there in February 1947, "they were now allowed out to talk to each other for one-and-a-half hours in the morning and one-and-a-half hours in the afternoon. We met in an old machine shop upstairs . . ."

Bowyer Bell says: "The fate of the IRA hard-core prisoners transferred to Portlaoise prison was a living hell. Key men in the IRA were treated like common criminals. Among them were *Tomás Mac Curtáin*, whose death sentence had been commuted at the last minute with the gallows already erected and the hangman on call; *Seán McCaughey*, also with a commuted death sentence, and *Liam Rice*, wounded in a gun battle with Irish detectives."

"They were ordered to wear prison clothes, accept letters with prison numbers on the top, and obey conventional prison routine. The little group of men refused. Since they would not wear prison clothing, the authorities let them remain naked but for their blankets. They could not attend mass since they were not presentable. They would not accept letters with prison numbers so they received none."

TRAPPED

"They would not obey the routine, so they were locked in their cells. Sitting month after month, year after year, in the bleak solitary cells, they were taken out once a week for a bath, and for the rest of the week lived the life of an animal trapped in a burrow."

"Even in solitary confinement there was no privacy. The lights were turned



on day and night at erratic intervals for security checks. There were no books, no contact with each other, no opportunity to talk with anyone.

"That they did not go mad is a remarkable comment on man's capacity for survival. Some suffered from delusions, white horses standing in the cell, or collapsed physically under the strain; but most of the little handful persisted until their sentences were completed or release came."

Tim Pat Coogan is not so graphic or detailed in his account but he does say that "they were not allowed out to the lavatory and the confinement was made doubly rigorous by having an empty cell on either side of them." In all fairness, he deals with McCaughey's hunger and thirst strike and the subsequent startlingly revealing inquest in a very forthright manner.

BLANKET MEN

The "blanket-men" of Portlaoise in the 1940s, who would not have a prison number substituted for their names were as follows: *Tomás Mac Curtáin*, Cork; *Frank Kerrigan*, Cork; *Murty Lucy*, Cork; *Tom Hunt* of Liverpool; *Michael Walsh*, Kilmacow, Co. Kilkenny; and *Patrick Davern*, Glenbower, both of whom had been sentenced to death with George Plant with subsequent commutation; *Peter Duffy*, *Joe O'Callaghan*, *Willie Stewart* and *Paddy Murphy*, all of Dundalk (the latter two had also received the cat-of-nine-tails; *Séamus Smith* and *Eamonn Smullen* of Dublin; *Eddie Joe Gallagher* of Mayo; *Jim Crofton*, a former Special Branch man who helped Republicans while in the force and was singled out for special attention; *Liam Rice*,

Harry White and *Seán McCaughey*, all of Belfast.



● Paddy Murphy

When the change of administration in the 26 Counties came in February 1948, the last of the Portlaoise political prisoners whose prison sentences by the Special "Criminal" Court or commuted death sentences of the Special Military Court had not expired, were released unconditionally in March. They were five: first *Liam Rice*, *Eamonn Smullen* and *Séamus Smith* were set free; then the last two, *Harry White* and *Tomás Mac Curtáin* were able to celebrate St. Patrick's Day together in the *Mac Curtáin* home in Cork.

The last out had been the first in. *Mac Curtáin* was moved from Mountjoy in July 1940. His account of his years "on the blanket" as written down by one of the Republicans who shared Mountjoy and the Curragh Concentration Camp with him in the next phase of struggle - the 1950s was summarised as follows:

REGIME

Here began immediately a regime

which would make any nationally-minded *Fianna Fáil* supporter blush - or deny that it ever happened which is the usual line of defence. *Mac Curtáin* was the first of 17 Republicans to be singled out for imprisonment in Portlaoise. He set the headline.

He refused to wear convict uniform and was locked in a cell naked. He made a hole in a prison blanket, put the "garment" over his head and tied it at the sides like a smock which reached halfway to his knees. He was kept in solitary confinement with the silent treatment (nobody spoke to him even when brought out to the bath-house once a week).

He had no visits or letters. These and Sunday Mass were denied. The only reading material was a Bible and a single book in the Irish language which could later be changed for another. He did physical exercises and even attempted to train a mouse in order to keep fit and sane.

