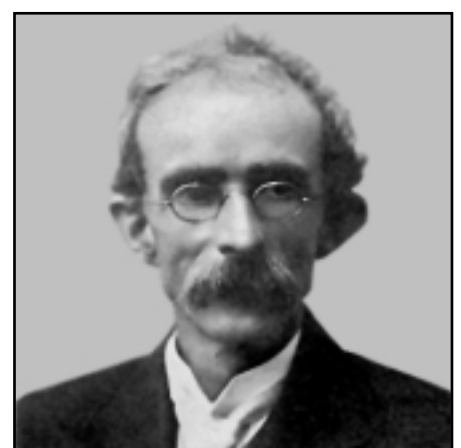


FORUM MAGAZINE

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Reopen Stardust Inquiry

Eoin McGrath

If you thought the Stardust tragedy was history, well think again. The 25th Anniversary of the single biggest loss of life in the history of the state has brought with it mounting pressure for a new investigation in to the tragic events of 14 February 1981. Now expert testimony and withheld evidence cast doubt over the official verdicts of the original tribunal, verdicts that have caused so much anger and heartbreak for survivors and relatives of those that died.

It is now evident that there were a number of flaws in the original inquiry, most notably the position and contents of a storeroom. The families believe the Garda lay out map of the Stardust that was produced at the tribunal was misleading due to the fact that it had the storeroom located at ground level when in fact it was above the main seating and dancefloor area. This basic map was the template for which the tribunal drew its final conclusions. The families argue that the original inquiry seriously underestimated the significance of this room and how flammable its contents were.

A list of the contents of the storeroom was provided to the original inquiry but it was never entered as evidence. Robin Knox an expert fire consultant believes "the tribunal never appreciated just how potent a fuel load was in there" on the night. He goes on to add, "the fire did not start in the seats at the back of the alcove. I believe the fire started above the heads of people". Greg O'Neill, legal representative for the families, believes that the "storeroom was in fact a bomb waiting to be ignited". It is now clear that the tribunal non-directed itself in relation to the storeroom's position and its highly flammable contents and was in error in finding that the fire could not have started or spread from this storeroom.

Witness statements at the time telling of the fire starting above their heads, and not at ground level, substantiates the withheld evidence. There is other evidence that should have been taken in to consideration

but was not, evidence highlighting electrical overheating in the room next to the storeroom months before the fire. These important facts should not have been ignored. David Delichatsas a leading fire expert states "based on the evidence withheld from the inquiry, the fire could not have started in the alcove but most likely in the roof space that was the storeroom" If this is the case then the original tribunal based its conclusions on inaccurate evidence.

Greg O'Neill, legal representative for the families, argues that there were too many inconsistencies with the original tribunal report. He goes on to say that the "Stardust report in paragraph one accurately describes where the storeroom is situated but from passages of the report and other conclusions drawn, it would seem there was a certain degree



Stardust: the scene of devastation

of ambiguity in the understanding of where the storeroom was". This he states has never been fully clarified. Ronan Keane who presided over the tribunal said at the time "there is no evidence to indicate that the fire was started deliberately in the west alcove and that the cause was "probable arson".

This tribunal has left the families with deep and abiding concerns over its conclusions. One family member is quoted as saying "I want the truth, I want to know why they died, I want to know how they died. The cause of the fire was never identified and for this reason alone a new inquiry needs to be opened, we have never known the cause of the fire. Surely we deserve the truth and some closure in our lives". The death of forty-eight young people is too great a calamity to be just swept under the carpet.

The onus is now on the government to re-open the inquiry and to establish the truth with all the evidence that is now available before them.

The New Republican Forum calls upon the Dublin government to have the inquest formally re-opened and to finally give the families answers to the questions they have been asking for the last twenty-five years. They deserve nothing less.

Omagh: MI 5's bomb to end all bombs?

John Hanley

In 1996 MI5 tasked David Rupert to infiltrate dissident republicanism. Between 1997 and 2001 Rupert posted 2166 e-mails to MI5. On 11 April 1998, five months before the Omagh bomb, Rupert informed MI5 that dissident republicans were planning a bomb attack in the town [E-mail 104]. While gardai frustrated the April bomb plan, MI5 knew the threat was postponed, not extinguished. MI5 e-mailed Rupert: "We disrupted the intention to use the car bomb, but maybe not for long" [E-mail 126A]. However, it now held the advantage over the would-be car bombers in that it knew Omagh would be a likely future target.

MI5 had other salient intelligence in its possession. An anonymous August 4 phone-call warned of a planned dissident attack in Omagh on August 15. Whereas in April Rupert provided the location of the planned bombing, this phone-warning supplemented this intelligence by confirming location with the date of attack.

On August 13, FRU agent Kevin Fulton met a Real IRA informant. According to Fulton, his clothing was covered in dust particles of homemade explosives. Fulton correctly suspected a car bomb attack was in an advanced stage of planning. He provided MI5 with the agent's name and car registration number. Yet no surveillance operation was put in place.

Further revelations came to light during the Omagh inquest. Michael Mansfield QC [representing the victims' families] asked RUC Assistant Chief Constable Eric Anderson if the British state possessed any satellite information which facilitated the monitoring of the Vauxhall Cavalier prior to the bombing. Anderson confirmed the Vauxhall Cavalier contained a tracking device which enabled a US satellite pinpoint the car's movements and exact location on the day of the bombing. US intelligence conveyed this surveillance data to MI5. Yet MI5 chose not to relay it information to RUC officers on the ground.

The presence of a tracking device indicates the involvement of an MI5 agent in the planning or the execution of the bombing, at some point between the unlawful procurement of the car and the detonation of the bomb.

After Omagh MI5 ordered Rupert out of Ireland. On August 16 MI5 e-

mailed Rupert: "insulate yourself from the gardai" [E-mail 305] and "collect tickets at Belfast City Airport...You'll be here [London] for two nights. We need to talk. It's extremely important" [E-mail 329]. MI5 obviously feared their agent might be gripped as part of a massive cross-border investigation and might disclose the April bomb warning he conveyed to MI5. Indeed Rupert's e-mails to MI5 on Omagh



Michael Mansfield QC

were withheld from Nuala O'Loan when she conducted her investigation into the intelligence background to the bombing.

