

THE IRISH NATION



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Comhdháil Náisiúnta na hÉireann-Irish National Congress

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PRÍOMH-AIRE NA hÉIREANN?

Prime Minister of Ireland?

Recently, Sinn Féin has been dropping significantly in opinion polls and is now definitely beyond the 'margin of error'. In fact, the party is registering little more on occasion than the percentage that it got in the last general election.

If SF puts up more candidates than then in the forthcoming general election, it would still increase markedly its presence in the Dáil. However, it would likely be well short of either forming a government or probably being in a position to lead one.

It has been speculated that a signal factor in this connection has been a somewhat unclear position on the rising issue of immigration. In regard to this, there is a need to continue the opposition to far-right racism and xenophobia, while at the same time addressing the serious and legitimate concerns of the people on the subject. This needs to be done without being cowed by ultra leftist and

wokish nonsense which seeks to portray the placing of any meaningful limitations on immigration as reactionary. (We deal in detail with this question elsewhere in this bulletin.)

Apart from that, there is the perspective that a border poll on the question of Irish unity seems to be some considerable length of time away. Nonetheless, a Sinn Féin First Minister has been elected in the North and SF is the largest party in that jurisdiction as well as in the 'South'. Moreover, Michelle O'Neill has come to secure an



outstanding 55% personal support in public opinion assessment in the 26 counties.

The time has perhaps come to consider a new and radical approach to Sinn Féin strategy on the island as a whole and to give a major boost to nationalist and republican morale throughout the nation. Bearing this in mind, the

following proposition might be seriously contemplated.

The fact is that it is legally possible for a person to be both a member of the Legislative Assembly in Belfast and Dáil Éireann in Dublin. That means that Michelle O'Neill could go forward as a candidate in the next general election south of the border. Should she be elected, it would then be feasible to put her name forward for Taoiseach. And, to emphasise the point, there would be then no legal impediment to her remaining as First Minister in Northern Ireland.

It will be argued that this proposal is just impractical; somebody, it will be said, simply can't do two jobs at once and be in two places at once. If one understands the difference between macro and micro management and the role of sufficient delegation on occasion and flexible scheduling of parliamentary sittings, there is in fact no reason why a quasi-federal scenario could not be worked out as it is elsewhere in the world. Of course, such a situation would also require adequate personnel and resource infrastructure to be in support of a person expected to direct both sets of responsibilities. To emphasise the point, of course one person could not do all the things that the Taoiseach and the First Minister currently do and be present at all their meetings - *and would not have to by way of oversight*, if matters are organised appropriately.

The scenario would then be created for Michelle O'Neill to be portrayed as *de facto* Príomh-Aire na hÉireann (Prime Minister of Ireland).

As for the 'nordie' factor and its effect on support in the 'South', it did not militate against Mary McAleese and her Presidency. While there is of course a

difference between President and Taoiseach, it should not be gratuitously supposed that there will be any broad resistance in practice to the proposal concerned. People's patriotic outlook ought not to be underestimated and the idea of a *de facto* all-Ireland Premier might in fact be inspiring and exciting for the populace.

With regard to the position of Mary Lou McDonald, she could, in the national interest, remain as President of Sinn Féin, while magnanimously standing aside in order to let Michelle O'Neill become Taoiseach as well as remaining northern First Minister.

There is a structural precedent for this arrangement with the 'Interparty Government' of 1948, when the leader of Fine Gael handed over to John A Costello as Taoiseach. Mary Lou would then still be in the running to become Tánaiste.

And the new Tánaiste position would entail significantly more than the previous content of that post. Following on what has been said above, such a post would be invested with much more duty and responsibility in view of the reality that the new Taoiseach would have to delegate several tasks that she herself could not fully assume. Effectively, a similar situation could delegatively exist in the North for the First Minister, including, as need be, occasional substitutional representation at ministerial meetings there.

Such a dramatic overall development could energise the whole of nationalist and republican Ireland and prepare the way for eventual reunification and establishment of a genuine Republic of Ireland.

◆ A DISCUSSION ARTICLE ◆



PSNI NOT A GAEL FORCE

On the 11th February 2022 the Commissioner of the Metropolitan police in London, Cressida Dick, resigned after she lost the confidence of the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. This followed allegations regarding the circulation of racist and misogynistic texts in Charing Cross Police station. The Metropolitan Police have been accused of being institutionally corrupt, institutionally homophobic and institutionally racist.