Solitary confinement and the silent treatment were to last from July 1940 until June 1943, 2 years and 11 months. As in *Tomás's* case none of the other Republicans who followed him there were allowed out in the fresh air until 1947 following on *Seán McCaughey's* hunger and thirst strike for release from such awful conditions. All were "on the blanket" also until then.

POLITICAL TREATMENT WON

Pride in their cause, will-power, dedication and a high sense of honour carried them through. By such means was political treatment in 26-county jails in the 1940s won and held. None of this was known to the general public because of war-time censorship of the news media, which makes their struggle all the more heroic. They did not compromise . . .

And their heroic sacrifice inspired a new generation of Republicans who threw themselves wholeheartedly into a renewed freedom-struggle in the 1950s. As *Pádraig Pearse* said at the grave of *O'Donovan Rossa*:

"Our foes are strong and wise and wary; but strong and wise and wary as they are, they cannot undo the miracles of God who ripens in the hearts of young men the seeds sown by the young men of a former generation."

(More next month. Refs.: *Harry*, by *Harry White*; *The Secret Army*, by *J. Bowyer Bell* and *The IRA* by *TP Coogan*.)

GARDAÍ ARREST KERRY ORGANISER

ARREST and harassment of Sinn Féin Poblachtach members and SAOIRSE sellers has been reported from Co. Kerry in recent weeks. In Tralee the county organiser was arrested by the Special Branch political police while in Killorglin there were attempts made by the 26-county police to stop sales of this newspaper during the annual Puck Fair.

Special Branchmen led by Detective-Sergeant Dillon (formerly Task Force) raided Brian Smullen's house on Friday morning, September 14. Armed with (among other things) a search warrant they arrested him under Section 30 of the Offences Against the State Act as his children were preparing to go to school. Placed in a cell immediately

in Tralee Barracks the interrogation turned out to be about Sinn Féin Poblachtach, its activities in Tralee and elsewhere. Special Branchmen involved included Messrs. Dillon, Mannion, Brew and McCloud.

The station sergeant Eoin Moynihan attempted to intimidate Brian Smullen's wife when she arrived to see him. Placing a chair outside his cell Serg. Moynihan told her she

could talk to him through the inspection hatch in the cell door. After protests a proper visit was obtained in the room set aside for that purpose. He was eventually released at 6pm after further interrogation sessions.

Kerry Comhairle Ceantair, Sinn Féin Poblachtach, condemned the arrest of Brian Smullen as yet another example of "holding people for interrogation about their politics

which is a blatant violation of international human rights principles."

PURPOSE

"This is, of course, the purpose of Section 30 of the Offences Against the State Act and the British equivalent, the Prevention of Terrorism Act. In the 26 Counties since 1972 21,000 people have been arrested under Section 30 and only 17 per cent were ever even charged with an offence. let alone convicted."

"We view the treatment of Mrs Smullen as an attempt to intimidate a relative in a stressful situation where if they did not know their rights they could probably have gone along with being

treated in this contemptuous fashion."

Also in Kerry the local Brendan Doherty Cumann, Sinn Féin Poblachtach, have reported the harassment of a SAOIRSE paper seller at this year's Puck Fair in Killorglin. 26-county police tried to confiscate copies of the paper and hustle the seller off the street. To the policemen's surprise people in the crowd attending the Fair expressed their disapproval of the bully-boy tactics.

A spokesperson for the Brendan Doherty Cumann said: "Let's hope every Cumann makes a good effort to sell SAOIRSE in the future as the best way to stand up to this harassment."

HOMES 'SKETCHED' IN TYRONE RAIDS

THE recent raiding of Nationalist houses in the Castleberg/Aghyaran area of West Tyrone which saw practically every home searched in the past few weeks has been condemned by Sinn Féin Poblachtach President Ruairí Ó Brádaigh. Residents who were not at home have had their front doors kicked in and their houses searched in their absence.

