



No. 1

THE TESTAMENT
OF
THE REPUBLIC

BY
PRESIDENT DE VALERA

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THE TESTAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC.

By President De Valera.

When I was in America I took with me everywhere a little brown-coloured pamphlet of just 32 pages, containing the official report of the first meeting of DAIL EIREANN, January 21st, 1919, and the texts as they were adopted that day, in *Irish, French, and English*, of the "Declaration of Independence," the "Message to the Free Nations of the World," and the "Democratic Programme." To make the little volume complete, I had pasted on the fly leaves the Proclamation of the Republic in Easter Week, the Constitution of Sinn Fein, and the Manifesto issued by Sinn Fein for the elections of 1918.

In these days of propoganda many of us have very short memories. I propose, instead of writing anything directly from myself, to reproduce instead the contents of this little "Testament of the Republic," as we used to call it. I hope and pray that the memories which they must arouse will stir the hearts of those who read them and inspire them with the same sentiments and determination that they inspired four years ago. The words of men who have given their lives for their faith and their ideals must inspire a conviction that the words of no living author can bring.

The first document is the "Proclamation of the Republic" sealed by the blood of every one of the signatories:

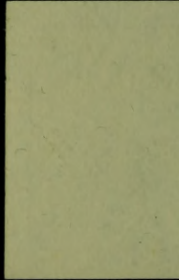
"The Provisional Government of the Irish Republic.

To the People of Ireland:

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

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Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely 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 with 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 power and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the 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 asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it 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.

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees civil and religious liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien Government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland, and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic, in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline, and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on behalf of the Provisional Government,—

Thomas J. Clarke, Sean MacDermada,
P. H. Pearse, James Connolly, Thomas
MacDonagh, Eamon Ceannt, Joseph
Plunkett.”

Next we have the Constitution of SINN FEIN, as adopted at the first great Ard Fheis, 1917. On this compact was founded the organisation which a British Intelligence Officer, C.J.C. Street, has appreciated as—

“The coalition which had been known as Sinn Fein, and which had worked together with greater devotion than any other coalition recorded in history. . . .”

We need only quote a few extracts of the Constitution here.

Sinn Fein aims at securing the International recognition of Ireland as an independent Republic.

Having achieved that status the Irish people

may by referendum freely choose their own form of Government.

This object shall be attained through the Sinn Fein Organisation, which shall, in the name of the Sovereign Irish people:—

(a) Deny the right and oppose the will of the British Parliament and British Crown or any other foreign Government to legislate for Ireland;

(b) Make use of any and every means available to render impotent the power of England to hold Ireland in subjection by military force or otherwise.

And now extracts from the Sinn Fein Manifesto issued for the General Election of December, 1918:

Manifesto to the Irish People.

“The coming General Election is fraught with vital possibilities for the future of our nation. Ireland is faced with the question whether this generation wills it that she is to march into the full sunlight of freedom, or is to remain in the shadow of a base imperialism that has brought and ever will bring in its train naught but evil for our race.

Sinn Fein gives Ireland the opportunity of vindicating her honour and pursuing with renewed confidence the path of national salvation by rallying to the flag of the Irish Republic.

Sinn Fein aims at securing the establishment of that Republic:

1—By withdrawing the Irish Representation from the British Parliament and by denying the right and opposing the will of the British Government or any other foreign Government to legislate for Ireland.

2—By making use of any and every means available to render impotent the power of England to hold Ireland in subjection by military force or otherwise.

- 3—By the establishment of a constituent assembly comprising persons chosen by Irish constituencies as the supreme national authority to speak and act in the name of the Irish people, and to develop Ireland's social, political and industrial life, for the welfare of the whole people of Ireland.
- 4—By appealing to the Peace Conference for the establishment of Ireland as an Independent Nation. At that Conference the future of the Nations of the world will be settled on the principle of government by consent of the governed. Ireland's claim to the application of that principle in her favour is not based on any accidental situation arising from the war. It is older than many if not all of the present belligerents. It is based on our unbroken tradition of nationhood, on a unity in a national name which has never been challenged, on our possession of a distinctive national culture and social order, on the moral courage and dignity of our people in the face of alien aggression, on the fact that in nearly every generation and five times within the past 120 years our people have challenged in arms the right of England to rule this country. On these incontrovertible facts is based the claim that our people have beyond question established the right to be accorded all the power of a free nation.

Sinn Fein stands less for a political party than for the Nation. It represents the old tradition of nationhood handed on from dead generations; it stands by the Proclamation of the Provisional Government of Easter, 1916, re-asserting the inalienable right of the Irish Nation to sovereign Independence, re-affirming the determination of the Irish people to achieve it, and guaranteeing within the independent

Nation equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens.

Believing that the time has arrived when Ireland's voice for the principle of untrammelled National self-determination should be heard above every interest of party or class, Sinn Fein will oppose at the Polls every individual candidate who does not accept this principle.

The policy of our opponents stands condemned on any test, whether of principle or expediency. The right of a nation to sovereign independence rests upon immutable natural law and cannot be made the subject of a compromise. Any attempt to barter away the sacred and inviolable rights of a nationhood begins in dishonour and is bound to end in disaster.

