



THE IRISH REVOLT
1916 AND AFTER
SEAN MURRAY

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THE IRISH REVOLT, 1916 AND AFTER
by SEAN MURRAY.

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INTRODUCTION

It is a sign both of the strength and of the weakness of the Irish Revolutionary Movement today that we are republishing, on the threshold of the 50th Anniversary of 1916, this short pamphlet which was written for the 20th Anniversary.

A sign of strength in that this the latest of a number of works which have been republished by the Movement dealing with Irish historical subjects from a working class viewpoint.

A sign also of weakness in that a more detailed Marxist history of the Rebellion has not been written, a more serious analysis of the events of Easter Week from the Marxist view - point is needed, if only to expose the myth of the last surviving Commandant who later became the grave-digger of the Revolution. The struggle to write a working class history of those times has begun, as part of the work of building a revolutionary party of the working class in Ireland and this pamphlet is one of the opening shots in that struggle which must end by exposing the falsification of Irish history in the interest of the Irish ruling class on one hand and King St. Moscow on the other, especially since at this time when many working class youths are beginning to question the lies and myths of Irish society.

Sean Murray passed away from this world a few years ago, but in spirit he had passed away from the revolutionary movement long before that. He played an important role in the tie-up of Irish Communists with British Imperialism in 1941 and the following year presided over the rump Irish Communist Conference which provided the 'theoretical' fig-leaf for this unholy alliance.

Any discussion on 1916 in the present period must centre on two questions. First the question of the so-called peaceful road to Socialism and national independence, and second, the question of the role of Marxists in the first stages of a revolution in Ireland today.

The first question must be left for the time being with these remarks. If there is a possibility of a peaceful road to Socialism, than the world awaits it. Meanwhile, to refuse to believe in force in this century is as silly as refusing to believe in the laws of gravity post Newton.

The question of stages is more complex and full of snares. Complex in that one side in the dispute has never been honest

on this question and invariably the question of stages in revolution has been posed in an attempt to avoid the task of making the revolution. The second tendency has in reaction to this, tended to want to skip over stages.

The right-wing in this dispute is best represented by Desmond Greaves and certain elements in the leadership of the two parties in Ireland which claim to be Marxists. While the second tendency which verges on the ultra-left is best represented by a large number of young comrades in Belfast and a few trade unionists in Dublin.

Greaves and his like imply that because the first tasks of the Irish revolution will be the completion of the struggle for National Independence, territorial unity, and in so far as remains to be completed, the smashing of the large estates etc i.e. the completion of the 'bourgeois democratic revolution' and because in the first stage large numbers of the petty bourgeoisie will participate along side the working class, that therefore it is incorrect to put forward any slogans other than slogans which will satisfy the class needs of the so-called national bourgeoisie.

The other tendency, while fully realising the counter-revolutionary role of 'Irish National Capitalism' and their past and present inability to carry to a final conclusion the struggle against British Imperialism in Ireland appear to believe that the working class can by-pass this struggle. Both these tendencies are wrong. The Belfast comrades are guilty of an honest impetuous mistake while Greaves and Co., the cynical old men of the Irish Revolutionary Movement who should know, and do know, better, are merely fulfilling their role of attempting to lead the Irish Revolutionary Movement up the garden path.

SOCIALIST SLOGANS

Lenin has made the case that 1916 was a social revolution despite the presence of the urban petty bourgeoisie and even a hurried review of the back copies of the 'Irish Worker' and the 'Workers Republic' will show that Connolly put forward Socialist slogans. In the 'Workers Republic' for January 15th 1916 there appeared the demand for the economic conscription of the property of the propertied classes.

So much for those like Desmond Greaves and others who put forward the case for no Socialist slogans while at the same time claiming to follow in the footsteps of Connolly.