In contrast, three days earlier on 8th February 2022, an official police Ombudsman report in Northern Ireland revealed that 8 out of 11 South Belfast UDA members (who had been involved in 27 sectarian murders, including the Seán Graham Bookie massacre in 1992) were also informers. The PSNI had been accused of a coverup regarding this investigation and were found to have hid files from the Ombudsman. This report followed another Ombudsman inquiry a few weeks earlier on 14 January 2022 which revealed “collusive behaviour” between security forces, including RUC Special Branch, and a UDA-UFF murder gang in Derry between 1989 and 1993. This resulted in the killing of 19 people, including those in the Rising Sun massacre in Greysteel in 1993.¹ Of course none of these revelations of systematic collusion in sectarian murder between the police and loyalist paramilitaries resulted in calls for the resignation of the PSNI Chief Constable. The revelations



were in effect ignored by large swaths of the political and media establishment in the Republic.

Some may claim that this collusion took place by the RUC, not the PSNI; this ignores the fact that many of the RUC officers remained in place when the PSNI was formed in 2001.

Also, the PSNI has been involved in many of its own controversies since then. In March 2019, the PSNI were forced to pay £875,000 in compensation to two journalists, Trevor Birney and Barry Mc Caffery, who were falsely arrested in August 2018 after making an award-winning documentary, *No Stone Unturned*, about collusion between the Special Branch and the UVF gang who murdered 6 Catholics in the Loughinisland massacre of 1994.

The PSNI is perceived as retaining a Protestant-Unionist bias. Every July, Irish tricolours are burned on hundreds of loyalist bonfires without any action by the PSNI, although it is a clear breach of the 2006

Religious and Racial Hatred Act. In addition, thousands of Loyalist paramilitary flags are flown from public street-lamps, often with the intention of intimidating local Catholics into leaving the neighbourhood, without any attempt by the PSNI to remove them or prosecute those who erect them, although under the 2000 Terrorism Act flags promoting paramilitaries are illegal. Loyalist paramilitary gangs, who have been given over 25 years and millions of pounds of taxpayers' money, seem only to have transitioned into full blown narco-terrorists that openly control most of the North's drugs trade without much serious intervention by the PSNI. These are

¹The Irish News 14th January 2022

not victimless crimes. In 2019, there were 189 drug deaths in the North, 115 from heroine and 28 from cocaine. From January to June 2022, there were 34 drug related deaths in Belfast alone. When you consider that, at the height of the troubles, Loyalist paramilitaries killed 131 people in 1974, it is clear that loyalist paramilitaries are killing more people with hypodermic needles than they killed with automatic weapons.

The confidence of the northern nationalist community in the PSNI has been eroding since the decision by the Conservative Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Owen Patterson, to end 50-50 recruitment into the PSNI for Catholics in April 2011. The move was a concession by the Tories to the DUP and they ignored the opposition to it by the Republic's Minister for Foreign Affairs. In 2001, 92% of the RUC were Protestant and only 8% were Catholic. By 2023, 32% of the 6900 PSNI officers

were Catholic; however, in the 2022 census, 45.7% of North's population were Catholic. In 2020, 75% of PSNI recruits were Protestant and only 24% Catholic. The figures for civilian administrative "police staff" are much worse, with only 18% being Catholic. In March 2022, it was revealed that 168 Protestant PSNI officers were members of Loyal orders like the Orange Order, Apprentice Boys, and Royal Black Preceptory.²

If the PSNI and British and Irish governments are serious about rebuilding the confidence of the northern nationalist community in the PSNI, they need to immediately reintroduce 50-50 Catholic recruitment into the PSNI and extend 50-50 recruitment to the administrative 'police staff'.

² *Making Sense of a United Ireland*, Brendan O Leary, 2022, Page 251

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

On 22nd December 2022, the *Irish News* revealed that "a current senior Irish Government official" was a spy for the British army. The revelation came from former Force Research Unit (FRU) agent "Sam Rosenfeld" who claimed that, in addition to spying on Irish Army bases, he had visited the Dáil at the invitation of the British agent. This espionage was condemned by Mark Thompson of Community Restorative Justice (CRJ), while Aontú leader, Peadar Tobin called for British spies to be expelled from the Civil Service and for the Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, to seriously investigate the matter. The response from the Irish government

was a deafening silence. This would suggest that they either don't believe or don't care about the allegations. Obviously, the Government have other priorities.

