

INC NEWS

IRISH NATIONAL CONGRESS

April 2016

COMHDHÁIL NÁISIÚNTA NA hÉIREANN

CELEBRATE EASTER 1916!

The Easter Rising of April 1916 was the pivotal action that broke British hegemonic control in Ireland, coming as it did in the midst of an inter-imperialist global conflict largely engineered by Britain.

The executions of the leaders of the Rising, together with the terrible news coming from the European and Asia Minor front lines concerning Irish casualty figures, discredited Redmond's policies and made continued British rule untenable. In the United Kingdom's first largely democratic election in November 1918, a majority of the Irish voted to secede from the UK, a result 'democratic' Britain refused to accept. It took more than two years of war and bloodshed before British forces finally departed from the greater part of Ireland.

On Sunday April 24, thousands will gather in the centre of Dublin for a rally which will be the culmination of a series of events to mark the centenary of the Rising. These events are being organised by an independent, non-party citizen initiative *Reclaim the Vision of 1916*. As the name implies, this rally will be organised separately from those ceremonies being conducted by the state. Unlike some, we refuse to apologise for celebrating the Rising: we will not be looking over our shoulders or seeking the approval of others. And we will certainly not be inviting British royalty! Compared with previous 1916 anniversary events, this year's rally will be very easy going and non-controversial. It will be a

happy and joyous occasion: do bring the whole family along, invite your friends and neighbours too and don't forget the flags banners and balloons.

Irish National Congress members have been involved from the start with *Reclaim the Vision*, and we have to say that it has been a positive and rewarding experience. The comparison this time with the 1991, 75th anniversary events could not be more stark. This time round, there was none of the ugly background atmosphere experienced in 1991. We have had no reports of harassment from the Garda Special Detective Unit, no reports this time of poison pen letters or death threats to the organisers, and none of the previous venomous diatribes from various media sources. We have even received some assistance from political establishment figures, such as former Fine Gael TD Jimmy Deenihan who was very enthusiastic at the prospect of a large scale and genuine celebration of the Rising. Unfortunately, Mr Deenihan was probably regarded as being too 'green' by some in government positions, and ended up losing his post to the somewhat clueless Heather Humphries.

After the celebrations are over, we will need to reflect on the journey our country has made in the past century, and our hopes and visions for coming years. Looking back, we note the successful establishment and consolidation of the Irish state, born in the most difficult of circumstances, trying to



emerge from centuries of despotic, rapacious and at times genocidal British colonial misrule. We will also need to acknowledge our failures to date, particularly with regard to the visionary economic, social and cultural goals which the new state attempted to implement. Alienation of large segments of the people and catastrophic emigration resulted from these shortcomings. And, of course, a significantly sized portion of our country remains under British colonial rule, the people deeply divided. Despite the welcome developments that have followed on from the peace process and the Belfast Agreement, the national question remains unresolved; therefore, the project of nation building must continue.

With regard to the world situation in 1916, history appears to be repeating itself. Today we are facing dangerous tensions globally, with the very real prospect of catastrophic financial collapse and the threat of war caused by Western NATO imperialist states, acting in blatant disregard of international law, attacking particular countries, slaughtering huge numbers and attempting to reimpose an unjust world order that will only benefit criminal global banking cartels and predatory transnational corporations. 1916 leaders such as Connolly and Casement would have very easily understood today's global situation. Little has changed.

For us in both Irish jurisdictions, the coming period will pose serious challenges and difficulties, due to the deteriorating global financial and security situation. In the north, it may become increasingly difficult to persuade growing numbers in the nationalist community, particularly youth, to stay the course with the peace process, given the socially destructive ideology and actions of the current UK government. Alienation, voter apathy and sporadic outbreaks of violence are serious underlying problems for nationalist politics.

The Irish state, along with other small

states in the European Union, are rapidly being turned into mere vassal states through imposed confiscation of national sovereignty, through outright financial looting by beyond-the-law criminal élites, and by the contemptuous disregard for the democratic will of the people, as expressed in plebiscites. On top of that, there are serious attempts being made behind the scenes to drag the Irish state into foreign wars, through inclusion in NATO. Britain (as always), and France are the two principal warmonger states. The current chaos and dysfunction inside the EU puts us in Ireland in real danger of losing many of the political, social and cultural gains made since the establishment of the state. However, we must not allow ourselves to become demoralised by the seemingly unstoppable power grab by amoral and sociopathic globalist elites backed up ultimately by US, British and NATO-armed might. On the contrary, we need to organise to confront them; otherwise we face a bleak, dystopian future of never-ending war and barbarism on a world scale.

The Rising of 1916 inspired millions worldwide, leading eventually to the collapse of direct colonialism throughout the globe. Perhaps the time has come for us in Ireland once again to take a lead, this time in the struggle against new forms of imperialism, and for justice against those forces that are leading humanity to the abyss. We should draw inspiration from our own history of struggle for nationhood: from the Land League, from the Gaelic League and from the sacrifices made by generations of patriotic men and women leading up to the Rising and beyond. We need to recapture that vision, the Spirit of Freedom, and apply it to today's needs.