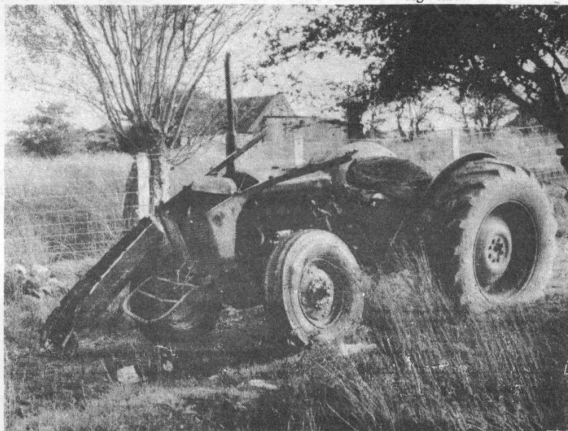
On Saturday morning, October 13, the home of Felix McAteer in Aghyaran was searched for three hours from 8am by the RUC. A female member of the RUC made a detailed sketch of both the inside and outside of the house during the search. Mr. McAteer said that the raids are of a very thorough, information-gathering type and all personal documents and letters were noted.

ATTACKS

These raids follow after several attacks on the local community in the previous weeks in which a 15-year-old boy was seriously injured when a bomb exploded on his father's farm.

James Harvey was starting the tractor on the remote hillside farm near the Tyrone-Donagall border when the booby-trap bomb went off. On the previous morning at 2am a bomb destroyed the St. Davóg GAA club centre in nearby Aghyaran.

"The RUC are revealed once again as part and parcel of the British war machine in Ireland, every bit as much as the Israeli 'Border Policemen' who oppress the Palestinian people in similar brutal fashion," Ruairí Ó Brádaigh said.



• Booby-trapped tractor on which James Harvey received serious injuries.

10th Anniversary of 1981 Hunger Strike

22 a fuair bás ar son na h-Éireann 1917-1981

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50 YEARS AGO:

An 'Al-Rawdah' Victim

IN November 1940 England lay night after night under a hail of bombs from the German airforce blitz. Only slowly was radar developed as an effective defence against the Luftwaffe.

In addition, the 'grey wolves' or U-boats were increasing their attacks on English merchant shipping. Irish harbours were coveted by the British as bases for convoy escort ships.

Then came public statements in London and Dublin which made it seem unbelievable that earlier in WWII the British and Free State General Staffs had discussed a Joint Irish Defence plan against a possible German invasion.

Harry White summarises the position on page 62 of *Harry* by saying that "IRA link-ups then and afterwards with Germany were a casual and tenuous probing contact of individuals; they in no way correspond to the tightly maintained formalities of the British and Free State police and military".

Publicly, however, in the British House of Commons on November 5, Prime Minister Winston Churchill (or "Mr. W.C.", as the Curragh internees called him) complained that the closing of these harbours to the Royal Navy was "a most heavy and grievous burden ... on our shoulders". A hostile and threatening chorus from the British press followed.

On November 7, de Valera replied in Leinster House: "There can be no question of the handing over of these ports so long as this state remains neutral. Any attempt to bring pressure to bear on us ... could only lead to bloodshed".

COLLABORATION

It suited both politicians to confront

each other publicly in this manner while they covertly collaborated. Churchill sought to divert attention from heavy losses of shipping in the Atlantic by blaming the Dublin administration. (This is still the practice when there is a security lapse in England!)

De Valera, for his part, took the opportunity given by Churchill, the arch-imperialist in Irish eyes, to strike a firm anti-British stance, this covering-up his coercion of Republicans. It was a pattern which would repeat itself. . . .

Germany took notice of these public utterances. Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop on November 27 urged a probe as to whether German help would be acceptable to Dublin in the event of a British attack — "help in the shape of equipment".

General Jodl, head of the German Armed Forces Planning Staff, indicated that "the Defence Ministry was considering whether captured English military equipment might be shipped from the French coast to Ireland in Irish vessels. . .". Such material was thought to be "most appropriate to Irish needs".

PLACATE

While de Valera and Churchill engaged in posturing to placate public opinion in each country, the British and Free State administrations quietly tightened the screws on Republicans on both sides of the Border. The hunt was stepped up and jails and internment camps were filled to bursting point.

In the Six Counties, internment without trial had been in force for two years since the December 1938 swoops. The internees were held in Belfast Jail until November 1939 when they were moved to Derry's old jail.

Following a Christmas Day public demonstration by them they were again transferred — this time to a prison ship of

6,000 tons, an old hulk named the *Al Rawdah* stationed in Strangford Lough, a sea inlet. (In 1922-24 it was the *Argenta* and in 1972 the *Maidstone*).

