

"Mgr. O'Riordan, Bishop O'Dwyer and the shaping of new relations between nationalist Ireland and the Vatican during World War One".

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1) Introduction: home rule, the war and the Vatican.

The First World War broke out at a moment when the British Parliament in London, thanks to the efforts of the Nationalist Party headed by John Redmond, was about to grant Ireland Home Rule. Although the implementation of Home Rule was deferred until after the war and the Ulster question not yet settled in a definitive way, the Nationalist Party saw the conflict in Europe as a way to show Ireland's nationhood and manhood and entirely supported the British war effort. According to the party, the democracy of Great Britain had granted Ireland autonomy and the British Empire was indeed fighting for the rights of small nations.

The Irish Catholic Church, generally in favour of Home Rule and backing John Redmond, supported the party's initial endeavours in the war effort. Like her sister Churches in Europe, the Irish Church had succumbed to the fever of nationalism and exhorted Irishmen to fight against Germany and her allies. Most of the Irish bishops and priests had a manichean vision of the war: it was good against evil. Bishop Foley of Kildare and Leighlin spoke of "the armies which are fighting on the side of justice and right"¹ whereas Bishop McHugh of Derry denounced Germany and her "new philosophy of life which goes by the name of *Kultur*"². These two statements clearly reflect the frame of mind of most clergymen at the beginning of the war and also show that the peace appeals of the new pope,

Benedict XV, elected in September 1914 after the death of Pius X, was or would not be heard.

However, among a certain number of ecclesiastics who decided to show their allegiance to the pope or who were not satisfied with John Redmond's policy, two men, both from the diocese of Limerick, distinguished themselves: Bishop Edward O'Dwyer and Mgr. Michael O'Riordan, rector of the Irish College in Rome. Both men would be responsible for a tangible rapprochement between nationalist Ireland and the Vatican. Only a few decades before 1914, Pope Leo XIII had decided, due to diplomatic considerations, to back England against nationalist Ireland and her Plan of Campaign during the Land War³. The First World War, its horror and its diplomacy, provided the incentive for the rapprochement. Before relating the events that led to this rapprochement, it is necessary to study briefly the political position adopted by O'Dwyer in Ireland and O'Riordan in Rome, and also the diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the belligerent powers, notably Germany.

Bishop Edward O'Dwyer was an Irish nationalist who embraced the cause of Home Rule in the 1870's when Isaac Butt was leader of the Nationalist Party. However, he was also an ecclesiastic with ultramontane tendencies and, contrary to Cardinal Logue and Archbishops Walsh and Croke, he accepted the Vatican's condemnation of the Plan of Campaign in 1887 during the Land War. So much so that he forbade the priests of his diocese to absolve anybody who was involved in the Plan⁴. Pope Leo XIII's decision caused strong anti-Vatican feelings throughout nationalist Ireland but O'Dwyer stuck firmly to the views of the Holy See and earned himself the nickname of "Landlord Bishop" by the angry Catholic and nationalist people.

The First World War would radically change this state of affairs and make the bishop the most popular ecclesiastic in the country. O'Dwyer did not endorse John Redmond's war policy for

he believed that Ireland had not been granted Home Rule and that the danger of partition was still looming. A few months before the conflict he wrote to Mgr. O'Riordan in Rome that "we are still in great uncertainty as to the measure of Home Rule we are to get (...) we shall have two Irelands and the Government and the Irish Party are simply turning down opinion in the country"⁵. O'Dwyer accused the Nationalist Party of having adopted a servile attitude towards the Liberal Government of Herbert Asquith and wished John Redmond to be more independent in his dealings with the British cabinet. Therefore, unlike the vast majority of the Irish Catholic clergy and the nationalist population during the first months of the war, O'Dwyer did not support recruitment for the British army and denounced the war in itself. Once again, he had decided to follow the Vatican and its policy of peace and apparent neutrality. Indeed, on the 1st of November 1914, the new pope, Benedict XV, made an uncompromising appeal for peace in his encyclical *Ad Beatissimi*. It was rejected by most governments and Catholic hierarchies of the belligerent countries. O'Dwyer, deeply inspired by Benedict XV, would defend the pope's peace initiatives until his death in August 1917. In November 1914, he said about the war that "we can only look on in horror and dismay; we are powerless; the people of the world are powerless while this wild fury, like an evil spirit, has taken possession of their rulers"⁶. O'Dwyer had become a fervent antimilitarist and the war would place him in direct and public opposition to John Redmond and his party. To the bishop, the latter had decided on a disastrous course of action for nationalist Ireland.