In conclusion, let us salute and celebrate the lives of those courageous men and women who defied the world's most powerful empire in April 1916. Let us re-dedicate ourselves to completing their work.

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SAOIRSE AONTACHT SÍOCHÁN

EASTER RISING JUSTIFIED

In this centennial year of commemoration of the Easter Rising of 1916, a number of issues have once more arisen concerning its justification.

We have seen a variety of elements slithering forth yet again in order to denigrate that event: certain ex-politicians, academics, journalists, and letter writers to editors.

It is worth repeating here and expanding on some points which I made in my article in the May 1914 edition of *INC News*.

Central to a lot of their accusations is the assertion that the Rising had no mandate and that its aims could have been achieved otherwise by electoral means. It is conveniently forgotten that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was not a proper democracy prior to 1918 in terms of its franchise. 70% of adults (i.e. persons aged 21 and more) did not have a vote for Parliament. The suffrage was not extended to all adult males until 1918 and some adult females (those aged 21-30) until 1928.

Apart from that and as for a mandate, national insurrection legitimately derives from foreign occupation. If my fundamental rights are violated by an imperial power, I have the right to resist and this right is not dependent on establishing majority support beforehand. Besides, it is ludicrous to imply that, under the circumstances of foreign occupation, one could hold a referendum on insurrection, even if that were desirable.

A number of assertions have been made about the Rising that are dubious, to say the least. To begin with, much is made of the derision to which captured rebels were subjected by some of the citizenry as they were led off to prison. However, it does not take a genius to suspect that supporters of the Rising were afraid to come out on the streets in the face of the British Army, while relatives of husbands and sons who had been lured into the service of British imperialism felt free to do so, especially when their allow-

ances for serving soldiers were taken into account.

In fact, there is evidence to support this conclusion. A member of the Canadian press, sent to Dublin after the Rising broke out, wrote a book about his experiences. In this, he said: "I have read many accounts of public feeling in Dublin in these days. They are all agreed that the open and strong sympathy of the mass of the population was with the British troops. That this was so in the better parts of the city, I have no doubt, but certainly what I myself saw in the poorer districts did not confirm this. It rather indicated that there was a vast amount of sympathy with the rebels, particularly after the rebels were defeated. The sentences of the Courts Martial deepened this sympathy." And further on he stated: "People were leaning from their windows waving triangular flags and handkerchiefs. 'They are cheering the soldiers,' I said to my

companion. ... As the main body approached I could see that the soldiers were escorting a large number of prisoners, men and women, several hundreds in all. The people were cheering not the soldiers but the rebels." (F A

McKenzie, *The Irish Rebellion - What Happened and Why*, C Arthur Pearson Ltd, 1916).

Paul Mc Guill has also supplied me with the reference below.

Frank Thornton was imprisoned with Seán MacDiarmada in Richmond Barracks. He recalls that on the way to Kilmanham on 9th May 1916: "We marched along the road and with every yard there were indications of the changed attitude of the people. The open trams passing by always brought a cheer from somebody, even though rifles were pointed at the offender on every occasion, and old men stood at the street corner and saluted despite being pushed around." (Brian Barton, *From Behind a Closed Door*, Black Staff Press, Belfast 2002, p 309).

More generally speaking, it is not ca-



pable of being known what the views of the population throughout Ireland were. The news media were in the hands of a hostile bourgeoisie and, of course, there were no such things as opinion polls in 1916.

All these points are ignored and the support which became undeniably manifest for the Rising subsequent to 1916 is reduced to the stupidity of a British general in carrying out the executions of the leaders.

As for the deaths of civilians in 1916, of course some of these were unfortunately caught in crossfire. However, there is the question of how many needlessly died as a result of British military policy. First of all, heavy machine guns were brought into the city as well as artillery and there were shells fired from a gunboat on the Liffey. It is hard to believe that the authorities would have behaved like this in a British city if there had been something similar to an uprising of latter-day Chartists. In addition to that, there were the murders of civilians carried out by British troops, especially the massacre in North King Street where non-combatant men were slaughtered along with youths by way of shooting and bayoneting. The revisionists are impelled to denounce the Rising in all sorts of ways, but they give little or no time to criticizing the atrocities of British imperialism in Dub-

lin.

On a broader front, we should not forget that home rule (already postponed from 1886 and '93), with all its limitations, had not been introduced in 1914, given the suspensory act which accompanied the main statute. There is also the support or tolerance shown by a large part of the British establishment for unionism. It is very much open to question if even the milk and water home rule provisions would ever have been introduced in reality. And it is wishful thinking that the Act could have led on to independence, not least because of Britain's urge to hold on to the island at its backdoor. As for the Treaty of 1921, despite revisionist claims to the contrary, it was well in advance of home rule and would not have been attained without force.

When all things are considered, the Easter Rising of 1916 was amply justified in its confrontation of the British Empire and the assertion of the right of Ireland to national freedom. It also became a beacon for anti-colonialist struggle throughout the world. The bravery and heroism of those who carried out that Rising are beyond doubt.