THE PUBLIC SERVICE

In November 2023, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar complained that the civil service was "too white", ignoring the fact that Civil Service recruitment is on the basis of merit, not racial origin.

The Irish political establishment seem to view the abilities and grievances of their own public servants with disdain.

In fact, recent recruitment practices suggest that the political establishment

have an attitude that anyone outside the existing public service can do the job better than public servants. Politicians have in the past bent the rules to ensure their preferred candidate got the job.

We have previously outlined how the rules and procedures for recruiting the Garda Commissioner were radically changed, whereby the selection board was composed of police officers from outside the State. The result was the recruitment of a serving PSNI Deputy Chief Constable and MI5 link man who didn't even hold an Irish passport. This resulted in the importation of an ongoing HR crisis.

The Garda Representative Association voted on 13th of September 2023 with an 84.5% turnout (or 9129 out of 10,803 possible ballots); 98.7%, or 9013, voted no confidence and 116 voted confidence in the Garda Commissioner, Drew Harris. There had never before been such a no confidence vote, yet the Government dismissed its outcome as irrelevant, as if any institution or business could function when 98.7% of its workers have no confidence in their management.

This response is in direct contrast to the police force north of the border and in Britain. In the North, the DUP and other unionist parties expressed no confidence in PSNI Chief Constable, Simon Byrne, for his disciplining of two PSNI officers who made arrests at a commemoration of the Ormeau Road massacre during Covid 19 restrictions. He was then forced to resign on 23rd September 2023. His deputy Chief constable was short-listed for the main job,

despite losing a vote of no confidence himself. Unlike in the South, no candidate from the Gardaí was considered for the post.

NEUTRALITY

An *Irish Times* opinion poll on 17th June 2023 found 61% of people favoured the policy of neutrality while only 26% wanted it changed.

Having rejected the idea of a Citizens Assembly on the subject of Irish military neutrality (as two other Assemblies were already planned), the Irish Government organised, from 22 to 27th June 2023, a Consultative Forum on neutrality chaired by Louise Richardson DBE, an expert on terrorism and former Vice Chancellor of Oxford university,

who holds Irish, British and American citizenship and who was decorated by the British Queen. Anyone, including non-citizens, were invited to take part. Many academic 'experts' mostly, from a pro NATO perspective, were invited to address the Forum. Representatives from all EFTA countries were also invited to attend. It may appear strange that so many foreign

opinions were consulted on the issue of Ireland's defence and security policy, particularly when Tánaiste Michael Martin, in November 2023, proposed dropping the triple lock for a UN mandate for overseas peacekeeping missions as allegedly giving foreign governments like Russia, China and America a veto on Irish troop deployments.

However, this forms part of a wider pattern whereby the Irish political establishment seek to outsource Irish



Irish Establishment Flag

sovereignty and subcontract Irish national defence and security to the EU and NATO. In September 2023, Micheál Martin announced that he was pulling Irish troops out of a UN peace-keeping mission in Syria in order to supply troops to EU battle groups. However, despite offering extra payment for volunteers, only 35 troops or 20% of the committed battle group places were filled.

In May 2023, it emerged that Ireland had “no air defence capability of any significance” and that the Irish Government had had an agreement with Britain since 1952 for the RAF to defend Irish airspace as the air corps’ turboprop Pilatus PC 9 aircraft has only 2 machine-guns and a flying ceiling of 10,000 feet. Although the Irish Defence Forces have repeatedly demonstrated outstanding bravery and efficiency (both on peace keeping missions and more recently the spectacular seizure of 2.2 tons of cocaine when the Irish Navy and army Rangers boarded a cargo ship from a helicopter off the Irish coast on the 27th September 2023), they are still treated with derision. There hasn’t been a stand alone Minister for Defence in cabinet since 2011, with the position being ‘job shared’ with another cabinet post.