Sinn Fein goes to the polls handicapped by all the arts and contrivances that a powerful and unscrupulous enemy can use against us. Conscious of the power of Sinn Fein to secure the freedom of Ireland the British Government would destroy it. Sinn Fein, however, goes to the polls confident that the people of this ancient nation will be true to the old cause and will vote for the men who stand by the principles of Tone, Emmet, Mitchell, Pearse and Connolly, the men who disdain to whine to the enemy for favours, the men who hold that Ireland must be as free as England or Holland, or Switzerland or France, and whose demand is that the only status befitting this ancient realm is the status of a free nation."

With these preliminaries from the fly-leaves we can proceed to the text of the official account:—The Deputies assembled at the Mansion House at 3.30 in the afternoon. Count Plunkett proposed, and Padraig O'Maille seconded, that Cathal Brugha preside over the assembly. The report is in Irish, as the proceedings were. This is the substance of the first ten lines. And then Cathal Brugha took

the chair. Speaking in Irish, as he always did, he said:—

“Friends, we have important work to do here to-day—the most important that has been done in Ireland from the day of the coming of the Gael—and it is hely work. We are people, every one of us, who place our hopes in 'God, people who respect the laws of God, hence it is right that we ask God's assistance for the work we have to do. I shall call upon one of the most faithful priests that ever lived in Ireland, Father Michael O'Flanagan, to pray to the Holy Spirit to guide us aright on the road we have to follow, and, my friends, whatever may be your religious beliefs, I ask each one to send up a prayer to God from the bottom of his heart that He may give to us His assistance to-day.”

And then Father O'Flanagan in Irish prayed to the Holy Ghost: “Come, O Holy Spirit, and fill the hearts of the faithful and kindle in them the fire of Thy love. Send forth Thy Spirit, O Lord, and they shall be created, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth,” and so on to the end of that beautiful prayer.

Next the Clerks of the Dail for the day were appointed, and a warning given to the visitors that they were not to disturb the proceedings. Then the roll was called. As we look through that list to-day a sigh is but a poor expression of what we feel.

After the roll call Cathal Brugha stood up and said:—

“You notice that many of those who were called are not here. They got an invitation to be present to drive out the foreigner, but they did not respond to the invitation. But, as Wolfe Tone said, those people in Ireland who do not care to work for Ireland we must do the work without, and it will be done.

There are many others whose names have been read out, and this is the answer that has been given in their regard—that the foreigner has them ‘under lock.’ You know that the foreigner has taken them and put them in prison without preferring any charge against them, and those ‘heroes’ who have done this are just those who proclaim to the world that they are the friends of small nations. In prison in England also is the bravest and noblest woman ever born in any country, Countess Markievicz.”

Then he read the five articles of the proposed temporary Constitution of the Dail, which was formally proposed by Sean T. O’Ceallaigh and seconded by Sean O hAodha, and passed unanimously. And then the real work of that day was begun. Speaking from the chair, Cathal said :—

“I ask you all to stand up until I read the Declaration of Independence.”

And he read it in the language he loved, and to which he fondly hoped he might devote himself when the political cares which he was then accepting were laid aside.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF DAIL EIREANN, FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC, 21st JANU- ARY, 1919.

WHEREAS, the Irish people is by right a free people :

AND WHEREAS for seven hundred years the Irish people has never ceased to repudiate and has repeatedly protested in arms against foreign usurpation :

AND WHEREAS English rule in this country is, and always has been, based upon force and fraud and maintained by military occupation against the declared will of the people :

AND WHEREAS the Irish Republic was proclaimed in Dublin on Easter Monday, 1916, by the Irish Republican Army acting on behalf of the Irish people :

AND WHEREAS the Irish people is resolved to secure and maintain its complete independence in order to promote the common weal, to re-establish justice, to provide for future defence, to insure peace at home and goodwill with all nations and to constitute a national polity based upon the people's will with equal right and equal opportunity for every citizen :

AND WHEREAS at the threshold of a new era in history the Irish electorate has in the General Election of December, 1918, seized the first occasion to declare by an overwhelming majority its firm allegiance to the Irish Republic :

Now, therefore, we, the elected Representatives of the ancient Irish people in National Parliament assembled, do, in the name of the Irish nation, ratify the establishment of the Irish Republic and pledge ourselves and our people to make this declaration effective by every means at our command :

We ordain that the elected Representatives of the Irish people alone have power to make laws binding on the people of Ireland, and that the Irish Parliament is the only Parliament to which that people will give its allegiance :

We solemnly declare foreign government in Ireland to be an invasion of our national right which we will never tolerate, and we demand the evacuation of our country by the English Garrison :

We claim for our national independence the recognition and support of every free nation of the world, and we proclaim that independence to be a condition precedent to international peace hereafter :

In the name of the Irish people we humbly commit our destiny to Almighty God who gave our fathers the courage and determination to persevere through long centuries of a ruthless tyranny, and strong in the justice of the cause which they have handed down to us, we ask His divine blessing on this the last stage of the struggle we have pledged ourselves to carry through to Freedom.