Daltún Ó Ceallaigh, Eagarthóir, INC NEWS

MEITHEAL NA NEODRACHTA

1 *Is maith an t-anlann an t-ocras.*

Ceapadh Pádraig Mac Piarais ina eagarthóir ar *An Claidheamh Solais*, nuachtán Chonradh na Gaeilge, sa mbliain 1903: "*Beidh cuimhne i Ros na gCaorach go héag ar an oíche thug Fear Bhaile Átha Cliath an fhleá dúinn i dteach scoile an Turlaigh Bhig.*" (*Na Bóithre*)

Leis an "fhleá" (oíche Ghaelach) úd a luaitear ina ghearrscéal féin, thug An Piarasach an buille marfach do mhodh earcaíochta na hImpireachta in Iar-Chonamara. Bhíodh sé de nós ag fear ionaid Rí Shasana ócáidí speisialta

a chur ar siúl do dhaltáí an cheantair, uair nó dhó sa tséasúr. Thagadh oifigeach ó Londain air. Iontas na n-iontas do dhaltáí scoile gan amhras, agus móramh na bhfear iontu gléasta in éide arm an Rí. Nach gcuirfeá cruth ort féin amach anseo agus dea-shampla na bhfear san a leanacht? Ní dhéanfadh do Bhéarla bacach thú a dhícháiliú agus gach seans gur buntáiste í do bhochtaineacht. "... *Hunger sauce must be still less sustaining. Indeed, the only advantage that Hunger Sauce seems to possess over other brands is its extreme cheapness. The very poorest can enjoy it, and it is one of the few luxuries that the rich will not begrudge them.*" (P Mac Piarais, *Deireadh Fómhair*, 1913.)

2 *"Yes friends, governments in capitalist society are but committees of the rich to manage the affairs of the capitalist class."* (Séamus Ó Conghaile, *Irish Worker*, 1914.)

Le linn Cogadh na Rúise in aghaidh na Seapáine in Eanáir na bliana 1905, scaoil arm réimeas Tsar Nioclás II le léirsiú síochánta. Maraíodh na céadta. De thoradh Domhnach na Fola seo St Petersburg, leath tinte ré-abhlóideacha ar fud na Rúise. Léigh Séamus Ó Conghaile tuairiscí ar an “éirí amach” san i leabhar le H W Nevins: Fáinne Lae na Rúise. Ba léir go raibh ceachtanna le foghlaim: gur teip a bhí san an éirí amach sin; nár socraíodh ar dháta dearfa i measc na réabhlóidithe; go raibh bearna ann idir lucht “Anois Díreach” agus lucht “Fan go Fóill”. Ba chóir an deis a thapú agus an namhaid i mbun cogaidh. Ní raibh daille ar bith air, ach oiread, go scaoilfeadh réimeas an Tsar na gunnaí móra i gcathair dá chuid. Deineadh san is dhéanfaí arís é mar ba mhian ag arm an réimis. Lasadh réabhlóid níos leithne de bharr eachtraí St. Petersburg: stailceanna ginearálta go forleathan; saighdiúirí ag taobhú le hoibrithe; mairnéalaigh ag glacadh seilbhe ar loing cogaidh. Ina dhiaidh sin is uile, cheap sé, b'é míthreoir is mímhúinín a gceannairí a féin a loic ar an lucht oibre. Nuair a bhíodar teanntaithe agus an namhaid níos líonmhaire go mór, thug a gcuid ceannfort na sála leo.

(Mheas an Conghaileach go raibh thart fá 1,500 réabhlóidí i gcathair Mhoscó i 1905, 18,000 saighdiúir á dtimpeallú agus go leor gunnaí móra acu Foinse: *Moscow Insurrection 1905*.) “Is trua nach marbh bhí m’athair/ nuair a chuir sé mé go harm an Rí/ s’gurb í an uaigh mo chrualeaba feasta/ s’a chéadsearc nach trua leat mo luí?” (*An Saighdiúir Tréigthe*.)

3 “A thonna thíos is airde géim go hard/ meabhair mo chinnse clóite ód’ bhéiceach tá/ cabhair dá dtíodh arís go hÉirinn bhán/ do ghlam nach binn do dthingfinn féin id’ bhráid”, Aodhghán Ó Rathaille.

Amhail Éirí Amach na Rúise 1905 bhí an ghluaiseacht fhríth-chogaidh fite fuaite le heagraíochtaí ar son na saoirse agus, dá bhrí sin, ina namhaid ag cibé Impireacht a bhí ar díol.

