

—take a long time to organise and train.¹ Secondly, until the definite breach between the Sinn Feiners and the Redmondites in October 1914, it was by no means certain that the National Volunteers were to be trusted, and even after the breach the police reported that a considerable proportion of the Redmondite Volunteers were in sympathy with Professor MacNeill. It may well have seemed too speculative an undertaking to train and arm 'for the protection of the coasts of Ireland' (which were in little danger), a force which, under influences already strongly at work, might be used for less innocent purposes.

It is, indeed, to these influences and to other causes which they exploited, rather than to any action or inaction of the War Office, that the refusal to enlist for the war on the part of large sections of the population must be ascribed. In setting up the organisation of the Irish Volunteers the Sinn Feiners did not succeed in obtaining any large nominal following, but they made up for their lack of numbers by their fanatical zeal, their exuberant eloquence, and the efficiency of their organisation. Of all the Volunteer forces in existence during 1915 the Irish Volunteers and their allies the Citizen Army alone displayed any activity in drilling and exercising, which they were allowed to do without let or hindrance. They occasionally even enjoyed the protection of the police. At Limerick, for instance, on Whit Sunday 1915, a parade of Irish Volunteers was only saved from ending in a humiliating rout by the intervention of the Royal Irish Constabulary. The Volunteers, who were over one thousand strong and most of them armed, were returning to the station through the Irishtown quarter, where many soldiers' families lived, when they were furiously attacked by a crowd of women—mostly wives of the Munster Fusiliers—and had to be shepherded through the danger zone by an escort of constables.²

While the Sinn Fein Volunteers were thus braving the wrath of the wives of the men serving at the front, Sinn

¹ Much bitterness was afterwards caused by the transference—under stress of circumstances at the front—of the artillery of the 16th (Irish) Division to the Guards.

² *Confidential Intelligence Notes*, 1915, p. 20. On November 19, at Loughrea in Galway, on the formation of a branch of the Irish Volunteers the National Volunteers marched through the town and smashed the windows of prominent Sinn Feiners (*ibid.*).

Fein agitators and organisers were busy in those counties where the tradition of disaffection was strongest—Limerick, Kerry, Kilkenny, Waterford, Wexford, and Galway. Their object, openly avowed, was to prevent recruiting for the army and to build up their own force with a view to taking immediate advantage of 'Ireland's opportunity.' They were more successful in the former object than in the latter, for in the case of recruiting they were assisted by what the police reports describe as 'the laziness and cowardice of the young men of the farmer and shop-assistant classes.' They conjured up the bogey of 'conscription' with notable effect, until the exclusion of Ireland from the Military Service Act laid this spectre to rest for the time being. Many National Volunteers ceased to attend drill because they feared that, if they were trained, they might be called upon to fight; ¹ and a certain number joined the Irish Volunteers as the best safeguard against conscription.² The Sinn Feiners were helped, too, by the immense prosperity of the country, which—what with separation allowances and the high prices obtained for agricultural produce—had never been so full of money; for this disinclined the young men of the more prosperous classes to exchange present comforts for the miseries and dangers of the trenches. If, as the Sinn Feiners reiterated, this was solely 'England's war,' they had the most patriotic reasons for holding aloof from it; for all the history they

¹ *Confidential Intelligence Notes*, 1914, p. 18.

² The numbers of the Nationalist Volunteers given in the subjoined table, showing fluctuations during the year preceding the Easter Week rebellion, are taken from the official returns. Those in the sections marked *a*, *b*, *c*, were reckoned as disloyal.

	National Volunteers (Redmondite)	<i>a</i>		<i>b</i>		<i>c</i> Citizen Army
		National Volunteers (in sympathy with MacNeill)	Country	Dublin		
May 6, 1914	26,696
Oct. 7, 1914	178,649	7,443	..	2,150	60	..
Dec. 16, 1914	152,090	11,247	..	2,100	60	..
Jan. 15, 1915	149,742	9,543	..	2,100	60	..
Dec. 27, 1915	112,446	5,112	6,137	2,225	100	..
Jan. 3, 1916	112,050	5,038	6,355	2,225	100	..
April 17, 1916	104,984	4,457	8,381	2,225	100	..