Why did MI5 make no attempt to intercept the bomb, despite possessing four key pieces of intelligence? How can this inaction be explained? What was MI5's motivation? Did it want to protect the identity of its agent at all costs? Or was this a "securocrat" plot to subvert the peace? No. MI5 management did not want to scupper the peace. But it did want to protect the identity of its agent and, at the same time, drive - what it hoped would be - the final nail into physical force republicanism at a sensitive time in the peace process.

By August 1998 the provisionals had decided to exchange the armalite for British ministerial portfolios. Future provisional decommissioning was only months away. Nonetheless MI5 remained concerned about the growing threat posed by the Real IRA. Between its formation in November 1997 and August 1998 the Real IRA planted large car bombs in Banbridge, Portadown and Markethill. Armagh and Moira RUC barracks were subject to mortar attacks. In April 1998 gardai intercepted a London-bound BMW containing 1,200 lbs of explosives at Dun Laoghaire port. In May two 500lb bombs were intercepted on the border. In July British police captured a London Real IRA unit with bomb mak-

ing equipment. The Real IRA campaign was gathering momentum while the Agreement had yet to be firmly rooted and the provo leadership was confronted with the specter of large scale defections.

British intelligence was confronted with an extremely volatile situation. It had spent years infiltrating the military and political wings of the provisional movement. By 1994 several senior PIRA members were compromised. The organisation was rendered incapable of sustaining an effective armed campaign. For two decades the reformist Sinn Fein leadership had been nurtured and surrounded by MI5 agents who influenced the constitutional trajectory of the movement. Was MI5's project about to be jeopardised at its moment of triumph by the emergence of another IRA? No. MI5 would allow nothing to destabilise the provisional's capitulation. Drastic solutions were required.

Was April 1998 the moment when the British agent within a dissident republican group first flouted Omagh as a target? Was August 15 the product of his labour? From MI5's perspective Omagh was an ideal target. It retained an elected dissident republican. A catastrophic bomb attack in Omagh would permanently discredit the emergent political opposition to Sinn Fein throughout the whole island and would dissuade disaffected provisionals from defecting. With one foul stroke MI5 could deal a decisive blow to political and military dissident republicanism.

Within days of the bombing the provo leadership regained the initiative. Amid a torrent of anti-republican hysteria they publicly condemned a republican attack and visited the scene of the explosion. It seemed dissident republicanism has committed political suicide. Only weeks previous it seemed unimaginable that Adams could countenance a move towards arms decommissioning and a formal end to the provo campaign. However, Omagh made this possible.

MI5 had four instances of intelligence pointing to the Omagh bombing on August 15. Yet MI5 deliberately allowed the bomb to proceed to protect a key informant and to defeat republican recalcitrants. After Omagh the Belfast Agreement drifted in and out of political crises, but the peace was secured. So was Omagh MI5's bomb to end all bombs?

Interview with Micheal McKevitt

Forum Magazine recently interviewed Michael McKevitt, who is serving a 20-year prison sentence for "directing" an IRA breakaway faction opposed to the Belfast Agreement

FM: Gerry Adams believes the Belfast Agreement contains the potential to deliver republican objectives. Do you agree?

MMcK: Adams recently described the Belfast Agreement as "an agreement to a journey, but not a destination". Well, this particular journey has copper-fastened partition and has led republicanism up a political cul-de-sac. The Agreement will not deliver republican objectives. Indeed it is contrary to republican principles to seek to redress the questions of independence and national reunification within the terms prescribed by the Belfast Agreement. The Agreement stipulates that Irish unification will not transpire until a majority within the six counties supports such a political outcome. This represents an anti-democratic unionist veto on reunification; a veto which is now entrenched in Irish and British constitutional law. The existence of this veto acts as a permanent bloc on unity and is an invitation to unionists to say no in perpetuity. The people of the island of Ireland have an inalienable right to national self-determination, free from external impediment. This political unit is the only democratic channel through which the future of Ireland should be decided. Under no circumstances should a unionist or any other majority within six of the nine counties of Ulster be permitted to exercise a veto on an independent, united Ireland.

FM: Do demographic trends within the north hold out any prospect of progress towards unity?

MMcK: Prominent Sinn Féin spokespersons occasionally point to demographic trends within the north as proof that the Belfast Agreement can deliver republican objectives. In fact Adams recently claimed that unionist majority status may be becoming precarious. Notwithstanding the totally spurious nature of these claims, this battle of the cradle type politics is totally abhorrent. Republicans should move beyond this type of narrow sectarian politics and move beyond the terms of the Belfast Agreement when seeking to redress partition and reunification. It is the people of the island of Ireland as a

whole - and not an artificially created majority within the six counties - that should decide the political future of this country. Republicans and anti-imperialists must not be diverted from this fact.

Those republicans who support the Belfast Agreement, and who are pinning their hopes on future demographic shifts within the north, should ask



Adams: "an agreement to a journey"

themselves whether they really believe the British government will withdraw from Ireland in the event of a 50% plus 1 scenario, as repeatedly forecast by numerous Sinn Féin spokespersons. Do they really believe the southern establishment has the political will or appetite to move towards unity on this basis? Over the coming years unionism will seek to shift the goalposts on the future of the north's constitutional status from the present scenario in which it is decided by a majority within the six counties to one where future constitutional change it is dependent on dual majority consent within both communities. Have no doubt, unionism will attain support for this position from the London and Dublin governments, both of whom are hostile to the emergence of an independent, united Ireland.

FM: Martin McGuinness maintains that, while the peace process has involved difficult decisions for republicans, the Agreement is working. Do you agree?