In Rome, the rector of the Irish College, Mgr. Michael O'Riordan, agreed with the Bishop of Limerick. O'Riordan had been appointed to the Italian capital in 1905 and was an enthusiastic supporter of the Nationalist Party. His aim was to manage the college and not to deal with politics. He wrote to Mgr. Joseph MacRory, the Bishop of Down and Connor, that "I have never been a politician in the usual sense; never a reader of

newspapers. Hence my political convictions are few, the fundamental being to trust neither Liberal or Tory and the former even less than the latter"⁷. Like O'Dwyer, O'Riordan deplored the Nationalist Party's lack of independent policies towards the British government and did not agree that the war was a means to affirm Ireland's nationhood and that home rule was secure. In December 1914, he wrote to O'Dwyer that there was "a lowered sense of national dignity which had (...) fallen more since the war began, than in thirty years before"⁸. However, the rector was soon to change his attitude towards politics and diplomacy. According to Fr. John Hagan, the very nationalist vice-rector of the Irish College, O'Riordan had indeed come to Rome without political intentions but was forced to change his mind because of the English colony residing in the city and who were not in favour of Home Rule and nationalist Ireland⁹. Furthermore, O'Riordan wished that the Irish Catholic Church in Rome be represented by Irish prelates and not by English ones like Cardinals Francis Bourne of Westminster and Aidan Gasquet. He also knew that the Vatican did not regard Ireland as being important from an ecclesiastical point of view¹⁰, and that certain Italian newspapers, such as the *Corriere d'Italia*, influenced by English conservative politicians, misrepresented Irish politics and history¹¹. The rector, therefore, set out to defend the distinct Irish nationality and opted for a separatist policy in order to show the pope and the Roman curia that Ireland, like Great Britain, was a nation and that she had her own Church which did not depend on Westminster for decision-making or other ecclesiastical affairs.

Unlike Bishop O'Dwyer, O'Riordan had a more cautious approach to ultramontanist. He, too, could remember the days of Leo XIII's intervention in the Plan of Campaign. In fact, his pre-war political activities were geared toward avoiding all unnecessary and harmful intervention on the part of the Vatican in Anglo-Irish relations. When the war started, his fears were that the English Government might, yet again, use the Vatican in

order to control Irish nationalism. Although his reaction was understandable and justified, O'Riordan could not have known that the First World War had created a diplomatic climate favourable to nationalist Ireland. It would seem that the Holy See, despite its policy of strict neutrality, was discreetly favouring Germany and her allies. Before the war, the Vatican was on the brink of bankruptcy and from the end of 1914, it benefitted from German financial aid until at least 1917. The financial transactions took place through Swiss banks. Benedict XV and his Cardinal Secretary of State, Pietro Gasparri, knew about those transactions. Also, the Vatican found out in December 1915, if not before, that it had been excluded from the future peace conference in a secret treaty signed in March 1915 between Italy and Britain¹². Under those circumstances, one could not expect the Vatican to favour British diplomacy and policies in Europe or Ireland... Benedict XV was not Leo XIII and O'Riordan would successfully confront the British in Rome. In doing so, one of the rector's main achievements was to forge a strong relationship between the ultramontane O'Dwyer and the Vatican.

2) British influence at Rome and O'Riordan.

When the war broke out, the Triple Entente realised that it was in a weak position in the Vatican: republican France had broken off all diplomatic relations with the Holy See and Protestant Britain had no official representative to the pope's court. Rapidly, however, the two countries would remedy this situation, for both were rightly convinced that Germany and her allies could successfully influence the Supreme Pontiff and the Italian hierarchy. In November 1914, the Italian newspaper *Giornale d'Italia* announced the arrival of a British diplomatic mission to the Holy See and was of the opinion that it would stay in Rome for at least until the end of the war¹³. Sir Edward Grey, Britain's Foreign Secretary, had instructed Sir Henry Howard, head of the mission, to give the pope exact information

of the events that had already occurred or that might occur during the period of his mission¹⁴. It would appear that the sending of a British envoy to Rome was Cardinal Aidan Gasquet's brainchild. Gasquet was an English Benedictine monk who had been appointed President of the Commission for the Revision of the Vulgate by Pius X and had been resident in the abbey of San Calisto in Rome since 1908. He also was an ardent English patriot who had defended the behavior of British soldiers during the Boer War in South Africa¹⁵. He was not a supporter of Irish nationalism and had had several clashes with O'Riordan and notably Hagan, the vice-rector of the college, in 1914 to whom he denied having told the Vatican that Home Rule was against the interests of the Irish Catholic Church¹⁶. Gasquet believed that the Italian Church generally supported Germany and was influenced by the activities of the Bavarian and Austrian ministers. He complained about this state of affairs to John Redmond¹⁷ who in turn privately helped the setting up of the British mission in Rome¹⁸.

Thus Mgr. O'Riordan's fears had become a reality: the new special envoy to the Vatican would explain Britain's attitude towards the war and possibly towards its own small dependent nationality, Ireland. Sir Henry Howard's arrival in Rome worried many independent nationalists. Mgr. Michael Curran, secretary to Archbishop Walsh of Dublin and later vice-rector of the Irish College, wrote to Hagan: "So you have got a Minister Plenipotentiary, what Leo [XIII] spent a life time trying to achieve (...) It looks very like as if the year that was to have seen Home Rule for Ireland will see Rome Rule with sauce à l'Anglaise"¹⁹. Hagan himself wrote in the *Catholic Bulletin* that "it [was] impossible to hide the feelings of apprehension with which the step [was] viewed by Irish residents in Rome, where memories [were still surviving] of a somewhat similar, if unofficial, mission in the past that [had] left behind them a bad taste in the mouth"²⁰. The vice-rector was alluding here to George Errington who, unofficially on behalf of the British

Government, had intervened in the nomination of Irish Bishops during Leo XIII's papacy²¹.

If some Irish ecclesiastics had become aware of a possible threat to the interests of nationalist Ireland, the question was how to eliminate it? Mgr. O'Riordan outlined his plan to Bishop O'Dwyer in December 1914 and would follow the same policy until the end of the war: to minimize the importance of Sir Henry Howard in Rome and show to the Roman society, be it religious or lay, that the British Extraordinary Envoy represented England and not Ireland and that the Irish College had therefore nothing to do with him. He explained to O'Dwyer that Cardinal Gasquet had organized a reception in Howard's honour but that the college would not be represented: "I don't know what the other Irish will do in Rome; but this college shall not be represented! To any who asked me what was said about the special envoy in Ireland, I replied that nothing was said -that he does not concern them: he represents England, but not Ireland"²². On the 3rd of January 1915, O'Riordan informed O'Dwyer that though he had been invited he did not go to the reception "as he [was] not a Britisher". On Howard, he remarked ironically that he was here "to counteract German falsehood by English truth"²³. Cardinal Gasquet and other British ecclesiastics would equally suffer from O'Riordan's ostracism. The two letters not only describe O'Riordan's separatism but also show that the rector, like O'Dwyer, had become an independent nationalist who did not approve the Nationalist Party's attitude towards the war and Great Britain. Concerning the war, he shared the bishop's view that Germany was not specifically to blame for it²⁴. In November 1914, O'Dwyer had publicly denounced the war as unjustifiable. On The 6th of January 1915, O'Riordan wrote to O'Dwyer that he found it surprising that the bishop had not been shot by the military authorities and commented sarcastically: "How are 'our' troops doing? And are the hopes of the 'Hiberno-English Empire' high?"²⁵. Obviously, the rector did not share John Redmond's enthusiasm about the creation of the 16th Irish Division

supposed to symbolize Ireland's nationhood and manhood.

3) O'Dwyer/O'Riordan and the pope's peace appeal of 7 February 1915.

The 7th of February 1915 was a date that would start a new and very effective collaboration between O'Dwyer and O'Riordan which would eventually start the shaping of new relations between the Vatican and nationalist Ireland. Pope Benedict XV had instructed it to be a day of expiation and prayer for peace. A week later, inspired by the pope's prayers, the Bishop of Limerick wrote an eloquent Lenten pastoral in favour of peace in which he explained that all the nations were responsible for the present conflict and that the doctrine of the just war had not been taken into account²⁶. According to Fr. John Hagan, O'Riordan saw there a chance to defend the bishop's reputation which had suffered because of the position he adopted during the Plan of Campaign²⁷. But, most of all, the rector noticed that O'Dwyer had decided to voice the pope's initiatives. Most of the other European Bishops did not do so. Therefore, the possibility of bringing together nationalist Ireland, embodied by O'Dwyer rather than Redmond, and the Holy See was not so remote. Equally, if the rapprochement took place, O'Riordan knew that it would be difficult for the British mission and English ecclesiastics to interfere in Irish affairs in Rome. He decided to translate O'Dwyer's Lenten pastoral into Italian and distribute it to the pope and the Roman curia. Moreover, the international diplomatic situation helped the rector to create the first link between the Bishop of Limerick, the Vatican and the Roman hierarchy. At that time precisely, the Holy See was trying to keep Italy out of the war, for Italian participation would mean the isolation of the Vatican, still not an independent state²⁸. O'Riordan's initiative was crowned with success. He had an audience with Benedict XV and in March 1915, the rector explained to O'Dwyer why he had translated his pastoral: "The Pope read some of it in my presence, and seemed