What is more, as the history of the Citizen Army shows, Connolly maintained at all times the independence and separate ideology of the working class, never hesitating to criticise the weakness of those people who were for the time being his allies. On Palm Sunday 1916 in a lecture to the Irish Citizen Army on 'street fighting' which was attended by officers of the volunteers he said "in the event of victory hold on to your rifles as those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached. We are out for economic freedom as well as political liberty." This shows that Connolly realised that it is not sufficient for a small clique at the top of the movement to know where they are going and what stages they are going through, but that it is necessary to educate the rank and file of the vanguard of the working class in a correct understanding of their role at all stages in the development of the revolution. Not for him the policy of praising people whom you know it will be necessary to struggle against at a later date. Connolly clearly knew that unless the rank and file know the real nature of their allies they will be taken completely by surprise when their fellow travellers in the struggle for national independence raise the slogan 'Labour must wait' and takes steps to make sure that Labour waits, as witness Ireland in 1922 and the bloody tragedy in Indonesia today.

Is Connolly then without blame as to his role in the rebellion? No, and it would be impossible to approach history in this manner. The task of Marxist historians must be to examine all events within the experience of the working class, from the viewpoint of correctly analysing the tactics and strategy so as to lay bare the mistakes made, and warn the working class against a repetition of these mistakes and in this sense a study of the role of the Citizen Army - the highest form of organization of the Irish working class at that time - reveals a number of errors. The failure to seize the printing presses, particularly the Murphyite 'Irish Independent', and to use this for the printing of mass propaganda. The absence of mass meetings in the republican held areas, especially in the North King Street area. The failure to seize the Bank of Ireland and Trinity College. This failure, due to Pearse's romantic notions about the 'old house of Parliament' was paid dearly for when the British Army used the Dame St - Pearse St - Nassau St fork to cut the republican positions in two. The failure to seize and then ration food stuff and clothing in the republican held area, which led to the looting on Thursday and Friday.

On that point we must deal briefly with certain critics

of Connelly's handling of the looting. Connelly was completely correct when he ordered the Citizen Army to fire on the looters on Monday and Tuesday. These critics, who are drawn almost entirely from the middle class, would be well advised to go now before it is too late into what was then the proletarian strong holds of Gloucester Diamond, Sean McDermott St., Summer Hill, etc., and speak to some of the old working class men and women on this point, and they will find that they have least sympathy with the looters of Monday and Tuesday who were drawn from the lumpen proletariats of the Dublin slums, the separation women and their fancy men, the banner men from Railway St., the Irish version of the 'King and Church' mob, to be found in all great cities.

As Engels explained in his prefixory note to The Peasant War in Germany, it is necessary to draw a river of blood between the revolutionary proletariat and these people. "But even the proletariat has not yet outgrown the parallel drawn with 1525. The class that is exclusively dependent on wages all its life is still far from forming the majority of the German people. This class is, therefore, also compelled to seek allies. The latter can only be found among the petty bourgeoisie, the lumpenproletariat of the cities, the small peasants and the agricultural labourers.

The petty bourgeois we have spoken of above. They are extremely unreliable except after a victory has been won, when their shouting in the beer houses knows no bounds. Nevertheless, there are very good elements among them, who join the workers of their own accord.

The lumpen proletariat, this scum of the depraved elements of all classes, which establishes headquarters in the big cities, is the worst of all possible allies. This rabble is absolutely venal and absolutely brazen. If the French workers, in every revolution, inscribed on the houses: *Mort aux voleurs! Death to thieves!* and even shot some, they did it, not out of enthusiasm for property, but because they rightly considered it necessary above all to keep that gang at a distance. Every leader of the workers who uses these scoundrels as guards or relies on them for support proves himself by this action alone a traitor to the movement.

The small peasants-- for the bigger peasants belong to the bourgeoisie-- differ in kind."

But above all, Connolly's failure to understand the conception of the combat party acting as the 'General Staff' of the working class is a failure for which the Irish working class suffered in 1916 and has suffered to this very day.

But what our Belfast comrades forget when they criticise Connolly on this score is that only one of the leaders of the world working class at that time understood the role of the party. Connolly was in good company in his misconceptions, Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg Leon Trotsky, like wise failed to understand this question at that time.

The fact that others shared Connolly's misconceptions does not alter the price that the workers and common people of Ireland have paid, and are paying, for the absence of a revolutionary party. But it must affect our assessment of the personal role of Connolly.

