

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 385. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 81 corresponds to Litir 385.

Bha feadhainn à Barraigh ann an Alba Nuadh ann an Canada o chionn ghoirid. Nuair a bha iad thall, chùm iad seirbheis cuimhneachaidh don fheadhainn a chaill am beatha ann an spreadhadh mòr Halifax ann an naoi ceud deug is seachd-deug (1917). Am measg nam marbh bha còignear Bharrach a bh’ air bòrd soitheach ann an cala Halifax.

Bha mi air cluinntinn mu dheidhinn spreadhadh mòr Halifax, ceart gu leòr, ach **mus do thòisich mi air a’ chùis a rannsachadh**, cha robh fios agam idir gun robh e cho mòr. Thathar ag ràdh gum b’ e an spreadhadh a bu mhotha a rinn mac an duine riamh, mus do chruthaich e bomaichean niùclasach.

Ann an naoi ceud deug is seachd-deug (1917), bha an Cogadh Mòr a’ dol agus bha port Halifax trang. Bha e làn soitheichean cogaidh agus longan a bheireadh bathar thar a’ chuain. ’S ann à Halifax a dh’fhalbhadh mòran de na longan a Bhreatainn. Bha soitheach nam Barrach a’ dol a thoirt gràn is eich a Bhreatainn.

Bha madainn ghrianach ann air an t-siathamh latha dhen Dùbhlachd. Ach mus tigeadh dorchadas na h-oidhche bhiodh còrr is mìle gu leth duine marbh. Bhiodh na ceudan eile a’ faighinn bàs mus biodh an gnothach seachad.

Chuir an soitheach Frangach, am *Mont Blanc*, seachad an oidhche taobh a-muigh a’ phuirt. Bha i ro anmoch airson faighinn a-steach tro na lìn a bha a’ dìon a’ phuirt an aghaidh bhàtaichean-aiginn Gearmailteach. Bha am *Mont Blanc* làn stuth-spreadhaidh – searbhag picric, TNT, cotan-gunna is benzol. ’S e luchd cunnartach a bh’ ann.

Bha soitheach eile a’ fàgail a’ phuirt air a’ mhadainn sin. B’ ise tè à Nirribhidh, an *Imo*. Bha i air an t-slighe a New York airson bathar a chur air bòrd a dhèanadh cobhair air muinntir na Beilge. Bhuail an dà shoitheach na chèile. Thòisich teine air bòrd a’ *Mhont Blanc*. Theich an criutha, agus iad a’ smaoineachadh gum biodh i a’ spreadhadh cha mhòr sa bhad. Dh’fhalbh iad ann am bàtaichean gu ruige Dartmouth, baile air taobh thall a’ chaolais bho Halifax.

Gu mì-fhortanach, ge-tà, cha do dh’fhàg iad an soitheach air acair. Bha i a’ falbh leis an t-sruth. Agus stad i ri taobh a’ chidhe ann an Halifax. Cha robh fios aig a’ phoball gun robh an suidheachadh cho cunnartach, agus thàinig na mìltean dhiubh a-mach airson an gnothach fhaicinn. Goirid ro chòig mionaidean an dèidh naoi spreadh an stuth air bòrd a’ *Mhont Blanc*.

Bha an spreadhadh cho mòr 's gun do sgrios e taighean, eaglaisean, sgoiltean is factaraidhean. Chaidh clann a mharbhadh air an rathad gu sgoil. Chaidh, agus na ceudan a bha a' coimhead a' ghnothaich. Bha mòran a' coimhead bho air cùl uinneagan, agus chaill feadhainn dhiubh sin am fradharc. Bha tuinn ann coltach ri *tsunami* a rinn milleadh mòr. Agus chaidh soitheach, leis a' chòignear Bharrach air bòrd, a chur fodha.

Chaidh feadhainn a ghlasadh ann an togalaichean a thuit gu làr **air am muin**. Chaochail cuid dhiubh sin leis an fhuachd air an oidhche sin oir 's e an geamhradh a bh' ann. Thug an sgrios buaidh mhòr air a' choimhearsnachd.

Agus, leis gu robh an spreadhadh cho millteach, thug an sgioba Ameireaganach a bha a' cruthachadh boma niùclasach anns an Dàrna Cogadh sùil air na thachair. Bha iad a' tomhas dè cho mòr 's a bhiodh na bomaichean a dhèanadh sgrios air Hiroshima is Nagasaki.

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Faclan na Litreach: Barraigh: *Barra*; Alba Nuadh: *Nova Scotia*; spreadhadh: *explosion*; lìn: *nets*; searbhag: *acid*; cotan-gunna: *gun cotton*; luchd: *cargo*; Nirribhidh: *Norway*; gràn: *grain*; millteach: *damaging*.

Abairtean na Litreach: am measg nam marbh bha còignear Bharrach: *among the dead were five Barra men*; bha mi air cluinntinn mu dheidhinn: *I had heard about it*; an spreadhadh a bu mhotha a rinn mac an duine riamh: *the biggest ever man-made explosion*; mus do chruthaich e bomaichean niùclasach: *before he created nuclear bombs*; soithichean cogaidh: *warships*; a bheireadh bathar thar a' chuain: *that would take goods across the ocean*; bhiodh na ceudan eile a' faighinn bàs: *hundreds of others would die*; taobh a-muigh a' phuirt: *outside the port*; an aghaidh bhàtaichean-aiginn Gearmailteach: *against German submarines*; a dhèanadh cobhair air muinntir na Beilge: *which would provide relief for the people of Belgium*; bhuail iad na chèile: *they hit each other*; cha mhòr sa bhad: *almost immediately*; taobh thall a' chaolais: *the other side of the narrows*; a' falbh leis an t-sruth: *drifting on the current*; chaill feadhainn dhiubh sin am fradharc: *some of them lost their sight*; chaidh X a chur fodha: *X was sunk*; chaidh feadhainn a ghlasadh: *some people were trapped*; thug an sgrios buaidh mhòr air a' choimhearsnachd: *the disaster had a big effect on the community*; thug X sùil air na thachair ann: *X examined what happened there*; bha iad a' tomhas dè cho mòr 's a bhiodh na bomaichean: *they were estimating how big the bombs would be*; a dhèanadh sgrios air: *which would destroy*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: mus do thòisich mi air a' chùis a rannsachadh: *before I started to research the matter. In different places the ways in which the verb tòisich, tòiseachadh is tied to other verbs varies. Mark's dictionary gives three equivalent examples for "he started to sing" – thòisich e air seinn, thòisich e ri seinn and thòisich e a' seinn. Some people might say, for the example in the Litir, mus do thòisich mi a' rannsachadh na cùise. Neither one is more "correct" than the other. But note that in the first example, the noun cùis is in the nominative case whereas in the second example, following the verbal noun a' rannsachadh, it should be in the genitive.*

Gnàths-cainnt na Litreach: a thuit gu làr **air am muin:** *which fell to the ground on top of them.*

* Tha “*Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh*” air a maoineachadh le Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig.