

IRIS

the republican magazine

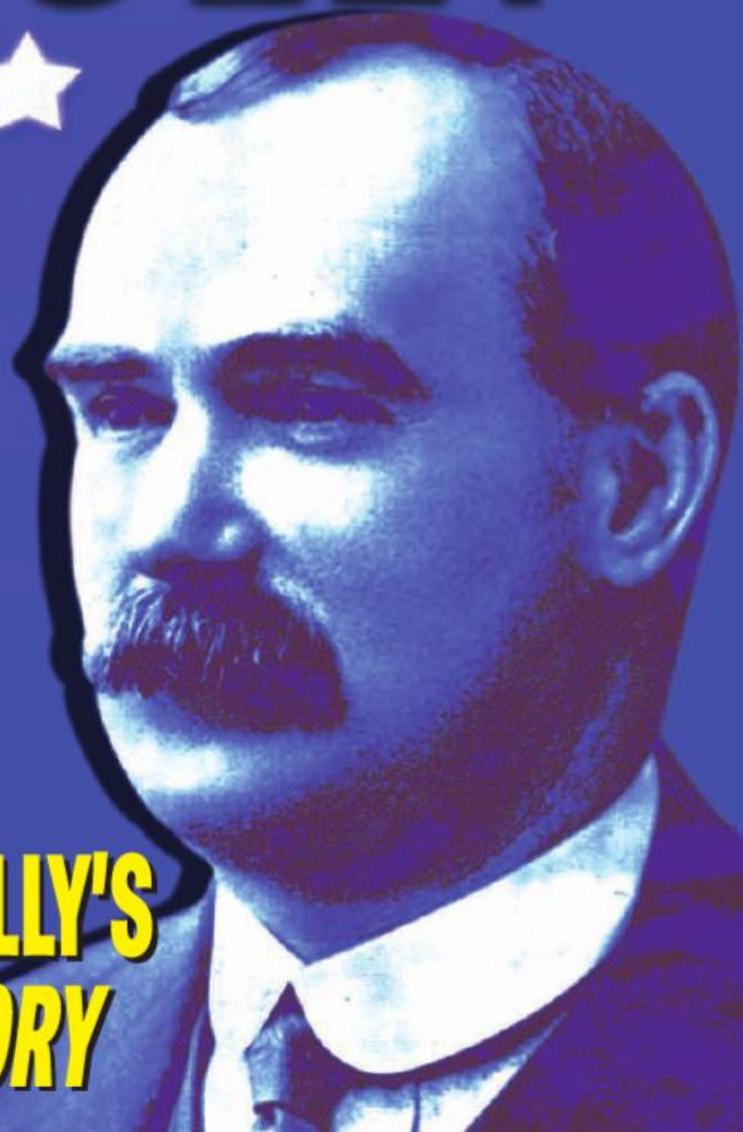
PUTTING
IRISH
UNITY
ON THE
AGENDA



JAMES CONNOLLY

"Only the
Irish working
class remains as the
incorruptible inheritors of the
fight for freedom in Ireland."

**CENTENARY OF CONNOLLY'S
LABOUR IN IRISH HISTORY**





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FINISHING JAMES CONNOLLY'S UNFINISHED BUSINESS

DURING EASTER WEEK 1916 Pádraig Mac Piarais described James Connolly as "the guiding brain of our resistance". Pearse was referring to Connolly's position as Commandant General of the Army of the Irish Republic in Dublin and as an inspirational political and military leader.

Connolly could be described as a "guiding brain" for republicans in a much wider sense. His ideas have guided republican politics and republican resistance in the decades since his death but never more so than in the present phase of the struggle for freedom.

One hundred years ago Connolly published his landmark book *Labour in Irish History*. For the first time he reclaimed the role of working people in the story of Ireland. He pointed out that the mass of the people had been neglected in the writing of Irish history, in favour of the prominent leaders who were often romanticised. Even more significantly he showed how the oppression of the Irish people was social and economic as well as political and that those who ignored or contributed to that economic and social oppression could not be called true Irish nationalists.

Connolly's arguments in *Labour in Irish History* were directed against those who called themselves Irish nationalists but who actually benefitted from the British connection. These were the privileged Irish who were content with Home Rule and who wanted to maintain the grossly unjust and inequitable system introduced into Ireland by the British. Connolly stood clearly both for total separation from England in the form of an Irish Republic and for the transformation of the Irish economy from capitalism to socialism.

For those who called themselves socialists but who ignored the reality of Ireland's position Connolly also had a clear message. They could not call themselves socialists if they failed to confront British imperialism in Ireland and if they refused to recognise that social justice and real democracy were not possible while Ireland's right to national self-determination was denied.

These fundamental principles set out by James Connolly are still relevant today. And as Connolly said of Wolfe Tone, we need to apply those principles to our own time, rather than simply honour him as a great patriot.

So what is Connolly's relevance to Ireland today?

Firstly, he reminds us that the business he and his comrades undertook in 1916 is unfinished business.

More than any other of the 1916 leaders Connolly understood what a disaster partition would be for the Irish people. He had lived and worked as a trade union organiser in Belfast and he saw the reality of sectarianism, actively fostered among working people in order to preserve the privilege of the few and to maintain the Union with England. He saw also how workers could be united across sectarian divisions. He predicted accurately that partition would lead to a "carnival of reaction" North and South.

Working for an end to partition, national reunification and a new Republic encompassing the whole island and all of its people is clearly fundamental for anyone who wishes to follow in Connolly's footsteps today.

Secondly, Connolly's core message was that the whole purpose of political struggle must be to better the lives of the people and to restore to them in full the social and economic rights taken from them by British imperialism and capitalism. He called this the reconquest of Ireland.

Today Ireland needs to be reconquered and reclaimed not only from British jurisdiction in the Six Counties and partition, but also from the bankers, the speculators, the exploiters and the gombeen men who have brought ruin to the Irish economy. And the nation needs to be reclaimed from the Establishment politicians whose political and personal corruption has led to the current crisis.

Connolly succeeded in putting forward enduring political principles and ideas which are his lasting legacy. He played a pivotal role in organising Irish workers in trade unions and he was central to the 1916 Easter Rising, a fatal blow to British imperialism in Ireland that echoed around the world. But after Connolly the struggle for political, social and economic liberation was stalled, partition was imposed and the socialist republican message of Connolly was sidelined.

That message was taken up by various groupings at different times but it is only in our own time that an effective, all-Ireland political party has been built up and is capable of fulfilling Connolly's programme of national and social freedom. That party is Sinn Féin and in its constitution, its policies and its political strategy it is still guided by Connolly. The challenge for Sinn Féin is to win over greater numbers of Irish people to the cause of the reconquest of Ireland.

Transforming Ireland – towards a real Republic

BY MÍCHEÁL Mac DONNCHA

SINCE the last issue of *IRIS* in August 2009 three key events have happened in Irish politics. The Lisbon Treaty was passed in a second referendum in the 26 Counties; the Fianna Fáil/Green Government imposed a savage Budget and set up the National Assets Management Agency (NAMA); and the future of the Executive, the Assembly and the All-Ireland institutions was secured – for now – by the Hillsborough Castle Agreement between Sinn Féin and the DUP.

LISBON ROUND TWO

That a second referendum on Lisbon took place at all was a subversion of democracy. The electorate in the 26 Counties had given a clear 'No' verdict in the first referendum. As was the case with the Nice Treaty, the Irish political elite and their counterparts at the head of the European Union refused to abide by that verdict. The supposed central principle that no EU Treaty can be ratified unless approved by each member state was shown to be a sham as the decision of the first referendum was ignored. We had to vote again to get the 'right' result. The people were brow-beaten into a 'Yes' vote by the combined forces of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the Labour Party, the Green Party, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and a variety of 'celebrities' who were pushed to the front, lest the discredited politicians on the 'Yes' side should lose a second time.

We were presented with a scenario in which a second rejection of Lisbon would see the Irish people drowning in the stormy waters of the recession and rejecting the efforts of the good ship 'Brussels' to rescue us. That was for the pessimists. The optimists were urged to 'Vote Yes for Jobs'. But of course the jobs disaster continued before, during and after the referendum and we now have record numbers of



Jobless figures in Ireland are approaching half a million

people unemployed and no initiatives from Brussels or Dublin to do anything about it. Former Fianna Fáil Minister Máire Geoghegan Quinn got a job alright, as EU Commissioner, appointed by Taoiseach Brian Cowen, while retaining her ministerial pension. And Deirdre de Búrca of the Green Party resigned from the Seanad in a huff because she didn't get a job on Geoghegan Quinn's staff.

UNEMPLOYMENT CRISIS

Little wonder that cynicism about politics is rampant among young people in particular. One in four young people in Ireland is now unemployed. Unemployment among the young in the 26 Counties increased by 150% in a year to 85,000 at the start of 2010. Nationally there are nearly 490,000 people



Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness (right) speaking at the announcement of the Hillsborough Castle Agreement

unemployed (432,400 in the 26 Counties and 55,700 in the Six Counties). The toll continues to rise towards half a million. If the figures for those who have emigrated as a result of the recession were taken into account, the half million figure would likely be exceeded. The recently launched Sinn Féin campaign on youth employment should be a priority for all republicans.

What did unemployed young people get from the Government in Merrion Street in response to their plight? They got a two-fingered Fianna Fáil/Green gesture from a Government that cut dole payments for the young in Budget 2010. That Budget was one of the most savage in the history of the 26-County state. Social welfare payments were cut across the board. The pay of low and middle income public service workers was cut. Public services were undermined.

The economic approach of the Fianna Fáil/Green government is fundamentally flawed. The slash-and-burn policy will not lead to recovery but to deeper recession (as shown by progressive economist Michael Burke in his article in this issue). And just as this policy penalises citizens today, NAMA will penalize them in the future. The golden circle of politicians, bankers, property speculators and the corporate elite who profited most from the Celtic Tiger and who caused the recession are now protecting themselves at the cost of billions to future generations of Irish people.

A NEW AGREEMENT

The Hillsborough Castle Agreement was a very

substantial achievement. Yes, it was long overdue. Policing and justice powers should have been transferred from London to Belfast long before now, but to have finally secured an agreement from the DUP on the transfer is hugely significant. The new agreement has – for now – secured the future of the Executive, the Assembly and the all-Ireland institutions. Perhaps the most significant part of this new agreement is that it was made in Ireland between the DUP and Sinn Féin, with far less input from either the British or Irish or US governments than any previous agreement in the Peace Process.

The work of the Sinn Féin ministers in the Executive shows what progress is possible when there is the political will and the progressive policies. That work contrasts with the regressive approach of the Fianna Fáil/Green Government. But it is not a Sinn Féin Executive and progress has been extremely difficult. The DUP has tried to slow things down on all fronts, notably the essential reform of education and (as explained by Shannonbrooke Murphy in this issue) the long-promised Bill of Rights. Patience, persistence and clear-sighted strategy are required of republicans now as in the past.

Unionism has been brought slowly and painfully to a position of working within structures based on equality. It is up to unionist leaders of all shades to convince their followers that there will never be a return to a past dominated by one-party rule, discrimination, sectarianism and conflict. Political dinosaurs such as Jim Allister and his 'Traditional Unionist Voice' must not be allowed to set the agenda



Sinn Féin TDs Aengus Ó Snodaigh, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Arthur Morgan and Martin Ferris – providing the only progressive alternative in the Oireachtas

for unionist politics. If the DUP permits them to do so then Peter Robinson will be making the same mistake as David Trimble when he stalled the Peace Process, almost destroying it, as he looked over his shoulder at the nay-sayers in – ironically, at that time, the DUP. Now the wheel has come full circle.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

As *IRIS* goes to press preparations are under way for the Westminster elections in the Six Counties. Sinn Féin is aiming to retain its five seats and to target gains. As always it will be a tight election and may come down to a handful of votes in key constituencies. Whatever the outcome, it should not distract attention from the need to press ahead with the implementation of the Good Friday, St. Andrews and Hillsborough Castle Agreements.

It is a far cry now from the days when Westminster elections in the North were known as 'Imperial Elections' and when the path to the House of Commons was the exclusive privilege of the unionist elite. A 'gentleman's agreement' ensured that the sordid affairs of the Orange state, with its one-party rule at Stormont, were not raised at Westminster. Now the days of one-party rule are long gone and the years of conflict and direct rule from Westminster are receding into the past also.

London is becoming increasingly irrelevant in the affairs of the North. Many unionists see this and



Peter Robinson at Stormont

realise that constantly looking eastward across the Irish Sea had led to nothing but political frustration for them. Their place is in Ireland, in the 'new North' that has emerged from the peace process, but also within an all-Ireland context, as provided for in the Agreements.

The challenge for Irish republicans is to convince unionists in sufficient numbers that there is a secure



The launch of Sinn Féin's campaign on youth employment –
Cllr. Kathleen Funchion, Senator Pearse Doherty, Cllr. Matt Carthy and Cllr. Cathal King

place and a future full of potential for them in a united Ireland. Dialogue with people from a unionist background is ongoing at many levels. Real progress has been made in this regard, much of it necessarily out of the glare of publicity. Much more such progress is needed.

Putting Irish unity on the political agenda internationally (as reported from the London conference in this issue) and nationally is a central task for Irish republicans. It cannot and must not be confined to Sinn Féin but Sinn Féin has to be the catalyst.

In the 26 Counties a General Election is possible at any time. A disastrous and deeply unpopular Fianna Fáil/Green government is politically accident prone and could be toppled unexpectedly. Republicans need to be prepared for this eventuality.

Sinn Féin in Leinster House has provided the only real progressive opposition to the Fianna Fáil/Green Government. This is seldom reflected in the media and one of the main challenges for activists in the 26 Counties is to show the party's relevance at national level and the real alternatives it presents. The best way to do that is to be relevant at local and regional level and to campaign in communities on the key issues.

DEBATE ON IRELAND'S FUTURE

The economic crisis has provoked much debate on the future of Ireland. This provides an opportunity for

republicans to set out our vision and our strategy. Sinn Féin has been doing so with coherent plans on public finances, banking, regional development and employment creation. Sound policies on universal healthcare, equal access to education, rural regeneration, ownership of our natural resources, policing for communities, housing and a range of other areas have also been developed by Sinn Féin. Those plans and policies need to be promoted and publicised and activists need to use them as campaign material in their communities.

Much of the recent debate on the future of Ireland has been partitionist in nature. Commentators speak of 'renewing the republic' or 're-imagining Ireland' but it is an Ireland that stops at Dundalk and Monaghan and Letterkenny and a republic that encompasses only 26 Counties.

Republicans have a vital and unique contribution to make to the debate by pointing out that for real transformation in Irish politics, in the Irish economy and in Irish society national reunification is essential.

We re-imagine Ireland as it ought to be – an island Republic with a place for all who live here, a democracy based on human rights and citizenship, an economy based on shared wealth. As the only all-Ireland party and with substantial support on both sides of the Border, Sinn Féin is in a unique position to help make that vision a reality.

ADVANCING THE REPUBLICAN VISION:

From the Proclamation to the Bill of Rights and Beyond

BY SHANNONBROOKE MURPHY

AS REPUBLICANS COMMEMORATE 1916 this year, those of us involved in the ongoing northern Bill of Rights process take particular heed of the following first principles enshrined in the Easter Proclamation:

The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and all of its parts, cherishing all of the children of the nation equally.

What makes this clause of the Proclamation special? This single sentence represents the core elements of a republican Bill of Rights in embryonic form: freedom with equality, and shared wealth for collective pros-

perity and wellbeing. Albeit in very broad strokes, it sets out what we now refer to by the shorthand term 'the Equality Agenda', which drives all republican policy making. The simple formulation in the Proclamation was later supplemented by the further elaboration of economic and social rights in the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil. By seamlessly merging civil and political rights with economic, social and cultural rights, the Proclamation was more than 30 years ahead of its time. This visionary combination would later appear in its more familiar, elaborate and seminal form in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

Easter offers an opportunity to reflect on this legacy of Irish republican leadership in progressive thinking and on all the ways in which we are working to advance the Proclamation's vision of a rights-based society today in 2010.

One of those ways is the struggle to achieve a Bill of Rights for the Six Counties as provided for under

the Good Friday Agreement and affirmed by the St. Andrews Agreement, and to ensure that it is worthy of the Proclamation advanced by our republican forebears. Where are we now on this demand, more than a decade after Sinn Féin negotiators succeeded in securing this commitment?

BILL OF RIGHTS PROCESS: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

In 1998 the Good Friday Agreement established a British Government commitment to legislate for a Bill of Rights for the Six Counties, following receipt of advice on its scope, form and content from the NI Human Rights Commission. Specifically, the relevant provision requires the identification and protection of:

...rights supplementary to those in the European Convention on Human Rights, to reflect the particular circumstances of [the north], drawing as appropriate on international instruments and experience....¹

The three main points of contention in the ensuing debates were: what rights should be protected in supplement to those already protected under the ECHR; what constitutes the 'particular circumstances' of the northern conflict and contemporary society; and which international human rights instruments and experience should guide the standards to be set in a future Bill of Rights.

As a consequence of divisions over these and other issues, for more than five years the NI Human Rights Commission under Professor Brice Dickson suffered from near-paralysis on the Bill of Rights.² However in 2006 the Sinn Féin Negotiating Team pulled the process out of the sand by securing supplementary commitments in the St. Andrews Agreement providing for the establishment of a Bill of Rights Forum bringing together all the major political parties with a broad range of civil society and church representatives, under the leadership of an independent international Chair, to make recommendations to the Commission to guide its advice to the British Government.³ At the same time, the Commission was provided with fresh leadership and impetus under Professor Monica McWilliams, and the process finally picked up momentum.

The Bill of Rights Forum operated from late 2006 to early 2008 under the leadership of Professor Chris Sidoti and proved a valuable exercise. The Forum Chair was able to keep all parties at the table



Monica McWilliams of the Bill of Rights Forum

throughout the process and managed a narrow consensus on some issues, including important technical issues. The resulting recommendations to the NI Human Rights Commission included detailed proposals that commanded the support of the vast majority of delegates, but also showed clear fault-lines.

The fault-lines were between those who support a 'maximum rights' position (Sinn Féin, the SDLP, the majority of civil society including the trade unions and to a lesser extent the Alliance Party and the Churches) and those who support a 'minimum rights' position (principally the DUP and UUP).⁴ It is to the Forum's credit that its report accurately depicted all

dissents rather than produce 'dumbed down' lowest common denominator recommendations.

In December 2008 the McWilliams-led Human Rights Commission delivered its advice to the British Government on time as promised on International Human Rights Day (the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). The Commission sets an acceptable floor – though not a ceiling – for a future Bill of Rights. Despite its informed expertise and measured approach, the Commission and Professor McWilliams in particular have been unfairly criticised by the British Government and attacked by rejectionist unionists for allegedly overstepping the Good Friday Agreement mandate, as a consequence of rec-



Martina Anderson, MLA, Sinn Féin
spokesperson on Human Rights

ommending the inclusion of economic and social rights. Not only was that position supported by most delegates in the Bill of Rights Forum, it is arguably a requirement under the terms of the Agreement. Indeed the British Government is already legally obligated to protect economic and social rights by international treaties to which it is a State Party. The Commission's proposals would merely give expression to these pre-existing obligations as permanent and superior law.

Almost a full year after the NI Human Rights Commission rendered its advice, the British Government finally published its response, an NIO Consultation Paper on the Bill of Rights, in November 2009. This document does no more than

reproduce the 'minimal rights' position taken by the two main unionist parties, and it was unanimously rejected by progressive forces including Sinn Féin in early 2010. The Sinn Féin position is that the NIO document is not an acceptable way forward and should be withdrawn in favour of a new document that at a minimum closely reflects the NI Human Rights Commission's advice.

The British Government has disregarded the carefully considered position of Sinn Féin, as expressed in numerous submissions before and since 1998 and set out in the greatest detail in the final report of the Bill of Rights Forum. It has also disregarded the clear majority view of the members of that Forum and the international and other legal experts who advised and guided that process. It has disregarded the carefully considered advice the NI Human Rights Commission provided as required under the Good Friday Agreement. It has disregarded the consensus view expressed by the Human Rights Consortium representing 140 civil society groups across the North. It has also ignored the widespread cross-community support for a strong and broad Bill of Rights reflected repeatedly in polling data.⁵

The NIO consultation document has prompted grave charges by the NI Human Rights Commission that it is 'not a genuine effort', that it 'demonstrates a lack of understanding of the purpose and function of a Bill of Rights', that it 'fails to take appropriate account of international human rights standards', that it 'appears to suggest lowering of existing human rights standards' and finally that it misrepresents the Commission's advice on the matter.⁶ The broadest coalition of civil society groups, the Human Rights Consortium, has described the document as 'pitifully limited', 'unacceptable and disrespectful' with 'no meaningful depth or scope' and therefore 'unworthy of consideration'.⁷ Even the former independent international Chair of the Bill of Rights Forum has assessed it succinctly as

a disappointing and inadequate document that does not advance the already protracted process of developing a Bill of Rights for [NI] that responds to the particular circumstances of the people of [NI]. It does not provide a basis for a Bill of Rights for [NI].⁸

THE SINN FÉIN POSITION

A robust Bill of Rights is essential for the republican agenda for two reasons: it a necessary element for advancing the Peace Process and it is an important building block towards a future United Ireland true to the standards established in the Proclamation.

The conflict was characterised by systematic human rights violations across the full spectrum of rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural

– as well as by systemic impunity for those violations, particularly when the perpetrators were agents of the state. For this legacy left us by the British occupation and ensuing conflict, our society has yet to see reparations or a fully effective remedy.

In this context, Sinn Féin sees two purposes behind a strong, inclusive and effective Bill of Rights. Firstly, recognition, validation, delivery and future protection of these rights is in and of itself a form of remedy for the wrongs of the past. Secondly, robust protections of the common rights of all has major potential to promote reconciliation and peace and prevent future conflict – insofar as it can both highlight and serve the significant common interest across communities by protecting the most vulnerable of each.

Having assessed both the particular circumstances that brought our society to this juncture and the potential for a Bill of Rights to assist the Peace Process in arriving at an eventual permanent settlement, we have identified six main elements essential for a Bill of Rights for the North. These are:

- Maximum Rights
- Maximum Enforceability
- No Derogation
- No Diminution
- Permanent Protections
- Superior Law

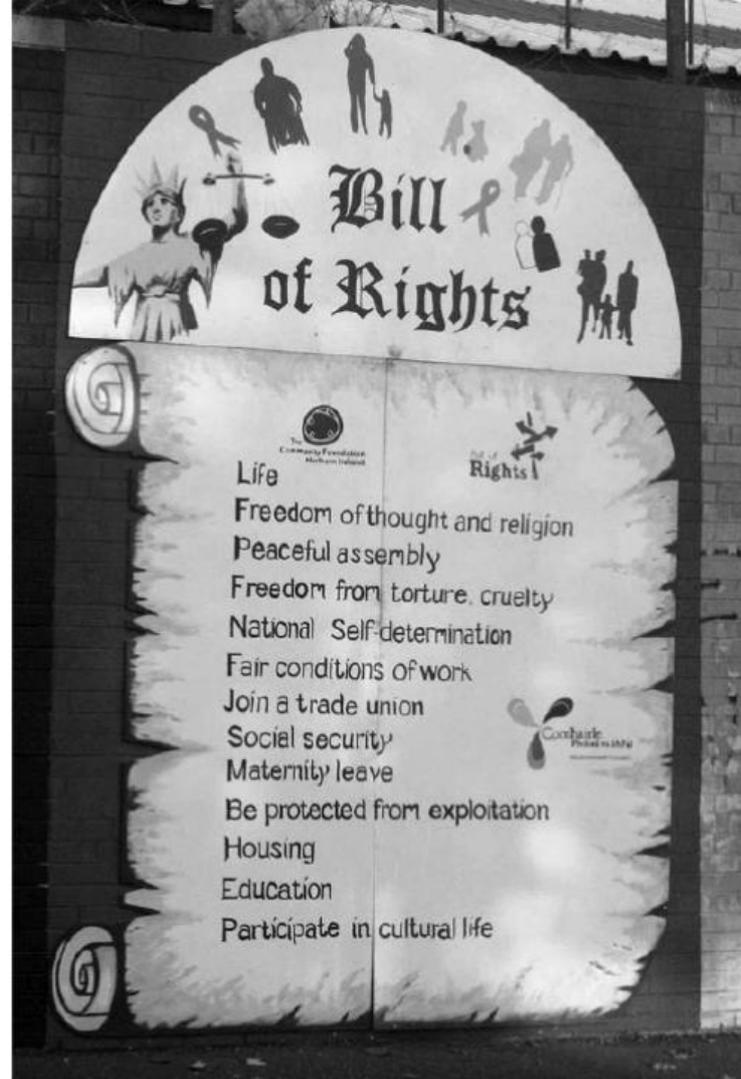
MAXIMUM RIGHTS

We need the Bill of Rights to help move us from a society where fundamental human rights were systematically trampled to one where those rights are thoroughly, extensively and enduringly protected and promoted. That is why it is Sinn Féin's view that a Bill fit to respond to our 'particular circumstances' as well as our particular post-conflict needs will take a 'maximum rights' approach – not the 'minimum rights' approach insisted on by the two main unionist parties and adopted wholesale by the NIO paper.