Ina aiste ‘Deireadh Fómhair’ na bliana 1913, déanann Mac Piarais tagairt do ruathar a thug díorma leis faoi chruinniú san Antient

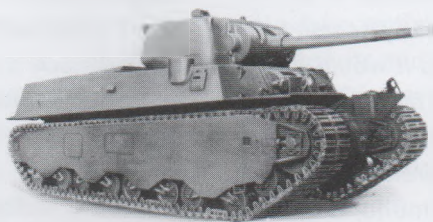
Concert Rooms an tráth san. Cruinniú earcaíochta d’Arm na Breataine a bhí ann agus is go fonnmhar a thugann an Piarasach a chuntas air agus an ruaille buaille a lean é sa phreas: “*The next day the Independent called me an ‘unwashed youth’...When, therefore, you differ in opinion from a newspaper it is always well to let it be known that you wash yourself regularly; that you take the normal number of meals, that you pay your rent and taxes, that you go to church or chapel and that, in short, you conform in all particulars to the lofty standard of conduct set up by such an eminent fellow-citizen of yours as William M. Murphy.*”

4 Ag scríobh dó san aiste *The Separatist Idea* (Feabhra 1916) thuig Mac Piarais go soiléir cé chomh lárnach is a bhí dearcadh Tone ar spleáchas is neamhspleáchas na hÉireann: “*On the appearance of a rupture with Spain, I wrote a pamphlet to prove that Ireland was not bound by the declaration of war, but might, and ought, as an independent nation, to stipulate for neutrality*” (Wolfe Tone: *The Spanish War*, BÁC 1790. Athfhoilsithe ag Cumann na mBan 1915; CSN/PANA 2006.)

Lena argóint ar son na neodracht chruthaigh Tone nach bhféadfaí ‘pairlimintí neamhspleácha comhionannacha’ bheith ann lastigh de choinníollacha na bunreacht a ghnóthaigh Grattan. “*The pamphlet, in fact, tended to prove the impossibility of Grattan’s constitution*”, arsa Mac Piarais. “Sé sin, mura raibh rogha ag tír i gcúrsaí cosanta ná i gcúrsaí cogaidh, ní ann don neamhspleáchas: “*There were and are only two alternatives: an enslaved Ireland and a free Ireland. A dual monarchy is, in the nature of things, only a temporary expedient.*”

Glacaimis leis gur ag léamh athfhoilseachán Chumann na mBan ar phaimpléad Tone a bhí an Piarasach, rud suimiúil ann féin ach níos suimiúla fós go raibh ann i gcónaí an díospóireacht ghéar seo idir na gluaiseachtaí éagsúla a ghlac seasamh fhríth-chogaidh.

“The ‘war on behalf of small nationalities’ is still going merrily on in the newspapers...” arsa Séamus Ó Conghaile san *Irish*



Worker, (Meán Fómhar 1914... "the Russian Government and the British Government stand solidly together in favour of small nationalities everywhere except in countries now under Russian and British rule."

5 *"Cannibalism at least provides a reasonable motive for killing a man, which is more than you can say for civilised warfare."*
Col P H Fawcett, An Somme 1916.

Bhí sé de bhua ag an bPiarasach comhghuaillithe leis a mholadh fad is a bhíodh sé dá ngríosadh. Nuair a sheol Sinn Féin carr frith-choinscríobh amach ar na sráideanna, gabhadh é. Mhol an Piarasach go seolfaidís céad carr eile amach. Dá ngabfaí iadsan, a dúirt sé, seolfar céad fear amach le cláracha frith-choinscríobh orthu: *"Tá na céadta bealaí ann le corraíl in aghaidh Preasail, Earcú, Coinscríobh."*

Thuig chuile shruth sa tonn a bhí ag teacht cén sórt búistéireacha a bhí á éileamh orthu ag Rialtas Shasana, Aontachtaithe agus feallairí a leithéidí Redmond: *"This war is undertaken in defence of the highest principles of religion, morality and right; and it would be a disgrace for ever to our country if young Ireland confined her efforts to remaining at home to defend our shores or Ireland from unlikely invasion..."* (MP John Redmond, Meán Fómhair 1914.)

Coicís I ndiaidh ráiteas earcaíochta

I went to the 44th Bloody Sunday march yesterday. I walked, as always, with my family, and this year I pushed my first grandchild in her pram, along the same route as I'd pushed her mother and her aunts and uncles when they were small. My wains have grown up now, and come home every year for the march, as I did when I studied in Dublin, or worked in Belfast, and walked with my own parents. We're still looking for the truth, across the generations.

This year again, in the January rain, the people of Derry and further afield who care about justice and human rights walked in memory of our citizens who were murdered on the streets on 30th January 1971. They were joined by Paddy Hill, still seeking the truth about the Birmingham

Redmond, ghlac Séamus Ó Conghaile an t-ardán san Antient Concert Rooms mar Chathaoirleach ar an Irish Neutrality League. Mar a mhol Mac Piarais, bealach a bhí san INL fórsaí fhríth-chogaidh éagsúla a thabhairt le chéile. Choisc na húdaráis an t-eagras ach is suntasach liosta na n-ainmneacha a bhí ar an gCoiste Sealadach: Art Ó Gríofa, Constance de Markievicz, Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, Seán T Ó Ceallaigh, JJ Scollan, William O'Brien, Seán Milroy.

Tá a fhios ag an saol Fódhlach anois, maítear, scéal eachtraí Éirí Amach 1916. Ní hionann eolas agus tuiscint gan amhras. Fiú tar éis slad, sléacht agus uafáis barbartha, scríobh fear ionaid nua Rí Shasana, Lord French: *"Home Rule will be offered and declined then conscription will be enforced. If they leave me alone I can do what is necessary. I shall notify a date before which recruits must offer themselves in the various districts. If they do not come, we will fetch them."* (Aibreán 1918.)

Cé nár thuig sé é in am, bhí sé i bhfad ró-dhéanach do Lord French agus dá chairde impiriúlacha. Bhí na daoine ag fillleadh abhaile ón bhfleá i Ros na gCaorach. Bímis ina measc.

*Feargus Mac Aogáin CSN/PANA –
Comhaontas na Síochána is na Neodrachta*

**MUCH
REMAINS
THE SAME**

bombings of 1970, by Helen Deery whose 15 year old brother Manus was murdered by British soldiers in 1972 as he stood outside a chip shop, and who still hasn't been granted the dignity of an inquest, by Shauna Moreland whose mother was shot by the IRA at the instigation of Stakeknife (a British agent and with the prior knowledge of his handlers), by the Ballymurphy families, by environmentalists infiltrated and abused by police posing as friends, and by countless others whose lives were changed forever by the official abuse of power.

In this year of anniversaries, it might be reasonable for me, as a long-standing member of the INC, to reflect on where we in the six counties, as subjects of her majesty and citizens of Ireland, find ourselves today.

Since the Good Friday Agreement, the six British-occupied counties of Ireland are now recognised by all political parties as a separate country. I hear we're even going to get our own anthem! Derry, the one-time cradle of resistance, was designated as the UK City of Culture, 2013. Martin Mc Guinness, erstwhile leader of the IRA, was in Liverpool on the day the decision was announced, punching the air in delight for the assembled media. I heard him on the radio recently, on the day he announced his candidature in Foyle for the Assembly elections, saying that the eight-hundred year old conflict had been resolved, thanks, it seems, to the efforts of himself and his party.

Of course we had a plebiscite on both sides of the imaginary line which was drawn across our country almost a century ago - under threat of immediate and terrible war - asking a different question in each jurisdiction. By this subversion of democracy, which removed the constitutional protection for northern nationalists and copper-fastened partition, was 'peace' achieved. The legislature in Stormont, where two implacably opposed power blocs face one another across a chasm of mistrust and suspicion, and where there is not even a shared narrative of our past, is terminally dysfunctional. It was designed thus. An advance for one side, even when it benefits ordinary people, is seen as a defeat by the other, and thus cannot be countenanced.

Meantime, Derry, my hometown, still languishes on the wrong side of every measurable index of deprivation. People who are scarred by the years of conflict, who visited jails and carried their children and friends to early graves, look on in disbelief as they are told that all is well. The areas identified by the 2011 NI census as the worst affected by poverty and deprivation are largely the same areas identified in the 1891 census. Hardly progress. We are the only city on these islands without a University, there's not a mile of dual carriageway between Derry and Belfast or Dublin, and a good bike can beat the train between Derry and Belfast. The area where I work as a GP has some 56% of children living in poverty, the dole queues get longer and

there have been more people killed due to suicide since the GFA than were killed in the troubles which preceded it. Yet we're told everything is just fine.

Apart from what have become known as "legacy issues", that is those state killings which happened before the IRA cessation, there are ongoing issues today around political policing, internment by remand and human rights violations within the prisons. People like the Craigavon Two, convicted on the uncorroborated statements of a man acknowledged to be a compulsive liar, and under a misinterpretation of the "joint enterprise" law may not feel that the shiny new police service and judiciary are all they're cracked up to be.

Yet the politicians will have their posters on every lamppost and street corner in a few weeks' time seeking a mandate to preside over this sorry mess. And they'll get it - or at least a version of it - the tired acquiescence of a population in despair, or duped into false optimism by street furniture, hanging baskets and empty promises.

Of course the end of the violent conflict on our streets is to be welcomed. That young men and women are no longer losing their freedom, or indeed their lives in a war of attrition with the state apparatus of one of the most ruthless nations in the world is a good thing. But, to my mind, those who walked the long road from 1969, and who dared to hope for better should not have to settle for merely this.

The constitutional question, the very large elephant in our wee tiny sitting room, hasn't gone away. The vision, expressed in the Proclamation of the Republic of 1916 for freedom and sovereignty for all the citizens of this nation remain as valid today as it was then. But people looking at the corruption, nepotism and smoke and mirrors that pass for governance in the house on the hill wonder if that vision is achievable, or even seems desirable to those inside.

All is not hopeless, though. There are some influences external to these shores which may exert influence on the future of our island, and some developments at home which likewise give cause for optimism.

The possible exit of Britain from the EU is one. Personally I lament the fact that some eighty percent of our laws are made in Brussels, a relinquishing of our national sovereignty to the super-state. However, if the six counties are forced to leave the EU because the Tories don't like it, and the twenty-six counties remain, what then for the future? A Brexit seems likely to prompt an immediate re-run of the Scottish referendum for independence - and, this time, it will not be defeated by threats and deceptions. Could this mean a break-up of the UK, and the possibility of new alliances with our Celtic brethren?