pleased. I was moved to translate it because I knew its neutral tenor would please him"²⁹. Cardinal De Lai was also pleased and wanted to publish the pastoral in the *Sabina Bulletin*. In April, O'Riordan told the bishop that Cardinal Ferrari of Milan and Archbishop Sbaretti were extremely satisfied³⁰. In June 1915, two weeks after Italy entered the war, he wrote that De Lai still wanted more copies and that the Archbishop of Florence congratulated O'Dwyer, whereas the Cardinal of Naples had used the pastoral for his seminary³¹. O'Riordan, perhaps without knowing it, had benefitted from favourable diplomatic circumstances in order to make O'Dwyer known in Italy. But what was far more certain is that he had succeeded in catching the Italian hierarchy's attention for the Bishop of Limerick. He could now hope that the pope and the Roman curia would give favourable consideration to nationalist Ireland's case. Subsequent events would prove this to be true.

As rector of the Irish College, O'Riordan had regular audiences with Benedict XV which he related to Bishop O'Dwyer. It was for him an opportunity to discuss the political situation in Ireland and give his own version of events. The pope would not only get his information from Cardinal Gasquet or Sir Henry Howard. In July 1915, O'Riordan explained to the Supreme Pontiff that Cardinal Bourne of Westminster and the English hierarchy had very little influence on the British government but that "the Irish Bishops have much influence, not because they are Catholic bishops or Irish, but because they have the Irish Parliamentary Party to enforce their view in Parliament"³². O'Riordan went on to explain that the party held the balance of power and that the Irish Catholic Church was the only Church to have that influence at their command. The rector's message was clear: the Irish Church was more powerful than the English one. O'Riordan seemed to have favourably impressed the pope. Indeed, a serious crisis between the Irish hierarchy and Cardinal Francis Bourne took place concerning correspondence between the Holy See and the Irish Catholic Church, and concerning military

chaplains. On the chaplaincy issue, for instance, Bourne had decided to solve the lack of chaplains in the British Imperial Army by appointing Irish priests over whom he had no authority and whose distinct nationality he did not seem to recognize. It would take too long to explore this issue in the context of this paper but the Irish hierarchy showed a strong separatist and nationalist feeling. O'Riordan played an important role in explaining to the pope the Irish point of view. Benedict XV reassured the rector that the Irish bishops were right and that they had nothing to fear³³. In fact, even Cardinal Gasquet wrote in May 1916 that the pope was very unsatisfied with Bourne's attitude³⁴.

Gasquet and Howard's mission became increasingly difficult as the war went on. They had not much hope in trying to defend successfully English policy in Europe or in Ireland. Three months after the Secret Anglo-Italian Treaty had been signed in which the Vatican had been excluded from the future peace conference, Pietro Gasparri, the Cardinal Secretary of State, found out and confronted Howard who knew nothing about it³⁵... The two Englishmen were simply not in a position to influence Benedict XV or the Roman curia in any way. This was not true for O'Dwyer and O'Riordan. They had understood that the best way to counter British influence or policy in the Holy See was to follow the pope's peace initiatives which would bring about the rapprochement between their country and the Vatican.

4) O'Dwyer/O'Riordan and the pope's peace appeal of 28 July 1915.

Benedict XV's peace letter of the 28th of July 1915 provided another occasion for the two Limerick men to do so. O'Dwyer had followed the political evolution in Ireland closely. Irish enthusiasm for the war had waned and recruitment figures had dropped. The War Office had made blunder upon blunder and had been reluctant to acknowledge Irish nationality despite the