Specifically, a Bill of Rights cannot be accepted by Sinn Féin unless it includes fully justiciable economic and social rights in addition to supplementary civil, political and cultural rights. The NI Human Rights Commission's recommendation to include such rights is one of the most important positive features of their advice.

MAXIMUM ENFORCEABILITY

In keeping with maximum substantive rights, maximum enforceability is also required if those rights are to have any practical mean-



Life
 Freedom of thought and religion
 Peaceful assembly
 Freedom from torture, cruelty
 National Self-determination
 Fair conditions of work
 Join a trade union
 Social security
 Maternity leave
 Be protected from exploitation
 Housing
 Education
 Participate in cultural life

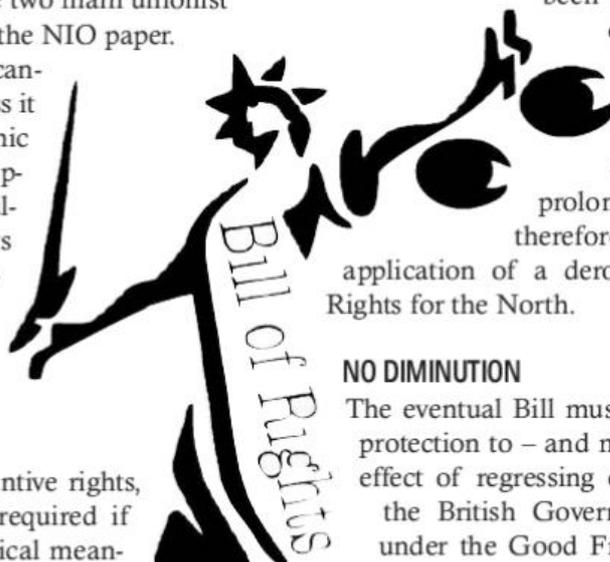
ing. All rights within the eventual Bill of Rights must therefore be fully justiciable (i.e. capable of being vindicated in the courts), and the Bill must include the most robust enforcement mechanisms.

NO DEROGATION

We disagree with the Commission's (and NIO's) proposal to include a derogation clause allowing for the suspension of certain rights under a declared state of emergency provided that specific conditions have been met, and in a manner that does not interfere with rights currently non-derogable under international law. In the past British government derogations aggravated and prolonged the conflict. Sinn Féin therefore continues to oppose the application of a derogation regime to a Bill of Rights for the North.

NO DIMINUTION

The eventual Bill must provide at least equivalent protection to – and must not in any way have the effect of regressing or otherwise undermining – the British Government's existing obligations under the Good Friday Agreement or interna-



tional human rights law, or under domestic human rights and equality legislation. An express provision to this effect (a non-diminution clause) as proposed by Sinn Féin will be essential. Sinn Féin argued for this throughout the Bill of Rights Forum process and it was one of the few issues on which the Forum members managed to achieve consensus.

We are particularly concerned that nothing in the Bill should undermine or otherwise regress current equality protections or Good Friday Agreement guarantees, yet it appears that the NIO proposals do exactly that.

PERMANENT PROTECTIONS

While Sinn Féin recognises that ordinary legislation may also be necessary to give effect to human rights, we are very clear that ordinary legislation is not sufficient for the purpose of providing the required permanent human rights safeguards in the North. Indeed, the courts must have the scope to assess the compatibility of such ordinary laws as well as policies and practices with Bill of Rights guarantees and to either confirm them or strike them down if necessary.

Especially in light of our particular circumstances but also in general, fundamental rights cannot be made subject to the whims of changing governments. A Bill of Rights identifying and providing permanent or quasi-permanent protection of all fundamental human rights is essential for peace with justice and for future conflict prevention. Complementary legislation, policies and guidance are naturally welcome, but only in addition to permanent protections in a Bill of Rights.

SUPERIOR LAW

As set out during the Bill of Rights Forum process, it is our firm position that the Bill must govern all legislation applying in the North, regardless of source. We need a Bill that will not only bind the Assembly and Executive, but that will also constrain and obligate the British Government. Thus we want the Bill of Rights to govern not only devolved but also reserved and excepted matters insofar as they concern or are applied in the Six Counties. In other words a Bill of Rights must take precedence over all laws passed in

the Assembly or Westminster and all such laws must be seen to comply with it.

TOWARDS AND ALL-IRELAND CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FUTURE UNITED IRISH CONSTITUTION

It is essential that republicans do not settle for less in a Bill of Rights. Why? Firstly as stated above, a Bill of Rights by its very nature is permanent or semi-permanent law so whatever we get we will be stuck with for the foreseeable future. In addition, the 'next phase' commitment to an All-Ireland Charter of Rights could be based in part on the standards set in that Bill. Indeed one of the reasons the Irish Government is watching this process closely and nervously is that they know it could potentially exert pressure on the 1937 Constitution in the context of the forthcoming All-Ireland Charter process also required under the Good Friday Agreement. And therein lies its real potential for advancing the vision set out in that significant clause of the Proclamation. The process of engaging with Bill of Rights issues – and later All-Ireland Charter issues – gets us thinking in a more concrete way about the constitutional changes and guarantees we would seek and that would be required under an eventual United Irish Constitution for our New Republic.



Shannonbrooke Murphy LLM, National Director of Policy for Sinn Féin, was a party delegate to the Bill of Rights Forum and is the party's leading advisor on the Bill of Rights. She is a doctoral candidate in law at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, NUI Galway.

1 Good Friday Agreement (1998), 'Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity', para. 4. Emphasis added.

2 Dickson has since gone on to advocate against a Bill of Rights in general and in particular the inclusion of economic and social rights in such a Bill.

3 Agreement at St Andrews (2006), Annex B, 'Human rights, equality, victims and other issues', p. 12.

4 It should be noted that the PUP have also supported a 'maximum rights' position, and the business sector representatives to the Bill of Rights Forum did not have a common approach nor consensus between them.

5 A series of independent opinion surveys commissioned by the NI Human Rights Commission have found that nearly 9 out of 10 people in the 6 Counties support a Bill of Rights (overall support is

87%), and that support is roughly equivalent between the nationalist and unionist communities. NIHRC Opinion Survey (Market Research Northern Ireland: March 2004), first published in Progressing a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland: An Update (NIHRC: Belfast, 2004).

6 NI Human Rights Commission, A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland: Next Steps – Response to the Northern Ireland Office (NIHRC: Belfast, February 2010), p. 5.

7 'Blueprint for Bill of Rights Rejected: A coalition of 140 groups has rejected a blueprint for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland' (Press Association: Thursday 31 December 2009).

8 Professor Chris Sidoti, A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland: Next Steps – Response to the Consultation Paper (Sydney: 26 February 2010), p. 2. Emphasis added.

Irish economic crisis exposes colonial legacy

Every €1bn fall in output caused by Fianna Fáil/Green Thatcherite economic policies has pushed taxes lower by at least €540mn

BY MICHAEL BURKE

THE Fianna Fail/Green Government is unique among the industrialised countries. In 2009, while virtually the whole world was busy implementing a variety of packages to stimulate the economy, the government in the South was alone in implementing a series of deep cuts in government spending. Many scandalous things have been done; cutting low-paid public sector pay twice is among them, probably just behind cutting disability benefits for the blind. But one of the worst, given Ireland's history, is the targeting of renewed emigration by cutting jobseekers' allowance for the young. This has drawn admiration from the leaders of the British Conservative Party who are hoping soon to emulate their fellow Thatcherites in Ireland.

According to the OECD Ireland has experienced a fiscal contraction amounting to 6.4% of GDP. By contrast, the G20 group of leading economies was attempting revival by increasing government spending, with the average stimulus package amounting to 2% of GDP in 2009. Most will provide further stimulus in 2010.

Tory Shadow Chancellor George Osborne recently urged readers of the *The Times of London* to "look and learn from the across the Irish Sea" – and so we should.

CUTS ARE NOT SAVINGS

In the wake of the financial and



Tory Shadow Chancellor George Osborne

economic crisis the private sector has significantly increased its savings by paying down debt. For both individuals and companies this can make sense, especially if they have falling incomes or their debts are high, or both. But the more they save the less they are able to spend. For individuals this means cutting back on consumption. For companies this means cutting back on investment. Both these components of demand have declined, but in the South the most severe decline has been the collapse in investment.

Under these circumstances it is economically disastrous for government to join the savers. The net result is to depress activity even further, leading to further declines in incomes for companies and individuals, who respond by further savings, and so on. It is a death-spiral for the economy which formed the backdrop to the Great Depression in the 1930s.

Instead, and just like the businesses who currently cannot or will not invest, government can invest to achieve a return, which lifts both economic activity and the taxes that come from it. In this way, not only does the economy grow but the deficit actually falls. That

is, the return on investment goes to Irish taxpayers.

However, this process also works in reverse. In the Fianna Fáil/Green Budget 2010 there were €4bn more in cuts, mainly in public sector pay and welfare. The Department of Finance accepted that pay cuts for public sector workers means lower tax receipts on that pay. However, there was no estimate of the wider economic impact – the fall in demand for goods and services arising from the cuts and the depressing effect on tax revenues from the private sector. Worse, there was no assessment of the effects on other areas of government spending. This is to ignore a crucial aspect of austerity measures; increasing numbers of low-paid workers or unemployed inevitably place upward pressure on government welfare spending, especially where benefits are means-tested.

WHY CUTS DON'T WORK

Taxation revenues are obviously dependent on activity, but just how dependent can sometimes be surprising. In real terms, adjusted for price changes, the recession in the South has been twice as severe as the British one. Most forecasts expect that growth was little changed in the final quarter of 2009, which would mean that through the course of the recession, the total contraction in GDP was €26bn in actual cash terms. The Exchequer's tax receipts fell by €14bn over the same period. So, a €26bn decline in the economy led to a €14bn fall in taxes (even though there

We hear much of the 'hand-outs' to the Six Counties. We hear nothing of the far larger profits made, €15bn in the latest year, which overwhelmingly goes into the pockets of British firms

were some tax increases over the period). Without the tax increases the ratio of the fall in taxes to the fall in GDP would have been even greater than the actual level of 54% (€14bn divided by €26n).

Now, one of the reasons that the Fianna Fáil/Green government is so admired by George Osborne, and indeed, one of the reasons its government finances have deteriorated so sharply, is that it presides over a low-tax economy. So, how can it be that falling activity led to such a high proportionate fall in taxation? The answer, in the jargon, is that taxation is elastic. If various economic activities are subject to thresholds, or exemptions, or untaxed at all,

the burden of taxation falls on a narrow part of overall activity. If that activity declines the taxes on it will fall disproportionately. As a result, every €1bn fall in output caused by Fianna Fáil/Green Thatcherite economic policies has pushed taxes lower by at least €540mn.

At the same time, government spending cuts can lead to increased pressures on expenditures in other areas. Despite deep spending cuts, 2007 government current expenditure was €41bn and by the end of 2009 it had increased to over €45bn. Here, if we add back in those spending cuts, the total rise in spending would have been over €8bn, equivalent to 31%. As a result, every €1bn fall in output caused by the various Budgets, has led to increased spending in other areas equivalent to €310mn. This is because government spending is usually disproportionately required for the low-paid and the unemployed, who are themselves the biggest victims of the economic slump. (However the money wasted on NAMA is not included in this and it dwarfs the economically useful spending on the poor and low-paid).

So, we have a situation in which a €26bn decline in GDP has led to both a fall in taxation revenue of at least €14bn and an adjusted increase in spending of €8bn. This combined total deterioration in government finances of €22bn is almost the same as the fall in GDP itself, a decline which the austerity measures of the Irish government have directly contributed to. But the culpability does not end there.



Finance Minister Brian Lenihan – pressing ahead with an economic strategy that won't work

Austerity has also led to an increase in interest payments compared to those countries which have engaged in deflation. Yields on Ireland's 10-year government debt have been over 1% higher than the Euro Area economies who tried to stimulate their economies. Bond markets, for all the Thatcherite cheerleading of most of their participants, are above all focused on repayment of their loans to governments. Repayment requires tax revenues. But the Exchequer tax receipts have experienced the biggest falls in the Euro Area, aside from Greece, because of its austerity policies. It has been obliged to borrow €55bn in the last two years as a result (that's before NAMA comes into operation). That's over €12,000 for every woman, man and child in the State. Because of both higher borrowing and higher interest rates on government debt, the additional cost to Irish taxpayers amounts to approximately €1bn per year for the entire lifetime of that debt.

Taking these three factors together, falling taxes, higher enforced spending and higher borrowing costs, the 'saving' arising from government spending cuts is virtually non-existent in the first year alone. Increased debt servicing costs and the build-up of debt in future years turns a supposed saving into a real cost to the taxpayer in future years, and higher public deficits. It is also economically disastrous.

The other countries of the Euro Area adopted fiscal stimulus measures to revive the economy. In the depth of the recession last year, the FF government's deficit was equivalent to 12.5% of GDP compared to 6.4% for the Euro Area as a whole, according to the EU. But the EU also forecasts that the South's deficit will be 14.7% in 2011 compared to 6.5% for the Euro Area as a whole, where stimulus measures have been adopted. FF's austerity policy has worsened the deficit and the economy as a whole.

WHY DO THEY DO IT?

Even if some European countries are strong-armed into adopting FF-style contraction this year, as in Greece, or the party of slash & burn takes office, as is possible in Britain, FF/Greens will still be unique. They were the only government which actually made matters worse in 2008 and 2009 by cutting gov-



Protest against Fianna Fáil/Green cuts to the community sector

ernment spending. It is also not the first time that they have adopted this policy. The most recent period was in the 1980s, which the IMF describes as the longest period of sustained cuts in government spending of any economy in modern history. They have form.

Economically, three of the defining features of a colony are a lack of foreign trade with all but the imperial centre, net payments to the centre and stunted growth. Without any subterfuge, Britain used to extract these payments from the whole of Ireland and called them the

'Imperial Contribution'. Now subterfuge is required to disguise the economic relationship between Britain and its remaining colony in Ireland, and we hear much of the 'hand-outs' to the Six Counties. We hear nothing of the far larger profits made, £15bn in the latest year, which overwhelmingly goes into the pockets of British firms. In the North, the Imperial Contribution has been privatised.

But the South exhibits all the key features of a post-colonial society. It has been able to grow, sometimes very rapid-



Green Party leader John Gormley and Fianna Fáil Taoiseach Brian Cowen

ly, because it is able to trade with the rest of the world. But most of that foreign trade is conducted by foreign firms. With a handful of exceptions, there are no indigenous Irish firms that compete globally.

This is because key features of colonial life remain, nearly 90 years after Partition. Two of these features include a lack of infrastructural investment and social welfare investment as well a weak group of capitalists who cannot compete internationally. These are all part of the inheritance from British rule and are related to each other.

Under British rule most of Ireland (with the exception of the area in and around Belfast) was cleared of its people to make way for England's cattle. At Partition, 98% of the South's exports went to Britain and these were overwhelmingly livestock. That same relationship was maintained until the 1950s. Even 'Ireland's independent currency' was a myth. It was a currency absolutely pegged to Sterling, just in case the large ranchers in the East might lose their market. This currency peg was backed up by very large purchases of British government debt; the old Imperial Contribution in a new guise.

Although the South is no longer dependent on British demand for beef (only 14% of exports go to Britain now, compared to 55% for the Six Counties), socially little has fundamentally

changed. Fianna Fáil has changed from the party of the large farmers and gombeen men, to the party of failed property speculators, failed bankers and gombeen men. As none of these can

In the bad times, their first resort is to cut wages, welfare payments and investment so that they can cut taxes. These are the only ways gombeen men can restore their profits. The alternative is for government to provide this investment in education, health and infrastructure

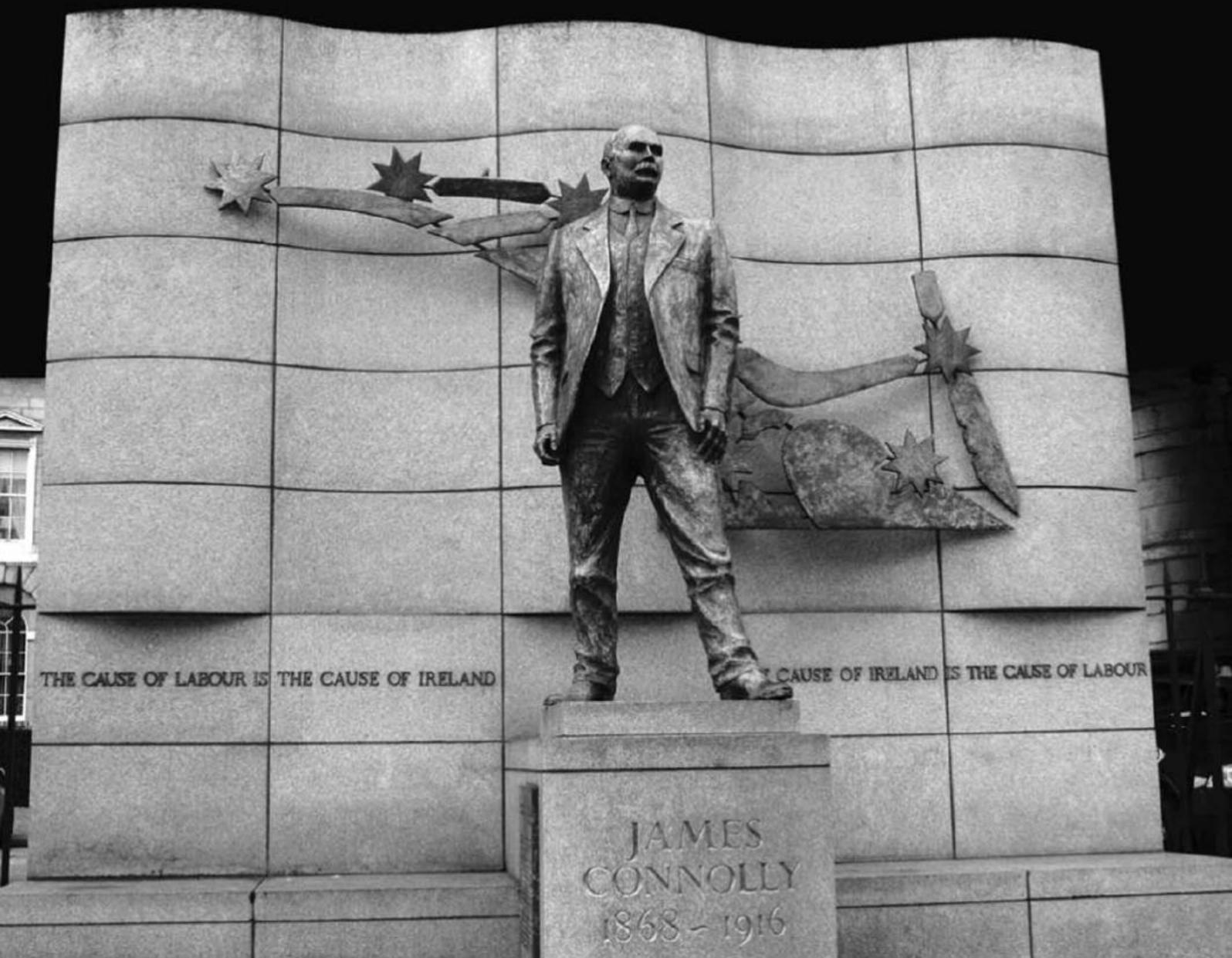
compete internationally, in the good times, wages are kept low, investment in health and education kept to a minimum and a huge infrastructure deficit is created. The South ranks 65th in global competitiveness for infrastructure, and has worse access to ports than many landlocked countries. In the bad times, their first resort is to cut wages, welfare payments and investment so that they can cut taxes. These are the only ways gombeen men can restore their profits. The alternative is for government to provide this investment in education, health and infrastructure.

While FF's is an extremely reactionary economic policy, the fightback against it represents an opportunity for all those seeking to end Partition. The fight against pay cuts, welfare cuts and job losses in the South (as well as against xenophobia which they engender) will come up against the party of the gombeen men. Participating in those struggles and defeating these attacks would weaken not just Fianna Fáil but all the Partitionists North and South, including Fine Gael. The latter party would add further privatisation to the menu, increasing the net outflow of capital from Ireland. The attacks on working people arise directly out of a Partitionist society. Freedom from those attacks, now and in the future, requires a different society where Partition and all its remnants are removed.

LABOUR IN IRISH HISTORY

ONE HUNDRED YEARS ON

IN 1910 James Connolly published his landmark book *Labour in Irish History*. It was the first socialist account of the history of Ireland and the place of the working people in that history. Connolly pointed out that history up to then had been recorded and written largely from the point of view of the privileged and his aim was to redress the balance. He wanted to show that the oppression of the Irish people was social and economic as well as political and that those who ignored that economic and social oppression, or who contributed to it, could not be called true Irish nationalists. To mark the centenary, *IRIS* here carries key extracts from *Labour in Irish History*. (Space does not permit inclusion of Connolly's detailed accounts of the early Irish socialist William Thompson or of the experimental commune at Ralahine and readers should refer to the book for these.)



FROM CONNOLLY'S FOREWORD

We desire to place before our readers the two propositions upon which this book is founded – propositions which we believe embody alike the fruits of the experience of the past, and the matured thought of the present, upon the points under consideration.

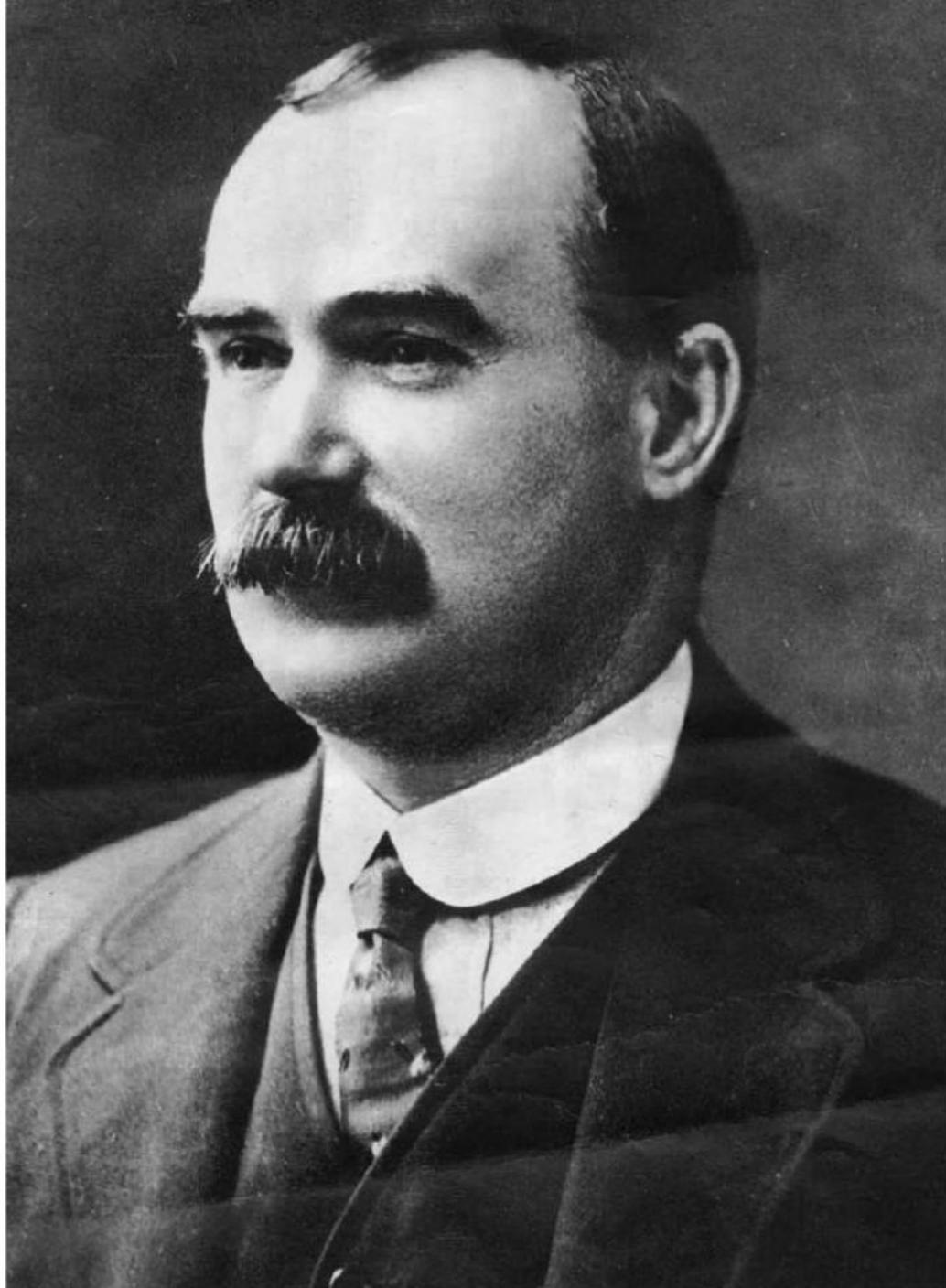
First, that in the evolution of civilisation the progress of the fight for national liberty of any subject nation must, perforce, keep pace with the progress of the struggle for liberty of the most subject class in that nation, and that the shifting of economic and political forces which accompanies the development of the system of capitalist society leads inevitably to the increasing conservatism of the non-working-class element, and to the revolutionary vigour and power of the working class.