The admittedly fragile anti-austerity alliances gathering momentum at home and across Europe likewise give hope for a new way forward. Since the bank bailout of 2008, incomes of ordinary workers have stagnated, yet the incomes of those who make money exclusively from shares and assets have multiplied by a factor of five. The richest 20% of our population control 73% of the wealth, while the poorest 20% control 0.2%. People have had enough, and there is hope that grass roots movements for justice may be effective in achieving change. The election of veteran old-labour stalwart Jeremy Corbyn, an incorruptible voice for the dispossessed, as labour party leader in England is a manifestation of widespread disaffection with the status quo.

At home, the growth in the numbers of independent councillors and TDs shows the frustration of the electorate with party crony-

ism and corruption. The independent model of political representation offers a democratic alternative to the failed party system, a system which has exposed itself as a willing servant of corporate wealth and establishment power.

The environmental movement, based on the knowledge that curtailing global warming necessitates a more equitable sharing of the world's resources, likewise gives hope for a new way of living.

The advent of information technology and the widespread use of social media give not only access to knowledge about the human face of wars in faraway places, but provide a platform where movements for social justice and the demand for accountability of governments for their actions can grow.

But none of these progressive movements for change will bear fruit unless we, the people, make them do so. Bobby Sands' maxim that "everyone has their part to play" is as important today as in those dark days of prison struggle.

At the end of every Bloody Sunday march, the assembled thousands at Free Derry Corner stand together in the gathering January dusk and sing together "We Shall Overcome" which seems an anthem for a different outcome. The unfinished revolution goes on. Beir bua.

Anne McCloskey, National Executive, INC

THE LEGACY OF 1916

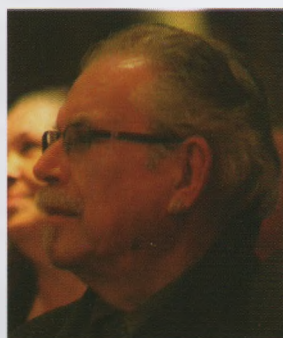
In 1990, a group of concerned citizens including many members of the INC, aware that the government of the day seemed determined to ignore the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising, decided to take steps to ensure that the event would be properly celebrated. I am glad to say that the initiative *Reclaim the Spirit of Easter*, in spite of intimidation, harassment and misrepresentation, admirably succeeded in its main objective of commemorating and celebrating the anniversary of the Rising in an appropriate and relevant manner. As the cen-

tenary of the Rising approached, I had hoped that this time around things might be different: sadly not! This begs the obvious question of why does official Ireland still remain ambiguous and uneasy about commemorating the most seminal event in modern Irish history. Certainly a small chorus of strident voices continues to embrace a thoroughly negative appraisal of the rebellion and, embarrassingly, the Irish government seemed to have adopted that particular point of view when, on an infamous November evening in 2014, it

launched its commemorative programme in Dublin's GPO. The centrepiece was a video presentation entitled *Ireland Inspires* that literally airbrushed the men and women of 1916 out of history in the very location where they made history. No images of the signatories of the Proclamation - Pearse, Plunkett, Connolly, Clarke, MacDonagh, MacDiarmada and Ceannt - were on display; the founding fathers of our nation were ignored as if they had never lived, as if they had never died. Instead, someone seemed to think it would be a good idea to replace them with images of Queen Elizabeth II, David Cameron, Rev Ian Paisley, Bono and Brian O'Driscoll.

Public reaction was immediate and totally hostile, forcing the government to feverishly embark on a damage-limitation exercise. The offending video was immediately taken offline and new structures were swiftly put in place with instructions to devise programmes that might be more in tune with the public mood. Yet, in spite of this, strange and inappropriate attitudes persisted. What other explanation can there be for the proposed plan to erect a memorial wall in Glasnevin cemetery with the names of all those who died in 1916 inscribed in alphabetical order? Unbelievably the names of Connolly, Pearse and many others, who sacrificed their lives for the Irish republic, are inscribed alongside the names of those British soldiers who expired while in the act of destroying that same republic. There can be no equivalence between those who died in the struggle to create an Irish republic and those who perished in crushing that same republic. In Washington DC, there is an elegant memorial wall inscribed with the names of the US soldiers who died in the course of the Vietnam War. Families of the dead draw great comfort from visiting the wall and laying flowers beneath the names of their loved ones. Obviously the US authorities considered the inclusion of Vietnamese as inappropriate, because, if you walk from one end of the wall to the other, you will fail to come across the name of a single Viet Cong soldier. Yet, once again, official Ireland seems to be of the view that

the Irish historical experience is different and therefore we should do things differently. In this scheme of things, the Easter Rising is presented as 'just another event' in a series of events making up a "decade of commemoration". This is a distortion of history, a deliberate and desperate attempt to distance citizens from the aims and ideals of a golden generation, the likes of which we have not seen since. Among their numbers were poets, writers, playwrights, teachers, musicians, journalists, trade unionists, teachers, artists, and ordinary working men and women - citizens - all striving to create a society of equality with no citizen left behind. These people were not merely rebels, they were revolutionaries! They did not take on the might of the British empire with the modest goal of superficial change like the right to fly a green flag over Dublin Castle; no, what they wanted was a complete trans-



Robert Ballagh

formation of Irish society, and the blueprint for that transformation was set out in the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, first declaimed by Patrick Pearse outside the GPO on 24 April 1916. The Proclamation of the Irish Republic is far more than simply a call to arms. It represents the articulation of a progressive programme for an enhanced future for all Irish men, women and

children. Surely it is more than reasonable to ask, almost 100 years later, the question: "Where today stands the republic for which so many sacrificed so much?". Sadly, the vision of 1916 has never been fully realised and the Irish people north and south have been forced to bear the consequences of political, social, economic and cultural failure. The highest suicide rates in Europe, intolerable levels of homelessness, unacceptable rates of poverty and unemployment, a healthcare system not fit for purpose, catastrophic emigration figures and an economic collapse brought about by greed and corruption clearly point to a state that has consistently failed the majority of its citizens.

