

# THE RESPONSIBILITY

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**The following is a statement issued by the Publicity Department, I. R. A., and addressed to each Teachta Dail Eireann, on September 7th, 1922.**

As an elected Representative of the Irish people in Dail Eireann it is of course your duty to decide how best and soonest to terminate this present war, which in two months has cost the Irish nation in men and material losses as heavy as were sustained in the whole previous period from 1916 onward.

In order to help you to come to a decision and to fix responsibility, the following facts are put before you.

For five years the nation was united on three fundamental principles—the existence of the Republic, the sanctity of our National Independence and Ireland's territorial integrity.

The Treaty violated all three by destroying the Republic, establishing an Irish Colony and partitioning Ireland.

It was impossible for Republicans to sanction this violation because:—

- (1) The Irish people had never recognised British rule as lawful.
- (2) They had for five years fought a bitter war to maintain the Republic.
- (3) They had taken lives in its defence.
- (4) They had sworn to defend the Republic against all enemies, foreign and domestic.
- (5) The Treaty had been signed behind the backs of the Cabinet of Dail Eireann and of the Army, and in violation of the signatories' oaths, credentials and terms of reference.
- (6) The Treaty was signed under a threat of war—an unworthy surrender for a proud and honourable nation.

Dail Eireann approved the Treaty by 64 votes to 57, but only three members accepted it on its merits, the other 61 declaring they took it as the only alternative to war, or as "a stepping stone to the Republic."

Mr. Griffith when elected President said that Dail Eireann would remain the sovereign authority of the Irish Republic till disestablished by a vote of the people.

Mr. Mulcahy, the new Minister of Defence, publicly promised that the Army would be preserved as the Army of the Republic.

On January 14th, Mr. Griffith called a meeting of the members of Parliament for "Southern Ireland"—a term recognised only by a foreign, and, therefore, spurious authority—and thereat he set up a "Provisional Government" which immediately proceeded to order the Irish people to do and not to do certain things.

Under these circumstances, both sides agreed to the calling of an Army Convention to ensure that Mr. Mulcahy's undertaking would be carried out. The Dail agreed, and Mr. Mulcahy called the Convention for the 26th March.

Mr. Griffith proclaimed the Army Convention on March 17th.

It is to be remembered that the Army was an unpaid, volunteer force which was in existence before the Dail, and which, as a condition to coming under its jurisdiction, had insisted on all the members of the Dail taking the oath of allegiance to the Republic.

The Army Convention was held and an Executive elected. Only the desire to avoid civil war prevented the Army Executive from attacking the Provisional Government.

Mr. Griffith proceeded to arrange for an election. The Republicans contended it would destroy national unity, as the register was out of date, and the threat of war would prevent a free vote.

On February 22nd, the Ard Fheis met and in order to stave off defeat at the hands of the National Political organisation, the pro-Treaty Party agreed to a three months' postponement, and undertook to produce the Free State Constitution in the meantime.

This was important, as Mr. Collins had secured support in the Army by stating privately he was drafting a Republican Constitution.

In the March Session of Dail Eireann, Mr. Collins stated that as Chairman of the Provisional Government he was not responsible to the Dail. This was an open breach of the undertaking that the Dail was the sovereign authority of the Republic.

The fact that the Provisional Government was secretly obtaining arms from England compelled the Army Executive to occupy the Four Courts and other buildings, as a precautionary measure. The legality of this occupation was never questioned by the Dail. No request was ever made by the Provisional Government or the Free State Army Chiefs that the Four Courts be evacuated.

The country was on the verge of civil war when on May 20th an agreement was reached between Messrs. de Valera and Collins for an agreed election and a Coalition Government.

The Dail unanimously ratified this. The Ard Fheis passed

it unanimously, and Mr. Collins said the pact was more important than the Treaty. Yet, on the 14th June, on his return from London he broke the pact in Cork by declaring he was not hampered by being on a platform where there were Coalitionists, and made a "straight appeal" to the people to vote for the candidate they thought best of.

The Constitution was published on the morning of the election, too late for the voters to consider it before voting. It showed a complete surrender to the English interpretation of the Treaty, and shamelessly bartered the sovereign independence of Ireland.

At the elections there were returned 4 T.C.D. members, 17 Labour, 7 Farmers, 6 Independents, and 94 Panel members, 58 being pro-Treaty and 36 Republicans.

The Panel members numbered 73% of the total. The mandate from the country, therefore, was clearly for a Coalition Government. There was no mandate whatever for war, as the remaining members (with the exception of the 4 from T.C.D.) had all asked the people to vote for Peace.

Of the whole House, the Collins-Griffith party were in a minority of 58 to 70.

On June 26th—four days before the day fixed for the meeting of the Third Dail—Mr. Churchill in the English House of Commons demanded an attack on the Four Courts, and Mr. Lloyd George said that while not using the language of menace, he had warned the Provisional Government that the occupation of the Four Courts should be brought to an end. Forty-eight hours later—two days before the Third Dail was to meet, the Provisional Government attacked the Four Courts.

It is to be kept in mind that all the members of this Provisional Government belonged to a party which was a minority of the New Parliament—and that this minority was elected to form a Coalition Government so as to avoid civil war.

The present situation, therefore, is the result of the action of a body calling itself a Provisional Government—really a military Junta set up and armed by England—waging a war of aggression against the forces of the Irish Republic.

It is your duty to see that that aggression ceases immediately. Otherwise, you will, of course, bear your share of the responsibility.