MMcK: The British state views the peace process as war by another means. It has relentlessly pursued its war objectives under the banner of the peace process - and it must be added, with some degree of success. This

process has witnessed the provisionals abandon Irish unity and agree to administer British rule in Ireland for the foreseeable future. The provisionals have also endorsed the entrenchment of British sovereignty over the north and accepted the anti-democratic unionist veto on Irish independence. They are about to accept a reformed RUC and an expanded role for MI5 in the north. The surrender of their entire arsenal, weapons which were procured to end British rule, was the price they paid for the implementation of an equality agenda within the British six-county state and for access to power north and south. In the negotiating rooms of Stormont Castle, the British state - in tandem with unionism - inflicted the political and military defeat upon the provisionals which it could not achieve in the field. What McGuinness refers to as difficult decisions could be more aptly described as a wholesale political and military capitulation. It is somewhat surprising that Trimble was treated with derision within unionism for having negotiated the Belfast Agreement. Instead of highlighting the ideological compromises which he and the British state forced the provisional leadership to swallow, he conducted what seemed to be an almost permanent rearguard action. In contrast Adams and McGuinness cleverly repackaged a resounding political defeat and sold it to their constituency as victory.

As to McGuinness' suggestion that the Agreement is working. Well, I suppose from his perspective it is working. The protracted political stalemate over the past few years has kept Sinn Féin and their prospective electoral candidates firmly in the media spotlight. All of this has fuelled Sinn Féin's pursuit of power in both partitionist states. So despite the apparent absurdity of the comment, it is easy to see why McGuinness and Adams believe the Agreement is working. While it may not be advancing republican objectives, it is nonetheless facilitating their acquisition of power in both states - and that is what they are about at present.

FM: Do you believe Britain has a political or strategic interest in Ireland?

MMcK: Britain has conducted a brutal and dirty war in our country over the past thirty years. Britain has armed, trained and directed pro-British death squads. Britain has murdered hundreds of Irish nationals. Britain has been found guilty of inflicting torture and inhuman and degrading treatment upon Irish prisoners before international courts. This war has clearly tarnished Britain's international reputation. On the financial front Britain injects an annual subvention of £4bn into the north. It has spent over £60bn since 1979. Is it enduring all of this out of the goodness of its heart? To protect the "democratic rights" of one million unionists?

In the long run Britain is prepared to maintain a normalised and reformed six-county state in perpetuity. Some have argued the British establishment is fearful that a withdrawal from Ireland could radicalise Welsh and Scottish nationalism and precipitate the future dismemberment of the so-called United Kingdom. There may be something in this. But one shouldn't discount the British establishment's profound hostility towards Irish separatism and its deep-seated commitment to anti-democratic unionism, all of which are continued manifestations of its age-old imperialist mindset. The British establishment would also be fearful of the radicalising effects of unity within Ireland. So, for various reasons, Britain has a political interest in remaining in Ireland.

The strategic question is an interesting one. In 1987 Adams secretly presented a republican questionnaire to Tom King via Fr Alec Reid. All of this is well-documented in Ed Maloney's *A Secret History of the IRA*. The first item on Adams' questionnaire asked: What is the nature of the British government's interest in Ireland? The response declared that Britain has "no political, military, strategic, or economic interest in staying in Ireland". King subsequently informed Maloney that he never actually saw the finished written response. Consequently Maloney concluded that MI5 - and not any British politician - penned the reply. This debate then entered the public domain in 1989 when Peter Brooke famously declared that "the British government has no selfish, strategic or economic interest in Ireland". Patrick Mayhew reiterated this formula as late as May/June 2005 in a *History Ireland* interview.

Were these declarations of strategic neutrality genuine? Or were they a

ruse designed to strengthen the hand of Adams and McGuinness? Well, published British policy documents contradict these public declarations of strategic neutrality. Throughout the Cold War British Foreign Office documents continually stressed Ireland's strategic importance for the British state, particularly with regard to the protection of shipping in the approaches to Britain. Has the end of the Cold War rendered these strategic concerns redundant? An interesting post-Cold War analysis was provided by GR Sloan, the Deputy Head of Strategic Studies at the Britannia Royal Naval



Tom King

College in Dartmouth, in a 1997 book entitled *The Geopolitics of Anglo-Irish Relations in the 20th Century*. Sloan believes the end of the Cold War has not diminished Ireland's strategic importance. Indeed Sloan encourages the British government to continue to pursue what he refers to as a "unique geopolitical dualism" which he believes is based on the assumption of being able to differentiate between a strategic policy enunciated for the purposes of political consumption in the north, namely, to send a signal to the provisional movement, and the necessity of maintaining partition to ensure the continued membership of a part of Ireland in the NATO Alliance. Sloan concluded that this "geopolitical dualism" looks likely to underpin British strategic policy for some time to come. So despite public pronouncements to the contrary, one shouldn't dismiss Ireland's strategic importance to certain elements within the British military establishment.

FM: Is the southern establishment interested in Irish unity?

MMcK: The southern ruling class is predominantly hostile to unity. All-island stability is its paramount concern. Granted most southern political parties claim to aspire to a united

Ireland. However, it is necessary to separate rhetoric from realpolitik. For over thirty years the southern political establishment's primary objective vis-à-vis the north has been political stability, primarily because it enhances the prospect of wealth creation and induces foreign multinationals to invest in, and repatriate colossal profits from, the south.

From the outset of the peace process the southern establishment's sole objective was a termination of all armed opposition to British rule in Ireland and the attainment of stability in the British-controlled six-county state. Articles 2&3 were deleted without a murmur of opposition. Unity was relegated from a constitutional imperative to a vague aspiration. And Britain's constitutional hold over the North was entrenched.

Last year Bertie Ahern stated that "the constitutional question is now settled". At a 2005 *Imagining Ireland* conference Garret Fitzgerald outlined three reasons why he believes the goal unity should be abandoned - as if this goal hadn't already been abandoned by the southern establishment.

Further establishment hostility to an all-Ireland approach was recently evident in relation to the question of whether northern public representatives should be given speaking rights at Oireachtas committee meetings. Fianna Fail, the Progressive Democrats and most of the opposition parties rejected the suggestion out of hand. This exposed the blatantly partitionist mindset of the major southern political parties.

At the recent Sinn Féin ardfeis Adams stated that one of party's main strategic priorities is to engage unionism and convince it of the merits of Irish unity. To date he cannot even persuade them to share power in a reformed British six-county state. But perhaps he should begin with the southern political establishment and his partners in the so-called "pan-nationalist alliance" because these elements are the most resolute defenders of partition; and albeit for different reasons, their hostility to a British withdrawal is just as intense as that of any unionist.