The centenary of the Easter Rising provides all citizens with a unique opportunity to gather in celebration of that extraordinary moment in Irish history and in so doing create

a platform to reflect, consider and act upon the aims and ideals of those who in their time decided to act in the cause of freedom; after all, their vision remains the yardstick by which we can measure the current state of the nation. For that reason, Reclaim the Vision of 1916 - an independent, non-party political citizens' initiative - is organising a major gathering in Dublin on April 24th 2016. The actual anniversary of the Rising, consisting of a parade themed on the Proclamation, which will progress through the streets of the city in a

lively, colourful, dramatic and musical manner, along with a pageant staged on O'Connell Street where some of Ireland's leading talents will celebrate with poetry, song, dance and drama the vision of the men and women of 1916.

Let us dare to dream!

Robert Ballagh, Artist

REMEMBERING THE RISING

We should perhaps not be surprised that the current government is so reluctant to celebrate the centenary of 1916; in this they are following in a long and ignoble tradition.

The 50th anniversary of 1916 in 1966 is sometimes viewed by Republicans with rose-tinted nostalgia and by revisionists with revulsion. However, there were in fact two celebrations: the official government-sponsored one and the unofficial IRA one which was suppressed. On 24th April 1966, 5000 people assembled in St Stephen's Green and marched behind the blue flag of the IRA's Dublin Brigade to Glasnevin Cemetery. However, when detectives tried to seize the flag outside Trinity College and at the Parnell Monument, fierce fighting broke out; while the flag was uncaptured several marchers were severely beaten and three IRA members, Bobby Mc Knight, Lar Malone and Leo Steenson, received prison sentences.¹

The outbreak of the conflict in the north of Ireland in the late 1960s led the southern political media and intellectual establishment to reassess their commemoration of 1916. In this, they were assisted by a newly emerging Irish intellectual trend known as

"historical revisionism". This had its origins in the Oxford university of the 1930s and sought to replace historical 'myths' and 'propaganda' with 'scientific history', which bred a fetish for official documents over eyewitness testimony. As the conflict progressed, there was a concerted effort by the establishment to create a causative link between 1916 and the writings of its leaders and the ongoing northern conflict. As if sectarianism, discrimination and gerrymandering were irrelevant.



In 1972, The Irish state refused to commemorate the 1916 Rising "due to the northern situation" claiming that the troops were needed to patrol the border.² By 1974, the state had ceased to officially commemorate the Easter Rising, instead switching its emphasis to celebrating St Patrick's day.³ Alternatively, the establishment continued a campaign which sought to vilify the rising as a proto-fascist coup d'état and its leaders as deranged psychopaths motivated by a suicidal bloodlust. In a 1975 radio debate, Fine Gael's leading 'intellectual' John Kelly claimed that if the rising had not occurred "Ireland would be just as independent today with no bloodshed and no partition." This myth is perpetuated by the

¹ Brian Hanley & Scott Millar, *The Lost Revolution*, Penguin, 2009. Page 55

² *Hibernia*, 12 January 1973

³ *Ibid*, 26 April 1974

current Fine Gael 'intellectual', John Bruton.⁴

In 1976, the state refused to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Easter rising so Sinn Féin organised a rally outside the GPO in Dublin on 25th April 1976. The government banned the commemoration but still 10,000 people turned up to hear a platform containing Sinn Féin Leader Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, Labour TD David Thornley (who was expelled from the party for his attendance) and siblings of the signatories of the Proclamation: Nora Connolly O'Brien, Fiona Plunkett aged 70 and Marie Comerford aged 84. Seventy of those attending were prosecuted 33 of whom included Thornley, Plunkett and Comerford who were fined. The latter two elderly sisters of the rising's leaders refused to pay their fines and were imprisoned.⁵

In 1991, the Irish state's sole proposal to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the rising was to refurbish a fountain in Dún Laoghaire and add a 1916 commemorative plaque to it. However, the INC and its chairperson had other ideas and set about organising a *Reclaim the Spirit of 1916* pageant in O'Connell St which brought 20,000 people onto the streets in celebration. However, this commemoration was not without its cost, financial and emotional; the organisers were ruthlessly and relentlessly attacked by politicians and the media, some being harassed by the Gardaí while others received death threats.

Once again, for the centenary of the rising, Ireland finds itself led by an establishment which is neither worthy nor capable of properly celebrating those heroes who won for us our liberty.