Second, that the result of the long drawn out struggle of Ireland has been, so far, that the old chieftainry has disappeared, or, through its degenerate descendants, has made terms with iniquity, and become part and parcel of the supporters of the established order; the middle class, growing up in the midst of the national struggle, and at one time, as in 1798, through the stress of the economic rivalry of England almost forced into the position of revolutionary leaders against the political despotism of their industrial competitors, have now also bowed the knee to Baal, and have a thousand economic strings in the shape of investments binding them to English capitalism as against every sentimental or historic attachment drawing them toward Irish patriotism; only the Irish working class remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland.

To that unconquered Irish working class this book is dedicated by one of their number. – James Connolly

THE LESSONS OF HISTORY

Were history what it ought to be, an accurate literary reflex of the times with which it professes to deal, the pages of history would be almost entirely engrossed with a recital of the wrongs and struggles of the labouring people, constituting, as they have ever



James Connolly photographed circa 1911

done, the vast mass of mankind. But history, in general treats the working class as the manipulator of politics treats the working man – that is to say, with contempt when he remained passive, and with derision, hatred and misrepresentation whenever he dares evince a desire to throw off the yoke of political or social servitude. Ireland is no exception to the rule. Irish history has ever been written by the master class – in the interests of the master class.

Politically, Ireland has been under the control of England for the past 700 years, during the greater part of which time the country has been the scene of

constant wars against her rule upon the part of the native Irish. Until the year 1649, these wars were complicated by the fact that they were directed against both the political and social order recognised by the English invader. It may surprise many readers to learn that up to the date above-mentioned the basis of society in Ireland except within the Pale (a small strip of territory around the capital city, Dublin), rested upon communal or tribal ownership of land. The Irish chief, although recognised in the courts of France, Spain, and Rome, as the peer of the reigning princes of Europe, in reality held his position upon the sufferance



English soldiers emerging from Dublin Castle in the reign of Elizabeth 1. Note the heads of Irish rebels (top left) on the Castle walls

of his people, and as an administrator of the tribal affairs of his people, while the land or territory of the clan was entirely removed from his private jurisdiction. In the parts of Ireland where for 400 years after the first conquest (so-called) the English governors could not penetrate except at the head of a powerful army, the social order which prevailed in England – feudalism – was unknown, and as this comprised the greater portion of the country, it gradually came to be understood that the war against the foreign oppressor was also a war against private property in land. But with the forcible break up of the clan system in 1649, the social aspect of the Irish struggle sank out of sight, its place being usurped by the mere political expressions of the fight for freedom.

During the last hundred years every generation in Ireland has witnessed an attempted rebellion against English rule. Every such conspiracy or rebellion has drawn the majority of its adherents from the lower orders in town and country; yet, under the inspiration of a few middle class doctrinaires, the social

question has been rigorously excluded from the field of action to be covered by the rebellion if successful; in hopes that by such exclusion it would be possible to conciliate the upper classes and enlist them in the struggle for freedom. The result has in nearly every case been the same. The workers, though furnishing the greatest proportion of recruits to the ranks of the revolutionists, and consequently of victims to the prison and the scaffold, could not be imbued en masse with the revolutionary fire necessary to seriously imperil a dominion rooted for 700 years in the heart of their country. They were all anxious enough for freedom, but realising the enormous odds against them, and being explicitly told by their leaders that they must not expect any change in their condition of social subjection, even if successful, they as a body shrank from the contest, and left only the purest-minded and most chivalrous of their class to face the odds and glut the vengeance of the tyrant – a warning to those in all countries who neglect the vital truth that successful revolutions are not the prod-

uct of our brains, but of ripe material conditions.

THE WILLIAMITE WARS

Modern Irish History, properly understood, may be said to start with the close of the Williamite Wars in the year 1691. All the political life of Ireland during the next 200 years draws its colouring from, and can only be understood in the light of that conflict between King James of England and William, Prince of Orange. Our Irish politics, even to this day and generation, have been and are largely determined by the light in which the different sections of the Irish people regarded the prolonged conflict which closed with the surrender of Sarsfield and the garrison of Limerick to the investing forces of the Williamite party. Yet never, in all the history of Ireland, has there been a war in which the people of Ireland had less reason to be interested either on one side or the other.

It is unfortunately beyond all question that the Irish Catholics of that time

did fight for King James like lions. It is beyond all question that the Irish Catholics shed their blood like water, and wasted their wealth like dirt, in an effort to retain King James upon the throne. But it is equally beyond all question that the whole struggle was no earthly concern of theirs; that King James was one of the most worthless representatives of a worthless race that ever sat upon a throne; that the 'pious glorious and immortal' William was a mere adventurer fighting for his own hand, and his army recruited from the impecunious swordsmen of Europe who cared as little for Protestantism as they did for human life; and that neither army had the slightest claim to be considered as a patriot army combating for the freedom of the Irish race.

So far from the paeans of praise lavished upon Sarsfield and the Jacobite army being justified, it is questionable whether a more enlightened or patriotic age than our own will not condemn them as little better than traitors for their action in seducing the Irish people

from their allegiance to the cause of their country's freedom, to plunge them into a war on behalf of a foreign tyrant – a tyrant who, even in the midst of their struggles on his behalf, opposed the Dublin Parliament in its efforts to annul the supremacy of the English Parliament.

The war between William and James offered a splendid opportunity to the subject people of Ireland to make a bid for freedom while the forces of their oppressors were rent in a civil war. The opportunity was cast aside, and the subject people took sides on behalf of the opposing factions of their enemies. The reason is not hard to find. The Catholic gentlemen and nobles who had the leadership of the people of Ireland at the time were, one and all, men who possessed considerable property in the country, property to which they had, notwithstanding their Catholicity, no more right or title than the merest Cromwellian or Williamite adventurer. The lands they held were lands which in former times belonged to the Irish

people – in other words, they were tribe-lands. As such, the peasantry – then reduced to the position of mere tenants-at-will – were the rightful owners of the soil, whilst the Jacobite chivalry of King James were either the descendants of men who had obtained their property in some former confiscation as the spoils of conquest; of men who had taken sides with the oppressor against their own countrymen and were allowed to retain their property as the fruits of treason; or finally, of men who had consented to seek from the English Government a grant giving them a personal title to the lands of their clansmen.

THE 1700s

Before long the Protestant and Catholic tenants were suffering one common oppression. The question of political supremacy having been finally decided, the yoke of economic slavery was now laid unsparingly upon the backs of the labouring people. All religious sects suf-



The Battle of the Boyne – King William's troops "cared as little for Protestantism as they did for human life"

fered equally from this cause. The Penal Laws then in operation against the Catholics did indeed make the life of the propertied Catholics more insecure than would otherwise have been the case; but to the vast mass of the population the misery and hardship entailed by the working out of economic laws were fraught with infinitely more suffering than it was at any time within the power of the Penal Laws to inflict. As a matter of fact, the effect of the latter code in impoverishing wealthy Catholics has been much overrated. The class interests, which at all times unite the propertied section of the community, operated, to a large extent, to render impossible the application of the power of persecution to its full legal limits. Rich Catholics were quietly tolerated, and generally received from the rich Protestants an amount of respect and forbearance which the latter would not at any time extend to their Protestant tenantry or work-people.

In the famine of 1740 no less a number than 400,000 are estimated to have perished of hunger or of the diseases which follow in the wake of hunger. This may seem an exaggeration, but the statement is amply borne out by contemporary evidence. Thus Bishop Berkeley, of the Anglican Church, writing to Mr. Thomas Prior, of Dublin, in 1741, mentions that: "The other day I heard one from the county of Limerick say that whole villages were entirely dis-peopled. About two months since I heard Sir Richard Cox say that five hundred were dead in the parish, though in a country, I believe, not very populous." And a pamphlet entitled *The Groans of Ireland*, published in 1741, asserts "the universal scarcity was followed by fluxes and malignant fevers, which swept off multitudes of all sorts, so that whole villages were laid waste."

This famine, be it remarked, like all modern famine, was solely attributable to economic causes; the poor of all religions and politics were equally sufferers; the rich of all religions and politics were equally exempt.

The country had not recovered from the direful effects of this famine when a further economic development once more plunged the inhabitants into



Irish tenants and labourers lived in dire poverty in the 18th century

blackest despair. Disease having attacked and destroyed great quantities of cattle in England, the aristocratic rulers of that country – fearful lest the ensuing high price of meat should lead to a demand for higher wages on the part of the working class in England – removed the embargo off Irish cattle, meat, butter and cheese at the English ports, thus partly establishing free trade in those articles between the two countries. The immediate result was that all such provisions brought such a price in England that tillage farming in Ireland became unprofitable by comparison, and every effort was accordingly made to transform arable lands into sheep-walks or grazing lands. The landlord class commenced evicting their tenants; breaking up small farms, and even seizing upon village common lands and pasture grounds all over the country with the most disastrous results to the labouring people and cottiers generally. Where a hundred families had reaped as sustenance from their small farms, or by hiring out their labour to the owners of large farms, a dozen shepherds now occupied their places.

Immediately there sprung up throughout Ireland numbers of secret societies in which the dispossessed people strove by lawless acts and violent methods to restrain the greed of their masters, and to enforce their own right to life. They met in large bodies, generally at midnight, and proceeded to tear down enclosures; to hough cattle; to dig

up and so render useless the pasture lands; to burn the houses of the shepherds; and in short, to terrorise their social rulers into abandoning the policy of grazing in favour of tillage, and to give more employment to the labourers and more security to the cottier. These secret organisations assumed different names and frequently adopted different methods, and it is now impossible to tell whether they possessed any coherent organisation or not. Throughout the South they were called Whiteboys, from the practice of wearing white shirts over their clothes when on their nocturnal expeditions. About the year 1762 they posted their notices on conspicuous places in the country districts – notably, Cork, Waterford, Limerick, and Tipperary – threatening vengeance against such persons as had incurred their displeasure as graziers, evicting landlords, etc.

The spirit of the ruling class against those poor slaves in revolt may be judged by two incidents exemplifying how Catholic and Protestant proprietors united to fortify injustice and preserve their privileges, even at a time when we have been led to believe that the Penal Laws formed an insuperable barrier against such Union. In the year 1762 the Government offered the sum of £100 for the capture of the first five Whiteboy Chiefs. The Protestant inhabitants of the city of Cork offered in addition £300 for the Chief, and £50 for each of his first five accomplices arrest-

ed. Immediately the wealthy Catholics of the same city added to the above sums a promise of £200 for the chief and £40 for each of his first five subordinates. This was at a time when an English governor, Lord Chesterfield, declared that if the military had killed half as many landlords as they did Whiteboys they would have contributed more effectually to restore quiet, a remark which conveys some slight idea of the carnage made among the peasantry.

Many a peasant's corpse swung on the gibbet, and many a promising life was doomed to blight and decay in the foul confines of the prison hell, to glut the vengeance of the dominant classes. Arthur Young, in his *Tour of Ireland*, thus describes the state of matters against which those poor peasants revolted.

"A landlord in Ireland can scarcely invent an order which a servant, labourer, or cottier dares to refuse to execute ... Disrespect, or anything tending towards sauciness he may punish with his cane or his horsewhip with the most perfect security. A poor man would have his bones broken if he offered to lift a hand in his own defence ... Landlords of consequence have assured me that many of their cottiers would think themselves honoured by having their wives and daughters sent for to the bed of their master – a mark of slavery which proves the oppression under which people must live."

GRATTAN'S PARLIAMENT

At the present day our political agitators never tire of telling us with the most painful iteration that the period covered by Grattan's Parliament was a period of unexampled prosperity for Ireland, and that, therefore, we may expect a renewal of this same happy state with a return of our 'native legislature' as they somewhat facetiously style that abortive product of political intrigue – Home Rule.

In the year 1794 a pamphlet published at 7 Capel Street, Dublin, stated



Henry Grattan

that the average wage of a day labourer in the County Meath reached only 6d. per day in Summer, and 4d. per day in Winter; and in the pages of the *Dublin Journal*, a ministerial organ, and the *Dublin Evening Post*, a supporter of Grattan's Party, for the month of April, 1796, there is to be found an advertisement of a charity sermon to be preached in the Parish Chapel, Meath Street, Dublin, in which advertisement there occurs the statement that in three streets of the Parish of St. Catherine's "no less than 2,000 souls had been found in a starving condition". Evidently 'prosperity' had not much meaning to the people of St. Catherine's.

The period marked politically by Grattan's Parliament was a period of commercial inflation due to the introduction of mechanical improvements into the staple industries of the country. As long as such machinery was worked by hand, Ireland could hold her place on the markets, but with this application of steam to the service of industry,

which began on a small scale in 1785, and the introduction of the powerloom, which first came into general use about 1813, the immense natural advantage of an indigenous coal supply finally settled the contest in favour of English manufacturers.

A native Parliament might have hindered the subsequent decay, as an alien Parliament may have hastened it; but in either case, under capitalistic conditions, the process itself was as inevitable as the economic evolution of which it was one of the most significant signs. How little Parliament had to do with it may be gauged by comparing the positions of Ireland and Scotland. In the year 1799, Mr. Foster in the Irish Parliament stated that the production of linen was twice as great in Ireland as in Scotland. The actual figures given were for the year 1796 – 23,000,000 yards for Scotland as against 46,705,319 for Ireland. This discrepancy in favour of Ireland he attributed to the native Parliament. But by the year 1830, according to McCulloch's *Commercial Dictionary*, the one port of Dundee in Scotland exported more linen than all Ireland. Both countries had been deprived of self-government. Why had Scottish manufacture advanced whilst that of Ireland had decayed? Because Scotland possessed a native coal supply, and every facility for industrial pursuits which Ireland lacked.

The 'prosperity' of Ireland under Grattan's Parliament was almost as little due to that Parliament as the dust caused by the revolutions of the coach-wheel was due to the presence of the fly who, sitting on the coach, viewed the dust, and fancied himself the author thereof. And, therefore, true prosperity cannot be brought to Ireland except by measures somewhat more drastic than that Parliament ever imagined.

The Act of Union was made possible because Irish manufacture was weak, and, consequently, Ireland had not an energetic capitalist class with sufficient public spirit and influence to prevent the Union.

Industrial decline having set in, the Irish capitalist class was not able to combat the influence of the corruption fund of the English Government, or to



Grattan's Parliament represented the privileged landlord class

create and lead a party strong enough to arrest the demoralisation of Irish public life. This we are certain is the proper statement of the case. Not that the loss of the Parliament destroyed Irish manufacture, but that the decline of Irish manufacture, due to causes already outlined, made possible the destruction of the Irish Parliament. Had a strong enterprising and successful Irish capitalist class been in existence in Ireland, a Parliamentary reform investing the Irish masses with the suffrage would have been won under the guns of the Volunteers without a drop of blood being shed; and with a Parliament elected under such conditions the Act of Union would have been impossible. But the Irish capitalist class used the Volunteers to force commercial reforms from the English Government and then, headed by Henry Grattan, forsook and denounced the Volunteers when that body sought, by reforming the representative system, to make it more responsive to the will of the people, and thus to secure in peace

what they had won by the threat of violence.

An Ireland controlled by popular suffrage would undoubtedly have sought to save Irish industry, while it was yet time, by a stringent system of protection which would have imposed upon imported goods a tax heavy enough to neutralise the advantages accruing to the foreigner from his coal supply, and such a system might have averted that decline of Irish industry which, as we have already stated, was otherwise inevitable. But the only hope of realising that Ireland lay then in the armed force of the Volunteers; and as the capitalist class did not feel themselves strong enough as a class to hold the ship of state against the aristocracy on the one hand and the people on the other, they felt impelled to choose the only alternative – viz., to elect to throw in their lot with one or other of the contending parties. They chose to put their trust in the aristocracy, abandoned the populace, and as a result were deserted by the class whom they had trusted,

and went down into bankruptcy and slavery with the class they had betrayed.

A further and, to our mind, conclusive proof of the manner in which the 'Parliament of '82' was regarded by the real Nationalists and progressive thinkers of Ireland is to be found in the extract below from the famous pamphlet written by Theobald Wolfe Tone and published September, 1791, entitled *An Argument on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*:

"The Revolution of 1782 was a Revolution which enabled Irishmen to sell at a much higher price their honour, their integrity, and the interests of their country; it was a Revolution which, while at one stroke it doubled the value of every borough-monger in the kingdom, left three-fourths of our countrymen slaves as it found them, and the government of Ireland in the base and wicked and contemptible hands who had spent their lives in degrading and plundering her; nay,

some of whom had given their last vote decidedly, though hopelessly, against this, our famous Revolution. Who of the veteran enemies of the country lost his place or his pension? Who was called forth to station or office from the ranks of opposition? Not one. The power remained in the hands of our enemies, again to be exerted for our ruin, with this difference, that formerly we had our distress, our injuries, and our insults gratis at the hands of England; but now we pay very dearly to receive the same with aggravation, through the hands of Irishmen – yet this we boast of and call a Revolution!”

THE UNITED IRISHMEN – DEMOCRATIC AND INTERNATIONALIST

Fierce competition for farms and for jobs enabled the master class to bend both Protestant and Catholic to its will, and the result was seen in the revolts we have noticed earlier in our history. The Protestant workman and tenant was learning that the Pope of Rome was a very unreal and shadowy danger compared with the social power of his employer or landlord, and the Catholic tenant was awakening to a perception of the fact that under the new the new social order the Catholic landlord represented the Mass less than the rent-roll. The times were propitious for a union of the two democracies of Ireland. They had travelled from widely different points through the valleys of disillusion and disappointment to meet at last by the unifying waters of a common suffering.

To accomplish this union, and make it a living force in the life of the nation, there was required the activity of a revolutionist with statesmanship enough to find a common point upon which the two elements could unite, and some great event, dramatic enough in its character, to arrest the attention of all and fire them with a common feeling. The first, the Man, revolutionist and statesman, was found in the person of Theobald Wolfe Tone, and the second, the Event, in the French Revolution. Wolfe Tone had, although a Protestant,



Wolfe Tone – pioneer of Irish democracy

been secretary for the Catholic Committee for some time, and in that capacity had written the pamphlet quoted in a previous chapter, but eventually had become convinced that the time had come for more comprehensive and drastic measures than the Committee could possibly initiate, even were it willing to do so. The French Revolution operated alike upon the minds of the Catholic and Protestant democracies to demonstrate this fact, and prepare them for the reception of it. The Protestant workers saw in it a revolution of a great Catholic nation, and hence wavered in the belief so insidiously instilled into them that Catholics were willing slaves of despotism; and the Catholics saw in it a great manifestation of popular

power – a revolution of the people against the aristocracy, and, therefore, ceased to believe that aristocratic leadership was necessary for their salvation.

Seizing this propitious moment, Tone and his associates proposed the formation of a society of men of every creed for the purpose of securing an equal representation of all the people in Parliament.

This was, as Tone's later words and works amply prove, intended solely as a means of unity. Knowing well the nature of the times and political oligarchy in power, he realised that such a demand would be resisted with all the power of government; but he wisely calculated that such resistance to a popular demand would tend to make closer and more enduring the union of the democracy, irrespective of religion. And that Tone had no illusions about the value of the aristocracy is proven in scores of passages in his autobiography. We quote one, proving alike this point, and also the determining effect of the French Revolution upon the popular mind in Ireland: -

“As the Revolution advanced, and as events expanded themselves, the public spirit of Ireland rose with a rapid acceleration. The fears and animosities of the aristocracy rose in the same or a still higher proportion. In a little time the French Revolution became the test of every man's political creed, and the nation was fairly divided into great parties – the aristocrats and democrats borrowed from France, who have ever since been measuring each other's strength and carrying on a kind of smothered war, which the course of events, it is highly probable, may soon call into energy and action.”

It will be thus seen that Tone built up his hopes upon a successful prosecution of a Class War, although those who pretend to imitate him to-day raise up their hands in holy horror at the mere mention of the phrase.

The Society of United Irishmen was initiated and conducted by men who realised the importance of all those

principles of action upon which latter-day Irish revolutionists have turned their backs. Consequently it was as effective in uniting the democracy of Ireland as the 'patriots' of our day have been in keeping it separated into warring religious factions. It understood that the aristocracy was necessarily hostile to the principle and practice of Freedom; it understood that the Irish fight for liberty was but a part of the world-wide upward march of the human race, and hence it allied itself with the revolutionists of Great Britain as well as with those of France, and it said little about ancient glories, and much about modern misery. The Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Lords reprinted in full the Secret Manifesto to the Friends of Freedom in Ireland, circulated throughout the country by Wolfe Tone and his associates, in the month of June, 1791. We quote a few passages to show the democratic views of its founders. The manifesto is supposed to have been written by Wolfe Tone in collaboration with Samuel Neilson and others:

"This society is likely to be a means the most powerful for the promotion of a great end. What end? The Rights of Man in Ireland. The greatest happiness of the greatest number in this island, the inherent and indefeasible claim of every free nation to rest in this nation – the will and the power to be happy to pursue the common weal as an individual pursues his private welfare, and to stand in insulated independence, an imperial people.

"The greatest happiness of the Greatest Number. On the rock of this principle let this society rest; by this let it judge and determine every political question, and whatever is necessary for this end let it not be accounted hazardous, but rather our interest, our duty, our glory and our common religion.

"When the aristocracy come forward, the people fall backward; when the people come forward, the aristocracy, fearful of being left behind, insinuate themselves into our ranks and rise into timid lead-

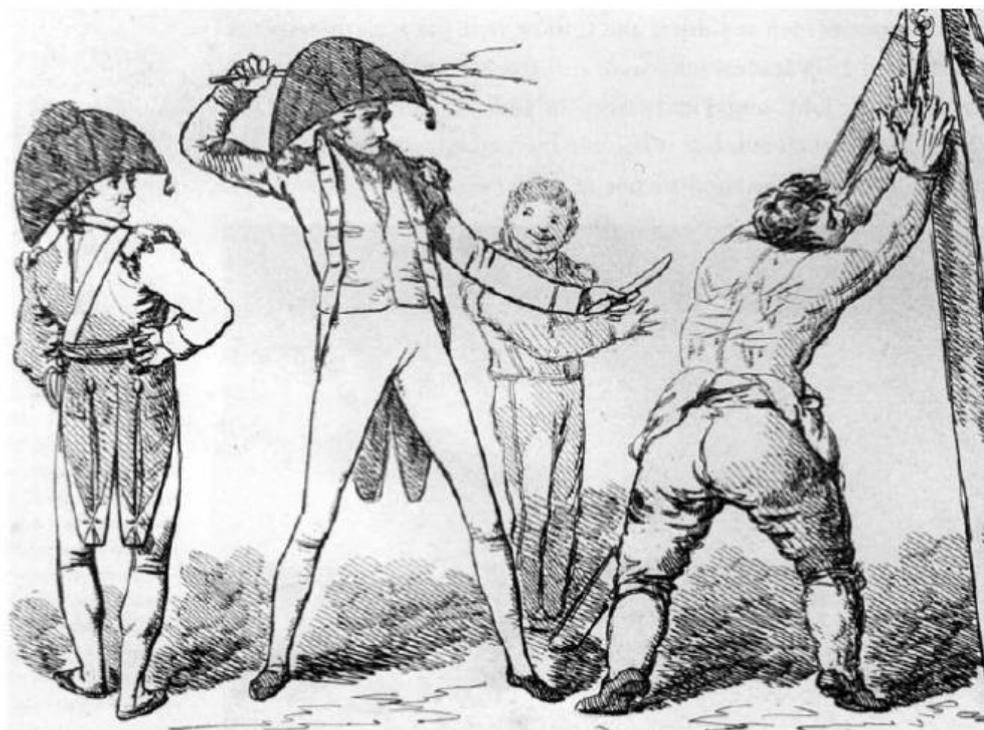
ers or treacherous auxiliaries. They mean to make us their instruments; let us rather make them our instruments. One of the two must happen. The people must serve the party, or the party must emerge in the mightiness of the people, and Hercules will then lean upon his club. On the 14th of July, the day which shall ever commemorate the French Revolution, let this society pour out their first libation to European liberty, eventually the liberty of the world, and, their eyes raised to Heaven in His presence who breathed into them an ever-living soul, let them swear to maintain the rights and prerogatives of their nature as men, and the right and prerogative of Ireland as an independent people."