FM: Yet the southern state is officially commemorating the 1916 Rising?

MMcK: The official state commemoration has more to do with the next general election than the ideals of the

1916 Proclamation or the actions of the men and women of Easter Week. Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour are currently engaged in a distasteful and absurd tug-of-war with Sinn Fein over who can best lay claim to the tradition of 1916. Whereas in actual fact all of these parties have forfeited any right to lay claim to the militant, separatist, socialist-republican tradition. These parties support the ongoing partition of our country and British rule in Ireland. These parties have absolutely nothing in common with the politics of Pearse or Connolly, both of whom were resolute opponents of partition. Indeed Sinn Fein has pledged itself to administering British rule in Ireland for the foreseeable future. People should ignore the hypocritical posturing of these parties and instead focus upon the ideals that motivated the men and women of Easter Week. Perhaps the best way to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the 1916 Rising is by re-examining and debating the progressive and democratic ideals that motivated the insurrection and by re-committing ourselves to their realisation. The 1916 Proclamation remains a relevant political manifesto. Whether it is the issue of national sovereignty, the utilisation of our national resources, health and welfare, or the treatment of our nation's children, the Proclamation shines a democratic light on all of these important issues. It illustrates what nationhood could signify.

FM: This year also marks the 25th anniversary of the 1981 Hunger Strike. How do you view this event after all this time?

MMcK: The ten H-Block Martyrs and all of the men and women who endured the brutal blanket and no-wash protests were highly courageous, highly committed, and highly principled IRA and INLA political prisoners. These political prisoners realised, perhaps quicker than most, the significance of the British government's attempt to criminalise the republican struggle. They knew that a victory for the British state inside the prisons would have devastating consequences for the overall struggle. On the first day of his hunger strike, Bobby Sands wrote that he was dying not only to end the barbarity within the H-Blocks but also in the knowledge that what was lost in the battle inside the H-Blocks, was lost for the entire freedom struggle. These young men, and

sometimes we forget just how young they were, confronted criminalisation head-on and were ultimately victorious. The blanket protesters and the hunger strikers also raised international consciousness of, and generated unparalleled world-wide solidarity for, the Irish freedom struggle. But the prisoners were human. They could not have predicted future political developments. They could only respond to the situation in which they found themselves. And they did so, with



The 1916 Proclamation: "a relevant political manifesto"

unwavering bravery and steadfast courage. We must never forget this.

FM: And yet in 2006 the question of IRA prisoners inside British jails still remains a live issue?

MMcK: Yes. Most definitely. Since 1998 there have been ongoing attempts to criminalise republican prisoners in Maghaberry Prison. Segregation from loyalist prisoners was sought and successfully obtained, but the ongoing attempts at criminalisation have not diminished. Numerous problems still exist. For example, one of the most contentious issues at present is the difficulties faced by the loved ones of republican prisoners when visiting Maghaberry prison. Prior to each visit, family members and friends of republican prisoners are subject to despicable and degrading searching procedures that involve the use of prison guard dogs. Then there is the closed nature of the visits in Maghaberry prison, where republican prisoners are denied physical contact with their loved ones. This situation is a disgrace and must be resolved immediately. I would urge everyone to support republican prisoners in Maghaberry Jail.

There are also seven republican prisoners in English jails, some of whom have been waiting up to 3 years to be repatriated to an Irish prison.

The Dublin government is just as complicit as the British government in all of this. The British government manages to repatriate its incarcerated nationals - even from non-English speaking countries - within a nine-to-twelve month period. So this vengeful policy of deliberately delaying the repatriation of Irish prisoners is totally disgraceful. All republicans should lobby and support these prisoners' right to be repatriated forthwith. There is growing anger surrounding this issue. Indeed some prisoners have actually suggested that a candidate should contest the next general election in Louth to highlight the scandal surrounding repatriation.

FM: In the February-March issue of *Forum* you called for an end to the provision of landing and refuelling facilities at Shannon for US military aircraft?

MMcK: In the article I pointed out how for the past fifty years - prior to march 2003 - foreign military aircraft were denied Irish overflight and landing facilities if they were carrying armaments or aerial photographic equipment, engaged in intelligence gathering or part of a military exercise or operation. However, the Irish government departed from this longstanding position when it joined the "coalition of the willing" and permitted US forces land and refuel at Shannon en route to the illegal invasion of Iraq. For the past three years the Irish government has been complicit in an illegal occupation that has resulted in the deaths of approximately 100,000 Iraqi civilians. But to make matters worse the government is now facilitating an illegal CIA intelligence gathering operation that is founded on abduction and torture by allowing CIA-owned planes involved in "extraordinary renditions" to also land and refuel at Shannon. I concluded the article by stating that the Irish government should desist from assisting US imperialism, and should comply with its obligations under international law, by immediately withdrawing Irish landing and refuelling facilities from all US military and intelligence aircraft and all chartered flights transporting US military and intelligence personnel.

FM: Michael, on behalf of *Forum Magazine*, thank you for agreeing to the interview.

Máirtín Ó Cadhain [1906-70]

Karen Gold

By the early twentieth century the Irish language was only spoken along the Atlantic Seaboard.

Although a relatively small and isolated part of the country, the Conamara Gaeltacht was rich in culture, heritage, folklore and custom.

It was into this milieu that Máirtín Ó Cadhain was born in 1906, in the small village of An Cnocán Glas.

Máirtín received his initial education in An Spidéal. He was regarded as an excellent scholar: a fact which compelled his father to place him in secondary school, despite being in need of help on the family farm.

Máirtín subsequently enrolled in St. Patrick's College, Dublin, where he qualified as a teacher in 1926. He then spent the next year teaching in Daighinis, before taking a permanent position in Camus, in the parish of Ros Muc.

It was here that Máirtín first began seriously writing in Irish, the only language in which he ever wrote.

Patrick Pearse had a profound influence on Ros Muc both before and after the 1916 Rising. Ros Muc had its own Irish-speaking volunteers in 1916. Militant republicanism always thrived in the area.

Máirtín imbibed this republican spirit. Shortly after his arrival in 1927 he was sworn into the IRA by his fellow school teacher, Joe McMahon.