FIRST CASUALTY

Numbers rose to 400 and conditions on the barbed-wire-fenced hulk were overcrowded and most rigorous. Then on November 18 the first casualty was suffered. Jack Gaffney, a man in his 40s, died as a direct result of prison conditions. He was a native of Co. Cavan but had lived in Belfast for most of his life.

Public opinion North of the Border was shocked and the fight of the internees was highlighted — but at the cost of a valuable life. The prisoners were again moved, back to Crumlin Road prison in Belfast, where conditions were again overcrowded. Many of them were to be transferred back to Derry again in November 1942.

A huge demonstration was the outcome in the case of Jack Gaffney's funeral to Milltown Cemetery, Belfast. Among those who walked the full length of the Falls Road behind the coffin was Dr Daniel Mageean, Bishop of Down and Connor, in his clerical vestments.

Harry White said of him: "He was bishop from 1929 to his death in 1962 and is remembered as the last and most outstanding nationalist Bishop of that diocese. The other incumbents since then, Dr Philbin and Dr Daly, have bent over backwards endeavouring to 'work with' the Orange/Masonic officials and the British authorities governing the state.

ALIENATION

"The result has been a near total alienation of their younger Catholic followers while Catholicism itself has gained relatively little in the fields of education, employment or preference. At all times during the thirties and into

the forties when government oppression was most evident, Dr Mageean was foremost in his protestations against it.

"While these had necessarily a religious edge to them, his strong national sympathy stood out. In February 1942, for example, in his Lenten Pastoral, he spoke in these terms: 'Catholics in the Six Counties (sic) may well view with dismay the encroachment of the state on the liberties of the individual'.

"At this stage he made a strong protest against the manner in which a young Republican was arrested: 'A large body of police crashed in on a funeral (of Jack Gaffney), invaded the cemetery, and as soon as the officiating priest had said his last prayers, and while the clay was still falling on the coffin, they arrested one of the mourners. Neither the sacredness of the place nor the solemnity of the occasion, was considered. Such an outrage cannot be allowed to pass without an emphatic protest.

"Equally strongly he protested against a round-up which brought the numbers of internees to over 300," Harry concludes. Arresting people at funerals was a favourite practice of the Black-and-Tans. It did not cease in 1940 either.

When Gerald O'Callaghan was shot dead by the IRA in 1942 and Tom Williams (19) hanged in Crumlin Road Jail, two days later, there was a series of armed attacks on Crown Forces, culminating in an RUC man and a "B" Special being killed and another wounded in a gun-battle in Co. Tyrone.

The press rushed for comment to the Catholic bishops. Cardinal MacRory rebuffed them with the remark: "I might say too much". Equally significantly Dr Mageean declined to say anything at all.

(Next month: The Curragh explodes . . . Refs. *Harry* by Harry White; *Spies in Ireland* by Enno Stephan).

50
YEARS
AGO:

Curragh in Flames: Internees Shot

THE LARGE POW camp in the Curragh of Kildare where about 500 Republican internees were held in 18 to 20 huts had become a festering sore by December of 1940.

Most of the men had been held since the massive swoop all over the 26 Counties on June 3; the others were interned without trial in the preceding months. "For most IRA men," says Bowyer Bell, "Mountjoy and Arbour Hill, the coldest prison in Europe, were way stations on the road to the Curragh Camp".

Bell continues that "caught by surprise by the need for a concentration camp, they had neither the time nor the inclination to set up an elaborate establishment but had cordoned off an area of bleak wooden huts with a barbed wire fence. Sanitary and kitchen facilities were primitive, the huts nearly derelict, and recreation possibilities remote. For discipline and the hardcore cases, there was always the Glasshouse, even more unattractive if possible".

Tim Pat Coogan says: "Heating was supplied by small turf stoves, and the walls and window-frames were of such inferior quality that, in bad weather, the rain seeped through". He goes on: "The cause (of the December outbreak) was the ugly, brooding, hot-house atmosphere created by close surveillance, internment, frustration and a feeling among the internees that a stand had to be made."

Three hundred men had come from the smaller concentration camp alongside the newly-built one in the early autumn of 1940. The rest had come from Cork jail where the unnamed John Joe Kavanagh had been shot.