warnings of John Redmond and John Dillon. The newly created 16th Irish Division was mainly commanded by Protestant and unionist officers whereas the 36th Ulster Division was almost 100 per cent unionist and was operating a sectarian recruitment policy. The 10th Irish Division, with thousands of redmondite supporters, fought bravely in Gallipoli but the War Office refused to mention their courage, leading the Irish nationalist people to believe that they had been voluntarily sacrificed³⁶. Sir Edward Carson and the intransigent unionist James Campbell had become members of the British cabinet. The Catholic Church's support for the war effort in Ireland was declining rapidly. Bishop Fogarty of Killaloe deplored the Nationalist Party's lack of independent policy and officially broke off all relations with Redmond³⁷. Yet, the nationalist leader continued to support recruitment until his death in March 1918. Redmond probably thought that if he withdrew all nationalist support for the war effort, the gap with the unionists would widen considerably and would unavoidably lead to partition. O'Dwyer, however, could no longer ignore the people's opinion. In a strong position, because of his recent Italian success, he decided to make a public appeal to John Redmond. The bishop's letter argued for world peace and the pope's latest initiative and warned against a financial catastrophe that the war would provoke in Ireland³⁸. Redmond's reply was negative, short and inappropriate and incensed O'Dwyer. Certain radical nationalists like Eoin MacNeill praised the bishop openly³⁹. It was the beginning of O'Dwyer's immense popularity in Ireland and his almost personal confrontation with Redmond which did the Nationalist Party much damage. O'Riordan, confident that O'Dwyer's letter would favourably impress Rome, decided to translate it. Once more, the rector was right. In September 1915, he wrote to O'Dwyer that the Under-Secretary of State, Mgr. Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pope Pius XII during the Second World War, had told him that the pope "was very pleased with it, and was having some of it printed in the *Osservatore Romano*"⁴⁰. However, O'Riordan thought that it had been censored.

In December 1915, O'Dwyer wrote a very long pamphlet concerning the pope's peace efforts, his confrontations with John Redmond, his refusal to believe in German war atrocities and the hypocrisy of the main powers towards small nations. It was published by the *American Ecclesiastical Review* and meant to impress the Irish-American Catholics. Arthur Griffith's newspaper, *Nationality*, equally published the pamphlet. O'Riordan translated it and entitled it *L'Appello del Santo Padre per la Pace*, the Holy Father's Appeal for Peace. It was published in January 1916 and distributed to the pope and the Italian cardinals⁴¹. In a footnote, the rector explained to the Italian reader that it was O'Dwyer's desire to show Redmond's bad decisions and that home rule would only come into operation after the war. In fact, O'Riordan's new initiative was meant to counter certain activities of Cardinals Bourne and Gasquet who were trying to convince Benedict XV that there was a "unity of spirit" between Ireland and England due to the war, which was not at all the case. On the 5th of January 1916, O'Riordan wrote to O'Dwyer that he had inserted a footnote in order to explain to the Romans that the war had not unified the two countries. He also told the pope who had asked him if there was such a "*perfetta unità di spirito*", a perfect unity of spirit, that he quite doubted that⁴². In Rome, O'Riordan successfully pursued his separatist policies which considerably frustrated Gasquet. In January 1916, the English cardinal wrote to Archbishop Walsh of Dublin and complained that the Irish College had boycotted him. He also denied being anti-Irish or having acted as such on many occasions⁴³. Perhaps did he believe that Walsh would incite Fr. John Hagan, who was from the diocese of Dublin, to adopt another attitude? But this did not happen. Not even the Easter Rising of April 1916 would change the college's and the Vatican's position towards the British in Rome.

5) The impact of the Easter Rising of 1916.

The events in Dublin did not take Mgr. O'Riordan and Fr. John Hagan by surprise. They had been informed by Count Plunkett around the 8th of April 1916⁴⁴. The count had been sent to the Vatican by Eoin MacNeill in order to obtain the pope's approval and blessing for the rebels⁴⁵ and had also met the German ambassador in Switzerland to whom he gave a letter for Sir Roger Casement⁴⁶ who was then in Berlin. According to Plunkett, his audience lasted almost two hours in complete privacy. The count remembered Benedict XV's knowledge of Irish affairs: "I was much struck with the Pope's familiarity with the Irish cause, and with the arguments put forward by England"⁴⁷. This was further proof of O'Riordan's activities in Rome.

Meantime in Ireland, the Bishop of Limerick had written a devastating reply to General John Maxwell, the commander in chief of the British forces which defeated the rebels in Dublin, who had asked O'Dwyer to suspend two priests of his diocese, Fr. Hayes of Newcastle West and Fr. Wall of Drumcollogher. The general believed that the two men were guilty of subversive activities. Not only did the bishop defend his priests but he also denounced the general's oppressive military regime and the way the leaders of the Rising had been summarily executed. O'Dwyer's letter was published at a time when Irish nationalist public opinion was changing in favour of the rebels. The population largely approved O'Dwyer's action⁴⁸. On the 27th of May 1916, the rector reassured O'Dwyer, after his letter to General Maxwell, that the pope was not displeased with him and that Herbert Asquith, the British Prime Minister, had never complained to Benedict XV⁴⁹. O'Riordan equally told the bishop that the people in Rome thought he was a fenian⁵⁰. All those rumours prompted O'Riordan to write a pamphlet on the political situation in Ireland. In June 1916, he wrote to Cardinal Gasparri about his intentions. He told the Secretary of State that the British government might approach the Vatican about the