Máirtín was motivated by the political ideals promulgated in the 1916 Proclamation, in particular, the importance it bestowed upon the Irish language.

But in many people's eyes the nascent Free State had abandoned these noble goals. The country was partitioned and the restoration of the language was paid little more than lip-service.

In 1933 Máirtín Ó Cadhain helped establish Muintir na Gaeltachta. Frustrated by the slow pace of political change and regional neglect, Muintir na Gaeltachta was the first political pressure group to emerge from within the Gaeltacht. The group received support from the Dublin newspaper *An t-Éireannach*, to which Máirtín regularly contributed.

In that same year Máirtín made a famous speech in An Ceathrú Rua where he called for a 'Black Pig's Dyke' to be built around the Gaeltacht to

protect it from anglicising influences. He also demanded that work be made available to stem the flow of emigration which was decimating the region, and for all state services to be provided in Irish.

The formation of Muintir na Gaeltachta empowered the people of the Gaeltacht and eroded their allegiance to conventional political parties.

After being sacked from his posi-



Martin O'Cadhain

tion as teacher in 1935, Máirtín moved to Dublin where he worked as an organiser for Conradh na Gaeilge and operated as an IRA recruiting officer. In April 1938 he was elected to the IRA Army Council.

He was one of many republicans interned by the war-time Fianna Fáil government in 1940. He spent the next five years in the Curragh Internment Camp. There Máirtín produced his first book of short stories, *Idir Shúgradh agus Dáiríre*.

Following his release in 1945 Máirtín married Máirín Ní Rodaigh, a school teacher in Scoil Lorcáin, Dublin's first Gaelscoil. By this time Máirtín was no longer active in the IRA. In 1948 he published his second book of short stories, *An Braon Broghach*. His masterpiece, *Cré na Cille*, was published the following year.

For the next seven years Máirtín worked in the translation section of Leinster House. And although not writing with the same intensity, he still managed to publish *Cois Caoláire* and *Athnuachan*.

In 1957 Máirtín was employed by the Department of Irish in Trinity College Dublin. Widely regarded as an excellent lecturer, he was subsequently appointed Professor of Irish.

By the 1960s Máirtín witnessed the Irish language dying before his eyes, with few raising voices in anger. The

ideals of 1916 were being swamped amid a new wave of materialism.

However, Máirtín did not fall victim to despair. He reverted to his dearly-held republican beliefs. He was one of the founding members of Misneach [Courage]: a group established out of the disillusionment felt by many towards the official language movement.

Misneach's aims and objectives were based on the 1916 Proclamation. These ideals were to be achieved by any means necessary. The organisation heightened political awareness of various issues by organising pickets and protests, and by withholding rates and embarking on highly symbolic hunger strikes.

Máirtín's wife passed away in 1965 and the remaining years of his life were dogged by ill-health. However, this was no obstacle to continued activism.

In 1966 Misneach boycotted the official 50th commemoration of the 1916 Rising, due to the Free State's betrayal of the ideals that motivated the insurrection. Instead the group organised an eighteen man hunger-strike. The eighteen included a number of 1916 veterans. This gesture of solidarity by several 1916 veterans meant a lot to Máirtín Ó Cadhain.

Despite being in ill-health, between 1967-70, Máirtín produced a whole volume of new work, which included *An tSraith Dhá Tógáil* and stories such as *An Eochair* and *Ag Déanamh Pápeir*.

In 1967 the Gaeltacht Civil Rights Movement was formed by a new generation of political activists. These younger campaigners were influenced by the earlier political programme of Muintir na Gaeltachta.

The new generation of activists frequently asked Máirtín for advice and were regularly joined by the Professor of Irish on many a picket or platform.

Sadly, in 1970, Máirtín Ó Cadhain passed away after years of ill-health.

Throughout his life he laboured selflessly for the freedom of Ireland and for the restoration of the Irish language.

Revolutionary, gaeilgeoir, soldier, scholar, writer, professor: his sad parting was Ireland's loss.

This year marks the centenary anniversary of the birth of Máirtín Ó Cadhain: one of the Gaeltacht's, and indeed, one of Ireland's greatest sons.

Where, O where, is our James Connolly?

Paul Maguire

On 12th May 1916, James Connolly entered the pantheon of Irish national heroes. The circumstances of his execution spawned numerous popular ballads and became embedded in national folklore. In 1966, on the 50th anniversary of the Rising, nationalist Ireland once again embraced his martyrdom but ignored and recoiled from his revolutionary politics. Attention focused on Pearse, while Connolly was innocuously depicted as a nationalist with a social conscience. Some even labelled him a socialist apostate, who at the last minute swapped the red flag for the green. Misrepresentation begot calumny, as the Irish establishment sought to neutralise this great working class leader. So, it is pertinent to ask, on the 90th anniversary of the 1916 Rising, Who was the real James Connolly?

Hammered and shaped on the anvil of human hardship from an early age, James Connolly knew only too well that inequality is an innate part of the capitalist system. However, his in-depth study of scientific socialism gave erudite expression to his instinctive sense of social injustice. Undoubtedly, Karl Marx, "the greatest of modern thinkers", helped formulate his thought by illustrating the precise inverse relationship between ruling class wealth and the exploitation of working class labour. Connolly wholeheartedly embraced marxism and advocated state ownership over the means of production, distribution and exchange, with no role for private capitalism, "a parasite on industry: the working class, a victim of this parasite".

But this was not a prescription for bureaucratic state socialism. When asked by an inquisitive trade union activist "Should we make this or that the property of the government?" Connolly answered "Yes, but only as a proportion of the workers make the government their property".

So what can we derive from this? What was Connolly's ideal worker's republic? The 1896 manifesto of the Irish Socialist Republican Party outlined the *minimum* programme of any socialist-republican government: the

nationalisation of the railways, canals and banks, the introduction of a graduated income tax, free childcare and education, public control of education, universal suffrage, a 48-hour week, and public ownership of the economy. It was, by the standards of the time, a progressive charter for change.

Yet Connolly always suspected the ruling class would not relinquish their power and privilege peacefully. "It would be suicidal to expect them not to slaughter us wholesale when their very existence as parasites was at stake". Hence the attainment of revolutionary change might require the working class "to use weapons of force

tions, which remain of enduring relevance".