The huts were constructed on the cement foundations of the pre-1922 British cavalry stables. (The "basins" for washing were in fact bowls used by the Brits to feed oats to their horses and left behind by them.) Two of these huts were entirely Irish-speaking by December.

DEMANDS

Five demands were formulated and given to the Camp Commandant. The one best remembered is the withdrawal of the butter ration but it was only one of five. There was no response. Saturday, December 14 was the day picked for the protest, because apparently there was a race-meeting at the nearby Racecourse on that day. It was hoped that racegoers would see the flames and smoke from burning huts, this preventing the prisoners' action being hushed up.

A small and limited number of huts at the lower end of the camp were selected. These were set alight but a brisk wind carried the flames to others not targeted. Coogan says "six of them were destroyed with a quantity of trestle beds and bedding," all of which recalls similar action by the Long Kesh internees in October, 1974.

Bell notes the response to the Curragh protest: "The authorities reacted immediately and harshly. The camp was surrounded by fully-armed soldiers backed by armoured cars. All the prisoners were rounded-up by soldiers carrying small arms..."

FIERCE FIGHTING

In fact "fierce fighting" (Coogan's phrase) took place in hand-to-hand confrontations as the military attempted to quench the blaze, attacking the prisoners in the process. These defended themselves with bed-boards, broom handles and whatever they could find.



• Barney Casey

Later the prisoners there took turns between resting in the centre of the cement floor and marching around the walls to keep warm. Matt Casey was lucky to have a newspaper under him. All were confined until Monday morning with a 12 ounce dry loaf between every four men and a mug of tea each. This was handed in once on Sunday while a few buckets near the door served as toilets.

The doors were unlocked at the usual time on Monday morning. One hut contingent under the command of JOHN REYNOLDS of Leitrim (Jimmy Joe's twin brother) marched up the main road as usual, wheeled left and entered the dining hall for breakfast (see diagram).

Next, the "Ice-box" contingent formed up on the road, marched towards the main gate in the normal way and wheeled

in that afternoon and spent time with him consoling him.

PAROLE REFUSED

Two applications for parole to attend his brother's removal and funeral were refused. For the next fortnight, he says, his head was in a whirl trying to come to terms with what had happened. The chaplain also wrote a kind letter home to his parents.

They received a telegram that day saying Barney was dead and that he was "shot accidentally"!

IRA Headquarters provided a coffin and hearse and the cortege was escorted by a heavy Free State military presence. The parish priest at Emmybegs in Longford evicted the troops as they attempted to interfere with the coffin of their victim in the church after it had arrived at 9-10pm.

A huge funeral took place next day. Republicans with headgear and Tricolour armbands marched on either side of the hearse. In Kilroe Old Cemetery, MAUD GONNE MacBRIDE, then 75 years, faced the bus-loads and car-loads of mourners and the bayonets of a massive Free State presence as she delivered the oration. MRS KATHLEEN CLARKE, widow of Tom Clarke, the executed 1916 leader, was among those present. She was Lord Mayor of Dublin at this time.

The Last Post and Reveille were defiantly sounded in that atmosphere of overwhelming intimidation. RICHARD GOSS, Divisional OC of North Leinster and South Ulster, led his Volunteers down from nearby Cairn Hill by bicycle. They carried rifles slung openly across their backs. In a plantation just outside the Free State cordon, three volleys were fired in salute as the last sods were laid on the grave and the darkness of the December evening closed in.

Cheated of their prey, Free State troops with uniformed and plain clothes police halted and turned out on the roadside in the darkness all who were in vehicles, but to no avail. Longford Republicans had honoured their former Battalion OC fittingly.

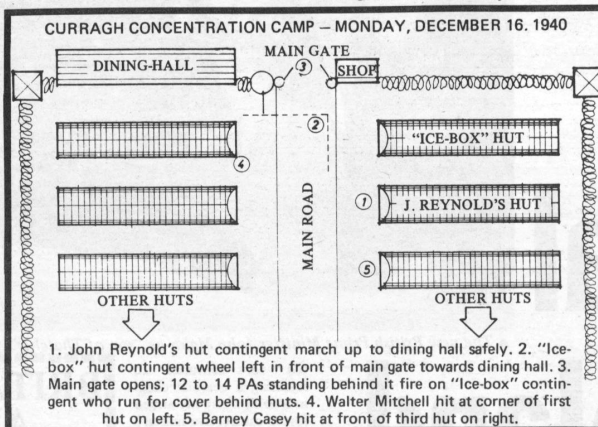
MISINFORMATION

From Leinster House and the Curragh misinformation was scattered liberally: "He was shot trying to escape," "he confronted an armed soldier and attempted to take his weapon," "the internees were warned not to march to meals" (which they were not), etc., etc.