The inability of Ireland to defend itself is not the fault of the members of the Defence Forces, but rather of a political establishment who have never taken Irish sovereignty seriously and who have underinvested in national defence for decades.

In 1960, Ireland spent 1.2% of GDP on defence; with the conflict in the North this grew to a peak of 1.67% of GDP in 1980. In 2021, this had fallen to 26% of GDP. The Irish defence budget for 2023 was €1.23 billion; similar sized nations like New Zealand spent 3.3 billion US dollars on defence in 2022. Ironically, in

May 2023, Ireland received two ‘hand me down’ naval vessels from New Zealand, the Rotoiti and Pukaki, at a cost of €26 million.

This vote of no confidence by the Irish political establishment in their own indigenous public servants is not confined to national security. Throughout the public services, the political elite seem to expect something for nothing. After decades of underinvestment, they seek to blame public servants for failing to deliver results. This is true in housing, health, education, planning, policing, broadcasting, transport and many other sectors. Rather than admit their own failings, they seek to lay the blame on the inherent incompetence of the Irish public sector and look abroad for a messiah to save them.

PUBLIC BROADCASTING

In April 2023, RTÉ controversially appointed Kevin Backhurst as Director General, after a divisive and “fraught” board meeting which had earlier rejected former TV3 executive and head of An Post, David Mc Redmond, for the €306,000 post. Backhurst had worked for BBC News from 1989 to 2012 when he moved to RTÉ News. Having failed to become RTÉ Director General in 2016, he moved back to Britain to head the British media regulator, Ofcom, only returning in July 2023 to become RTÉ Director General.

CULTURAL CRINGE

The Irish political elite seem to suffer from what former Australian Prime Minister, Paul Keating called “cultural cringe”, whereby they seem to assume that any outsiders, particularly those who have proven their ability by working for our former imperial overlords in Britain, have inherent gifts of competence, integrity and wisdom which are lacking

in their domestic counterparts. While we have not yet reached the point where “no Irish need apply” or returned to the position in 1911 when only 34% of the Civil Service were Irish Catholics. it is perhaps time for the Irish political

establishment to show some appreciation of the abilities, courage and dedication of their own public servants.

Pádraig Ó Faoláin

Over a century removed from the Flying Columns era, the necessity and morality of IRA actions during the War of Independence continues to be subject to intense scrutiny by historians. It is notable that the actions of British forces during the same conflict are not subject to a similar level of inspection and debate.

Other than the victims' Protestant religion, there is little evidence that the killings of 13 Protestants in west Cork in 1922 were sectarian acts. A stronger indicator of motive lies in a British Army intelligence assessment that, uniquely, that area of West Cork saw extensive sectarian loyalist informing. Bureau of Military History witness statements and military pension evidence backs this point up in commentary on the killings.

Attempts to compare this solitary series of shootings over three evenings with the pogrom directed at the Catholic population over two years in the newly created northern six county territory, are mistaken. The scale, ferocity and intent of those northern killings, house burnings evictions and expulsions from work, affecting thousands, are clear. The acquiescence of unionist parties and Protestant churches has also been detailed. It is a continual surprise that,

whereas nationalist political culture is expected to atone for hurts, unionism engages in no historical navel gazing whatsoever.

Claims by the late Canadian historian, Peter Hart, that the burning of 76 Ascendancy “big houses”, the killing of 13 Protestants in Dunmanway in April 1922, along with the killing of another 24 Protestant informers in Cork during the War of Independence, amount-ed to a sectarian pogrom, is simply not true.

A sectarian pogrom did take place in this period, but it happened in Ulster not Munster, and those guilty wore the uni-

form of the crown, not the Republic. Between June and July 1922 in Belfast, 257 Catholics were killed, 1,100 lost their jobs, 23,000 were forced from their homes and 500 Catholic-owned businesses were destroyed.

The suggestion that Catholics felt such hatred for their Protestant neighbours, purely on the basis of religious belief, that they harassed, persecuted and even murdered them generally in a sectarian manner, is in itself sectarian. Indeed, one of the reasons we had a War of Independence in the first place was in reaction to the sectarian nature of British rule in Ireland.

