3 Poems by Bobby Sands, From the H-Blocks[1]

Bobby Sands
April 23, 2021



We republish these three poems by the Irish revolutionary Bobby Sands—written under the pen-name Marcella while imprisoned in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh Prison by the British imperialists—in tribute to the Easter Uprising of 1916, when the Irish revolutionaries, under the especially esteemed and outstanding leadership of the socialist James Connolly, rose in arms against British Imperialism and proclaimed the All-Ireland People's Republic. The love and determination of a revolutionary artist is on display in these poems which we gladly share with our readers.

The struggle for a free, united, and socialist Ireland continues to this day; we direct our readers to the Campaign to commemorate the 1981 Hungerstrike, in which Bobby Sands participated up to his death, available here, and to the Irish Socialist Republicans statement commemorating the Easter Uprising and their statements on the recent British Loyalist, imperialist-stoked violence and the anti-imperialist resistance of the Irish youth and Republicans, available on the same website. As the popular and revolutionary newspaper of Brazil A Nova Democracia *puts it, "The revolt of the so-called loyalists (Irish loyal to the British crown) is a symptom of the contradictions produced by the domination of English imperialism over the Irish nation. […] they express a revolt – although*

[1] https://struggle-sessions.com/2021/04/23/3-poems-by-bobby-sands-from-the-h-blocks/

without full political awareness of it – against English imperialism and its chauvinism who repeatedly ignores the appeals of its colonies, even its lackeys. In this case, it is the claim of the free Irish border."

Note that we have also recently republished our journal's interview with the Irish Socialist Republicans, to whom we extend warm internationalist greetings. – Editorial Board

A PLACE TO REST

As the day crawls out another night crawls in
Time neither moves nor dies.
It's the time of day when the lark sings,
The black of night when the curlew cries.

There's rain on the wind, the tears of spirits
The clink of key on iron is near,
A shuttling train passes by on rail,
There's more than God for man to fear.

Toward where the evening crow would fly, my thoughts lie,
And like ships in the night they blindly sail,
Blown by a thought — that breaks the heart —
Of forty women in Armagh jail.

Oh! and I wish I were with the gentle folk,
Around a hearthened fire where the fairies dance unseen,
Away from the black devils of H-Block hell,
Who torture my heart and haunt my dream.

I would gladly rest where the whin bush grow,
Beneath the rocks where the linnets sing
In Carnmoney Graveyard 'neath its hill
Fearing not what the day may bring!

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 to 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 lit fires when fires were not,
And burnt the mind of man,
Tempering 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 writhing 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 the 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 in 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 there in every race.

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

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

— *Marcella, H-Block, Long Kesh Prison Camp.*

TOM BARRY*

For Barry's soul we prayed in hell,
Pathetic creatures adorned in pain,
And we never heard his requiem bell,
But our own — in torture's livid strain.
In the southern realms of Munster world,
The humble whin bush sway,
Shedding yellow tears like child
For a legend passed away.

And they blow down lanes of time gone by,
O'er Crossbarry and Kilmicheal grave,
And resurrect a battle cry,
'With Barry, boys be brave!'

In dusky light, by mist, o'er hills they tread,
A column on the run,
The ghosts of fighters long since dead,
Yet n'er at rest, their guns still slung.

Now Barry leads them in the night,
Hardy souls of Cork Brigade,
To tramp the glens to morning light,
When their ghostly forms shall fade.

And we prayed tonight for Barry's rest,
Would Barry e'er be free,
As he tramps across old Munster's breast,
To blind eternity.

And in darkened shadows, 'neath prison bars,
The hags of torture wave,
But we hear a voice that is of ours,
'With Barry, boys be brave!'

**Tom Barry, an IRA commander in the Tan War, died in July 1980*