recent rising in Ireland and also told him that he was in a position to inform him about the event in question⁵¹. The pamphlet was printed in September 1916 and soon became known as the "Red Book", because of the colour of its cover. It was 43 pages long, written in Italian and entitled *La Recente Insurrezione in Irlanda, Esposizione delle sue Cause e delle sue Conseguenze*, The Recent Insurrection in Ireland, Account of its Causes and Consequences. It would be too long to evoke in detail the contents of the "Red Book". Briefly, it was an exposé of the British government's policy in Ireland concerning home rule and the war effort and why this had led to the creation of a nationalist paramilitary force that eventually rose against the British authorities. Although O'Riordan did not justify the Rising, he defended the rebels's behaviour during the fighting in Dublin and contrasted it to certain bad actions of the British army. He also explained that the English government had never forgiven the Irish Catholic Church for not having helped the police and the civil service in carrying out their duties. Finally, he stated that the present war was not at all about small nations and he denounced the hypocrisy of the main powers. As an example, he made a comparison between Belgium and Ireland. O'Riordan's sources were mainly extracts of English newspapers and official reports criticizing the English in Ireland. Thus, the Italian reader could not accuse him of partiality. O'Dwyer's writings figured as well, notably his letter to General Maxwell and a letter the bishop had written in the defence of Irish emigrants in Liverpool trying to flee conscription and who had been attacked by a hostile English crowd⁵². O'Riordan's greatest achievement was that every nationalist, from John Redmond to Arthur Griffith, would have approved of the "Red Book". It certainly was not a statement in favour of one particular brand of Irish nationalism.

The "Red Book" created a sensation in Roman ecclesiastical and diplomatic society. In October 1916, O'Riordan informed O'Dwyer that Cardinal Maffi was asking for more copies⁵³. O'Riordan had also sent a copy to Cardinal Farley of New-York

who wanted two other ones⁵⁴ and who suggested that it should be translated into English for "it [needed] to reach the large range of readers it [would] command"⁵⁵. It is more difficult to know with certainty what the pope's reaction had been. If one takes into account Germany's financial aid to the Vatican and the exclusion of the Holy See from the future peace conference by Italy and Britain, it would be unlikely that he had objected to it. However, Cardinal Gasquet's activities provide an extra clue. He had contacts with a French civil servant called André Géraud, based in the French embassy in London. Géraud had been responsible for several propaganda missions in Ireland involving members of the French and Irish Catholic hierarchies⁵⁶. Their aim had been to boost recruitment in Ireland. One month after the circulation of the "Red Book" in Rome, Géraud wrote his impressions on O'Riordan and Hagan in a report for the French Foreign Office, the *Quai d'Orsay*: "they have committed real acts of treason... they have direct and clandestine access to the Pope... according to Cardinal Gasquet, they have a real influence on him"⁵⁷. It was as well real evidence that Gasquet did interfere in Irish affairs despite his claiming the contrary... Count De Salis, who had replaced Sir Henry Howard at the head of the British mission, did not advise the new Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, to continue prosecution against the Irish College. De Salis was of the opinion that the Vatican would do nothing⁵⁸. As to the French embassy in Rome, it informed their Prime Minister that O'Riordan's pamphlet was "only an apology for the insurrection in Ireland and an indictment against the British government's policy in that part of the United-Kingdom"⁵⁹. It seemed that the war had changed the nature of traditional Franco-Irish relations. Only a century before, the rector would have been a precious ally for the French! O'Riordan's initiative had been successful. The British in Rome were unable to use the Easter Rising in order to operate a rapprochement with the Vatican and use the latter against Irish nationalism. In fact, the Holy See would move closer towards Ireland thanks, once more, to the Bishop of Limerick's writings

and O'Riordan's prompt translations.

6) Conclusion: O'Dwyer and O'Riordan's influence after 1916 to the end of the war.