This pamphlet as we have said is published as part of the struggle to build a revolutionary party in Ireland and if it helps even half a dozen people to join us in this task then we shall be pleased.

N O T E

We would like to thank the following comrades for helping to make this pamphlet possible. Comrades Eileen Flynn, Helen Given and Peter Taffe.

THE IRISH REVOLT, 1916 AND AFTER

August, 1914 saw the start of the conflagration which we call the Great War. It was certainly "Great" measured by the extent of its participants, the number of its victims, the oceans of prejudice it let loose and the material ruin and wastage it wrought to the world.

What was it all about? What was the "holy urge" which could set ablaze five continents for four years, people land and sea with its dead bodies, the hospitals of every land with dead and dying, and leave smoke and wallsteads where once there were towns and cities?

On the side of the allied powers headed by Britain it was a high and noble business. There was Prussian militarism. That was to be finished once and for all. There were nations denied liberty - that was to be done away with. The tyranny of the Czarist and Turkish Empires - mankind could no longer green under these. "A reign of law based on the consent of the governed," such was the message from the land of Washington and Lincoln through the mouth of Woodrow Wilson. From Great Britain through the lips of Premier Lloyd George could be heard the war cry of "freedom for small nations and self-determination." Such were the signs under which the peoples were summoned to go forth on the great crusade.

It is clear enough to-day to all but the blindest that that war was not fought for any of the things which the peoples were led to believe in 1914. The promises then made were made by imperialists in the cause of imperialist conquest and greed. The peoples were deceived by their rulers. Prussian militarism is a greater menace to-day than ever. Democracy is being scrapped in favour of a system of the most barbarous dictatorship - Fascism - in one capitalist country after another. Weak countries are being invaded and their liberties taken away. One Treaty after another is being torn into shreds and cast into the waste paper basket. The fate of China, Abyssinia, the threat to Mongolia and the dagger now held at the heart of every independent State of Europe by German Fascism are sufficient commentary on the promises and slogans of 1914.

"THE SOVEREIGN IRISH PEOPLE"

On April 23rd, 1916, a Proclamation was read in Dublin declaring Ireland an independent Republic . The Proclamation was signed by the following leaders of revolutionary Republican and Labour thought and organisation in the country: Thomas J Clarke, Thomas MacDonagh, P H Pearse, Eamon Ceant, Joseph Plunkett, James Connolly, Sean MacDermott.

The proclamation read as follows:-

"Irishmen and Irishwomen.

"In the name of God and the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her reedom.

"Having organise and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her openmilitary organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

"We declare the right of the People of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and Government has not extinguished that right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destructionof the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty, six times during the past three hundred years they have asserting it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right, and again asserting in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a sovereign Independent State and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations."

That was Easter Monday, 1916, in Dublin City.

The Republic maintained an existence of five days. With liberal use of armed force and the bombardment of the city, the insurrection was crushed on Easter Saturday.

P.H. Pearse, on behalf of the Provisional Government, then signed the following :

"In order to prevent the further slaughter of unarmed people and in the hope of saving the lives of our followers, now surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered, members of the Provisional Government present at Headquarters have agreed to an unconditional surrender, and the commanders of all units of the Republican forces will order their followers to lay down their arms."

"I agree to these conditions for the men only under my own command in the Moore Street District and for the men in the Stephen's Green command.

"James Connolly"

"LEADERS EXECUTED"

The end of the insurrection was the beginning of a wholesale execution of the leaders by Mr. Asquith's Government. The first batch to face the firing squad was P. H. Pearse, Tom Clarke, Thomas MacDonagh. Under the command of General Sir John Maxwell, the court-martial and firing squads continued the work of condemning and shooting their captives. The insurrection began on April 27th, Easter Monday. The surrender took place on Saturday, April 28th. Pearse, Clarke and MacDonagh went to their doom on Wednesday May 3rd. From then until May 1st the executions continued. By that time all the signatories to the proclamation plus the insurgent commandants had been done to death. The Asquith Government, leading its own people in a war for freedom for small nations," took a terrible vengeance on the champions of freedom for Ireland. But the wrath of a frightened imperialism was not yet satisfied. Between Saturday, April 28th, and May 12th there lay in Abour Barracks one of the signatories of the Proclamation, the second in command to Pearse and representative of the revolutionary working class in the uprising - James Connolly.