These men aimed at nothing less than a social and political revolution such as had been accomplished in France, or even greater, because the French Revolution did not enfranchise all the people, but made a distinction between active and passive citizens, taxpayers and non-taxpayers. Nor yet can an impartial student fail to realise that it was just this daring aim that was the secret of their success as organisers, as it is the secret of the political effective-

ness of the Socialists of our day. Nothing less would have succeeded in causing Protestant and Catholic masses to shake hands over the bloody chasm of religious hatreds, nothing less will accomplish the same result in our day among the Irish workers. It must be related to the credit of the leaders of the United Irishmen that they remained true to their principles, even when moderation might have secured a mitigation of their lot. When examined before the Secret Committee of the House of Lords at the prison of Fort George, Scotland, Thomas Addis Emmet did not hesitate to tell his inquisitors that if successful they would have inaugurated a very different social system to that which then prevailed.

ROBERT EMMET AND HIS WORKING-CLASS SUPPORT

The Emmet Conspiracy – the aftermath of the United Irish movement of 1798, was even more distinctly democratic, international and popular in its sympathies and affiliations. All students who have investigated the matter are as one in conceding that Emmet's conspiracy was more of a working-class character than its predecessors. Indeed it is a remarkable fact that this conspiracy, widespread throughout Ireland,



British soldiers whipping Irish prisoners in 1798



Robert Emmet

England, and France, should have progressed so rapidly, and with such elaborate preparations for armed revolt, amongst the poorer section of the populace, right up to within a short time of the date for the projected rising, without the alert English Government or its Irish Executive being able to inform themselves of the matter.

Probably the proletarian character of the movement – the fact that it was recruited principally amongst the working class of Dublin and other large centres, as well as amongst the labouring element of the country districts, was the real reason why it was not so prolific of traitors as its forerunner. After the conspiracy had fallen through, the Government, of course, pretended that it had known of it all along – indeed the British Government in Ireland always

pretends to be omniscient – but nothing developed during the trial of Emmet to justify such a claim. Nor has anything developed since, although searchers of the Government documents of the time, the Castlereagh papers, the records of the secret service and other sources of information, have been able to reveal in their true colours of infamy many who had posed in the limelight for more than a generation as whole-souled patriots and reformers.

Nothing has yet been demonstrated to dim the glory or sully the name of the men and women of the working class, who carried the dangerous secret of Emmet's conspiracy and guarded it so well and faithfully to the end. It must be remembered in this connection, that at that period the open organisation of labourers for any purpose was against

the law, that consequently the trade unions which then flourished amongst the working class were all illegal organisations, whose members were in constant danger of arrest and transportation for the crime of organising, and that, therefore, a proposal to subvert the oppressive governing class and establish a republic founded upon the votes of all citizens, as Emmet planned, was one likely to appeal alike to the material requirements and imagination of the Irish toilers. And, as they were already trained to secrecy in organisation, they naturally made splendid material for the revolutionary movement. It is significant that the only serious fight on the night of the ill-fated insurrection took place in the Coombe district of the Liberties of Dublin, a quarter inhabited exclusively by weavers, tanners, and shoemakers, the best organised trades in the city, and that a force of Wicklow men brought into Dublin by Michael Dwyer, the insurgent chieftain, were sheltered on the quays amongst the dock-labourers; and eventually managed to return home without any traitor betraying their whereabouts to the numerous Government spies over-running the city.

The ripeness of the labouring element in the country at large for any movement that held out hopes of social emancipation may be gauged by the fact that a partial rebellion had already taken place in 1802 in Limerick, Waterford, and Tipperary, where, according to Haverly's *History of Ireland*, "the alleged grounds for rebellion were the dearness of the potatoes", and "the right of the old tenants to retain possession of their farms".

Such were the domestic materials upon which the conspiracy of Emmet rested – working-class elements fired with the hope of political and social emancipation. Abroad he sought alliance with the French Republic – the incarnation of the political, social, and religious unrest and revolution of the age, and in Great Britain he formed alliance with the 'Sassenach' reformers who were conspiring to overthrow the English monarchy. On November 13, 1802, one Colonel Despard, with nineteen others, was arrested in London

charged with the crime of high treason; they were tried on the charge of conspiracy to murder the King; although no evidence in support of such a charge was forthcoming, Despard and seven others were hanged. According to the Castlereagh papers Emmet and Despard were preparing for a simultaneous uprising, a certain William Dowdall, of Dublin, described as one of the most determined of the society of United Irishmen, being the confidential agent who acted for both.

Every recurring Emmet anniversary continues to bring us its crop of orators who know all about Emmet's martyrdom, and nothing about his principles. Even some of the more sympathetic of his panegyrists do not seem to realise that they dim his glory when they represent him as the victim of a protest against an injustice local to Ireland, instead of as an Irish apostle of a worldwide movement for liberty, equality and fraternity. Yet this latter was indeed the character and position of Emmet, and as such the democracy of the future will revere him. He fully shared in the international sympathies of that Dublin Society of United Irishmen who had elected a Scottish reformer to be a United Irishman upon hearing that the Government had sentenced him to transportation for attending a reform convention in Edinburgh. He believed in the brotherhood of the oppressed, and in the community of free nations, and died for his ideal.

Emmet is the most idolised, the most universally praised of all Irish martyrs; it is, therefore, worthy of note that in the proclamation he drew up to be issued in the name of the 'Provisional Government of Ireland' the first article decrees the wholesale confiscation of church property and the nationalising of the same, and the second and third decrees forbid and declare void the transfer of all landed property, bonds, debentures, and public securities, until the national government is established and the national will upon them is declared.

Two things are thus established – viz., that Emmet believed the 'national will' was superior to property rights, and could abolish them at will; and also

that he realised that the producing classes could not be expected to rally to the revolution unless given to understand that it meant their freedom from social as well as from political bondage.

DANIEL O'CONNELL'S BETRAYALS

For both Ireland and Great Britain the period between the winning of Catholic Emancipation (1829) and the year 1850 was marked by great misery and destitution amongst the producing classes, accompanied by abortive attempts at revolution in both countries, and the concession of some few unimportant political and social reforms. In Ireland the first move against the forces of priv-

ilege was the abolition of the Tithes, or, more correctly speaking, the abolition of the harsh and brutal features attendant upon the collection of the tithes. The clergy of the Episcopalian Church, the Church by law established in Ireland, were legally entitled to levy upon the people of each district, irrespective of religion, a certain tax for the upkeep of that Church and its ministers. The fact that this was in conformity with the practice of the Catholic Church in countries where it was dominant did not, of course, make this any more palatable to the Catholic peasantry of Ireland, who continually saw a part of their crops seized upon and sold to maintain a clergy whose ministra-



Daniel O'Connell



Children working in mines in England; Daniel O'Connell opposed legislation to restrict the use of child labour

tions they never attended, and whose religion they detested. Eventually their discontent at the injustice grew so acute as to flare forth in open rebellion, and accordingly all over Ireland the tenants began to resist the collection of tithes by every means in their power.

The Episcopalian clergymen called on the aid of the law, and, escorted by police and military, seized the produce of the poor tenants and carried it off to be sold at auction; the peasantry, on the other hand, collected at dead of night and carried off the crops and cattle from farms upon which the distraint was to be made, and, when that was impossible, they strove by acts of violence to terrorise auctioneers and buyers from consummating the sale. Many a bright young life was extinguished on the gallows, or rotted away in prison cells, as a result of this attempt to sustain a hated religion by contributions exacted at the point of the bayonet,

until eventually the struggle assumed all the aspect of a civil war. At several places when the military were returning from raiding the farm of some poor peasant, the country people gathered, erected barricades, and opposed their passage by force. Significantly enough of the temper and qualities of the people in those engagements, they generally succeeded in rescuing their crops and cattle from the police and military, and in demonstrating that Ireland still possessed all the material requisite for armed rebellion.

In one conflict at Newtownbarry, twelve peasants were shot and twenty fatally wounded; in another at Carrigshock eleven policemen were killed and seventeen wounded; and at a great fight at Rathcormack, twelve peasants were killed in a fight with a large body of military and armed police. Eye-witnesses declared that the poor farmers and labourers engaged,

stood the charge and volleys of the soldiers as firmly as if they had been seasoned troops, a fact that impressed the Government more than a million speeches could have done. The gravity of the crisis was enhanced by the contrast between the small sum often involved, and the bloodshed necessary to recover it. Thus, at Rathcormack, twelve peasants were massacred in an attempt to save the effects of a poor widow from being sold to pay a sum of forty shillings due as tithes. The ultimate effect of all this resistance was the passage of a Tithes Commutation Act by which the collection of tithes was abolished, and the substitution in its place of a 'Tithe Rent Charge' by means of which the sums necessary for the support of the Episcopalian clergy were included in the rent and paid as part of that tribute to the landed aristocracy. In other words, the economic drain remained, but it was deprived of



Funeral of famine victim, Skibbereen, 1846

all the more odious and galling features of its collection.

The secret Ribbon and Whiteboy Societies were the most effective weapons of the peasantry in this fight, and to their activities the victory is largely to be attributed. The politicians gave neither help nor countenance to the fight, and save for the advocacy of one small Dublin newspaper, conducted by a small but brilliant band of young Protestant writers, no journal in all Ireland championed their cause. For the Catholic clergy it is enough to say that while this tithe war was being waged, they were almost universally silent about that 'grievous sin of secret conspiracy' upon which they are usually so eloquent. We would not dare to say that they recognised that, as the secret societies were doing their work against a rival priesthood, it was better to be sparing in their denunciations for the time being; perhaps that is not the explanation, but at all events it is noteworthy that as soon as the tithe war was won, all the old stock invectives against every kind of extra-constitutional action were immediately renewed.

Contemporaneously with this tithe-war had grown up the agitation for repeal of the Legislative Union led by Daniel O'Connell, and supported by the large body of the middle classes,

and by practically all the Catholic clergy.

In 1835 O'Connell took his seat on the Ministerial side of the House of Commons as a supporter of the Whig Government. At that time the labouring population of England were the most exploited, degraded, and almost dehumanised of all the peoples of Europe. The tale of their condition reveals such inhumanity on the part of the masters, such woeful degradation on the side of the toilers, that were it not attested by the sober record of witnesses before various Parliamentary Commissions the record would be entirely unbelievable. Women worked down in coal mines, almost naked, for a pitiful wage, often giving birth to children when surprised by the pains of parturition amidst the darkness and gloom of their places of employment; little boys and girls were employed drawing heavy hutches (wagons) of coal along the pit-floors by means of a strap around their bodies and passing through between their little legs; in cotton factories little tots of eight, seven, and even six years of age of both sexes were kept attending machinery, being hired like slaves from workhouses for that purpose, and worked twelve, fourteen, and even sixteen hours per day, living, sleeping, and working under

conditions which caused them to die off as with a plague; in pottery works, bakeshops, clothing factories and workrooms the overwork and unhealthy conditions of employment led to such suffering and degradation and shortening of life that the very existence of the working-class was endangered. In the agricultural districts the sufferings of the poor were so terrible that the English agricultural labourer – the most stolidly patient, unimaginative person on the face of the earth – broke out into riots, machine-breaking, and hay-rick burning.

In 1838 five cotton-spinners in Glasgow, in Scotland, were sentenced to seven years' transportation for acts they had committed in connection with trade union combination to better the miserable condition of their class. As the punishment was universally felt to be excessive, even in the brutal spirit of the times, Mr. Walkley, Member of Parliament for Finsbury, on the 13th of February of that year, brought forward a motion in the House of Commons for a "Select Committee to enquire into the constitution, practices, and effects of the Association of Cotton Operatives of Glasgow". O'Connell opposed the motion, and used the opportunity to attack the Irish trade unions.

A law had been enacted forbidding

the employment of children under nine years of age in factories except silk-mills, and forbidding those under thirteen from working more than forty-eight hours per week, or nine hours per day. The ages mentioned will convey to the reader some idea of how infantile flesh and blood had been sacrificed to sate the greed of the propertied class. Yet this eminently moderate enactment was fiercely hated by the godly capitalists of England, and by every unscrupulous device they could contrive they strove to circumvent it. So constant and effective was their evasion of its merciful provisions that the famous friend of the factory operatives, Lord Ashley, in the House of Commons, moved a Bill to more effectually regulate Factory Works, its purpose being to prevent or punish any further infringement of the Act of 1833. O'Connell opposed the motion, and attempted to justify the infringement of the law by the employers by stating that "they (Parliament) had legislated against the nature of things, and against the right of industry." "Let them not", he said, "be guilty of the childish folly of regulating the labour of adults, and go about parading before the world their ridiculous humanity, which would end by converting their manufacturers into beggars."

On this question of the attitude to be taken up towards the claims of labour, O'Connell differed radically with one of his most capable lieutenants, Fergus O'Connor. The latter, being returned to Parliament as a Repealer, was struck by the miserable condition of the real people of England in whose interests Ireland was supposed to be governed, and as the result of his investigation into its cause, he arrived at the conclusion that the basis of the oppression of Ireland was economic, that labour in England was oppressed by the same class and by the operation of the same causes as had impoverished and ruined Ireland, and that the solution of the problem in both countries required the union of the democracies in one common battle against their oppressors. He earnestly strove to impress this view upon O'Connell, only to find, that in the latter class-feeling was much stronger than desire for Irish



National freedom, and that he, O'Connell, felt himself to be much more akin to the propertied class of England than to the working class of Ireland. This was proven by his actions in the cases above cited. This divergence of opinion between O'Connell and O'Connor closed Ireland to the latter and gave him to the Chartists as one of their most fearless and trusted leaders.

When he died, more than 50,000 toilers marched in the funeral procession which bore his remains to his last resting-place. He was one of the first of that long list of Irish fighters in Great Britain whose unselfish sacrifices have gone to make a record for an 'English' Labour movement.

THE CAUSES OF THE FAMINE

The staple food of the Irish peasantry

was the potato; all other agricultural produce, grains and cattle, was sold to pay the landlord's rent. The ordinary value of the potato crop was yearly approximately twenty million pounds in English money; in 1848, in the midst of the famine the value of agricultural produce in Ireland was £44,958,120. In that year the entire potato crop was a failure, and to that fact the famine is placidly attributed, yet those figures amply prove that there was food enough in the country to feed double the population, were the laws of capitalist society set aside, and human rights elevated to their proper position.

It is a common saying amongst Irish Nationalists that "Providence sent the potato blight; but England made the famine". The statement is true, and only needs amending by adding that "England made the famine by a rigid application of the economic principles



Starving people attack a potato store in Galway

that lie at the base of capitalist society". No man who accepts capitalist society and the laws thereof can logically find fault with the statesmen of England for their acts in that awful period. They stood for the rights of property and free competition, and philosophically accepted their consequences upon Ireland; the leaders of the Irish people also stood for the rights of property, and refused to abandon them even when they saw the consequences in the slaughter by famine of over a million of the Irish toilers.

The first failure of the potato crop took place in 1845, and between September and December of that year 515 deaths from hunger were registered, although 3,250,000 quarters of wheat and numberless cattle had been exported. From that time until 1850 the famine spread, and the exports of food

continued. Thus in 1848 it was estimated that 300,000 persons died of hunger and 1,826,132 quarters of wheat and barley were exported. Typhus fever, which always follows on the heels of hunger, struck down as many as perished directly of famine, until at last it became impossible in many districts to get sufficient labourers with strength enough to dig separate graves for the dying. Recourse was had to famine pits, into which the bodies were thrown promiscuously; whole families died in their miserable cabins, and lay and rotted there, and travellers in remote parts of the country often stumbled upon villages in which the whole population had died of hunger. In 1847, 'black '47', 250,000 died of fever; 21,770 of starvation. Owing to the efforts of emigration agents and remittances sent from relatives abroad in the same year, 89,783

persons embarked for Canada. They were flying from hunger, but they could not fly from the fever that follows in the wake of hunger, and 6,100 died and were thrown overboard on the voyage, 4,100 died on their arrival in Canada, 5,200 in hospitals, and 1,900 in interior towns.

Great Britain was nearer than America, and many who could not escape to America rushed to the inhospitable shores of Britain; but pressure was brought to bear upon the steamship companies, and they raised the rates upon all passengers by steerage to an almost prohibitive price. In this flight to England occurred one of the most fearful tragedies of all history, a tragedy which, in our opinion, surpasses that of the Black Hole of Calcutta in its accumulation of fearful and gruesome horrors. On December 2, 1848, a steamer



The destitute seek admission to the poorhouse

left Sligo with 200 steerage passengers on board bound for Liverpool. On that bleak north-western coast such a passage is at all times rough, and storms are both sudden and fierce. Such a storm came on during the night, and as the unusual number of passengers crowded the deck the crew unceremoniously and brutally drove them below decks, and battened down the hatches to prevent their re-emergence. In the best of weather the steerage of such a coasting vessel is, even when empty of human freight, foul, suffocating and unbearable; the imagination fails to realise what it must have been on that awful night when 200 poor wretches were driven into its depths. To add to the horror, when some of the more desperate beat upon the hatches and demanded release, the mate, in a paroxysm of rage, ordered tarpaulin to be thrown across the opening to stifle their cries. It did stifle the cries, it also excluded the air and the light, and there in that inferno those 200 human beings fought, struggled and gasped for air while the elements warred outside and the frail tub of a ship was tossed upon

the surface of the waters. At last, when some one stronger than the rest managed to break through and reach the deck, he confronted the ship's officers with the news that their brutality had made them murderers, that grim death was reaping his harvest amongst the passengers. It was too true. Out of the 200 passengers battened down below decks, 72, more than a third of the entire number, had expired, suffocated for want of air or mangled to death in the blind struggle of despair in the darkness. Such is the tale of that voyage of the ship Londonderry, surely the most horrible tale of the sea in the annals of any white people!

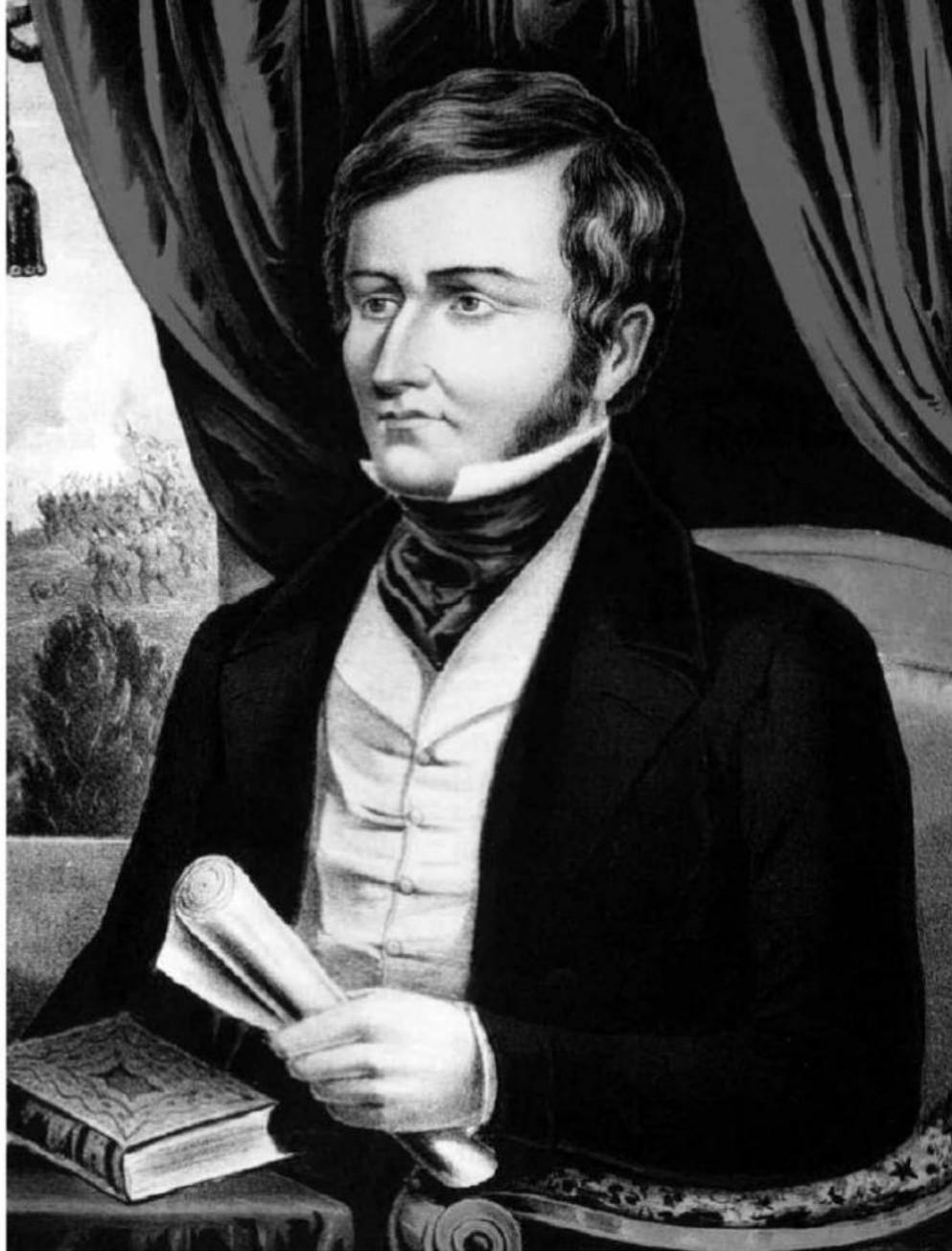
Amidst such conditions the Irish Confederation had been preaching the moral righteousness of rebellion, and discoursing learnedly in English to a starving people, the most of whom knew only Irish, about the historical examples of Holland, Belgium, Poland, and the Tyrol. A few men, notably John Mitchel, James Fintan Lalor, and Thomas Devin Reilly, to their credit be it said, openly advocated, as the first duty of the people, the refusal to pay

rents, the retention of their crops to feed their own families, and the breaking-up of bridges and tearing-up of railroad lines, to prevent the removal of food from the country. Had such advice been followed by the Young Irelanders as a body it would, as events showed, have been enthusiastically adopted by the people at large, in which event no force in the power of England could have saved landlordism or the British Empire in Ireland.

As explained by Fintan Lalor, the keenest intellect in Ireland in his day, it meant the avoidance of all pitched battles with the English army, and drawing it into a struggle along lines and on a plan of campaign where its discipline, training, and methods would be a hindrance rather than a help, and where no mobilisation, battalion-drilling nor technical knowledge of military science was required of the insurgent masses. In short, it involved a social and a national revolution, each resting upon the other. But the men who advocated this were in a hopeless minority, and the chiefs of the Young Irelanders were as rabidly solicitous about the rights of

the landlord as were the chiefs of the English Government. While the people perished, the Young Irelanders talked, and their talk was very beautiful, thoroughly grammatical, nicely polished, and the proper amount of passion introduced always at the proper psychological moment. But still the people perished. Eventually the Government seized upon the really dangerous man – the man who had hatred of injustice deeply enough rooted to wish to destroy it at all costs, the man who had faith enough in the masses to trust a revolutionary outbreak to their native impulses, and who possessed the faculty of combining thought with action, John Mitchell. With his arrest the people looked for immediate revolution, so did the Government, so did Mitchell himself. All were disappointed. John Mitchell was carried off to penal servitude in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) after scornfully refusing to sign a manifesto presented to him in his cell by Thomas Francis Meagher and others, counselling the people not to attempt to rescue him. The working class of Dublin and most of the towns were clamouring for their leaders to give the word for a rising; in many places in the country the peasantry were acting spontaneously. Eventually news reached Dublin in July, 1848, that warrants were issued for the arrest of the chiefs of the Young Ireland party. They determined to appeal to the country. But everything had to be done in a 'respectable' manner; English army on one side, provided with guns, bands, and banners; Irish army on the other side, also provided with guns, bands and banners, "serried ranks with glittering steel", no mere proletarian insurrection, and no interference with the rights of property.