Paul McGuill, Rúnaí, INC

THE 1916 CLUBS

The 1916 Clubs are a different grouping from the 1916-21 Club, although not different in focus and commitments.

In 1914, a small group of republicans

⁴ Roddy Connolly and the Struggle for Socialism in Ireland, p 236

⁵ The Irish Times, 26 April 1976

gathered in a tobacco shop at the corner of Parnell square. Behind this innocuous shop front, these men plotted to bring down the British Empire and to establish an Irish Republic, men whose names that were once unknown but are now renowned: Hobson, McCulloch, MacDiarmada and Clarke.

In 2014, a 100 years later, another small group of republicans gathered in the exact same location on the corner of Parnell Square, it was still an innocuous shop front, currently a Londis and a Maptravel; it was the first official meeting of the 1916 Clubs.

The goal of the 1916 Clubs was to provide an opportunity for all to remember and reflect upon the sacrifices of our Fenian dead and to use this as a means of envisioning a better Ireland irrespective of political party, creed or class. Over the last two years in our attempt to achieve this, we have met resistance. Our first chapter was in the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI). Despite the prefix "Royal", we prospered, although we never got official recognition as a college society and had major difficulties getting access to college meeting rooms. To circumvent these restrictions, we improvised by getting other college organizations to help us: the Irish society, the Irish language society, the GAA and the gay and lesbian society helped us in getting access to college facilities. This was a valuable lesson for us: that, to promote the republican ideology, we needed to work with other groups and find common ground. By the end of the first year, we had one of the largest, albeit subterranean and unrecognized, organizations in the RCSI.

Although we welcomed members from any political background, from the outset, we were non-party political. Our rule was: 'you can be as political as you want, but leave the party politics at the door'. Occasionally people, on behalf of political parties, tried to influence our organization in their own direction. Our response was to ask these people to reflect on the organization's founding principles and to understand that there are many shades of republicanism, all of which could be accommodated by the ideals of 1916. In most cases, they did. The 1916 Clubs remained true to their cause, largely

due to the hard work of their members, but the main reason they have grown as large as they have, with chapters in every college in Dublin and with individual members throughout Ireland, is due to the decency of individuals and the support of other organizations in Ireland willing to help us, a small group of students with no money or experience. Thus included were historians such as Lorcan Collins, Brian Feeney and Shane Kenna, among others, who gave talks; the Ireland Institute provided us with a location and a loyal band of interested citizens. All believed in what we were doing, particularly that our pan-republican approach was essentially a good thing.

Our largest event to date was a political debate to which we invited representatives from Fine Gael, Labour, Sinn Féin, Fianna Fáil and Republican Sinn Féin. It was our first event that involved political parties. We believe that 1916 belongs to citizens, but it is fair to say that, while no single political party has ownership over 1916, they all have their origins in the events that unfolded during Easter week. The debate posed the question: "How have the political parties achieved the vision of the men and women of 1916 and in which ways have they failed?"

With contributions from politicians such as Mary Lou McDonald, Joe Costello, Éamon Ó Cuív, Ted Leddy and Des Dalton at the event, we were expecting large numbers. We got 125 on the night and the maximum capacity for the Pearse centre was 85 seats; it was a very full house. Two things stood out during this debate: no politician, no matter what end of the political spectrum, claimed that their party had achieved the vision of those of 1916. They had to concede that they had failed to achieve the Republic. The second thing from the debate is the amount of young people who were constantly questioning and challenging these prominent political figures; one could see the uncertainty in some of them regarding the present political institutions of our country, and also their eagerness and freedom to voice their opinion regarding the future of our nation.

Another major political event, on

8/4/16, will be based on the New Ireland Forum, which was set up in 1983-84 to determine a possible political solution to the national question. In 2016, 100 years after the 1916 Rising, the 1916 Clubs think it is opportune to call together a more representative (new) Ireland forum representing all the various strands of Irish nationalism and republicanism. Believing that there is more that unites us than divides us, we call on representatives of Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, Labour, Sinn Féin and Republican Sinn Féin to attend the meeting to discuss how best to find common ground for the future of the country. We propose to call this forum "The Young Ireland Forum" after those who have already proven that the idealism of 1916 still survives in modern Ireland.

Oisín McElvaney, Sec, 1916 Clubs

HONOUR OUR OPPRESSORS

Below is the text of a letter recently sent to the newspapers by Daltún Ó Ceallaigh.

I was amazed by the List of State Ceremonial Events for the Easter Rising published by the Department of the Taoiseach and which has just come to my attention.

It states, among other things, that, on 16th May 2016, in Grangegorman Military Cemetery, there is to be an "Event to mark the deaths of British soldiers who died during the Rising". One wonders what the event will involve, e.g. will the Irish Army conduct it.

As a Polish friend observed to me, this is like a commemoration of the Warsaw uprising during the Second World War including the marking of the deaths of German soldiers who helped to suppress it.

Significantly, the public will not be allowed to attend this event and the timing of it is yet to be announced.

It is both disgraceful and shameful that the military representatives of imperialism and enemies of Irish freedom in 1916 should be recognized in this way.

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