" A GLORIOUS CHAPTER "

In his valedictory address to the Volunteer insurgents on the Friday prior to the surrender, P. H. Pearse wrote:

"I desire now, lest I may not have an opportunity later, to pay homage to the gallantry of the soldiers of Irish Freedom, who during the past four days have been writing with

fire and steel the most glorious chapter in the later history of Ireland. Justice can never be done to their heroism, to their discipline, to their gay and unconquerable spirit in the midst of peril and death.

"Let me, who have led them into this, speak in my own, and in my fellow-commanders' names, and in the name of Ireland present and to come, their praise and ask those who come after them to remember them".

"For four days they have fought and toiled, almost without sleep, and in the intervals of fighting they have sung songs of the freedom of Ireland. No man has complained, no man has asked "why?" Each individual has spent himself happy to pour out his strength for Ireland and for freedom. If they do not win this fight, they will have deserved to win. But win it they will, although they may win it in death. Already they have won a great thing. They have redeemed Dublin from many shames, and made her name splendid among the names of cities.

"If I were to mention names of individuals my list would be a long one.

"I will mention only that of Commandant General James Connolly, commanding the Dublin Division. He lies wounded but is still the guiding brain of our resistance.

"If we accomplish no more than we have accomplished, I am satisfied. I am satisfied that we should have accomplished more, that we should have accomplished the task of enthroning as well as proclaiming the Irish Republic as a Sovereign State, had our arrangements for a simultaneous rising of the whole country, with a combined plan as sound as the Dublin plan has been proved to be, been allowed to go through on Easter Sunday. Of the fatal countermanding order which prevented those plans from being carried out, I shall not speak further. Both Eoin MacNeill and we have acted in the best of interests of Ireland.

"For my part, as to anything I have done in this, I am not afraid to face either the judgment of God or the judgment of posterity."

"IMPERIALIST VENGEANCE"

In answer to protests against the apparently unending daily list of executions and a demand for their cessation, Mr. Asquith stated in the House of Commons that he intended to stop the carnage, but that there were two men still in custody whose lives must first be taken. These were James Connolly, the Socialist leader, and Sean MacDermott.

Connolly's execution was delayed owing to the fact, as stated in Pears's message, that he was "badly wounded." The Asquith Government had now to make up its mind whether it would be sheated out of its vengeance by a "mere" observance of the civilised custom of not executing a wounded man, or whether it would brush aside such trifles and bring its wounded captive before the firing squad. Imperialist vengeance took first place over civilised usage and human decency, and on May 12th, 1916, Connolly was delivered over to his executioners.

History will record this deed as among the blackest crimes of imperialism against the Irish nation and against the international Labour movement.

In 1848, in the midst of a nation ruined by famine and plague, in which it is calculated 2,000,000 people lost their lives, John Mitchel, in the dock at Green Street, received a sentence of fourteen years' penal servitude for organising the masses for rebellion; and in answer to the question as to why sentence should not be passed, he cried: "The law has now done its part, and the Queen of England, her Crown and her Government in Ireland are now secure, pursuant to Act of Parliament. But I have done my part also!"

These words sum up Easter Week. Imperialist vengeance in the name of the law, had done its part. Dublin was in ruins, the soldiery of the foreign conqueror had displaced the volunteers of the people, another Irish insurrection was crushed, the jails were again overflowing, fifteen leaders lay in quick lime, and Casement was on his way to the gallows, conducted thereto by the pioneer of the gentleman's rebellion in Ulster, "Galloper" Smith, afterwards Lord Birkenhead. Imperialism had done its part. So had revolutionary Ireland.