Independence was read in English, Gaelic and French by the twenty-nine members present rising and subscribing to it in a body. The proceedings closed with the nomination of Count Plunkett, Arthur Griffith, and Eamon De Valera as 'delegates to the Peace Conference.' This meeting was public. On the following day a private session was held at which Mr. De Valera was elected 'President of the Irish Republic,' and a ministry was established, with departments for finance, home affairs, foreign affairs, and defence. Among the 'ministers' was the redoubtable Michael Collins,¹ who as head of the 'War Office' was later to take a share in organising the reign of terror, to earn a legendary fame for his prowess as a gunman and his hair-breadth escapes, and to be hailed by Mr. Lloyd George as 'the bravest representative of a valiant race.'

That an opposition Parliament should have been allowed to debate openly, and to set up an opposition Government, in a country under 'martial law' may well surprise those who judge events in Ireland by the universal experience of other countries, and the spectacle of the metropolitan police guarding the peace of a rebel assembly would have yet more surprised them. In order to account for this singular phenomenon, and much else that happened during the time of troubles to come, it is necessary to explain the powers possessed by the Irish Government and the principles on which these powers were exercised. Ireland had not been put under martial law in the sense in which the South was after the Civil War in the United States.² The Defence of the Realm Act, which gave large powers to the Government to deal more or less summarily with persons dangerous to the State, was a temporary war measure common to the whole United Kingdom, and its operation was very jealously safeguarded. In addition to this, however, the Government had a reserve weapon in the Criminal Law and Procedure (Ireland) Act of 1887, but nearly all the clauses of this Act required a

¹ He had been a junior clerk in the Post Office in London, and had come to Ireland to avoid conscription.

² When on May 1, in the debate on the Budget, Mr. Joseph Devlin denied the moral right of the Government to tax Ireland, on the ground that martial law had been substituted for the Constitution, he was merely indulging in the usual wild exaggeration.

proclamation of the Lord-Lieutenant in Council before they came into force. The principle followed was to use these powers only in cases of grave necessity, so as to interfere as little as possible with the ordinary life of the country, and to apply them only temporarily and to given disturbed areas. Meetings were only interfered with when, in the opinion of the police, they were likely to lead to grave breaches of the peace, and the ban at times fell on Orange demonstrations as well as on those of Sinn Fein. Thus the brutal murder on 21 January 1919 of Constable MacDonnell—the first indication of a campaign which was to reach terrible proportions—was followed on the 28th by the proclamation under the Defence of the Realm Act of South Tipperary as a 'military area'; the murder of Mr. J. C. Milling, a resident magistrate, on 31 March, led to Westport being proclaimed; the murder of Constable O'Brien and the wounding of several others, during the rescue of a Sinn Fein prisoner from Limerick workhouse infirmary on 6 April, led to the proclamation of the district of Limerick.¹

The same policy was pursued, during the greater part of the year, towards the various revolutionary associations. They were allowed to carry on their propaganda, but whenever and wherever this led, or threatened to lead, to serious breaches of the peace they were proclaimed. Thus after a series of outrages, including a bomb attack on a police hut (21 July), the ambushing and murder of a constable (6 August), and the murder of a boy of fifteen (15 August), Sinn Fein 'and kindred bodies' were proclaimed in County Clare. On 10 September they were suppressed in the county and borough of Cork, and on the same date Tipperary, Limerick, Clare and the county and borough of Dublin were proclaimed under Section 1 of the Crimes Act (1887). All these proclamations were the result of definite outrages, which showed an alarming

¹ The prisoner, R. J. Byrne, condemned to a year's imprisonment, had gone on hunger-strike and been removed to the infirmary. During visiting hours thirty armed men, who had mixed with the visitors, suddenly fell with bludgeons and revolvers on the five policemen guarding the prisoner; Byrne himself seized Constable S— from behind round the waist, while others shot and bludgeoned him. The constable, however, succeeded in drawing his revolver and shooting Byrne under his arm. The Sinn Feiners got away with the prisoner, but he was mortally wounded. Some of the rescuers were traced to County Clare and arrested.

labourers and peasants under the Government of Soviet Russia, and exhorting the workers to 'keep the red flag flying.'¹ It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Republican idealists who followed De Valera were but the unconscious tools of the tyrants of Moscow, and that Bolshevik brains were responsible for the campaign of organised destruction which later attended the revolt of the Irregulars and by the spring of 1923 had left Ireland impoverished, if not ruined.