Connolly maintained that liberty for Ireland could not simply mean political independence. Consequently, he asserted that while socialism was not achievable without independence, neither was *genuine* independence achievable without socialism.

Here lies the origin of Connolly's coalition with the Irish volunteers in Easter Week. Connolly's participation in the 1916 Rising was not an aberration, or a renunciation of socialism, or even a last-minute relapse into advanced nationalism. It was in fact the consummation of revolutionary

theory and praxis, the realisation of a political project which had, for close on a decade, inextricably linked his concept of a worker's republic with national independence.

While Connolly was angered by the bankruptcy of those European social-democrats who endorsed the 1914 imperialist war, he was not discouraged. The banner proclaiming "We serve neither King nor Kaiser but Ireland"

adorned Liberty Hall. If only other European social-democratic leaders had had Connolly's courage and revolutionary commitment? Imagine how many European workers would have been participants in a continent-wide social revolution instead of being forsaken as canon-fodder at Verdun or the Somme?

Some within the Bolshevik leadership were dismissive of the 1916 Rising. Trotsky labelled it a "petty-bourgeois putsch". Karl Radek was equally skeptical. However, Connolly found a formidable ally in Lenin: "To imagine that a social revolution is inconceivable without revolts of small nations in the Colonies and in Europe...is tantamount to repudiating social revolution. The misfortune of the Irish is that they rose prematurely, when the European revolt of the proletariat had not yet matured".

Nine months after Connolly's death, Tsardom fell beneath the first wave of Russian revolutionary fervour. Nine months after that the Red Flag flew triumphant over the Kremlin. How Connolly would have loved to have witnessed these revolutionary events?

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to dislodge the usurping class".

Connolly also authored the first marxist interpretation of Irish history. "History has ever been written by the master class - in the interest of the master class". So began his great marxist counter-analysis *Labour in Irish History* [1910].

Connolly's materialist interpretation placed class struggle and the working class at the heart of the national historical narrative, while exposing the class-limited objectives of bourgeois idols such as Grattan and O'Connell. Without an understanding of class struggle Connolly believed "Irish history is but a welter of unrelated facts, a hopeless chaos of sporadic outbursts, treacheries, intrigues and massacres".

Labour in Irish History was an outstanding historical work, written by a man who left school at eleven and scrapped a living as a factory worker, cobbler, journalist and trade unionist. As Professor Joseph Lee wrote "Nobody has overcome so many material obstacles to write so illuminating about Irish history. The quality of his insights obliges one to continue to wrestle with him...he asked big ques-

Revising the rising?

Over recent weeks the usual coterie of revisionists have been out peddling their anti-republican invective during the debates concerning Easter 1916. As is customary, the mainstream media has granted their dinner-table history lectures a disproportionate amount of air and column space. Thus, we have been deluged with disparaging depictions of the Rising as a nihilistic blood sacrifice which lacked a democratic mandate and as an ultimately counterproductive event in that just as much could have been achieved had constitutional nationalism been granted sufficient breathing space. It is necessary to counter these attempts at revising the Rising.

Let us firstly deal with the question of the so-called blood sacrifice. Many revisionists point to extracts from Pearse's writings to support the blood sacrifice thesis. Yes, without doubt, Pearse's use of language was often extreme, but also - and this should not be overlooked - typical of the age. Historically, leaders of advanced nationalist movements have regularly resorted to political hyperbole. "The tree of liberty must continually be watered with the blood of martyrs and the blood of tyrants". This archetypal Pearseian phrase was in fact written by Thomas Jefferson. So are we to take it that the American war of independence was a blood sacrifice?

One cannot truly appreciate the Rising unless it is placed within its proper international and historical context. To the ill-informed the Rising might appear as a historical grand gesture or yet another theatrical assertion in arms of republican aspirations. However, the Rising was anything but. In fact it represented the realisation of a coherent revolutionary strategy that was far removed from the revisionist depiction of a mindless blood sacrifice.

Any assessment of the Rising must take into consideration the 18-month-long protracted negotiations which the 1916 leaders conducted with the German general staff and admiralty from mid-1914 onwards. These negotiations resulted in the Rising coinciding with a massive German offensive on the western front at Verdun. The 1916 leaders fervently hoped the IRA would hold out for three days on Easter Week, thus satisfying the requirement that would enable a victorious Germany to fulfill its promise to give Ireland a hearing at the post-war peace conference as an independent belligerent nation. We now know the British war cabinet actually considered the possibility of suing for peace in the spring of 1916, when a German victory, or the emergence of a situation in which Germany could demand satisfactory peace terms for an end to hostilities, seemed a distinct probability. It was at this post-war peace conference that the 1916 leaders fervently hoped that Irish national aspirations would be realised. Unfortunately, history dictated otherwise. But as has been shown, the strategic approach employed by the 1916 leaders can only be appreciated within a broad international context. And contrary to the ahistorical assertions of the anti-republican revisionists,

the Rising was anything but a theatrical exercise in political hari-kari. Indeed, as the eminent historian Eoin Neeson has pointed out, the lasting shibboleth of "the blood sacrifice" is "one of the most effective and enduring examples of black propaganda this country has been subject in recent times".

Revisionists also highlight the absence of a democratic mandate for armed insurrection. This is indisputable. But they fail to qualify this by acknowledging that Ireland was not a democracy in 1916. The Act of Union, designed to permanently frustrate Irish democracy, was itself contrived without a democratic mandate and British rule in Ireland had no democratic mandate. Furthermore, only half the population was entitled to elect representatives to a foreign parliament in 1916. The Proclamation sought to remedy this democratic deficit by guaranteeing universal suffrage to a native Irish parliament. Indeed the sovereignty of the Westminster parliament over Irish affairs was the precise reasons why the insurgents were fighting. Having correctly assessed British intentions, the leaders of 1916 sought a radical alteration of Irish national perspectives by acting first and seeking a retrospective mandate later. The resort to armed force was derived from the fact that British rule has no moral authority in Ireland and that Irish national demands would always fall victim to British interests and subversion. Kevin Myers may bemoan the fact that few of the 1916 leaders ever stood for election. But the fact is no Irish separatist sought to take seats in a British parliament, as none sought to lend legitimacy to a body they fervently sought to overthrow. What is indisputable is that the Easter insurgents received a retrospective mandate in the 1918 when Sinn Féin stood for election on the principles of the 1916 Proclamation.