When C.G. Duffy was arrested on Saturday, 9th of July, in Dublin, the Dublin workers surrounded the military escort on the way to the prison at Newgate, stopped the carriage, pressed up to Duffy and offered to begin the insurrection then and there. "Do you wish to be rescued?" said one of the leaders. "Certainly not," said Duffy. And the puzzled toilers fell back and allowed the future Australian Premier to go to prison.



William Smith O'Brien – his leadership was "the crowning absurdity"

But the crowning absurdity of all was the leadership of William Smith O'Brien. He wandered through the country telling the starving peasantry to get ready, but refusing to allow them to feed themselves at the expense of the landlords who had so long plundered, starved, and evicted them; he would not allow his followers to seize upon the carts of grain passing along the roads where the people were dying of want of food; at Mullinahone he refused to allow his followers to fell trees to build a barricade across the road until they had asked permission of the landlords who owned the trees; when the people of Killenaule had a body of dragoons entrapped between two barricades he released the dragoons from their dangerous situation upon their leader

assuring him that he had no warrant for his (O'Brien's) arrest; in another place he surprised a party of soldiers in the Town Hall with their arms taken apart for cleaning purposes, and instead of confiscating the arms, he told the soldiers that their arms were as safe as they would be in Dublin Castle.

When we remember the state of Ireland then, with her population perishing of famine, all the above recital reads like a page of comic opera. Unfortunately it is not; it is a page from the blackest period of Ireland's history. Reading it, we can understand why Smith O'Brien has a monument in Dublin, although Fintan Lalor's name and writings have been boycotted for more than fifty years.

Had Socialist principles been

applied to Ireland in those days not one person need have died of hunger, and not one cent of charity need have been subscribed to leave a smirch upon the Irish name. But all except a few men had elevated landlord property and capitalist political economy to a fetish to be worshipped, and upon the altar of that fetish Ireland perished. At the lowest computation 1,225,000 persons died of absolute hunger; all of these were sacrificed upon the altar of capitalist thought.

Early in the course of the famine the English Premier, Lord John Russell, declared that nothing must be done to interfere with private enterprise or the regular course of trade, and this was the settled policy of the Government from first to last. A Treasury Minute of August 31, 1846, provided that "depots for the sale of food were to be established at Longford, Banagher, Limerick, Galway, Waterford, and Sligo, and subordinate depots at other places on the western coast", but the rules provided that such depots were not to be opened where food could be obtained from private dealers, and, when opened, food was to be sold at prices which would permit of private dealers competing.

The English capitalist class, with that hypocrisy that everywhere characterises the class in its public acts, used the misery of the Irish as a means to conquer the opposition of the English



James Fintan Lalor – the "clearest exposition of the doctrine of revolution"

landlord class to free trade in grains, but in this, as in every other measure of the famine years, they acted consistently upon the lines of capitalist political economy. Within the limits of that social system and its theories their acts are unassailable and unimpeachable; it is only when we reject that system, and the intellectual and social fetters it imposes, that we really acquire the right to denounce the English administration of Ireland during the famine as a colossal crime against the human race.

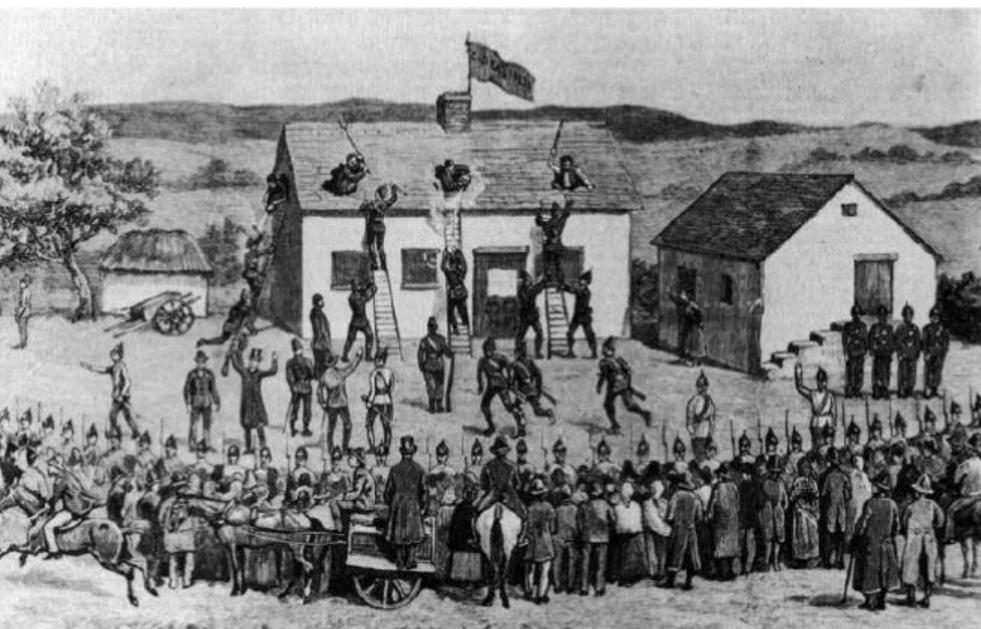
The non-socialist Irish man or woman who fumes against that admin-

istration is in the illogical position of denouncing an effect of whose cause he is a supporter. That cause was the system of capitalist property. With the exception of those few men we have before named, the Young Ireland leaders of 1848 failed to rise to the grandeur of the opportunity offered them to choose between human rights and property rights as a basis of nationality, and the measure of their failure was the measure of their country's disaster.

JAMES FINTAN LALOR

The palm of honour for the clearest exposition of the doctrine of revolution, social and political, must be given to James Fintan Lalor, of Tenakill, Queen's County. In his writings, as we study them to-day, we find principles of action and of society which have within them not only the best plan of campaign suited for the needs of a country seeking its freedom through insurrection against a dominant nation, but also held the seeds of the more perfect social peace of the future. All his writings at this period are so illuminating that we find it difficult to select from the mass any particular passages which more deserve reproduction than others. But as an indication of the line of argument pursued by this peerless thinker, and as a welcome contrast to the paralysing respect, nay, reverence, for landlordism evidenced by Smith O'Brien and his worshippers, perhaps the following passages will serve. In an article entitled *The Faith of a Felon*, published July 8, 1848, he tells how he had striven to convert the Irish Confederation to his views and failed, and says:

"They wanted an alliance with the landowners. They chose to consider them as Irishmen, and imagined they could induce them to hoist the green flag. They wished to preserve an aristocracy. They desired, not a democratic, but merely a national, revolution. Had the Confederation, in the May or June of '47, thrown heart and mind and means into the movement, I pointed out they would have made it successful, and



Irish eviction scene in 1886

settled at once and forever all questions between us and England. The opinions I then stated and which I yet stand firm to, are these:

"1. That in order to save their own lives, the occupying tenants of the soil of Ireland ought, next autumn, to refuse all rent and arrears of rent then due, beyond and except the value of the overplus of harvest-produce remaining in their hands, after having deducted and reserved a due and full provision for their own subsistence during the next ensuing twelve months.

"2. That they ought to refuse and resist being made beggars, landless and homeless, under the English law of ejection.

"3. That they ought further, on principle, to refuse all rent to the present usurping proprietors, until the people, the true proprietors (or lords paramount, in legal parlance) have, in national congress or convention, decided what rents they are to pay, and to whom they are to pay them.

"4. And that the people, on grounds of policy and economy, ought to decide (as a general rule admitting of reservations) that these rents shall be paid to themselves, the people, for public purposes, and for behoof and benefit of them, the entire general people.

"It has been said to me that such a war, on the principles I propose, would be looked on with detestation by Europe. I assert the contrary; I say such a war would propagate itself throughout Europe. Mark the words of this prophecy – the principle I propound goes to the foundations of Europe, and sooner or later will cause Europe to outrise. Mankind will yet be masters of the earth. The right of the people to make the laws – this produced the first great modern earthquake, whose latent shocks, even now, are heaving in the heart of the world. The right of the people to own the land – this will produce the next. Train your hands, and your sons' hands, gen-



Michael Davitt

tle men of the earth, for you and they will yet have to use them."

The paragraph is significant, as demonstrating that Fintan Lalor, like all the really dangerous revolutionists of Ireland, advocated his principles as part of the creed of the democracy of the world, and not merely as applicable only to the incidents of the struggle of

Ireland against England. But this latter is the interpretation which the middle-class politicians and historians of Ireland have endeavoured to give his teachings after the failure of their attempt, continued for half a century, to ignore or suppress all reference to his contribution to Irish revolutionary literature.

The working-class democracy of Ireland will, it is to be hoped, be, for their part, as assertive of the universality of Lalor's sympathies as their bourgeois compatriots are in denying it. That working class would be uselessly acquiescing in the smirching of its own record, were it to permit emasculation of the message of this Irish apostle of revolutionary Socialism.

The working class: The inheritors of the Irish ideals of the past – The repository of the hopes of the future

Just as '98 was an Irish expression of the tendencies embodied in the first French Revolution, as '48 throbbed in sympathy with the democratic and social upheavals on the Continent of Europe and England, so Fenianism was a responsive throb in the Irish heart to those pulsations in the heart of the European working class which else-



Fenian prisoners exercising in Mountjoy Prison, 1867

where produced the International Working Men's Association.

Branches of that Association flourished in Dublin and Cork until after the Paris Commune (1870), and it is an interesting study to trace the analogy between the course of development of the Socialist movement of Europe after the Commune and that of the Irish revolutionary cause after the failure of '67. In both cases we witness the abandonment of insurrectionism and the initiation of a struggle in which the revolting class, while aiming at revolution, consistently refuse the arbitrament of an armed struggle. When the revolutionary nationalists threw in their lot with the Irish

Land League, and made the land struggle the basis of their warfare, they were not only placing themselves in touch once more with those inexhaustible quarries of material interests from which all the great Irish statesmen from St. Laurence O'Toole to Wolfe Tone drew the stones upon which they built their edifice of a militant patriotic Irish organisation, but they were also, consciously or unconsciously, placing themselves in accord with the principles which underlie and inspire the modern movement of labour. This fact was recognised at the time by most dispassionate onlookers. Thus, in a rather amusing book published in France in 1887, under the title of *Chez Paddy*, Englished as *Paddy at Home*, the author, a French aristocrat, Baron E. de Mandat-Grancey giving an account of a tour in Ireland in 1886, in the course of which he made the acquaintance of many of the Land League leaders, as well as visited at the mansions of a number of the landlords, makes this comment: -

"For in fact, however they may try to dissimulate it, the Irish claims, if



'Washerwomen at Dunkathel' by Beatrice Gubbins

they do not yet amount to Communism as their avowed object - and they may still retain a few illusions upon that point - still it is quite certain that the methods employed by the Land League would not be disowned by the most advanced Communists."

It was a recognition of this fact which induced *The Irish World*, the chief advocate of the Land League in America, to carry the sub-title of *American Industrial Liberator*, and to be the mouthpiece of the nascent labour movement of those days, as it was also a recognition of this fact which prompted the Irish middle-class leaders to abandon the land fight, and to lend their energies to an attempt to focus the whole interest of Ireland upon a Parliamentary struggle as soon as ever a temporary set back gave them an opportunity to counsel a change of tactics.

They feared to call into existence a spirit of inquiry into the rights of property which would not halt at a negation of the sacredness of fortunes founded upon rent, but might also challenge the rightfulness of fortunes drawn from

profit and interest. They instinctively realized that such an inquiry would reveal that there was no fundamental difference between such fortunes: that they were made, not from land in the one case nor workshops in the other, but from the social subjection of the non-possessing class, compelled to toil as tenants on the land or as employees in workshop or factory.

For the same reason the Land League (which was founded in 1879 at Irishtown, Co. Mayo, at a meeting held to denounce the exactions of a certain priest in his capacity as a rackrenting landlord) had had at the outset to make headway in Ireland against the opposition of all the official Home Rule Press, and in Great Britain

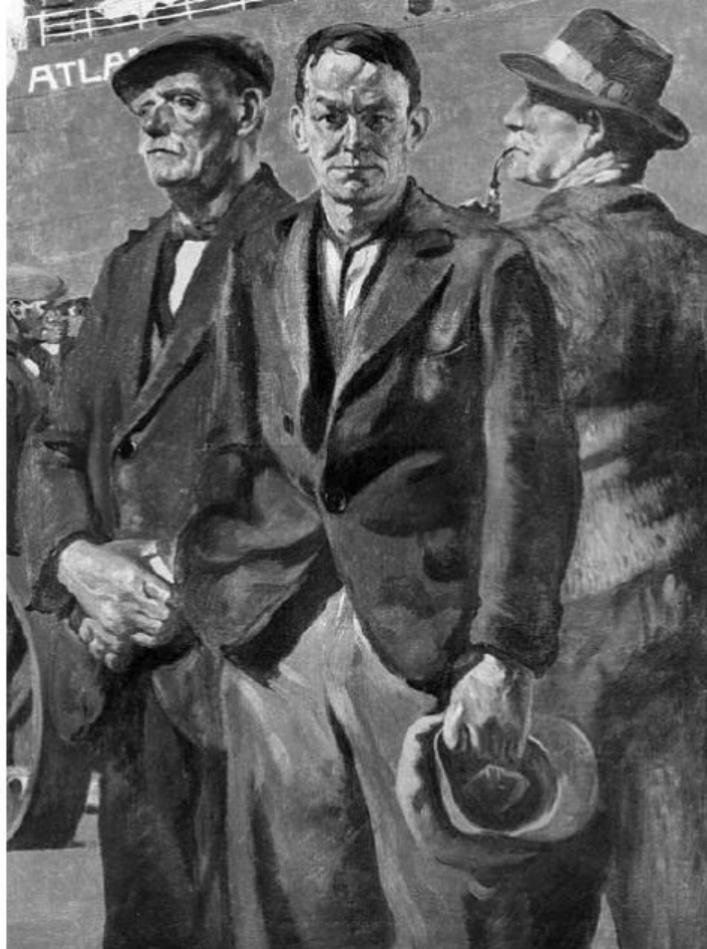
amongst the Irish exiles to depend entirely upon the championship of poor labourers and English and Scottish Socialists. In fact those latter were, for years, the principal exponents and interpreters of Land League principles to the British masses, and they performed their task unflinchingly at a time when the 'respectable' moneyed men of the Irish communities in Great Britain cowered in dread of the displeasure of their wealthy British neighbours.

Afterwards, when the rising tide of victorious revolt in Ireland compelled the Liberal Party to give a half-hearted acquiescence to the demands of the Irish peasantry, and the Home Rule-Liberal alliance was consummated, the Irish business men in Great Britain came to the front and succeeded in worming themselves into all the places of trust and leadership in the Irish organisations. One of the first and most bitter fruits of that alliance was the use of the Irish vote against the candidates of the Socialist and Labour Parties. Despite the horrified and energetic protests of such men as Michael Davitt, the solid phalanx of Irish voters was again and again hurled against the men

who had fought and endured suffering, ostracism and abuse for Ireland, at a time when the Liberal Government was packing Irish jails with unconvicted Irish men and women. In so manoeuvring to wean the Irish masses in Great Britain away from their old friends, the Socialist and Labour Clubs, and to throw them into the arms of their old enemies the Liberal capitalists, the Irish bourgeois politicians were very astutely following their class interests, even while they cloaked their action under the name of patriotism. Obviously a union of Irish patriotism and Socialist activity, if furthered and endorsed by Irish organisations in

Great Britain, could not long be kept out of, or if introduced could not well be fought in, Ireland. Hence their frantic and illogical endeavour to twist and distort the significance of Irish history, and to put the question of property, its ownership and development, out of order in all discussions on Irish nationality.

Capitalism is now the enemy, it reaches across the ocean; and, after the Irish agriculturist has gathered his harvest and brought it to market, he finds that a competitor living three thousand miles away under a friendly flag has undersold and beggared him. The merely political heresy under which middle class doctrinaires have for nearly 250 years cloaked the Irish fight for freedom has thus run its course. The fight made by the Irish septs against the English pale and all it stood for; the struggle of the peasants and labourers of the 18th and 19th centuries; the great social struggle of all the ages will again arise and re-shape itself to suit the new conditions. The war which the Land League fought, and then abandoned, before it was either lost or won, will be taken up by the Irish toilers on a broad-



'Dockers' By Maurice McGonigal

er field the sharper weapons, and a more comprehensive knowledge of all the essentials of permanent victory. As the Irish septs of the past were accounted Irish or English according as they rejected or accepted the native or foreign social order, as they measured their oppression or freedom by their loss or recovery of the collective ownership of their lands, so the Irish toilers henceforward will base their fight for freedom, not upon the winning or losing the right to talk in an Irish Parliament, but upon their progress towards the mastery of those factories, workshops and farms upon which a people's bread and liberties depend.

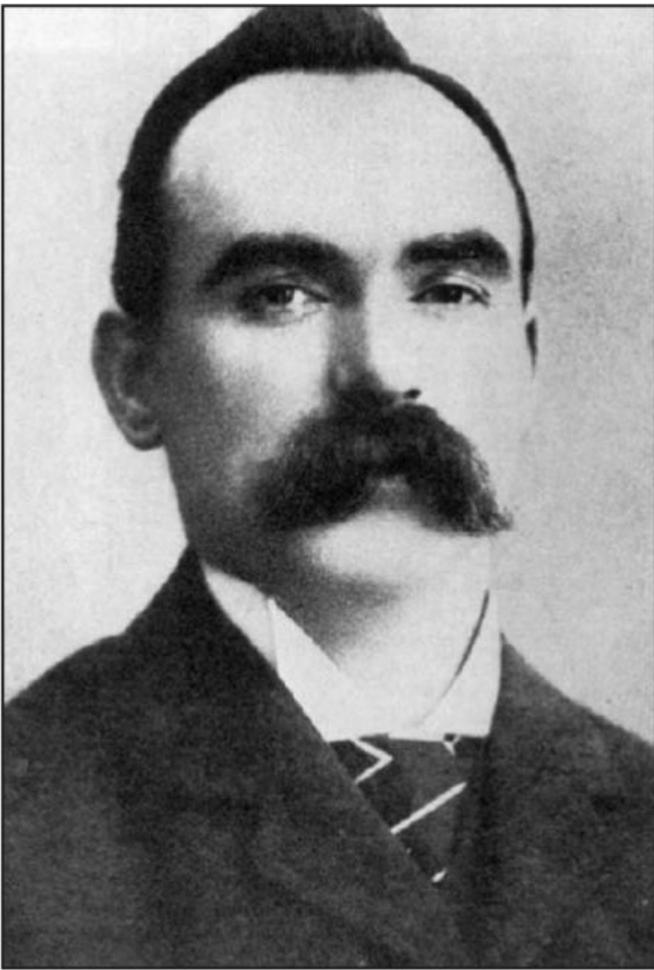
As we have again and again pointed out, the Irish question is a social question, the whole age-long fight of the Irish people against their oppressors resolves itself, in the last analysis into a fight for the mastery of the means of life, the sources of production, in Ireland. Who would own and control the land? The people or the invaders; and if the invaders, which set of them – the most recent swarm of land-thieves, or the sons of the thieves of a former generation? These were the bottom

questions of Irish politics, and all other questions were valued or deprecated in the proportion to which they contributed to serve the interests of some of the factions who had already taken their stand in this fight around property interests. Without this key to the meaning of events, this clue to unravel the actions of 'great men', Irish history is but a welter of unrelated facts, a hopeless chaos of sporadic outbreaks, treacheries, intrigues, massacres, murders, and purposeless warfare.

With this key all things become understandable and traceable to their primary origin; without this key the lost opportunities of Ireland seem such as to bring a blush to the cheek of the Irish worker; with this key

Irish history is a lamp to his feet in the stormy paths of to-day. Yet plain as this is to us to-day, it is undeniable that for two hundred years at least all Irish political movements ignored this fact, and were conducted by men who did not look below the political surface. These men, to arouse the passions of the people, invoked the memory of social wrongs, such as evictions and famines, but for these wrongs proposed only political remedies, such as changes in taxation or transference of the seat of Government (class rule) from one country to another. Hence they accomplished nothing, because the political remedies proposed were unrelated to the social subjection at the root of the matter.

The revolutionists of the past were wiser, the Irish Socialists are wiser to-day. In their movement the North and the South will again clasp hands, again will it be demonstrated, as in '98, that the pressure of a common exploitation can make enthusiastic rebels out of a Protestant working class, earnest champions of civil and religious liberty out of Catholics, and out of both a united Social democracy.



James Connolly photographed in 1902





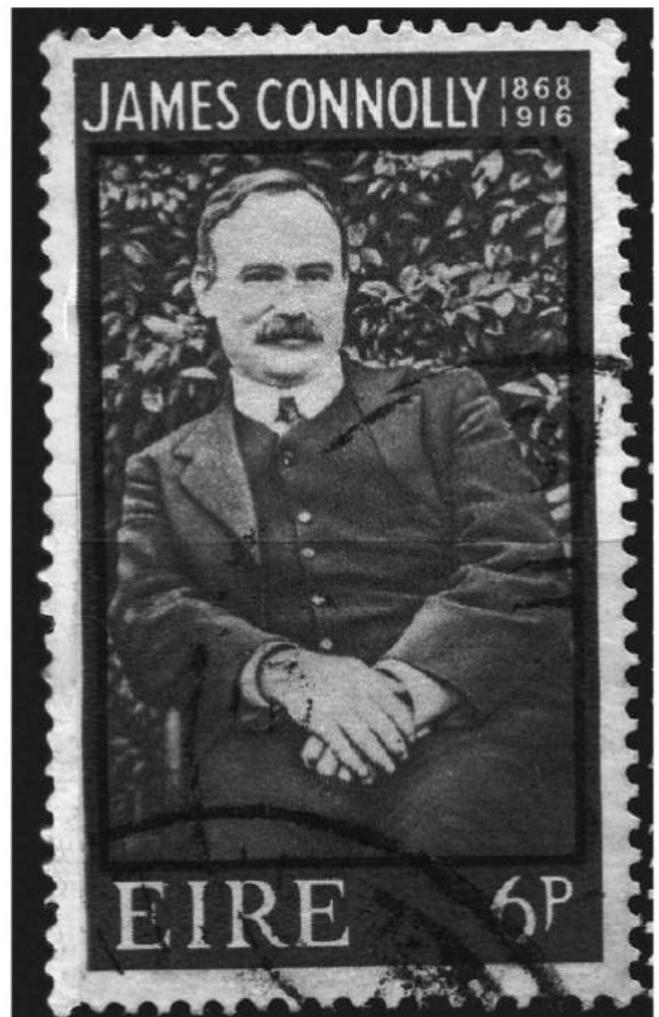
Connolly (left) with the national executive of the Irish Trades Union Congress in 1914



First recruits to the Irish Citizen Army drilling in the Phoenix Park, December 1913. James Connolly is second from the right



James Connolly with his wife and daughters, circa 1895



James Connolly commemorative stamp issued 1968



Cover of Socialism Made Easy, published in Chicago in 1909



Speakers photographed in Liverpool in support of Dublin workers. Back: Jim Larkin and James Connolly. Front: Mrs Bamber (Liverpool Trades Council) and Bill Haywood (IWW)



Irish Trade Union Congress outside Dublin City Hall, May 1914. James Connolly is standing second from the right



Members of the Irish Socialist Republican Party (James Connolly centre front)

Putting Irish Unity on the Agenda



OVER 500 PEOPLE participated in a major conference in London on 20 February 2010. It was by far the broadest and largest political event held to discuss Irish unity in Britain for many years. 'Putting Irish unity on the agenda – a conference to open the debate' was organised by Sinn Féin to open up a new national discussion in Britain on the issue, involving all points of view.

The conference saw a large cross-section of the Irish community in attendance, travelling from as far afield as Liverpool, Leeds, the Isle of Man, Bristol, Cardiff and Glasgow

to hear politicians including Sinn Féin MPs Pat Doherty and Conor Murphy, the SDLP's Conall McDevitt, Ken Livingstone, Labour MPs Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell and Diane Abbott, Salma Yaqoob from the Respect Party and also cultural figures including GAA star Jarlath Burns, writer Ronan Bennett, academics Professor Mary Hickman and Professor Paul Bew and leading author on women and Ireland, Margaret Ward.

Here *IRIS* carries a report of keynote addresses of the Conference.

A United Ireland is achievable

By Pat Doherty MP

I want to begin dedicating my remarks to Redmond O'Neill who was a vocal advocate of Irish unity and a champion for the Irish community in Britain.

Today's event is the latest in a series of such conferences which Sinn Féin is holding with the Irish diaspora and is about creating a debate around the issue of Irish reunification. Last year we held two conferences in the US, one in Canada and a smaller introductory meeting here in London. More are planned for the future, including in Ireland.