Tom Cooper

THE IRA AND RELIGION



THE IMMIGRATION QUESTION



The immigration question is now definitely at the top of the agenda in the minds of the electorate in the Republic. Housing is certainly the number one item in the list with 48% rating it as “most important”. However, the next three items are almost on a par, ranging from 23% to 28% - in ascending order of concern: immigration, health-care and cost-of-living. Anxiety about the “Rise of the far right” is next on the list dropping dramatically to 12%. In the latter respect, this could be taken as indicating that the populace can distinguish between legitimate misgivings about immigration and irrational scaremongering about foreigners.

This seems to be a distinction which is lost on a lot of commentators. They would have us believe that people are xenophobic when they raise issues about the homeless, reasonably priced housing and the allocation of financial and material resources to deal with their various needs, on the one hand, and, on the other, a diminished capacity of the State to respond to these because of immigration (beyond the latter meeting spare and essential labour capacity).

However, it is not lost on many of us that much of such commentary is irrational in the misrepresentation thus generated and that it smacks of the neocolonial self-flagellation which is characteristic of would-be cosmopolitan intellectuals.

A lot of downright nonsense is talked

by these self-regarding and self-righteous pundits. First of all, we are told that, as a country which has experienced huge emigration, we are adopting double standards in being frugal about who is let into modern Ireland. The fact is that progressives are not advocating a closed door policy, but rather insisting that only genuine asylum seekers should be accepted as well as others in need of employment that we can reasonably and charitably absorb on an island of just over 7 million people. The simple reality is that we are not the United States (331 million) or Germany (85 million), for example. Nor do we have anything like the populations of Britain (65 million) or France (66 million) - former colonial powers which created, and to some extent continue to create through neocolonialism, the conditions for the outflow from native populations. It is they who should have the major obligation for acting receptively to migration, mainly from the so-called ‘Third World’.

Then there is the response to the slogan that “Ireland is full”. We are advised by the erudite that, if one looks at density of population, we in no way compare with similar geographical areas such as the Low Countries. This is of course true, but Ireland is not a piece of real estate; it is primarily a homeland. The War of Independence was fought to establish a sovereign Irish nation whose culture could be protected and enriched by its people in an environment free from persecution and anglicisation. Moreover, there is an

awareness that there are 70 million people across the globe who identify as Irish, either themselves enforced emigrants or the descendants of same, and for whom there should be the option of returning to their native soil. Insofar as we may wish to actually invite immigration, it is only reasonable that we should think primarily of trying to actively encourage those who belong to our diaspora to consider settling in Ireland.

As regards ongoing immigration to Ireland, the subject of the conditions on which people are given citizenship in particular should be seriously looked at. At present, apart from ensuring that they have no criminal record, there are no requirements concerning language and general knowledge about the country. On the first count, it should be obvious that a certain standard of English should at least be sought and, if it is not present, persons should undergo an appropriate amount of instruction before citizenship is granted. With regard to general knowledge, it is usual in other countries that those applying for citizenship should be examined as to their awareness of important facts about the country in which it is proposed to enter or, again, given instruction about same. This normally covers history and culture. In Ireland, proposed citizens should, as part of this, be acquainted with the nature of the Irish language, while not necessarily having to attain a spoken ability in it.

The recent sharp decline in the support for Sinn Féin in opinion polls has been attributed in some degree to a perceived ambiguity in its stance on immigration. The Party has emphasised that the Government has been notably deficient in consulting with local people about the placement of immigrants, of one sort or another, in their areas. However, SF does not seem to have

significantly addressed the substance of their concerns, under the headings referred to above, in regard to such location. In other words, it has to be stated plainly that the needs of the Irish people have to be addressed first, before providing for would-be immigrants. It will be said that both these objectives can be met simultaneously, but that does not altogether make sense. It is not very complicated. If money is spent on one thing, it cannot be spent on another. And it is plain that enough money is not being spent on accommodating Irish people and serving their health and education needs. Nobody should suggest that we slam the door shut on immigrants, but we require to have both a humane and realistic discussion about what we in Ireland can be fairly expected to do in the international situation prevailing.