Revisionists also contend that just as much could have been achieved by constitutional nationalism by 1921 without any recourse to physical force. They argue that a twenty-six county Home Rule entity could have evolved into an independent Irish state. However, posing the question in this manner simply confuses the issue. The 1916 rebels did not wish to hasten Home Rule for the twenty-six counties. They fought for an all-island Irish Republic, something diametrically opposed to Home Rule. Home Rule sought to co-opt the Irish urban and rural bourgeoisie in the administration of Irish affairs within the Empire. Whereas the 1916 leaders sought a democratic all-island socialist Republic and a radical break with empire. A partitioned Ireland may have been the historical outcome by 1921, but this cannot detract from the 1916 leaders' total opposition to partition, as outlined by Pearse in his 1915 essay *Why We Want Recruits*. Anti-republican revisionists may attempt to disparage and dilute the visionary ideals of the Easter rebels who fought and died for an independent, sovereign, all-island, socialist Republic. However, under no circumstances should we allow their tawdry version of Irish history to stand unanswered.

Letters and articles (800, 1100 or 2200 words) can be sent to Forum Magazine at:

The New Republican Forum, PO Box 10, Dundalk Sorting Office, Dundalk, Co. Louth, Ireland.

Flying Column

When Dick shot Whittington

When Dick Cheney "peppered" Texan lawyer Harry Whittington with lead pellets on a recent quail shoot he became the first US vice-president to have shot a man since Aaron Burr shot Alexander Hamilton in an 1804 duel. Cheney chose not to report the incident for 24 hours. Instead he kept his head down, which is precisely what Harry Whittington should have done during the shoot. But I suppose it's easy being wise after the event. Cheney subsequently told *Fox News*: "It was the worst day of my life". Flying Column would place a small wager that it was actually the worst day of Harry Whittington's life! It later emerged that Cheney had no legal license to shoot quail. But then when has illegality ever obstructed the Bush administration from using lethal force? Cheney avoided the draft during the Vietnam War on the grounds that he was an undergraduate at Yale University. Had he served in Vietnam he might be slower to send young Americans abroad to die in illegal wars - and he might have shot the quail instead of his 78 year-old lawyer friend. Cheney also served in previous hawkish administrations under Gerard Ford, Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. He was the main architect of the two recent US wars in the Middle East; and he has suffered four heart attacks - which goes some way to proving the man actually has a heart. When Gerry Adams eventually endorses the PSNI and delivers PIRA disbandment, he may once again be permitted to fund raise in the US. When these further compromises come about, perhaps by way of reward, Dick Cheney might invite Adams out on a quail shoot or, at the very least, Teddy Kennedy might bring him for a nice drive around Chappaquiddick!

Martin - that's not cricket!

There were a number of peculiar motions on the clár of this year's Sinn Féin ardfheis. One conspicuous motion, congratulating the Irish cricket team on reaching the final stages on the world cup, was passed by a slim majority. Since when have the provies been interested in maiden overs and fast-bowling? The party leadership found itself on another sticky wicket when confronted with the issue of coalition government and policing. A majority of party delegates seemed opposed to entering future coalition south of the border and were reticent about endorsing the PSNI. However, Martin McGuinness and Gerry Kelly swung both debates which at times seemed to be drifting away from the politburo. In the end, party bosses had their way on both issues. However, delegates delivered a snub to the politburo by adding a motion insisting that the draconian 1939 Offences Against the State Act be abolished before the party enters coalition. Amazingly, Martin McGuinness - and the rest of the politburo - voted against this amendment. McGuinness was twice jailed under the oppressive Act. This draconian piece of legislation was supposed to be repealed under the terms of the Belfast Agreement. However, the Sinn Féin leadership seems in no hurry to scrap the oppressive Act and obviously believes it still has a role to play in

dealing with recalcitrant republicans. Remember these double standards the next time you hear Sinn Féin criticising the DUP for not living up to its commitments under the Belfast Agreement. On the last day of the ardfheis one young delegate described the absence of senior politburo members on the platform during the poorly-attended Sunday session on political prisoners as "shameful". Conor Murphy informed delegates that no snub was intended, it was just that the politburo were merely "caught out having a spot of lunch". I hope they suffered indigestion!

Shameless West Britons

During a recent session of the Fianna Fail-Fine Gael dominated Dun Laoghaire and Rathdown County Council, local elected officials rejected a motion supporting the display of the 1916 Proclamation in council buildings. Only two years ago this very same bunch of quivering councillors unveiled a monument "in honour of Queen Victoria" adjacent to Dun Laoghaire pier. This type of behaviour is typical of the Free State bourgeoisie. Proud to honour the "Famine Queen" but ashamed to honour our patriotic leaders of 1916. Oh, come the revolution!



National Lampoons?

In scenes reminiscent of a National Lampoons film, Gerry Adams blundered his way through this year's St Patrick's Day tomfoolery in the US. Just before he departed for Washington, Adams was denied a fundraising visa. This meant a previously collected \$100,000 had to be repaid by Sinn Féin. A bad start to the trip! On arriving Adams told journalists that it was not all bad because at least he would get "a free White House breakfast", which is fitting as he is well accustomed to settling for crumbs from the imperial table. He then became embroiled in several verbal spats. He told CNN that he held Mitchell Reiss in "low regard", before picking a fight with the BBC over misquoted comments attributed to Teddy Kennedy. Having downed his "free breakfast" Adams then left for a pre-arranged function in Buffalo via Washington Airport, only to be detained by armed airport officers because his name appeared on a terror list. Fortunately, nobody told the airport luggage handlers. So as Adams cancelled the function from a phone in the main airport lounge, his suitcases were flying at 25,000ft in the cargo-hold of a plane en-route to Buffalo. At this point, Gerry-no-friends was forced to begin a six-hour train journey to his next pit-stop in Massachusetts - minus his toothbrush and a change of shirt. Bemoaning his fate to a diminishing pack of accompanying journalists, Adams, with pompous arrogance, declared: "I can't explain this. I've been invaluable to the White House". For Washington, Adams' only value lay in his ability to deliver the abandonment of traditional IRA objectives and the complete surrender of republican arms. But having outlived his usefulness, perhaps Adams should get used to "free breakfasts" and mistreatment by armed US airport officers. Because as far as the White House is concerned he is still just one small fish in a calm, small pond. A trout surrounded by touts, you could say.