But the diaspora is very important. In the construction of the Peace Process the progress we achieved would not have been possible without that support, especially in the US. The international support which the diaspora helped generate was and remains very important. So, in any effort to advance a United Ireland the diaspora will play a crucial role, and none more so than here in Britain. Here the Irish community has the potential to directly influence a British government and to persuade British political leaders of the imperative of facilitating Irish reunification.

What do Irish republicans mean by Irish unity?

Our goal is simply stated; an end to the partition of Ireland, an end to the Union with Britain, and the construction of a new national democracy, a new republic on the island of Ireland and reconciliation between Orange and Green. Irish republicans also have a vision of a new society, a new Ireland, that is democratic, inclusive and based on equality.

A society which shares its wealth more equitably, seeks the well being of the aged, the advancement of our young, the liberation of



Pat Doherty is Sinn Féin MP and MLA for West Tyrone. Born in Glasgow of Irish emigrant parents, he has a special affinity with the Irish diaspora in Scotland, Wales and England.

women, and the protection of children, and will deliver the highest standards of services and protections for all citizens. Republicans want to create a new relationship between the peoples of these islands which puts behind us the negative consequences of our past relationship and history, and is based on respect.

At the heart, at the core, of our United Ireland will be citizens. Citizens with rights – the right to a job; to a home; to a decent standard of education and of health care. The right to live in a safe environment; to equality in the Irish language; and to participate fully in the democratic process. The right to equality and parity of esteem for all cultural traditions; of those from faith communities and none; for traveller or settled.

The Proclamation of 1916, which is the mission statement of Irish republicanism in the 21st century puts it best even now after almost 100 years:

“The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and all of its parts, cherishing all of the children of the nation equally.”

So, these are our goals. Putting them on the political agenda here in Britain and internationally is an important part of the work of advancing the objective of Irish unity. The reality is that for more centuries than any of us care to contemplate Britain's colonial policy in Ireland has been the source of conflict. Partition, sectarianism and division; and the great hurt between the people of these islands have their roots in Britain's occupation of Ireland and the strategies it has pur-



Kevin McNamara, Salma Yaqoob (Respect), Ken Livingstone, John McDonnell MP, Professor Mary Hickman and Pat Doherty pictured at the London Conference

sued to sustain that occupation.

Partition was not just a line on the map; it was the construction of a system of political apartheid which relied on discrimination and denied democracy and justice and created the context for conflict. The Peace Process has delivered an end to war and that is to be welcomed and applauded. However, resolving the many complexities resulting from centuries of occupation and partition was never going to be easy. And for Irish republicans the underlying cause of conflict persists – the British government’s claim of jurisdiction over a part of Ireland. It is this denial of the Irish peoples’ right to self-determination, freedom and independence which is the core outstanding issue which must be resolved. Sinn Féin’s focus is on achieving this.

The Sinn Féin peace strategy, out of which grew the Peace Process, recognised this. In the opening paragraph of our strategy paper *Towards a Lasting Peace in Ireland* which was first published in 1992, it states:

“A Peace Process, if it is to be both meaningful and enduring, must address the root causes of the conflict. For our part we believe that a genuine and sustainable Peace Process must be set in the context of democracy and self-determination.”

“ At the heart of our United Ireland will be citizens. Citizens with rights – the right to a job; to a home; to a decent standard of education and of health care ”

All that we have done in the years since has been rooted in this view.

The Good Friday Agreement is a key part of this. It is an accommodation – not a settlement. The St. Andrews Agreement and the recent progress achieved in the negotiations with the DUP at Hillsborough are complementary to this. They are all part of a process of change. And all of these agreements must be

seen in their all-Ireland, all-island context.

The journey we are on is one in which the lines which divide us in Ireland will be increasingly blurred until we reach a point where they become meaningless. In the meantime Sinn Féin seeks to use the opportunity that has been created to develop a greater understanding of the interconnectedness of life on this island and of the advantages that Irish unity can bring to all of the people. In this regard the institutional elements of the Good Friday Agreement and of St. Andrews are important mechanisms to be built upon as we seek to move forward.

These are already creating change and building connections and greater co-operation across almost every area of life you can think of; health, education, infrastructure, tourism, the environment, justice and policing, agriculture, and much, much more.

There have been significant all-Ireland transport developments, such as upgrading of Dublin-Belfast Enterprise rail link, Irish Government multi-million Euro investment in City of Derry airport, substantial Irish Government funding for new road infrastructure between the Port of Larne and Belfast for east-coast corridor, major ongoing all-Ireland road projects to

link Dublin and the North West, and the re-opening of the Ulster Canal. In addition, measures have been introduced to promote equality of opportunity, to defend Human Rights, and to ensure effective scrutiny of policing.

The Good Friday Agreement and the St. Andrews Agreement put in place mechanisms and arrangements which seek to do that. These include political matters, institutional arrangements, human rights, equality, policing, justice, language and culture issues. As well as the crucial issue of constitutional matters. And it does all of this in an all-Ireland context.

These Agreements are also significant instruments of change; real change in real ways in peoples daily lives.

Of course, unionists have a different perspective. They want to maintain the union. For this reason some elements of political unionism are opposed to this new dispensation. They seek to minimise, to dilute and to delay its potential or to oppose it entirely. And that is their right. But the Good Friday Agreement has for the first time created a level playing field on which nationalists and republicans, and unionists and loyalists can play out our different positions and let the people decide.

The Good Friday Agreement clearly recognises that it is for the people of the island of Ireland to determine our own future – to exercise our self-determination. In the event that a majority of people in the north prefer a sovereign United Ireland then the British government will legislate for it. The agreement also sets out the mechanism by which this will happen – by means of a ‘border poll’. So, when a majority in the North and a majority in the south opt for Irish re-unification, the constitutional process to bring that about will kick in.

The Good Friday Agreement therefore provides for a constitutional route to Irish unity. That is a significant achievement. Sinn Féin

“ We need to look at what they mean by their sense of Britishness and be willing to explore this with them and to be open to new concepts. We need to look at ways in which the unionist people can find their place in a new Ireland ”

seeks to build on this by working in partnership with others of like mind in Ireland to build political support for Irish reunification. There is a responsibility for all parties in the Oireachtas and particularly for the government in Dublin to actively work for reunification.

We have to persuade unionists – or at least a section of unionism – that such a development makes political, social and economic sense – that it serves their self-interest. For unionists, a new Ireland offers a real hope of stability and influence and

prosperity. Within the current British system unionists make up less than 2 per cent of the population. They are a tiny minority presence on the margins of a British system which doesn't really understand or care about them. They have no significant influence within the political system. In a new Ireland unionists would make up 20% of the population and be able to exercise real authority and real power and real influence.

Sinn Féin is also currently engaged with unionists and especially with disadvantaged unionist working class areas, to a greater extent than ever before. We need to address the genuine fears and concerns of unionists in a meaningful way. We need to look at what they mean by their sense of Britishness and be willing to explore this with them and to be open to new concepts. We need to look at ways in which the unionist people can find their place in a new Ireland. In other words it needs to be their United Ireland.

So, there are many issues for republicans and unionists to talk about.

Sinn Féin's vision of a new Ireland is of a shared Ireland, an integrated Ireland, an Ireland in which unionists have equal ownership; an Ireland in which there will be respect for cultural diversity, and a place in which there is political, social, economic and cultural equality. There is no desire on the part of Irish republicans to humiliate unionists. Nationalists and republicans want our rights, but we do not seek to deny the rights of anybody else. What we seek is justice for all – privilege for none.

One example of this approach at work is the effort, emerging out of the recent negotiations with the DUP, to construct a new process for dealing with the issue of contentious parades. Like the agreement on transfer of powers on policing and justice, which will take power from London back to Ireland, so too this new process will

REDMOND O'NEILL
1954-2009



**LIFELONG SOCIALIST
AND INTERNATIONALIST**



Irish republicans accept that the Orange Order is a part of who we are as a people

see power taken from London and given to the Assembly in Belfast. This is an important development.

Irish republicans accept that the Orange Order is a part of who we are as a people. The Irish national flag is of green for nationalists – orange for unionists and white for peace between the two. I have met representatives of the Orange in the past. I would like to meet more in the future. I want a dialogue between us that can help each of us understand better the beliefs of the other. I accept absolutely that Orange marches have their place in our society but it must be on the basis of a respect for the rights of each other.

Can we resolve the issue of contentious parades? I believe we can.

Can we achieve a United Ireland? Yes.

There was a time when it was argued that a United Ireland wasn't practical because the south was an impoverished state and why would anyone want to join that? When the southern state was doing well Irish unity was dismissed by some because it would mean 'taking on responsibility' for an impoverished north! Today the south is in trouble economically, while goods and services are cheaper in the north. So the cry goes up again – Why? Why

would the north join with the south or vice versa?

The answer is at once simple and complex. The border is more than just an inconvenience. It is an obstacle to progress and while its adverse affects are most clearly felt in the communities that straddle the border, it also impacts negatively throughout the island. On an island the size of Ireland, with a population of about 6 million it does not make economic sense to have two competing economies, with two governmental administrations and a

“Those who understand the negative role successive British governments have played in Ireland have a duty to argue for reunification. And don't think it's impossible or can't happen or it's too high a hill to climb”

host of duplicating services. Consequently, the delivery of public services is restricted and inefficient.

There are two competing industrial development bodies seeking inward investment, with no co-ordination in supporting local industries. We have two arts councils and two sports councils and three tourists' bodies. This is not efficient. So, let's co-operate and connect and harmonise. Let's erase the lines of separation. And let's co-ordinate and plan and strategise for a better future.

It is also important that we put the issue of Irish reunification on the political agenda here, in Britain. I recognise that at a time of conflict in Afghanistan, controversy over the war in Iraq, economic recession and of serious problems within the British political system, that Ireland is not at the top of the political agenda. But those who understand the rights of the Irish people and the negative role successive British governments have played in Ireland, have a duty to put Irish unity and independence on that agenda and to argue for reunification. And don't think it's impossible or can't happen or its too high a hill to climb.

Last week we celebrated 20 years of freedom for Madiba – Nelson Mandela. There was a time when people thought apartheid wouldn't end or Mandela would never be free or there would always be a divided Germany or that there would never be peace in Ireland. Many thought that a deal between Sinn Fein and the DUP was impossible.

Well, apartheid has ended. Mandela was President of a free South Africa. Germany is united. The war is over in Ireland. And we reached agreement with the DUP at Hillsborough. So, nothing is impossible. You just have to believe and strategise and work hard and the impossible can be achieved.

So, let me invite all of you, as well as people across Britain in all of the elected bodies, to join with us in this historic endeavour.

For the GAA, Ireland is United

By Jarlath Burns

My life has been defined by my involvement in the Gaelic Athletic Association. It contains all the values, the principles and the ideology with which I can identify as an Irishman.

The GAA is in touch with Ireland in a way that politicians, civic leaders and the church in particular have ceased to be for some years now. It is the last remaining bastion of moral authority extant in Ireland today. There are no stories of sleaze, no WAGs, no lurid headlines, no porsches, no fancy lifestyles, no pictures of players emerging from nightclubs with some page three 'stunna', no fat cats operating for their own career prospects because in the GAA there are no career people, no players' wages, only volunteers. The fella playing in front of 80,000 on Sunday will be serving you sausages in the shop on Monday, or teaching your child, or studying for an exam.

This is why the GAA is a critical element in the conversation about Irish unity. You see, the GAA has never accepted partition. Some of our clubs straddle the border, Ulster consists of nine counties and the desire to seek Irish unity is enshrined in the Official Guide of the GAA. There is a commitment to the use of the Irish language and the promotion of Irish culture that is discreet yet honourable, inclusive, not intrusive and at all times, full to the neck of integrity that is to be admired and learnt from.

The GAA kept Ireland together during the tragedy of the Civil War when families, divided by the Treaty, united in their love of the club. During the Troubles it served as a non-violent and creative way of giving witness to the desire to be classed as Irish, to be proud of our identity and to seek a united



Ireland. And there was always a cutting edge to its devotion to a 32-County Ireland. Rule 21 forbade members of the British security

forces from playing gaelic games and the GAA skillfully and serenely deflected the many brickbats it received from this stance by calmly stating that it would remain in place until the time and climate was right to change it. And it was true to its word.

We actually used to ban our members playing in or even watching foreign sports and actually suspended the first President of Ireland Douglas Hyde for attending a soccer international; we still ban foreign sports from our grounds and debate still rages about whether or not we should have temporarily opened Croke Park to rugby and soccer to allow the redevelopment of Lansdowne Road. But along the way the GAA has suffered for having these principles. Many of our members have been killed by loyalist paramilitaries and for many years our association was seen as a legitimate target by those who saw us as a threat to what they would call the British way of life.

In many ways the GAA has tried to steer a path through the

“When morons on the nationalist side burn an Orange hall, morons on the other side respond by burning a GAA clubhouse. Apart from maddening us that our premises would be targeted in this way, to be classed as the cultural equivalent of the Orange Order is just as offensive”

warring morass of society in the Six Counties. When morons on the nationalist side decide to burn an Orange hall, morons on the other side respond by burning a GAA clubhouse. Apart from maddening us that our premises would be targeted in this way, to be classed as the cultural equivalent of the Orange Order is just as offensive.

And within clubs, it can be just as fraught with the GAA having to be equally relevant to the SDLP and Sinn Féin in the north and Fianna Fáil and all the others in the south. There is no doubt that the GAA has become embroiled into the political arena in ways which cause us serious discomfort. As an organization which values culture, we immediately get pulled into the political squabble since culture in the north is part of the battlefield.

When your language, culture and pastimes have been taken from you by a distinct and calculated act of political strategy, then it will take a political act to bring them back also. The GAA would be upfront about the fact that our desire for a united Ireland and our commitment to the promotion of Irish culture brings us into the political arena and when left to our own devices, we can manage this bit of baggage quite skilfully.

However, sometimes events just engulf us. We all now know about Bloody Sunday, the first one in 1920 when 12 people were shot dead in Croke Park by the British Auxiliaries, including Michael Hogan, a Tipperary player whose name the main stand bears.

The Hunger Strike in 1981 was another example. Should the GAA support it or not? The GAA is political, we admit that, but not party political. Was the Hunger Strike a party political or a human rights



Jarlath Burns is a former County Armagh senior Gaelic football player and a stalwart of his local club, Silverbridge.

issue? This matter split clubs and divided the GAA community for many years and at times we felt helpless to stop it.

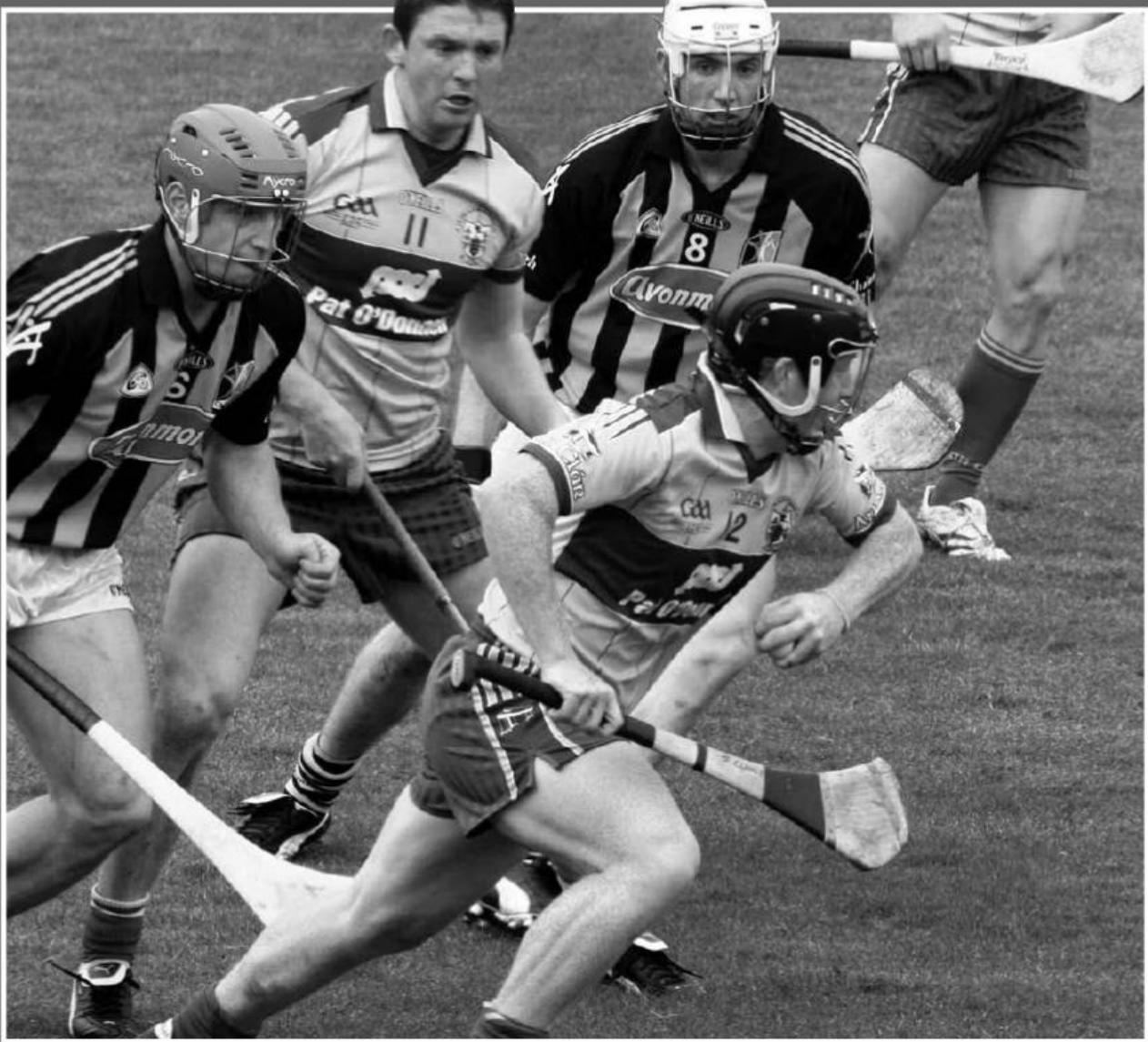
Likewise, when the British Army decided to steal the grounds of Crossmaglen GAA club for two

decades there was an irony lost on them that was quite hilarious if the subject matter wasn't so tragic. They were actually responsible for driving many young men in Crossmaglen into the IRA, occupying the grounds of the local GAA club who would endeavour to give young people a sporting outlet to keep them out of the IRA. We always feel in Ireland that the British went out of their way to just be as stupid as it was possible to be in their occupation. How did they ever win two world wars at all because our experience of them was that they approached every situation with the giddy inquisitiveness of a child trying to find a gas leak with a lighted match.

And bringing us right up to date – this week Bryansford GAA are having their expansion plans thwarted by a particularly bigoted piece of political chicanery from the DUP minister of culture, a man who hadn't even the guts to mention the GAA Ulster championship last summer in a statement promoting the summer of sporting activities in the Six Counties. And we are still in trouble because some of our grounds are named historically and emotionally after what we would term Irish patriots, but who others would call terrorists. Off the field, we just can't seem to win and this is why we are distinctly uncomfortable in the political arena and nowadays try to avoid it at all costs.

What we do best is to promote our games, make the idea of the Irish nation real in the minds and hearts of Irish people and we are so far removed from the totally commodified professional sports in this country that it gives us a sense of bursting pride. You might have had your empire which has defined you as a nation, but we have the GAA

“ Our experience of the British was that they approached every situation with the giddy inquisitiveness of a child trying to find a gas leak with a lighted match ”



which to us is a much better definition of what we are.

The GAA remains at the very heart of Irish society. It is a moral compass, a mediator, an honest broker; its contribution to Ireland is immeasurable; it gives meaning and purpose to young people at a particularly vulnerable time in their development, it creates social capital that no government initiative could ever generate and it provides a social outlet for its members, particularly in isolated parts of rural Ireland like no other organization can.

In conclusion however, it might also be a reluctant player in any new robust consensus strategy or movement for a United Ireland. We are focused on building relation-

“ The GAA remains at the very heart of Irish society. It is a moral compass, a mediator, an honest broker; its contribution to Ireland is immeasurable ”

ships with the Protestant people of the Six Counties and are succeeding albeit at a very slow pace. We are being extremely careful in how we present ourselves in case we might be seen as narrow minded, conservative or even sectarian, ammunition to those who might seek to condemn us.

The GAA promotes Irish unity simply by being there. It is a monument to how we use our flag, our anthem, our language, our games, our songs, our music, our dance in an inclusive and non-divisive way. We could all learn from the GAA. For the GAA, Ireland is united. There has never been partition. For the near future at least, this might have to do us.

A new Ireland must embrace diversity

By Mary Hickman

If Irish unity is to be put back on the agenda then it requires a debate that does not rely on old shibboleths but one that focuses on what a united Ireland would look like and offer different people. It requires a revised vision of Ireland for the 21st century. Obviously that vision will have to include a plan for the political arrangements that could bring people together and an economic strategy that might best suit an all-island economy, but it should also include a convincing concept of belonging that is inclusive and allows for multiple and contingent identities.

In these fluid times characterised by global migrations, many of them circular, new ways of perceiving "who belongs" are required. These new perceptions of belonging should encompass both recent emigrants and the wider diaspora and new residents as having a stake in Ireland and its well-being.

Currently about 3.1 million Irish passport holders live outside Ireland. Of these about 800,000 were born in

Ireland, with well over half of them living in the UK. Article 2 of the Irish constitution was amended after a referendum in 1998 following the Good Friday agreement. It provided that every person born in the island of Ireland is part of the Irish nation and that the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage. A person who is born outside Ireland is automatically an Irish citizen by descent if one of that person's parents is an Irish citizen who was born in Ireland. A decade later, however, there remains deep ambiguity about relations with the Irish diaspora.

On the one hand, there have been a variety of attempts in the past decade to assist and engage with the diaspora. In 2001 the Irish government set up a task force on policy regarding emigrants and its recommendations led to the establishment of a the Irish Abroad Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs and to a significant increase in funds



Mary Hickman is Professor of Irish Studies and Sociology at London Metropolitan University. She established the Irish Studies Centre at the former University of North London. Her current research interests include migrations and diasporas



Irish Unity should encompass both recent emigrants and the wider diaspora

available to assist vulnerable Irish people abroad. With the rapid onset of recession a Global Irish Economic Forum took place last September, funded by the Irish government, to bring members of the diaspora to Dublin for consultation on ways forward for Ireland and a Global Irish Network has subsequently been established.

On the other hand, the possibility of more fully integrating the diaspora into the life of the nation has become taboo. There has been a full-scale retreat from the offer of representation for the diaspora in Irish legislative bodies. The issue of votes for emigrants was the subject of much debate from the late 1980s, and lobbying groups were



established in Britain, the US and Australia. These efforts culminated at the general election of 1997, when Fianna Fáil's policy document promised to introduce emigrant voting rights by the year 2000; on gaining power this did not happen.

The reluctance of Irish politicians to enact such moves largely relies on the belief that the Irish diaspora is so large that the impact of its vote would be disproportionate and uncontrollable. Ireland is not only out of step with the rest of Europe in this matter but also with much of the rest of the world. Currently 115 countries allow citizens abroad voting rights. In Ireland, in contrast, the national territory and its governance remains ring-fenced from the influence of the Irish emigrants.

The identification of Ireland with its territory remains predominant but it is reinforced by an insistence on blood lineage as the final guarantor of the right to be an Irish

A united Ireland would be as multi-ethnic, multi-faith and as class-stratified an entity as any other European state

“Currently 115 countries allow citizens abroad voting rights. In Ireland, in contrast, the national territory and its governance remain ring-fenced from the influence of the Irish emigrants”

citizen. This allows many in the Irish diaspora access to (a qualified) citizenship but excludes many new residents in Ireland. Ireland's historical imagination about itself since independence assumed that various “others” (Jews, Protestants, Travellers) did not offer a serious threat to the form of “26-county nationalism” that developed and became deeply entrenched.

A united Ireland would be as multi-ethnic, multi-faith and as class-stratified an entity as any other European state. In the recent past Northern Ireland, the Irish diaspora and multinational immigration have all posed challenges to definitions of the Irish nation and of who is accepted as belonging in Ireland. Contemporary politics and practices of governance in Ireland suggest that many traditional ideas remain in play. This is a challenge for debates about the reunification of Ireland but an opportunity for good political leadership.