"INSANITY AND TREASON "

The Insurrection over, all shades of politics come forward to the incrust to investigate the causes and pronounce their verdicts. Mr. Augustine Birrell, the Liberal Chief Secretary for Ireland, gave the verdict of the ruling class of his country on the uprising. He was satisfied the rising was off the rails of Irish history and tradition. It was undertaken by a small minority of conspirators in opposition to the expressed will of official nationalist Ireland, led by Messrs. Redmond, Dillon and Devlin. Britain was engaged in a just war, and Ireland, Nationalist and Orange, had joined that war for freedom. Under such circumstances, Mr. Birrell

felt confident enough to state in the House of Commons that the rebellion "would never be regarded by the Irish people as a landmark in their history". Such was the verdict of the governing class of Britain on the uprising of '16.

It was now the turn of official nationalist Ireland to speak through the mouth of Mr Redmond: "I need not say how I regard this act with horror and detestation." He went on to appeal for clemency for the rank and file "on whose shoulders there lies a guilt far different from that of the ringleaders, instigators and fomentors of the outbreak." The Parliamentary statesman of the nationalist upper classes was satisfied that the revolt was an artificial affair and so to be dismissed.

"CRIMINAL MADNESS"

This viewpoint was even more clearly and forcibly expressed by the leading nationalist daily paper in Ireland, the "Irish Independent," a paper directly linked to the chief circles of the employers of labour, through its proprietor, Mr. William Martin Murphy.

In its first appearance after the insurrection, the "Independent" editorial was entitled "Criminal Madness," and on May 10th, two days before Connolly's execution, in a leading article entitled "The Clemency Plea," it wrote:

"When, however, we come to some of the ringleaders, instigators and fomentors not yet dealt with, we must make an exception (to the clemency plea. - S.M.) If these men are treated with too great leniency, they will take it as an indication of weakness on the part of the Government and the consequences may not be satisfactory. They may be more truculent than ever and it is therefore necessary that society should be protected against their activity.... It would hardly be fair to treat these leniently because the cry for clemency has been severely punished. Weakness to such men at this stage may be fatal.... Let the worst of the worst of the ringleaders be singled out and dealt with as they deserve."

The May 13th, 1916, issue of the "Independent" announced the execution of Connolly and MacDermott under the caption "Intriguers Pay the Penalty."

The organ of clericalism, the "Irish Catholic", joined in the imperialist chorus against the insurgents. It wrote:

"This extraordinary combination of rogues and fools. To find anything like a parallel for what has occurred, it

is necessary to have recourse to the bloodstained annals of the Paris Commune."

And on May 29th it wrote :

" What was attempted was an act of brigandage, pure and simple, and there is no reason to lament that its perpetrators have met the fate which from the very dawn of history has been universally reserved for traitors."

British imperialism, Irish capitalism, Irish clericalism - the verdicts of all were substantially the same. The rising was "criminal madness," treachery, led by men of ill-balanced mind and intriguers, would be disowned by the Irish people, and so on.

ONE ESTIMATE

From the ranks of ^{the} International Labour movement came differing estimates. A Conference of the Independent Labour Party of Great Britain at Newcastle-on-Tyne recorded its condemnation of militarism, but included among the "militarists" Connolly and the Easter insurgents. Heavily polluted with the poison of MacDonaldite pacifism, this Party of British Labour was quite unable to make a faithful working-class estimate of the great Dublin struggle.

Even some spokesmen of the International Left Wing Conference at Zimmerwald, in Switzerland, through its organ took up the position that the insurrection was a putsch - the product of a conspiracy without any mass roots or justification.

-AND ANOTHER

But from the Party of the Russian working class, through the man who was destined one year after Easter week to lead a great nation out of the shambles of the war and into freedom and Socialism, came a different estimation of the events in Dublin.

Lenin wrote:

"The term 'putsch', in the scientific sense of the word may be employed only when the attempt at insurrection has revealed nothing but a circle of conspirators, or stupid maniacs, and when it has roused no sympathy among the masses. The century-old Irish national movement, having passed through various stages and combinations of class interests, expressed itself, inter alia, in a mass Irish National Congress in America which passed a resolution calling for Irish independence - it expressed itself in street fighting conducted by a section of the urban petty bourgeoisie and a section of the workers after a long period of mass agitation, demonstrations,

suppression of papers, etc. Whoever calls such an uprising a 'putsch' is either a hardened reactionary or a doctrinaire, who is hopelessly incapable of picturing to himself a social revolution as a living phenomenon."