In September 1916, O'Dwyer had taken a new departure and had publicly declared his support for Sinn Féin. O'Riordan, though in complete agreement with the bishop so far, would not follow him. The rector's reasons were practical rather than political. In October 1916, he wrote to Bishop O'Donnell of Raphoe arguing that the Nationalist Party had made serious mistakes but that it should not be destroyed for it would take too long to build up another one. O'Riordan stated: "... to dethrone the chairman now would mean practically to dissolve the Party: and that would leave the country in chaos"⁶⁰. The rector did not hide his opinions and told O'Dwyer about his political convictions in April 1917: "I shudder at the thought of disruption of that Party (...) If they see they have blundered, then let them set themselves right by getting off the pedestal of political infallibility, begin to work with courage & independence, & win back the national prestige they have unquestionably lost (...) Let them mend themselves, & things will be right"⁶¹. Yet, the two men agreed to differ and continued their effective collaboration until the end, sensing that the war had made a rapprochement between nationalist Ireland and the Vatican possible, whatever version of nationalism Ireland would embrace.

O'Dwyer's last Pastoral letter was written in February 1917. It was entirely dedicated to the pope's peace efforts. O'Riordan gave an Italian translation to Benedict XV and at least nine cardinals. The results were even better than before. In a letter to O'Dwyer, the rector related in detail his audience with the Supreme Pontiff. A large extract merits to be quoted:

"I had an audience with His Holiness on Saturday.

Whilst I approached him, after my genuflection, he stood up, and with a joyful smile told me at once that he thanked me for sending him the letter. He then began to launch out in its praise as he sat down, and spoke of it for quite four or five minutes. He commissioned me to thank you for it, and to tell you what he thought of it. He said Card. Gasparri came to see him a few days ago bringing his copy and asked the Pope if he had seen it. 'I told him' said the Pope, 'that I had one myself'. 'It is really grand' said the Cardinal, 'it contains everything; the very things we have been saying for the last three years: it is a pity it cannot be published'. (...) The Pope said what the Pastoral says is all true: and the truth said with great accuracy and power. (...) I am very glad I have translated all these, they help to raise the prestige of the Irish Church".⁶²

Cardinal Gasquet had been right when he told André Géraud that O'Riordan had much influence on the pope but should have mentioned that O'Dwyer's writings played an important role. Benedict XV had led a relatively independent policy towards the belligerent countries. As shown earlier, the war had created a wide gap between Britain and the Vatican. Since 1914, O'Riordan had been trying to prove that Ireland and Britain were two distinct countries and that the Catholic Church of the former was more important than the one of the latter. In 1917, his separatist policy had paid off. A major key to his success was that O'Dwyer forcefully voiced the pope's opinions on the war and that he systematically translated the bishop's Pastorals. Between Irish ecclesiastics in favour of peace and British cardinals and diplomats justifying their country's participation in the conflict, Benedict XV's choice had been all too clear. When the Bishop of Limerick died in August 1917, O'Riordan was right to say that "he had been beyond question the first bishop

in Ireland" and that "in the mind of the highest ecclesiastics [in Rome] he [was] one of the first bishops of Europe"⁶³.

The war was to last another year and O'Riordan pursued the same policy. He defended the Irish hierarchy's position during the conscription crisis in April 1918 and dissuaded the Vatican to interfere after initial British diplomatic pressure⁶⁴. In May 1918, the French embassy in Rome sent a report to Paris on the rector's role in that crisis: "Benedict XV is totally won over by the Irish and will do nothing against Cardinal Logue and the bishops who know that they have nothing to fear from him. (...) The intermediary between the Pope and the bishops is Mgr. Michael O'Riordan who, since 1905, has been the rector of the Irish College in Rome. (...) He has easy access to Benedict XV and has seen him a lot recently"⁶⁵. The First World War had drastically changed the relations between nationalist Ireland and the Vatican. Never again would the Holy See interfere in Irish politics on behalf of Britain. The pope and the Roman curia were now fully convinced of the legitimacy of Irish independence and the importance of her Church. Ultramontanism was no longer to be feared by Irish nationalists. Two men had been at the origin of those new relations: Mgr. Michael O'Riordan and Bishop Edward O'Dwyer.

- ¹ *The Irish Times*, 16/08/14.
- ² *The Irish Catholic Directory*, 1916, p.503.
- ³ Emmet Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church and the Plan of Campaign in Ireland 1886-1888*, Cork, Cork University Press, 1978.
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²³ Limerick Diocesan Office, O'Dwyer Papers, file "Mgr. O'Riordan to Bishop O'Dwyer, 1887-1917", O'Riordan to O'Dwyer, 03/01/15.

²⁴ Limerick Diocesan Office, O'Dwyer Papers, file "Mgr. O'Riordan to Bishop O'Dwyer, 1887-1917", O'Riordan to O'Dwyer, 03/01/15, and O'Riordan to O'Dwyer, 06/01/15.

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²⁷ *The Catholic Bulletin*, Nov. 1919, "Notes from Rome", p.580.