The inquest was in effect, suppressed. The Free State Minister for Justice Gerry Boland issued a written order under the Emergency Powers Act to the Kildare County Coroner doing away with the jury. Then, only evidence of identification and medical evidence was heard. The "when, where, how and why" were not examined. It was a travesty. But Seán MacBride, representing the family, did get it on the record that "the entrance wound was at the back and the exit wound at the front".

As in the case of other Republicans shot dead by the 26-County State, no verdict was ever returned. Nor has it been, fifty years later.

(Next month: The Curragh aftermath... Refs. *The Secret Army* by J. Bowyer Bell; *The IRA* by T.P. Coogan; *The United Irishman*: series of articles in early 1950s; *Tintown 1940-45* by Gearóid Mac Cárthaigh; separate article on shooting of Barney Casey 1952. Interviews: late Joe Casey, senior; Matt Casey, Michael Traynor and other ex-internees.)



The situation grew nasty. The Free Staters opened fire. First MÁRTÍN STANDÚN (An Spidéal) suffered a flesh wound, being burned along the temple by a bullet. Then BOB FLANAGAN, Kilmore, Carrick-on-Shannon, had one lodged in his shoulder. ARTHUR MOYNIHAN of Cork had a rifle bullet enter his back and exit later in the Military Hospital through his stomach.

(It may be noted that in dealing with the Long Kesh burnings 34 years later the British did not use firearms).

The Curragh internees were eventually driven back to an open space, used for games, at the end of the camp. There they were surrounded by machine-gun teams with Lewis guns. Towards darkness they were locked into the remaining huts.

The one nearest the main gate of the camp, as one approached it along the camp main road, on the right hand side was a disused dining hall with a cement floor, named the "Ice-box" for obvious reasons. Sixty-two men were crowded into this.

TRIGGER-HAPPY

Coogan relates: "Throughout the night there was desultory shooting around the huts as trigger-happy military police fired at shadows. Inside the huts the internees were apprehensive that someone was going to be shot."

In the "Ice-box" a concert was got under way to raise morale and show the PAs (Póilíní Airm) that the men were not broken. Choruses raised the roof and Barney Casey, a young hut OC from Co. Longford did his traditional Irish step-dancing to the cheers of all present. (He was the best traditional reel dancer ever, says Peadar Ó Gríofa, Irish teacher in North Longford and South Leitrim for many years).

left proceeding towards the dining hall. Then the main gate swung open revealing 12 to 14 armed PAs under an officer.

OPENED FIRE

All hell broke loose. Shouting "Get back" the PAs opened fire on the prisoners marching to breakfast. They scattered seeking cover, at least from view behind the wooden huts. There were two bursts of firing. WALTER MITCHELL, a Protestant Republican from Rahon, Co. Offaly, and a veteran of the Black-and-Tan War, turned head-over-heels as he dashed behind a hut. He suffered a flesh wound as a bullet penetrated the heel of his boot. That was in the second burst.

In the first BARNEY CASEY was shot in the back attempting to enter a hut. Bell described him as "being crumpled on the ground, his face and chest covered with a bloody froth". His comrades placed him unconscious on one of the low, trestle plank beds.

Then in the sudden silence, the first Camp OC Prisoners, BILLY MULLIGAN of Aughnaclicke, Co. Longford, marched up the main road to the PAs with the guns still smoking in their hands. As they yelled "Get back" at him, he halted and demanded a stretcher, a priest and a doctor for Barney. He remained there facing their murderous weapons, until one of them turned and went for help.

Barney Casey was removed within ten minutes to the Base Hospital. He never recovered consciousness and died two hours later. His brother Matt was in the meantime brought to see him for five minutes.

No sympathy was expressed to Matt when he was called up to the main gate to receive word of his brother's death. A Free State army chaplain did come