Amidst a torrent of denunciation and disapproval from the press and pulpits, from all the upper layers of society in Ireland the representatives of the Easter insurrection appealed to the masses of the people.

VERDICT OF THE MASSES

The masses gave their verdict in six bye-elections between the period of the insurrection and the close of the war. Five of these elections endorsed the uprising! The nationalist (Redmondite) candidates were routed and Republicans elected. Mr. Lloyd George, following his strategy of "keeping them talking," hastily got together a Convention in Trinity College to talk about Home Rule "by consent" in a separate effort to sidetrack the rapidly swelling tide of revolution in the country. The Convention came to nothing.

At the beginning of 1918 the issue of conscription came to the fore. The Imperial Government was here to suffer its first signal defeat at the hands of the masses of the Irish people. Inspired by the Easter Rising, roused by the slaughter of its revolutionary leaders, piercing the deception of the imperialist war cries about concern for subject peoples, self-determination and defence of small countries, the working masses of the country banded themselves together against being forced to fight imperialism's battles.

In the famous Mansion House Conference, all sections of the Nationalist, Republican and Labour Movements formed a united front against the conscription plan of the Coalition Government. The following made up the Conference: Eamonn de Valera, Arthur Griffith (Sinn Fein); John Dillon, Joseph Devlin (Nationalist Party); William O'Brien, T.M. Healy (Independent Nationalist Party); Thomas Johnston and William O'Brien (Labour); Chairman, Lawrence O'Neill, Lord Mayor of Dublin. At no period of the Irish National movement was there witnessed such a mass uprising of the people. The Lloyd George Government dropped the Conscription Act, so far as it applied to Ireland.

LENIN'S ESTIMATE VINDICATED

In the days of militarism and impending new imperialist wars the memory of that great popular victory of the Irish

people over the powerful Lloyd George Government must never be forgotten. Its lessons and examples are needed in Ireland to-day.

The Easter rising was to receive its final mass vindication in the General Election of 1918, the notorious "khaki election." Out of eighty-four Parliamentary seats the anti-Easter Week nationalists retained only six. John Dillon, the leader of the Nationalist Party, was among the defeated in Mayo. O' Brien and Healy discreetly retired without a fight in Cork. The betrayers of the national cause and supporters of the imperialist war went down before a hurricane of popular indignation.

The Easter uprising was now to confront the British imperialism in a mass form. It was now no longer a case of quelling a revolt in military fashion only. The masses had joined issue with imperialist tyranny for national liberation. They had given their verdict on the uprising and the lie to the Birrells, Redmonds, and the capitalist press who had misrepresented the greatest episode in modern Irish history as the act of criminals and lunatics.

Lenin's estimation of Easter Week was vindicated.

The first act of the newly-elected deputies, all but the half-dozen "nationalists" and a score of Unionists (Carsonites), was to meet in Dublin in January, 1919, to ratify the Easter Week proclamation declaring Ireland a Republic. The deputies took an oath of allegiance to the Republic, declared for a boycott of the Westminster Parliament and established Dail Eireann as the Parliament of the nation with a Government responsible to it. The Irish Volunteers became the Irish Republican Army under the control of the newly-established Government.

COERCION - THE BLACK AND TANS

The reply of the Lloyd George Coalition Government to this verdict of the General Election of 1918 was to proclaim Dail Eireann "an illegal assembly," and declare for a policy of coercion.

The democratically expressed will of the Irish people had now taken the place of Prussian militarism as the menace to British imperialism.

The '16 rising had been ruthlessly quelled and its leaders executed on the pretext, amongst others, that it was an action of men acting without popular approval. Faced with the clearly expressed will of the people in a

General Election, the Lloyd George Government answered with the Black and Tans. Finished fighting for "liberty" on the the Continent, the knight-errants of imperialism launched their crusade for Empire against the declared will of the Irish people.