Intellectual humility required for unity project

By Paul Bew

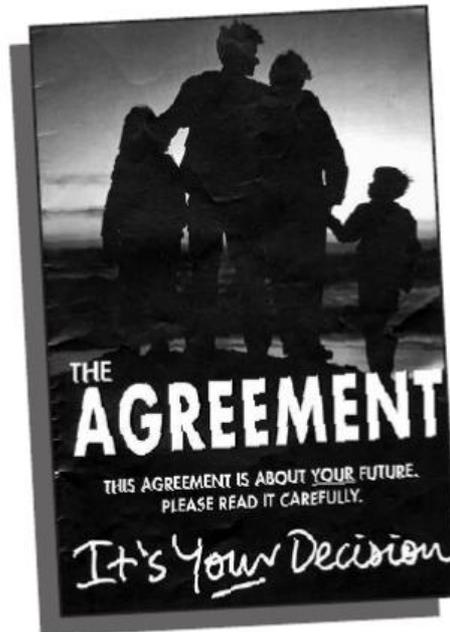
As part of the Good Friday Agreement, the Irish constitution dropped the territorial claim over Northern Ireland as embodied in articles 2 and 3 of Éamon De Valera's *Bunreacht na hÉireann*. Since then, the Irish constitution, borrowing from the ethos of the old constitution of the *Bundesrepublik*, evokes the settled will of the Irish people to achieve unity by peace and consent.

How is that project going? Not very well, it has to be said. The 2001 Northern Irish census revealed that without significant Protestant conversion to the nationalist project and indeed without the complete collapse of the small but significant Catholic unionist tradition in Northern Ireland, Irish unity, based on consent as the Good Friday agreement insists, was decades away at the earliest. It is this reality which helps to explain Sinn Féin's new and welcome openness towards dialogue with the Protestant and unionist community in Northern Ireland.

To make matters worse, the shattering economic crisis of the public finances in Dublin combined with the clerical sexual abuse scandals have turned that society inwards in a way which also weakens such momentum as there was for Irish unity. In 1998 Dublin took out a long-term option on Irish unity if it could be achieved relatively painlessly. Today, with the stability of Northern Ireland dependent on a subvention which works out at £20,000 per annum for every family of two, nationalist or unionist, for many a year to come Dublin policymakers will be happy to allow the British taxpayer to pick up the

burden. Therefore, Sinn Féin's new encouragement of dialogue is very generous, and perhaps a little foolhardy.

The problem in part lies with the brilliance of the Sinn Féin leadership. It has been superb at emoting and creating widely accepted personality cults of its dual leadership within its own community. No embarrassing revelation can dent the emotional investment which has now been built up. But superb as this exercise has been it has its counterpart in the equally dramatic failure to make any progress towards Irish unity. The very strengths of the current leadership are also its equally profound weak-



ness when it comes now to the need to engage the unionist community.

The IRA campaign has been cleverly described by Eamonn McCann as the pursuance of the civil rights movement by inappropriate means. In other words, a violent campaign whose effect has been to



Paul Bew is a much-published historian and Professor of Irish Politics at Queen's University, Belfast. He was an advisor to former Ulster Unionist Party leader David Trimble

give the northern nationalist community a place in the sun within Northern Ireland. Gordon Brown's multimillion hand-out to the Irish language this week is but the latest proof both of that place in the sun and the way in which it is underwritten by the Unknown British Taxpayer, the true hero of the Troubles.

McCann's formula has the advantage that it explains why the failure of the IRA campaign to achieve its stated objective – British withdrawal and Irish unity – has nonetheless placed the political wing of the Republican Movement in such a strong position within Northern Ireland, but also explains the great difficulty that Sinn Féin now has. Because it needs to reach

out to unionists it cannot admit that the means were inappropriate.

Combined with this is a genuinely threadbare understanding of the traditions within the unionist community – either its liberal and progressive elements, or its conservative and reactionary elements. It is no good simply repeating arguments which were around at the time of the Anti-Partition League of 1948 to the effect that the unionists really are Irish, that other people see them as Irish and that they had best come to terms with the rest of the Irish people.

The truth is that Ireland is not defined by a shared imagined community of one people but two. I began by drawing attention to German approach on the issue of unification. Germany, after all, is a case of one people whom the great powers wished to see divided for

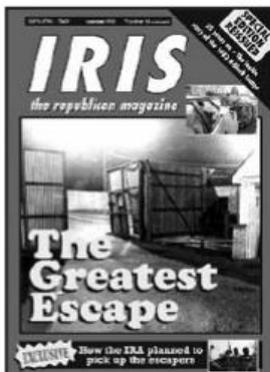
“ Germany, after all, is a case of one people whom the great powers wished to see divided for much of the second half of the 20th century. Ireland is a case of two people whom the great powers wish to see united, if at all possible **”**

much of the second half of the 20th century. Ireland is a case of two people whom the great powers wish to see united, if at all possible.

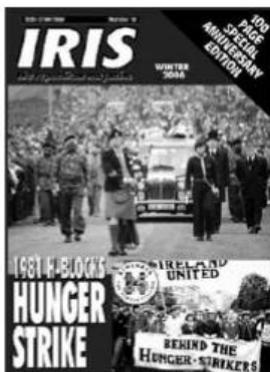
The German example, therefore, of relatively successful unification therefore cannot be taken too far but it is worth noting that it provides a good evidence of the intellectual humility required for such a project. At a time when many German intellectuals were opposed to unification in 1991, Karl Heinz Bohrer published a celebrated article entitled *Why We Are Not a Nation and Why We Should Become One*, which both faced up to the case against unification and gave significant reasons why it should happen. It would be a remarkable thing if sometime soon we were able to read an article as serious with the same title from the pen of Gerry Adams.

IRIS

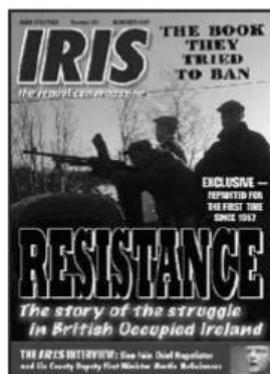
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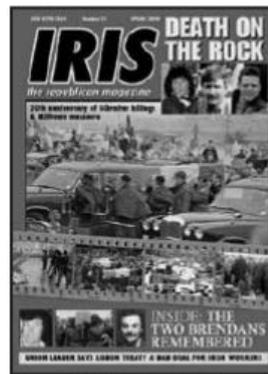
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What would a United Ireland mean for women?

By Margaret Ward

In thinking of a future united Ireland, my starting point has to be that of a feminist – what would it mean for women? Where are the strategies, policy commitments that will make a difference? Where are women now, in the 26 and Six Counties in terms of representation, reproductive rights and recognition?

In both north and south we remain in a minority in political and public life. The Dáil has always been at least 86% male. The Northern Ireland Assembly at best has been 84% male. No political party has come out in support of the urgent measures – particularly quotas – that need to be put in place before that male political dominance can be ended.

In terms of reproductive justice, the experience of abortion represents modern Ireland's hidden diaspora. Human Rights Watch has condemned the Irish government for contributing directly to viola-



Historian and author Margaret Ward has published pioneering studies on Irish women revolutionaries and on the place of feminism in the Irish struggle

tions of women's human rights. Since 1980, at least 90,000 women have travelled to the UK from the Republic to terminate their pregnancies. The Family Planning Association Northern Ireland estimates that since 1968, as many as 80,000 women have travelled to England and other European countries from Northern Ireland to access safe and legal abortion services.

It is impossible to get government or political parties to take responsibility for this. We have seen this in practice recently when we had the support of Westminster MPs (and Diane Abbott in particular) for a change to abortion law. This was blocked because the DUP threatened that it would jeopardise their involvement in the Peace Process. Many women felt that their existence and their needs were being negotiated away.

As a representative for the



In both north and south women remain in a minority in political and public life



Can a united Ireland speak for the needs of women in the island of Ireland?

women's sector, I fought to have this issue included in the Bill of Rights Forum in 2008. My experience of the forum has not convinced me that political parties have a commitment to achieving equality for women. In fact, measures to improve women's representation were regarded by unionist parties with even more hostility than abortion law reform.

I attended an anti-abortion meeting in the Presbyterian assembly rooms two years ago and witnessed Mark Durkan, Jeffrey Donaldson, and other politicians speaking with pride on how they were united in their opposition to reform of abortion law. And I remembered Joan Carson of the UUP, who had spoken very differently in 2000 at an Assembly debate on the issue. In her view, the 1967 legislation "was made by men for women and any future changes need to be made in consultation with the women of Northern Ireland". But we don't have enough women in political life to push this issue.

Women are the majority of the population on the island of Ireland, yet we are at the mercy of a male minority. If there is ever to be a united Ireland, the foundations have to include a profound transformation of gender relations.

Is there recognition of the work that so many women's groups have been doing for so long – much of which crosses borders and helps to bring north and south together?

“If there is ever to be a united Ireland, the foundations have to include a profound transformation of gender relations”

I am involved in an all-Ireland women's peace building project, called Hanna's House. In the last year we have held seminars in the four historic provinces of Ireland – last week in Dublin, where the theme was exploring a feminist analysis of truth recovery. We looked at international perspectives, at issues relating to the conflict in the north, from unionist and nationalist perspectives, and we looked at truth recovery and institutional abuse from the experience of women in the south. It was an emotional day, but it was also inspirational, and women from north and south once again saw how much they had in common, despite what might appear as very different issues.

Can a united Ireland speak for the needs of women in the island of Ireland, or must we echo the words of Virginia Woolf – as “outsiders”, who say: “In fact, as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world.”

The Irish Peace Process has much to offer Europe

By Salma Yaqoob

I have come down here today from Birmingham where the conflict in Northern Ireland has left a deep scar in the psyche of my city.

The impact of the pub bombings of November 21st 1974 still reverberate to this day. 21 completely innocent people lost their lives. Nearly 200 were injured. This was an awful, indefensible act, the consequences of which have been dramatic and long lasting. The suffering of the families of those killed and injured still continues. Time cannot be turned back for the Birmingham Six who were framed and jailed for a crime they did not commit. Politically the cause of Irish unity was set back.

What also happened was that the entire Irish community was subjected to a terrible backlash and forced into a long nightmare of demonisation from which it only recently has started to emerge. It is a remarkable fact that it took nearly 25 years before the St Patrick's Day parade recommenced in the city.

For a long time in Birmingham the pain from the pub bombings was so raw that it was virtually impossible to speak about the conflict and the background that had given rise to the bombings. And when I hear Irish people talk about their experiences at that time it resonates, to some degree, with my own experience as a Muslim. Since the events of 9/11 and 7/7, the entire Muslim community has been demonised.

We came under huge pressure to condemn atrocities committed in our names, yes, which we rightly do, but also to silence ourselves on political stances. To co-operate with a censorship which strips away the



Salma Yaqoob is a member of Birmingham City Council for the Respect Party. She is a prominent anti-war activist.

history and memory of state sponsored terrorism. We are being blackmailed with the threat of being labelled terrorists or terrorist sympathisers, to not speak the truth.

And that truth is this. Where you have the abuse of power, you have inequality and injustice. And if generations experience discrimination and criminalisation and are blocked from having a political voice in their own country, you create the conditions for conflict and violence. And where you have violence, you have victims, on all sides.

To those on the receiving end it does not matter whether they are Israeli or Palestinian, whether they are Kashmiri or Indian, whether they are British or Irish, their pain and their suffering is no less real just because their nationality or religion is different. So, however difficult and painful it is, we must speak about these issues, because the only hope for eliminating the pain and suffering is to address the political causes that give rise to that pain and suffering.

There are a number of things that strike me as very significant about the Peace Process in Northern Ireland. I will focus on just two.

First the Peace Process is proof that even what appear to be intractable political problems can be un-knotted and huge steps can be taken to resolving them. And that lesson is applicable to other apparently intractable problems in other parts of the world. And this is directly relevant to me personally.

One of the largest ethnic groupings in Birmingham defines themselves as being of Kashmiri descent. Britain bequeathed Kashmir to India, against the wishes of the

“If generations experience discrimination and criminalisation and are blocked from having a political voice in their own country, you create the conditions for conflict and violence”



In Britain and the rest of Europe, Muslims are being demonised now, in a manner similar to the way Jews, Blacks and the Irish have been in the past

Kashmir's, when they partitioned the country in 1947. The cost of that decision has been the brutal Indian occupation to date, resistance and armed struggle to that occupation that has taken the lives of many thousands of people, and three wars between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan.

The foreign policy issue that probably burns the brightest in the city, especially among young people, is that of Palestine. A conflict, once again, that has its origins in a British government decision, this time the partition of historic Palestine to create, in the words of Winston Churchill, a 'loyal Ulster' in the Middle East.

Without underestimating the historical specificity of the Irish Peace Process, or the frustrations

and difficulties in that process, I do believe that it offers lessons in conflict resolution applicable to other parts of the world. And to people who care passionately about peace

“ Multiculturalism and pluralism are under attack and the ideas of citizenship and identity are discussed in narrower and narrower terms ”

and justice, in places like Kashmir or Palestine, and who often despair about their situation improving, I would say there is much hope and much to be learned from the Irish.

Secondly, I believe the Irish Peace Process has much to offer Europe, including Britain, in the way that lessons from history have been learnt and the recognition of the importance of equality and belonging for all. Sadly, Europe, instead of learning from its history is repeating it. We are seeing a rise in xenophobia and intolerance as evidence with Switzerland's decision to ban minarets despite there being only 4 in the country, and the calls in France to deny Muslim women the right to dress as they want to, which alarmingly have been echoed in this county.

In this way multiculturalism and pluralism are under attack and the ideas of citizenship and identity are discussed in narrower and narrower terms.

That is why the very important steps taken to eradicate the inequality and discrimination that so defined the Northern Ireland state from its foundation are so significant. The Peace Process is enacting the idea that equality for all is not a threatening one, but one that genuinely assures the benefit of all. The rights of one section of the community do not need to be upheld at the expense of another, in the way for example Catholics and Nationalists were subjected in the past. Instead, what ensures peaceful and respectful belonging and co-existence is upholding the rights and dignity of all.

I am heartened at Sinn Fein's commitment that Unionists can still be British in a United Ireland and that cultural identity and practice, including Orange marches, have a right to be protected as long as they do not attack the rights of others. These issues of equality, identity, citizenship and pluralism are of direct relevance for what is happening in Britain and the rest of Europe.

Sadly the rise of the far right and intolerance indicates a strong slide in the opposite direction. Muslims are being demonised now, in a manner similar to the way Jews, Blacks and the Irish have been in the past. It is an irony that a place that has been so associated with community division is now pointing the way to what genuine pluralism based on equality could look like. Or perhaps it is because of the bitter experiences of the realities of not doing so it is able to do so. Either way, it is a lesson the rest of Europe can ill afford to ignore.

So I am here to offer my support to the Peace Process, and to congratulate Sinn Fein and its representatives for their role within it. I am also here to offer my support for the cause of Irish unity.

“The challenge for us is to articulate the case for British disengagement and lobby for a relationship between Britain and Ireland based on real equality and justice”

The Good Friday Agreement has laid a serious and realistic prospect of a united Ireland as it has committed the British government to disengage from Ireland, should the people of Ireland desire it, in a binding international treaty.

The question that all progressives, Irish and non-Irish, should be asking is how is the British government preparing for this possibility? Indeed the challenge for us who want to build on the serious discussion here today is to articulate the case for that disengagement, and lobby for a relationship between Britain and Ireland based on real equality and justice.

We need to take this message to our workplaces, colleges, universities and voluntary organisations. Speaking for myself I am committed to raising this issue in Birmingham City Council, the largest local authority in Europe, the symbolism of which I hope would not be insignificant.

And I am optimistic that if I, as a Muslim woman, can highlight the injustice of the British presence in Afghanistan, on the BBC's Question Time, in Wooten Bassett, on an all-male, pro-war establishment panel, and in my humble opinion win the argument, the taboos about promoting a united Ireland here in Britain can certainly be broken down.

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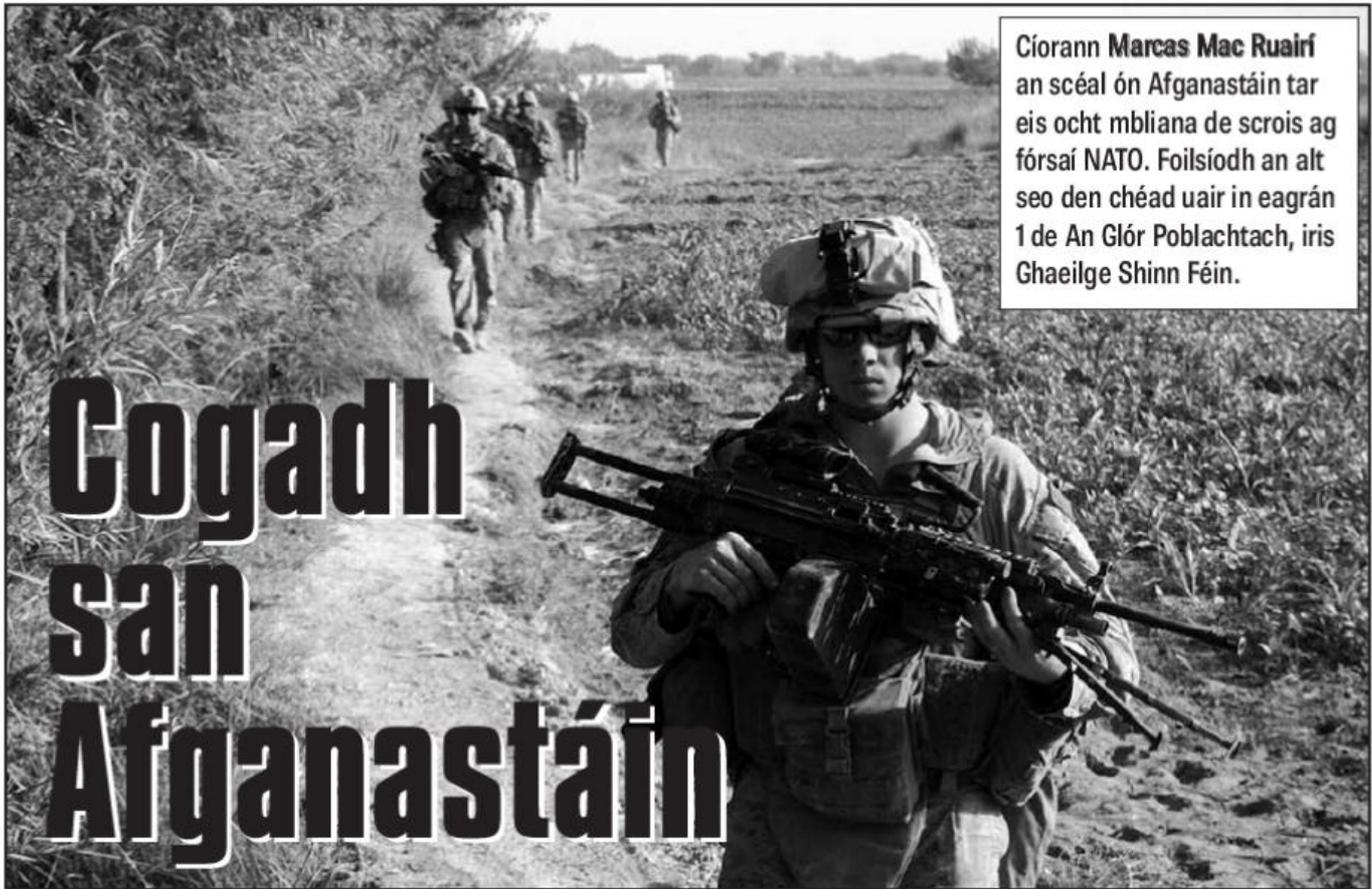
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Ainneoin sin, lonnaithe idir an Rúis, an Áis Theas agus an Mheán Oirthear is tír straitéiseach domhanda í. Tugann an láthair sin tábhacht di de bharr mianta na cumhachtaí móra chun cinnte a dhéanamh nach mbeadh tionchar ag aon cheann eile dá gcomhchumhachtaí sa réigiún.

Téann baint na Rúise agus na Breataine leis an tír siar a fhad leis an 19ú Aois. Lean suim na Rúiseach fríd an aois Shóivéadach agus bhí baint nach beag ag an cogadh ansin idir 1979 agus 1989 i dtitim an Aontais Shóivéadaigh. Cuireadh an ruaig ar an Bhreatain féin aisti tar éis dóibh ionradh a dhéanamh uirthi sa 19ú Aois.

Is tír í atá scoilte le tíreolaíocht idir shléibhtiúil agus fhásaigh, í beag ná a mhór dothrasnaithe. Le daonra de bhreis agus 28 milliún duine, is iad na Pastúnaigh (Pashtuns) an grúpa eitneach is mó ach tá leor grúpaí eile mar chuid den daonra náisiúnta, a dteanga féin ag leor acu – Táidsiceastánaigh (Tajiks), Hasara (Hazara), Aimak (Aymaq), Úisbéiceastánaigh (Uzbeks), Uigiúirí (Uyghur), Tuircméanastánaigh (Turkmen) agus eile. Níor fheidhmigh sí riamh leis an chineál daonlathas a aithnítear san Iarthar. Is stát déanta suas de treibheanna agus is í an treibh an bunaonad cumhachta ann.

Má chreidtear é, tá an áit bhocht iargúlta seo ar an bhgairt is mó don domhain. Ag éisteacht leis na tuairiscí nuachta faoi na saighdiúirí Briotanacha á dtabhairt abhaile i gcónaí shílfi go bhfuil pobal an iarthar trí chéile i bhfách leis an chogadh láithreach ann in éadan na daoine bochta seo.

Tugann na meáin cuireadh dúinn comhbhá agus comhbhrón a thabhairt. Is beag anailís a fhaightear ón BBC agus é ag déanamh a mhór do na saighdiúirí seo.

Gach duine acu a fhaigheann bás san Afganastáin, deir an BBC go raibh siad cliste, ábalta, cineálta, lán spraoi, dílis, ina saighdiúirí maithe Ní sin mar a chuimhním saighdiúirí na Breataine ar na sráideanna in Éirinn – iad lán maslaí, lán fuatha, bagrach, ag éirí pionós a bhaint amach ar phobal a bhí ag iarraidh a shaoirse.

In amanna, titeann masc na bréagadóireachta. I gcás amháin moladh saighdiúir marbh mar 'aimsitheoir ar leith.' Is é sin le rá go raibh sé maith ag marú daoine ó thír bhocht le raidhfíil. Muise, i mír nuachta amháin taispeánadh an saighdiúir féin, nó an aimsitheoir, ag gáire agus ag ceiliúradh tar éis dó Talabanach a scaoileadh chun báis.

Bhí roinnt spriocanna ag na Stáit Aontaithe nuair a d'agraigh siad an ionsaí ar Afganastáin:

1. Cinnte a dhéanamh de nach mbeadh deis ag Al Qaeda úsáid a bhaint as an tír arís le hionsaithe ollmhóra cosúil le 9/11.
2. Bunús a bhaint ó thionscadal na ndrugaí.

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- Tá minicíocht na n-ionsaithe ag fás leo;
- Tá líon na marbh ag na comhghuaillithe ag fás leis;
- Tá líon na marbh agus na dtaismeach sibhialta ag fás leis (básanna nach bhfuil an Talabanach lochtach astu uile). Tá níos mó sibhialtaigh maraithe ná a maraíodh ar 9/11;
- Deirtear go bhfuil leatrom agus foréigean in éadan na mban ag fás;
- Tá barr an óipiam go fóill ar an cheann is mó sa domhain;
- Tá liomhaintí faoi shárú cearta daonna ag fás leo;
- Tá faisnéis ann go bhfuil buíonta dúnmharfóirí eagraithe i roinnt ceantracha agus feallmharú seachbhreithiúnach ar siúl acu (cosúil leis na buíonta dílseoirí in Éirinn) agus go bhfaightear coirp cheannaircigh ina luí marbh taobh an bhóthair;
- Eagraíodh olltoghcháin agus é sáite i liomhaintí faoi chalaois. Maítear go ceathrú cuid nó 1.5 milliún de na vótaí calaoiseach.

Tá cur i gcoinne na bhfórsaí eachtránaí neartaithe ag fearg na nAfganastánach mar gheall ar líon ollmhór na dtaismeach sibhialta a tharlaíonn de bharr taicticí na gcomhghuaillithe, go háirithe iad siúd a éiríonn as ionsaithe ón aer.

Ocht mbliana tar éis don ionradh ar Afganastáin tá misean SAM agus a chomhghuaillithe NATO ina theip iomlán. Ní bheadh a mhalairt de scéal ann choíche nuair a chuimhnítear ar líon na dtaismeach sibhialta atá maraithe ag an Ríocht Aontaithe agus fórsaí Mheiriceá le chéile.