Sinn Féin has had a problem in the past in keeping abreast of justifiable propositions which have been put to the people and gauging their response to same. One thinks of the referendum on restricting citizenship to those born of foreign nationals in Ireland until it could be claimed at age 18, in the light of some individuals coming to the country in a pregnant state in the expectation of giving birth to children which would then have automatic citizenship and parents consequently claiming a family right to remain with them. The Party seemed to have been influenced into opposition to this provision by illogical and pseudo-progressive commentary which would have it that racism or xenophobia was thus involved. Ultra-leftists also contributed to this misrepresentation. There was probably also an emotional factor involved insofar as the Minister who happened to be responsible for the legal step concerned was a right-wing politician, viz. Michael McDowell. In

other words, the constitutional amendment was not looked at objectively, rationally and coolheadedly in its own right. Nonetheless, an overwhelming majority of the electorate approved the amendment concerned, including the bulk of Sinn Féin voters.

Then there was the referendum on the Seanad. To begin with, Sinn Féin adopted the sensible position of calling for reform of the upper house. However, when Fine Gael opted for abolition, this was construed as somehow moving to the left of Sinn Féin which then shifted to going for abolition as well. Again, a majority of voters, including a majority of Sinn Féin supporters, voted against abolition. As a result, even reform of the Seanad was put in the freezer.

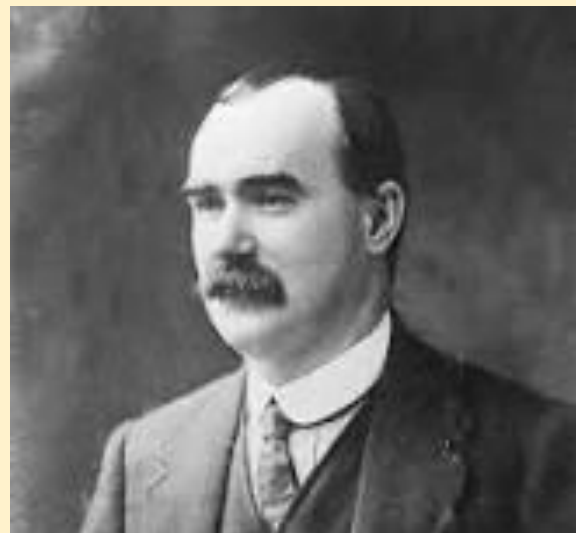
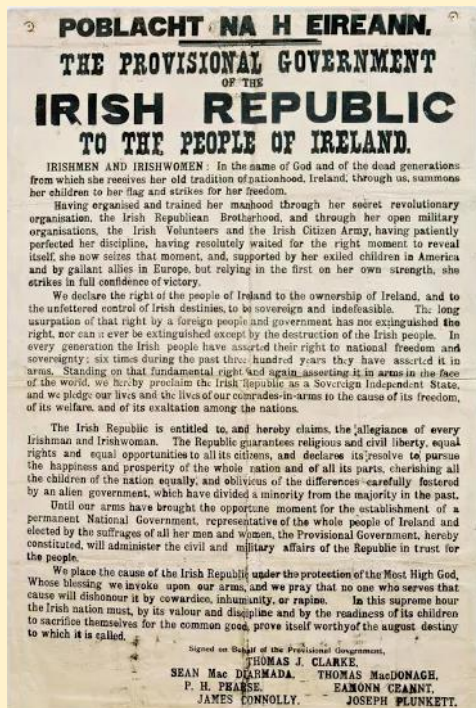
The prospect now arises once more on the immigration question of Sinn Féin not grasping the real issue which is to both denounce racism and xenophobia, and meaningfully acknowledge the genuine worries of Irish people.

It did not matter much at the end of the day that Sinn Féin did not get it right

on the citizenship and Seanad referenda. Those episodes did not have much impact on local, national and European elections. However, there is now a real danger that SF votes may be lost to Independents, and perhaps to a new party such as Independent Ireland, to the extent that they appear to be listening more on the immigration issue, although one cannot be confident that some of them may not then stray into the xenophobic camp. The progressive approach should be to analyse carefully the immigration question and to adopt policies which address the concerns of the people in a practical fashion, while at the same time endeavouring to fulfil reasonable commitments to those arriving on the shores who are authentically in need of succour.

It could well be that if Sinn Féin is scuppered at the next general election in its attempt to form or lead a government, it will be due to fudging or mishandling the immigration question.

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JAMES CONNOLLY
Commander in Chief
Army of the Irish Republic 1916