The struggle from January, 1919, till December, 1921, is the story of the continuation of the Easter rising fortified by the mass power of the people, on one side, and the continuation on a corresponding scale of the Easter executions, proclamations, jailing and suppressions by the imperialist forces on the other. The Treaty of 1921 a compromise fraught with disastrous consequences to Ireland - brought the unity of the anti-imperialist forces to an end, closed one chapter in the history of the Irish national struggle and opened another. But to understand 1921 it is necessary to look more closely at the factors which made '16.

TWENTY YEARS AFTER: THE LESSON

Viewed from almost any angle, the agreement signed by the Irish representatives (Messrs. Griffith, Collins, Barton and Gavan Duffy) with Messrs. Lloyd George, Chamberlain, Churchill and Birkenhead on behalf of the British Government cannot be regarded as other than a defeat for nationalist Ireland. The Republic was abandoned, partnership with Empire accepted. The unity of the country was surrendered and the will of the Tory counter-revolution in England and "Ulster" legalised in the form of a separate State for Six Counties in the North-East. What did the national representatives get in return for the sacrifice of national unity and acceptance of monarchy and Empire? Even from the angle of economics the Treaty as nothing short of outrageous. The new Free State agreed to defray the costs of pensioning off the servants of the old Castle regime - the police, judges and civil servants. There was no stipulation about the land annuities, which means they were to be paid to the British, who continued collecting them up to 1932, and are conducting an economic war at this hour for the right to go on collecting them.

Worst of all, the partitioned state was to pay a sum of £11,000,000 per annum as a contribution towards imperial defence, in other words, for the "protection" of the imperial navy and suchlike. The disastrous character of the agreement from the business angle alone is best shown by the farce of the £11,000,000 imperial contribution. This money was never collected, and 1925 Mr. Baldwin cancelled the whole thing in return for the abandonment by the Cosgrave

Government of all claims to a revision of the Northern boundary. It was an agreement by which Baldwin gave away nothing, except what he never possessed, and Cosgrave brought back nothing, while the Premier could extol his "imperial generosity" and Cosgrave rant about the "hard bargain" he had driven!

The purely nationalist-minded see little, or in fact, no, connection between the capitulation of 1921 and the Easter rising. They take the view that 1916 was made by good men; the 1921 Treaty by bad ones. For many amongst us to this day the foregoing is not at all unfair or exaggerated representation of their viewpoint. But to seek for an explanation of the historic events with which we are dealing along any such paths will avail nothing.

FEAR OF SOCIAL REVOLUTION

The Communist Party of Ireland in its Inaugural Manifesto in 1933 estimates the position as follows:

"The 1921 betrayal was no accident of individual leaders being bribed or bought by the British. It was the inevitable outcome of a struggle in which the leadership was in the hands of a class who feared that the complete triumph of the national independence movement would not halt at national separation, but would develop into a social revolution, resulting in the overthrow of the Irish capitalist class and the establishment of a Workers' and Farmers' Socialist Republic."

Brutus, after assassinating Caesar, justified his act: Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more." The Irish upper classes were in much the same fix as Brutus: they loved Ireland much, but they loved their class more. They had chief say, in fact they alone had a decisive say, in the guidance of the national cause following 1916. All issues of a social character which would offend or estrange the wealthy classes were avoided and if raised were severely frowned upon.

The land annuities are a case in point. £5,000,000 (including the North) was being paid yearly to the British Government. The Republican Government had it in its power to settle this issue once and for all by instructing the people to cease paying this feudal tribute. From a national point of view it was nothing short of serious disloyalty to the people to continue paying the enemy this unjust tribute at a moment when the nation could be said to be at war. While men were laying down their lives for

the country's liberty, languishing in jails, fighting on the hillsides, sacrificing everything for their country's freedom, the Government of the First Dail was ensuring that John Bull got his £5,000,000 from the Irish farmers.

The stoppage of the annuity payments was a national duty. It would have been a blow at the basis of the Conquest. But just because it raised the social rights of the people as well as the national right of the nation, both national and social justice were alike sacrificed by the national leaders on the altar of fear of social revolution.