With all this organised Irish Labour, though its organs encouraged the movement among the labourers, had officially nothing to do, having from the first ostensibly declared for peaceful methods and against violence. At a special congress of delegates of the Irish Labour Party, held in Dublin on 21 February, it was decided by a considerable majority to put forward Labour candidates at the forthcoming elections. The Report of the National Executive, which was adopted, pointed out in reference to the Treaty that 'the terms of peace were the best that could be obtained in the circumstances.' 'Differences have arisen,' it said, 'among the dominant party (Sinn Fein) in respect to the course to be pursued towards the goal of sovereign independence which both sections still aspire to.' The ideal commonwealth—the Republic based upon co-operative labour and service—not upon property and capital—was not to be attained through either party

¹ *The Voice of Labour* published on 11 November 1922 a message to the 'workers of Russia' congratulating them on the fifth anniversary of the revolution of November, together with an 'interview' in which Krassin painted in glowing colours the lot of the peasantry under the Soviet Government. *The Workers' Republic*, for the same date, printed a manifesto of which the following is a characteristic extract: 'November 7th was the Anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Five years ago the Russian peasants, workers and soldiers, under the leadership of the Russian Communist Party—the Bolsheviks—seized the land, industries, and machinery of government in Russia to use them for the benefit of their own class. And they have kept possession of them. . . . Neither pestilence nor famine nor civil war, all fomented by foreign capital, has prevented the Russian workers from fighting, dying or living for the Russian Workers' Republic. The Russian Communist Party was able to seize power because it knew how to carry out its programme which promised land to the peasants, control of industry to the town workers, and peace, when the freedom of Russia was won, to the soldiers. . . . We in Ireland may learn much from the Russian revolutionaries. We must also help them to carry on the struggle. We can do this by striking every blow we can at the British Empire, the greatest enemy of Soviet Russia and one of the bulwarks of world capitalism.'

in the present Dail. But a new legislature was to be elected, and it was the duty of the Labour Party to make use of whatever instrument and power the political struggle had placed in its hands. 'We ought to work the new government machine,' said the Report, 'if it is established, even if it is not built according to our design, provided it can be adapted for turning out the products we require.' In short, Labour declared for constitutional methods, denouncing 'the prevalence in many places of the militaristic spirit; the assumption widely held that the soldier is above the law, the master, not the servant, of the civil powers.'¹

There was certainly no sign that the militaristic spirit, thus defined, was subsiding in Ireland. It asserted itself ominously at Limerick on 5 March, when the anti-Treaty section of the I.R.A. seized the military barracks and the principal buildings of the city, imprisoned the Free State commandant and the *liaison* officer sent to effect an accommodation, and posted up proclamations denouncing the insidious attempts to subvert the Republic. Although the affair did not lead to bloodshed, and was patched up by agreement on the 10th, it was of importance as the first conspicuous indication of a serious revolt of sections of the I.R.A. against the authority of General Headquarters. It had an even more sinister significance, which was revealed in the manifesto issued by Commandant Thomas Barry,² the leader of the anti-Treaty invaders, in justification of the *coup*. His grievance was precisely that the military had been treated as the servants, not as the masters, of the civil powers. He complained that the Republican Army had not been consulted as to the Treaty. This was indeed, in the circumstances of the time, a serious omission, and under the terms of the accommodation reached it was to be rectified by summoning a convention of the I.R.A. for this purpose. This was at least a recognition of the realities of the situation.

¹ *The Voice of Labour*, New Ser., vol. iv. No. 19, 25 Feb. 1922. On p. 2 is an account of the establishment of a 'farm soviet,' labourers on strike entering on the land and staking out 15 acre holdings with red flags.

² An ex-officer in the British army, who had gained experience in guerilla warfare while fighting the Bolsheviks in Northern Russia. He was later conspicuous as the commander of the Irregulars in the Cork district.