The writings of Bobby Sands

The June-July issue of *Forum Magazine* will commemorate the 25th anniversary of the 1981 Hunger Strike. However, over the coming issues, our political prisoners page will be devoted to the poetry and writings of the H-Block Martyr Bobby Sands.

The Rhythm of Time

There's an inner thing in every man,
Do you know this thing my friend?
It has withstood the blows of a million years,
And will do so until the end.

It was born when time did not exist,
And it grew up out of life,
It cut down evil's strangling vines,
Like a slashing searing knife.

It light fires when fires were not,
And burnt the mind of man,
Tempting leadened hearts to steel,
From the time that time began.

It wept by the waters of Babylon,
And when all men were a loss,
It screeched in writing agony,
And it hung bleeding from the Cross.

It died in Rome by lion and sword,
And in defiant cruel array,
When the deathly word was 'Spartacus',
Along the Appian Way.

It marched with Wat the Tyler's poor,
And frightened lord and king,
And it was emblazoned in their deathly stare,
As e'er a living thing.

It smiled in holy innocence,
Before conquistadors of old,
So meek and tame and unaware,
Of the deathly power of gold.

It burst forth through pitiful Paris streets,
And stormed the old Bastille,
And marched upon serpent's head,
And crushed it 'neath its heel.

It died in blood on Buffalo Plains,
And starved by moons of rain,
Its heart was buried at Wounded Knee,
But it will come to rise again.

It screamed aloud by Kerry lakes,
As it was knelt upon the ground,
And it died in great defiance,
As they coldly shot it down.

It is found in every light of hope,
It knows no bounds nor space,
It has risen in red and black and white,
It is here in every race.

It lies in the hearts of heroes dead,
It screams in tyrant's eyes,
It has reached the peak of mountains high,
It comes searing 'cross the skies.

It lights the dark of this prison cell,
It thunders forth its might,
It is 'the undaunted thought,' my friend,
That thought that says 'I'm right!'

Diary Entry: 1st March 1981*

I am standing on the threshold of another trembling world. May God have mercy on my soul. My heart is very sore because I know that I have broken my poor mother's heart, and my home is struck with unbearable anxiety. But I have considered all the arguments and tried every means to avoid what has become the unavoidable: it has been forced upon me and my comrades by four-and-a-half years of stark inhumanity. I am a political prisoner. I am a political prisoner because I am a casualty of a perennial war that is being fought between the oppressed Irish people and an alien, oppressive, unwanted regime that refuses to withdraw from our land. I believe and stand by the God-given right of the Irish nation to sovereign independence, and the right of any Irishman or woman too assert this right in armed revolution. That is why I am incarcerated, naked and tortured. Foremost in my tortured mind is the thought that there can never be peace in Ireland until the foreign, oppressive British presence is removed, leaving the Irish people as a unit to control their own affairs and determine their own destinies as a sovereign people, free in mind and body, separate and distinct physically, culturally and economically. I believe that I am but another of those wretched Irishmen born of a risen generation with a deeply rooted and unquenchable desire for freedom. I am dying not just to attempt to end the barbarity of H-Block, or to gain the rightful recognition of a political prisoner, but primarily because what is lost in here is lost for the Republic and those wretched oppressed whom I am deeply proud to know as the 'risen people'. There is no sensation today, no novelty that October 27th brought. (The starting date of the original seven man hunger-strike) the usual screws were not working. The slobbers and would-be despots no doubt will be back again tomorrow, bright and early. I wrote some more notes to the girls in Armagh today. There is so much I would like to say about them, about their courage determination and unquenchable spirit of resistance. They are to be what Countess Markievicz, Anne Devlin, Mary Ann McCracken, Marie MacSwiney, Betsy Gray, and those other Irish heroines are to us all. And, of course I think of Ann Parker, Laura Crawford, Rosemary Bleakeley, and I'm ashamed to say I cannot remember all their sacred names. Mass was solemn, the lads as ever brilliant. I ate the statutory weekly bit of fruit last night. As fate had it, it was an orange, and the final irony, it was bitter. The food is being left at the door. My portions, as expected, are quite larger than usual, or those which my cell-mate Malachy is getting.

***For the first seventeen days of his hunger-strike Bobby Sands kept a secret diary in which he wrote.**

NEW REPUBLICAN FORUM

The New Republican Forum is a coalition of political and community activists, founded to challenge the political status quo in Ireland by providing a radical Republican alternative to the mainstream political establishment.

The New Republican Forum:

- Stands for the reunification of Ireland and opposes all aspects of British interference in Irish affairs.
- Opposes the Belfast Agreement, which subverts the Irish people's inalienable right to self-determination.
- Stands for the creation of a just society in Ireland, based on principles of equality, social justice and genuine democracy, underpinned by a comprehensive charter of inalienable human rights.
- Supports the promotion and development of Irish culture.
- Opposes the resurgence of imperialism as a political ideology, led by the United States, its allies and client regimes.
- Supports all oppressed peoples struggling for national liberation.
- Opposes any attempt by the Dublin government to aid or assist any Western military alliance.

Our aims are:

- To establish a credible Republican opposition to British rule in Ireland.
- To critically reassess and analyse the history of the Republican struggle in Ireland, and by so doing, chart a course for the future of the Republican movement.
- To establish, support and coordinate the activities of Republican, community-based and other progressive organisations, forging a basis for a new national movement.
- To liase with other progressive forces, nationally and internationally, including anti-capitalist groups, trade unionists and environmental movements, along with national liberation movements worldwide, to further the cause of anti-imperialism.
- To establish a range of independent media outlets providing Irish people with alternative sources of information on political and social issues

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