The National movement failed to act up to Fintan Lalor's war-cry, not merely to repeal the Union but to undo the Conquest. It aimed to effect a purely political change in the national status, but to leave intact the Conquest which had socially despoiled the people.

Across the whole conduct of Ireland's national struggle following Easter '16 is written in giant letters, the words "Fear of Social Revolution."

THE NATION AND THE CLASSES

The "social problem" has haunted all national endeavour right from the days of the United Irishmen, through Young Ireland and Fenianism. The revolutionary wing of Irish nationalism devoted its endeavour towards national separation, a Republic and the destruction of landlordism. From the 'eighties of the last century up to the commencement of the Twentieth Century the social issue was predominantly that of the land question, the battle of the peasant farmers against the landed garrison ruling by the bayonets of Dublin Castle.

The first decade of the present century and the beginning of the second decade saw the emergence into independent life of a new class, the industrial workers of the cities. James Connolly, a disciple of the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels, appeared on the scene towards the end of the Nineteenth Century and founded the Irish Socialist Republican Party. In 1907 Jim Larkin came to prominence in the strike of the Belfast Transport Workers, and from this can be dated the uprise of the modern Trade Union movement among the hitherto unorganised or poorly organised unskilled labourers. The junction between Larkin and Connolly in the 1913 strike in Dublin was the joining of the forces of Socialism and industrial labour.

CONNOLLY OR GRIFFITH

James Connolly put the Labour standpoint on the issue of the country's national liberation in these terms: "The cause of oppressed nations and oppressed classes is one and the same." He could not conceive of "a free Ireland with a subject working class," of a free working class with a subject Ireland. He boldly announced the doctrine that the freedom of Ireland from foreign rule was bound up with the freedom of the working class from the capitalist system. He arrived at this standpoint by a Marxian socialist analysis of the attitude of the various classes in Ireland to the national cause and was able to show that the men of property from the gentry down wards were "bound by a thousand golden threads to Empire" and that the Irish working class alone were the true "inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland."

The leading exponent of nationalism, Arthur Griffith, the founder of the Sinn Fein Party, took a directly opposite view to Connolly. Ranging himself in opposition to the Labour movement, denouncing Larkin and the 1913 strike, describing Connolly's doctrine as embodied in his 'Labour in Ireland' as a "Tract for the Times," Griffith claimed that there was no social problem in Ireland apart from foreign rule, and that the solution was to be found in the repeal of the Union politically and the creation of Irish industry without any change in the social system.

A national independence movement allied to the working class with its ultimate goal a Socialist Republic: such was the doctrine of Connolly. A national movement allied to the aspiring Irish capitalists with its ultimate goal a compromise with imperialism: such was the doctrine of Arthur Griffith.

Following '16 the Griffith standpoint predominated in the combined Sinn Fein-Republican movement, Griffith becoming Vice-President of the national organisation in 1917, and leading plenipotentiary in the Anglo-Irish negotiations in 1921.

Griffith was opposed to the 1916 rising, and his colleague, Eoin MacNeill, was guilty of an act of out and out disloyalty to the Rising at the eleventh hour. On the Easter Saturday morning. Mr. Griffith died in 1922 while conducting a civil war against the Republic. Nationalism divorced from the class struggle of the workers for social liberty came to a sorry end: the betrayal of the nation and armed conflict with the Republic proclaimed in 1916.

THE HOPE - RISING SOCIALISM

The ideals and objectives of Easter Week have yet to be fully realised. Their realisation alone can solve the national problem in Ireland. Compromises and bargains between Irish capitalists and governing classes of Great Britain can only aggravate the evils of the present situation for both peoples. Not with dying capitalism but with rising Socialism can the future freedom and well-being of the Irish nation be secured. The revolutionary working class attitude to the national fight in Ireland has been vindicated by history. The movement for freedom must now be constructed in such a manner as to avoid past errors.

The Irish Communist Party is convinced that the way to success lies through a powerful united Labour movement joined to all that is virile in the national cause and directed to the simultaneous destruction of national and social enslavement of the people, to the Workers' and Farmers' Republic.

In this spirit should Irishmen and women salute the Twentieth Anniversary of Easter, 1916.

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