²⁸ William Renzi, "The Entente and the Vatican during the Period of Italian Neutrality, August 1914-May 1915", op. cit., p.505.

²⁹ Limerick Diocesan Office, O'Dwyer Papers, file "Mgr. O'Riordan to Bishop O'Dwyer, 1887-1917", O'Riordan to O'Dwyer, 20/03/15.

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³² Limerick Diocesan Office, O'Dwyer Papers, file "Mgr. O'Riordan to Bishop O'Dwyer, 1887-1917", O'Riordan to O'Dwyer, 13/07/15.

³³ Numerous letters concerning those crises can be read in the archives of Limerick Diocesan Office, Ara Coeli Armagh, the Bishop's House in Carlow, Dublin Diocesan Archives, the Irish College in Rome and Westminster in London.

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³⁶ Terence Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers*, Blackrock, Irish Academic Press, 1992.

³⁷ Jérôme aan de Wiel, "L'Eglise catholique en Irlande, 1914-1918: guerre et politique" (The Catholic Church in Ireland, 1914-1918: War and Politics), Ph.d thesis, University of Caen, France, 1998, pp.160-163.

³⁸ Limerick Diocesan Office, O'Dwyer Papers, file H, O'Dwyer to Redmond, 04/08/15.

³⁹ *The Irish Volunteer*, 21/08/15.

⁴⁰ Limerick Diocesan Office, O'Dwyer Papers, file "Mgr. O'Riordan to Bishop O'Dwyer, 1887-1917", O'Riordan to O'Dwyer, 18/09/15.

⁴¹ Irish College Rome, O'Riordan Papers no 16, letter no 1, "L'Appello del santo Padre per la Pace", January 1916.

⁴² Limerick Diocesan Office, O'dwyer Papers, file "letters from Rome", O'Riordan to O'Dwyer, 05/01/16.

⁴³ Dublin Diocesan Archives, Walsh Papers, 388 I/1916, Gasquet to Walsh, 06/01/16.

⁴⁴ San Isidoro (church of the Irish Franciscans), Rome, Plunkett to Fr. Rope, 23/06/33.

⁴⁵ Archives of the Holy Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, Vatican, file "Segretaria di Stato, Guerra anno 1914-1918, rubrica 244, fasc. 92, rubrica 244 D.3, document 15543, letter from Count Plunkett to Benedict XV, not dated.

⁴⁶ Brian Murphy, *Patrick Pearse and the Lost Republican Ideal*, Dublin, James Duffy, 1991, p.77.

⁴⁷ San Isidoro Archives, Rome, letter from Count Plunkett, 15/10/38.

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⁴⁹ Limerick Diocesan Office, O'Dwyer Papers, file I "letters from Rome", O'Riordan to O'Dwyer, 27/05/16.

⁵⁰ Limerick Diocesan Office, O'Dwyer Papers, file "Mgr. O'Riordan to Bishop O'Dwyer, 1887-1917", O'Riordan to O'Dwyer, 10/06/16.

⁵¹ Archives of the Holy Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, Vatican, file "Guerra anno 1914-1918, rubrica 244, fasc. 92, rubrica 244 D.3", O'Riordan to Gasparri, 16/06/16.

⁵² Limerick Diocesan Office, O'Dwyer Papers, file "Mgr. O'Riordan to Bishop O'Dwyer, 1887-1917", O'Riordan to O'Dwyer, 23/10/16.

⁵³ Limerick Diocesan Office, O'Dwyer Papers, file "Mgr. O'Riordan to Bishop O'Dwyer, 1887-1917", O'Riordan to O'Dwyer, 23/10/16.

⁵⁴ Saint Joseph's Seminary, Archdiocesan Archives New-York, AANY I-23, Farley Papers, O'Riordan to Farley, 21/12/16 and 22/12/16.

⁵⁵ Irish College rome, O'Riordan Papers no 18, letter no 80, Farley to O'Riordan, 29/05/17.

⁵⁶ Jérôme aan de Wiel, "L'Eglise catholique en Irlande, 1914-1918: guerre et politique", op. cit., pp.309-363.

⁵⁷ Archives of the Quai d'Orsay (French Foreign Office), Paris, vol. 545 "Grande-Bretagne/Irlande", mission des évêques français en Irlande, pp.173-174.

⁵⁸ Public Record Office, London, F.O. 380/8, De Salis to Balfour, 21/12/16.

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⁶⁰ Ara Coeli Armagh, O'Donnell Papers, O'Riordan to O'Donnell, 26/10/16.

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from Rome", O'Riordan to O'Dwyer, 25/03/17.

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