Is é firinne an scéal agus geilleagair an domhain i dtri-



oblóid go bhfuil acmhainní teoranta ag an iarthar le creatlach polaitiúil a chur in áit báúil dá cruinneshamhail. Mar phoblachtach Éireannach ní bhfacthas dom riamh go raibh an ceart ag na Stáit Aontaithe ná NATO ionsaí a dhéanamh ar Afganastáin.

Ocht mbliana ar aghaidh, ag troid cogadh dobhuaite, tá sé mímhóralta leanúint leis, fiú dá nglactar leis i dtéarmaí na n-ionsaitheoirí. Ní dhéanann anailís ar an chogadh beag de thragóid na dteaghlach agus iad ag cur na saighdiúirí óga a básaíodh i dtír i bhfad ó bhaile i gcogadh dobhuaite nach dtuigeann siad. Ní fios cá mhéad daoine neamhchiontach atá maraithe ag na saighdiúirí sin sula dtagann siad abhaile sna cónraí.

Ní iarrann meáin an iarthair orainn bá a thaispeáint leis na mairbh sin. Ní thugtar cur síos dúinn ar na tréithe daonna a bhíonn acu siúd a mharaíonn na comhghuaillithe. Is sa chomhthéacs sin atá dainséar leis an chomhbhrón gan cháiliocht.

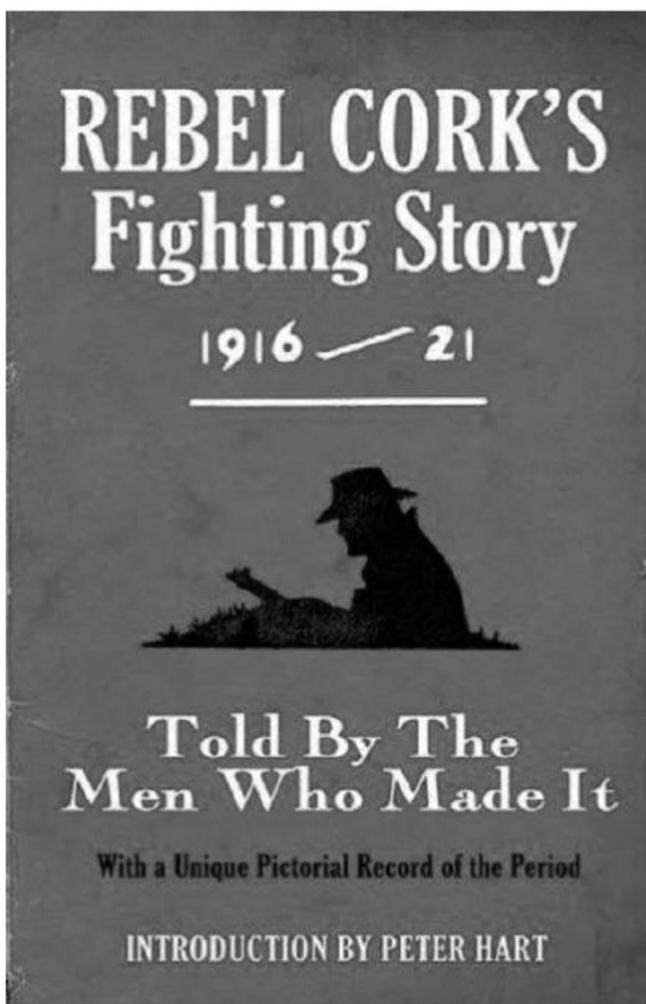
The IRA in the Rebel County

BY PAUL O'CONNOR

Rebel Cork's Fighting Story 1916-1921.
Mercier Press. Price: €19.99

THE FOREWORD to the original edition of this series of "Fighting Story" books states, "The booklets do not purport to be a detailed or chronological history of the fight for independence". *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story, 1916-21* is by no means a comprehensive account of the Tan War in Cork; still less does it offer an analysis or interpretation of the period. What the book does provide is a series of accounts of events, actions, and individuals from that period, written by those who either took part or lived through them.

The result is a book that varies widely in both content and style. Two lengthy chapters entitled 'North Cork from 1915 to the Truce' and 'The East Cork Brigade in Action' give an overview of the conflict in North and East Cork. The chapter on East Cork in particular provides a sense of the gradual evolution of the Brigade's activities, beginning with isolated attacks on police barracks looking for arms, working up to larger engagements, and culminating in the catastrophe at Clonmult in February 1921 which saw almost the entire Brigade column wiped out. Other chapters deal with individual military actions, provide sketches of key republican leaders, depict British reprisals or cover a particular theme, for example 'Cumann na mBan in Rebel Cork' or 'The Heroic Dead of West Cork'. The style of the individual writers varies, and the length of a chapter does not always correlate with the interest or importance



of its subject. For example, the Kilmichael ambush is given a mere three pages, and that at Upton is only represented by a ballad; whereas several less well-known and possibly less significant incidents get covered in more detail.

Nonetheless there are many "fighting stories" told here which are both gripping in themselves and give vivid sense of what the Tan War was like for its participants. Particular chapters I would pick out as highlights include: 'Rescue of MacNeilus from Cork Jail', 'The Attack on Blarney Police Barracks', 'Successful Raid on Mallow Barracks', and 'The Fight at Burgatia House, Rosscarbery'. Of particular interest is the account of the Clonbanin Ambush – everybody knows about Kilmichael and Crossbarry, but at Clonbanin the North Cork Volunteers inflicted 13 dead and 15 wounded upon the Crown Forces. Among them was Brigadier-General Cummins, who started the practice of carrying hostages on military lorries to deter would-be ambushers.

Of course the accounts preserved in the book are very much a product of their time. Dr Brian Ó Conchubhair writes in Preface: "These four books deserve reprinting,

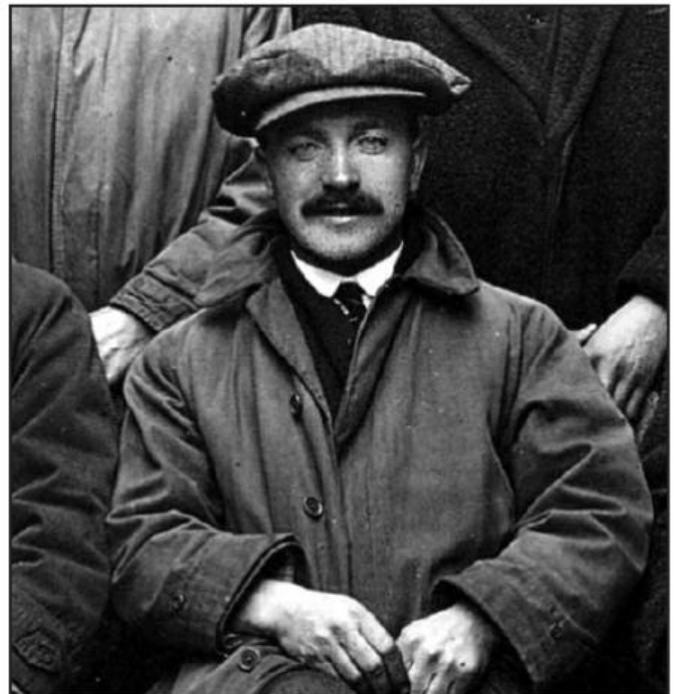


Cork IRA guerrilla leader Tom Barry

not only for the important factual information they contain...but also because of the valuable window they open on the mentality of the period." This can be interesting for the historian, but at times it may create difficulties for the general reader. Some of the weakest chapters are those dealing with republican icons like Tomás MacCurtáin, Terence McSwiney, and Michael Fitzgerald – these fall into a hagiographic style which leaves us with little sense of what these men were really like. On the other hand, the account of the capture of General Lucas gives a fascinating insight into the mentality of the period – on both sides.

In the summer 1920, with the Tan War already underway for over a year, General Lucas left Fermoy to spend a day fishing on the River Blackwater outside Fermoy. He was accompanied by only two staff officers and a personal servant – there was no military escort. What is more, once they reached the fishing grounds the party split up, and when the IRA arrived, acting on local intelligence, they discovered each of the three officers at a separate point along the riverbank, and were able to capture them without a struggle.

As the prisoners were being driven off towards the Knockmealdown Mountains, two of them made a bid to escape. The fracas ended with Liam Lynch and General Lucas rolling around in the road, struggling to get hold of Lynch's gun, before the Englishman was eventually overpowered. If the British seem to have confused Fermoy with the Home Counties, the IRA now showed themselves to be officers and gentlemen. One of the British officers had been slightly wounded, so the IRA decided to let both him and his companion go free while they proceeded with only Lucas as their captive. Afterwards, Lucas and his captors seem to have got on very well, for "Lynch and him-



Tomás Mac Curtáin, Sinn Féin Mayor of Cork, murdered by British crown forces 90 years ago

self had many interesting discussions on a variety of subjects, but mainly on military matters, during the course of his captivity." Indeed when he was released, Lucas publicly complimented the IRA on their chivalry!

In conclusion, *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story* is well worth reading, both for the gripping tales it tells and for the insights it offers into the mentality of the period. However, its re-publication also points up the absence of a comprehensive and accessible military history of the Tan War, either in Cork or elsewhere.

A glory to Dublin

BY MÍCHEÁL Mac DONNCHA

Dublin's Fighting Story 1916-1921.

Mercier Press. Price: €19.99

*A glory to Dublin to afford due
renown
In the long generations her fame will
go down
And children will tell how their
forefathers saw
The red blaze of freedom o'er Erin
go Brágh!*

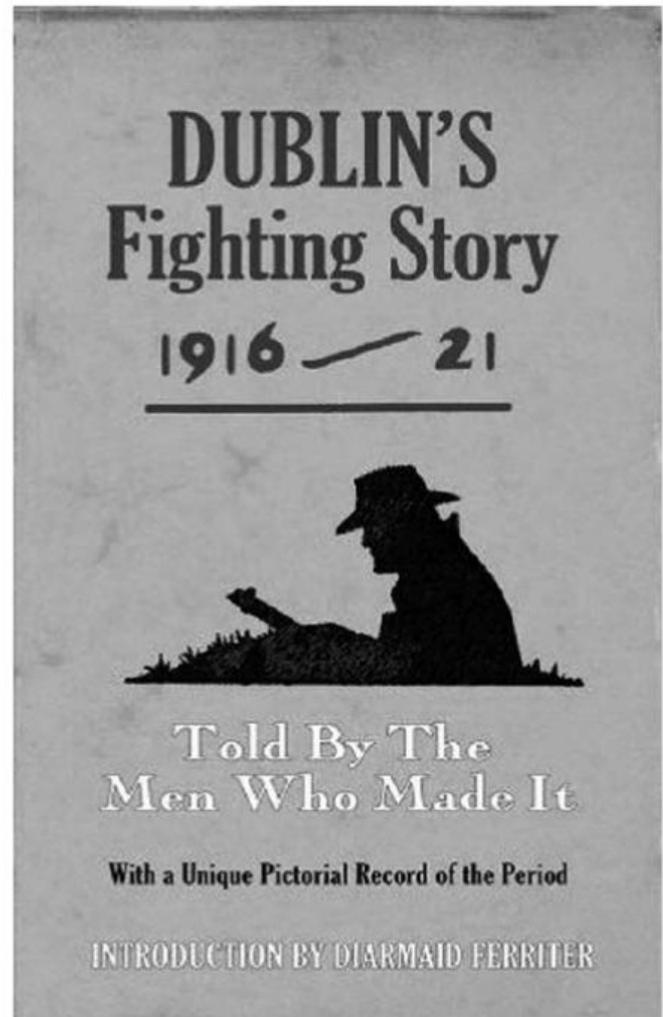
THE WORDS OF the ballad *A Row in the Town* make a suitable introduction to this long overdue re-publication of a classic collection of accounts of the struggle for freedom in Dublin.

The accounts in this book actually go back further than 1916 as they also cover the 1913 Lockout and the origins of the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Citizen Army, Cumann na mBan and Fianna Éireann. The book differs from the 'fighting stories' of other countries in that the events covered are more varied and, of course, include detailed memoirs of the 1916 Easter Rising which was essentially the Battle of Dublin.

There are memoirs of participants in the Rising in its different sectors across the city and county and they are invaluable for a complete picture of that cataclysmic event. These, plus short biographies of the 14 leaders executed in Dublin after the Rising, make up nearly half the book. The profiles and some other pieces are written by 'John Brennan' pen-name of Sydney Gifford Czira, a prolific writer and staunch republican, sister of Grace and



Kevin Barry



Muriel Gifford and sister-in-law to Joseph Plunkett and Thomas Mac Donagh.

What I find most interesting about this book are the accounts of the activities of the IRA's Dublin Brigade during the Tan War. Recent popular histories have concentrated mostly on the intelligence war waged by Michael Collins and his 'Squad'. This was hugely important, of course, but the Dublin Brigade, including its Active Service Unit, also mounted many attacks against British forces and were pioneers of urban guerrilla warfare. According to an account given here, the meeting which established the Dublin ASU was held in 44 Parnell Square, now Sinn Féin Ard Oifig, in September 1919.

The same building is named after Kevin Barry and as well as covering his torture and execution 90 years ago, the book tells of a successful arms raid on the Kings Inns in which Barry participated. Other land-



Dublin's Fighting Story gives comprehensive accounts of the 1916 Rising

marks very familiar in Dublin today which were the scenes of IRA raids and attacks included the British aerodrome at Collinstown, now Dublin Airport, and the Red Cow Inn. It's something to think about the next time your flight is delayed or when you're queuing in traffic at the infamous roundabout!

The parallels between the IRA in Dublin 1919-1921 and the guerrilla actions of the IRA against the British

Army and RUC in Belfast in the 1970s and '80s are many. In neither case could the struggle have been sustained without the support of large sections of the people of Dublin and Belfast who sheltered Volunteers, concealed arms and provided all kinds of logistical support.

This book is an essential read and, while no Dublin republican should be without it, it is a must for all with an interest in Ireland's revolutionary history.



Auxiliaries about to mount a raid in Dublin

The Tan War on Shannonside

BY MAURICE QUINLIVAN

Sinn Féin Limerick City Councillor.

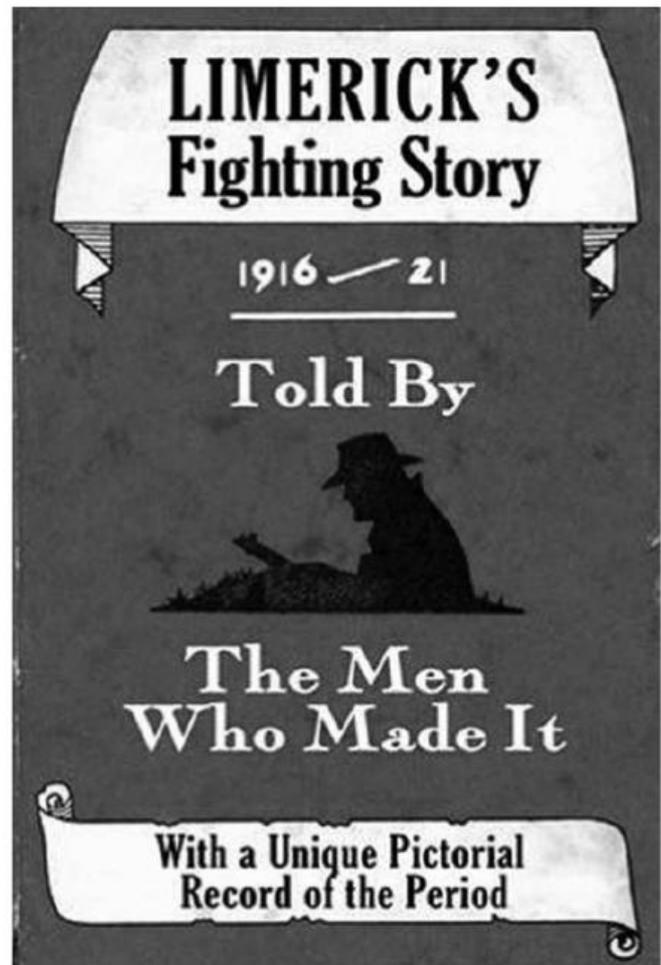
Limerick's Fighting Story 1916-21.

Mercier Press. Price: €19.99

THIS BOOK, first released in 1948, recalls the story as "told by the men (as usual most of the women from that period are airbrushed from the tale) who made it". The strength of this book however lies in the fact that it is written by those who fought and struggled against the might of the British crown forces in Limerick.

This book demonstrates the scale of the fighting that took place in Munster and shows how Limerick proudly played its part in that fight. In most republican homes in Limerick you will find an old battered copy of *Limerick's Fighting Story*. Growing up I remember being acutely aware of the entries relating to my own great grandfather and great grand uncle who both, on a number of occasions, narrowly escaped the clutches of the crown forces as they waged war against them. With the new reprint hopefully many more families will have access to the book, be able to trace relatives and to keep the story alive. This is how local history should be recorded – written and told by those who made it.

The book recalls some of the pivotal actions of the war and demonstrates the real terror that the British forces unleashed upon the civilian population of Limerick. It tells how the first flying column was formed in East Limerick and, in another first, how IRA volunteers shot down a British military aeroplane and captured the pilot. Among the tales of brutality of the Black and Tans, the RIC and the Auxiliaries it tells how during one night in March 1921 during the British imposed curfew both the Mayor George Clancy, his predecessor Michael O'Callaghan and local Volunteer Joseph O'Donoghue were taken from their homes and murdered by crown forces in vicious acts of reprisals designed to inspire terror throughout the City. In a quirk of history it tells how the leader of the British assassins that night, George Nathan, died in the Spanish Civil



War fighting with the 15th International Brigade alongside IRA members against Franco.

The book vividly describes how martial law was introduced in Limerick and how the IRA and organised labour fought back. My one criticism is that whilst I understand it is a reprint of the original, the story of the Limerick Soviet should have been told in greater detail. The reissue could have included, perhaps as an appendix, more information and some eyewitness accounts from other publications which exist on the Limerick Soviet which was such an important part of our history. But this is an otherwise excellent read.



The 1916 monument in Limerick

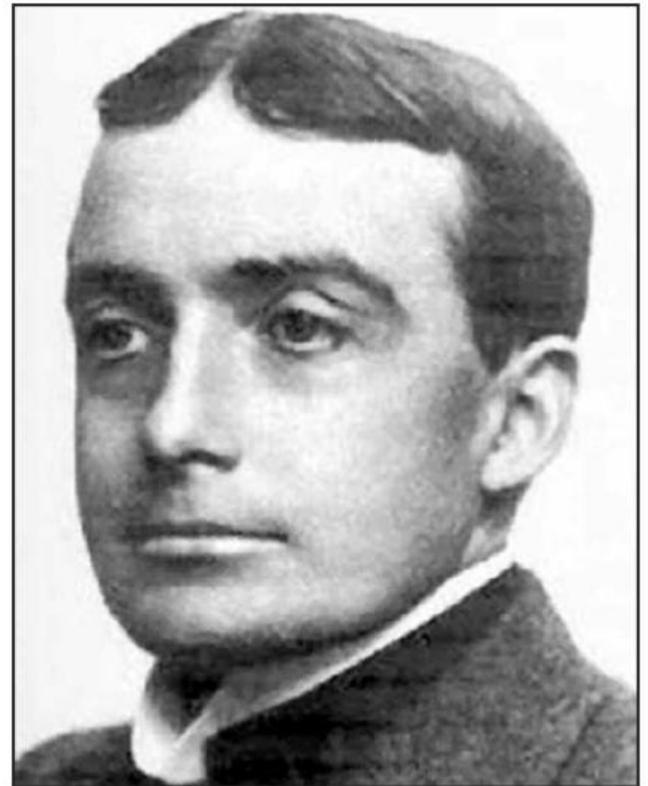
Many stories are told about the Kilmicheal and Crossbarry ambushes but little is known about the Dromkeen ambush when the Limerick Brigade ambushed and inflicted 12 fatalities on the Crown forces. It tells of how Seán Wall, a former Cathaoirleach of Limerick County Council, died in the struggle, possibly summarily executed by the RIC. Brave young Brigadier Seán Finn said as he died "Goodbye, lads; carry on; I am done." The priest at his funeral read a verse:

*He gave to Ireland's call his all,
His heart's best love, his service high;
To break her chain – to end her thrall
He gave his love without a sigh.*

Limerick fought hard, suffered a large number of both IRA and civilian casualties and by the time of the Truce had flying columns in all of its Brigade areas. With the centenary of the 1916 Rising rapidly approaching this book's reissue is timely. It should be read by anyone with an interest in our history, regardless of what county they are from.



George Clancy (above) and Michael O'Callaghan (below)
Mayor and former Mayor of Limerick
murdered by British forces in March 1921



To finish, it is worth quoting from the introduction by Dr. Ruán O'Donnell head of the History Department in University of Limerick:

"This new life of a classic of its genre will facilitate a fresh evaluation of its unique perspectives on the genesis of the modern Irish state."

A Chara,

An Phoblacht follows in a long line of republican journals since the first republican paper, the United Irishmen's *Northern Star*, was produced in the 1790s.

In a rapidly changing media world, the many thousands of people across Ireland who buy *An Phoblacht* each week have been joined by almost 100,000 people who now read it online.

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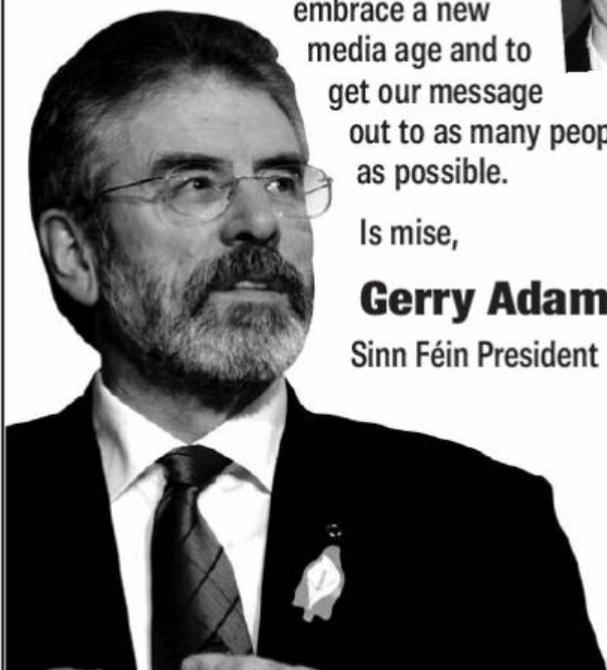
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This is the time for republican politics, for debating big ideas and showing how we make our vision of an Ireland of equals a reality. It is time for us to

embrace a new media age and to get our message out to as many people as possible.

Is mise,

Gerry Adams,
Sinn Féin President



A Chara,

Leanann *An Phoblacht* líne fhada d'irisí poblachtaigh ónar foilsíodh an chéad nuachtán, *An Réalta Thuaisceartach* ag na hÉireannaigh Aontaithe sna 1790.

I ndomhan ina bhfuil na meáin chumarsáide ag athrú go tapa, ceannaíonn na mílte ar fud na hÉireann *An Phoblacht* gach seachtain agus de bhreis ar seo léann beagnach 100,000 duine an t-eagrán idirlinne gach seachtain freisin.

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In aghaidh na míosa a bheas an t-eagrán priontála den *An Phoblacht* ag teacht amach amach anseo agus comhlánófar e seo le réimse foilsiúchán eile agus *IRIS* agus an tsraith *Legend* san aireamh

Seo an t-am do pholaitíocht poblachtaigh, do dhíospóireacht a dhéanamh ar na hábhair mhóra agus ag chun léiriú cad é mar a chuirimid ár bhfís d'Éireann na Cothroime i bhfeidhm. Is é seo an t-am fa choinne polaitíocht Poblachtach, fa choinne díospóireacht ar smaointí móra agus a léiríonn cén dóigh ar féidir linn ár bhfís d'Éire aontaithe a bhaint amach. Tá sé am dúinn glacadh le meán nua aois agus chun ár teachtaireacht a fháil amach don mhéid daoine agus is féidir.

Is mise,

Gerry Adams,
Uachtarán Shinn Féin



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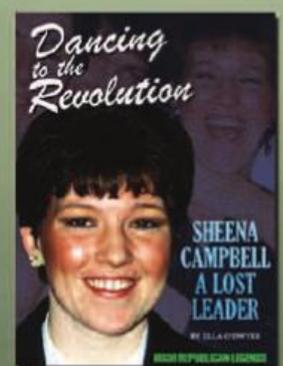
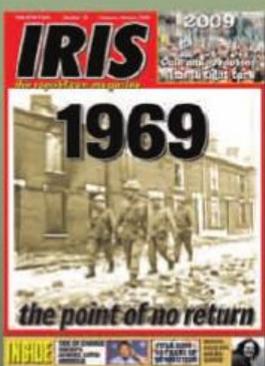
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