When the Declaration had been read in English, Cathal Brugha rose again and said:—

“Deputies, you understand from what is asserted in this Declaration that we are now done with England. Let the world know it, and those who are concerned bear it in mind. Whatever issues from what is said here, life or death, there is an end now of ráiméis. There are at present assembled at Versailles delegates from most of the nations of the world. They have come there, as they themselves have said, to make peace between the peoples of the world so that there may be no need of war ever again. We tell them, and tell them bluntly, that if they are in earnest they must break the yoke that binds this country to England. If they do not do that, there will be no peace.”

And then he said:—

“*Have trust in one another, I beg of you. God’s hand is in our work—that is clear from what has happened during the last two years. Two years last Easter the Irish Republic was founded. We have now only to stand together, praise and thanks to God. Let us pull together and LET NO ONE SEPARATE US and there is no danger,*” and Piarais Beasley supported it. And then Cathal once more said, “I ask you to rise and to say the words of this vow after me:—

‘We adopt this Declaration of Independence,

and we pledge ourselves to put it into effect by every means in our power.' ”

And then delegates were appointed to plead Ireland's cause at the Peace Conference, and after that Ireland's "Address to the Free Nations of the World" was read in Irish by Scelig, in French by Count Plunkett, in English by Robert Barton :—

“To the Nations of the World, Greeting.

The Nation of Ireland having proclaimed her national independence, calls, through her elected representatives in Parliament assembled in the Irish Capital on January 21, 1919, upon every free nation to support the Irish Republic by recognising Ireland's status and her right to its vindication at the Peace Congress.

Nationally the race, the language, the customs and traditions of Ireland are radically distinct from the English: Ireland is one of the most ancient nations of Europe, and she has preserved her national integrity, vigorous and intact, through seven centuries of foreign oppression; she has never relinquished her national rights, and throughout the long era of English usurpation she has in every generation defiantly proclaimed her inalienable right of nationhood down to her last glorious resort to arms in 1916.

Internationally Ireland is the gateway of the Atlantic. Ireland is the last outpost of Europe towards the West. Ireland is the point upon which great trade routes between East and West converge; her independence is demanded by the Freedom of the Seas: her great harbours must be open to all nations, instead of being the monopoly of England. To-day these harbours are empty and idle solely because English policy is determined to retain Ireland as a barren bulwark for

English aggrandisement, and the unique geographical position of this island, far from being a benefit and safeguard to Europe and America, is subjected to the purposes of England's policy of world domination.

Ireland to-day re-asserts her historic nationhood the more confidently before the new world emerging from the war, because she believes in freedom and justice as the fundamental principles of international law, because she believes in a frank co-operation between the peoples for equal rights against the vested privileges of ancient tyrannies, because the permanent peace of Europe can never be secured by perpetuating military dominion for the profit of empire but only by establishing the control of government in every land upon the basis of the free will of a free people, and the existing state of war, between Ireland and England, can never be ended until Ireland is definitely evacuated by the armed forces of England.

For these among other reasons, Ireland—resolutely and irrevocably determined at the dawn of the promised era of self-determination and liberty that she will suffer foreign dominion no longer—calls upon every free nation to uphold her national claim to complete independence as an Irish Republic against the arrogant pretensions of England founded in fraud and sustained only by an overwhelmingly military occupation, and demands to be confronted publicly with England at the Congress of the Nations, in order that the civilised world having judged between English wrong and Irish right may guarantee to Ireland its permanent support for the maintenance of her national independence.”

It was formally proposed by Eoin MacNeill, who said: “We are asking the Free Nations to

assist the Republic, we are not asking them to establish the Republic in Ireland—that is done already.” He showed that in assisting Ireland they would be assisting themselves. He spoke of Ireland’s ancient services, and pointed out that in asking them to stand by Ireland to-day they were only asking them to stand by the cause of Right. It was seconded by Seumas Breathnach and passed unanimously.

And then was read the Democratic Programme of the Dail, by Piarais Beasley in Irish, and by Ald. Tom Kelly in English. It was formally proposed by Richard Mulcahy, and seconded by Con Collins, and like every other motion that day, passed unanimously :

DEMOCRATIC PROGRAMME.

“We declare in the words of the Irish Republican Proclamation the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies to be indefeasible, and, in the language of our first President, Pádraig Mac Phiarais, we declare that the Nation’s sovereignty extends not only to all the men and women of the Nation, but to all its material possessions, the Nation’s soil and all its resources, all the wealth and all the wealth-producing processes within the Nation, and with him we reaffirm that all right to private property must be subordinated to the public right and welfare.

We declare that we desire our country to be ruled in accordance with the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Justice for all, which alone can secure permanence of Government in the willing adhesion of the people.

We affirm the duty of every man and woman to give allegiance and service to the Commonwealth, and declare it is the duty of the Nation to assure that every citizen shall have opportunity to spend his or her strength and faculties

in the service of the people. In return for willing service, we, in the name of the Republic, declare the right of every citizen to an adequate share of the produce of the Nation's labour.

It shall be the first duty of the Government of the Republic to make provision for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the children, to secure that no child shall suffer hunger or cold from lack of food, clothing, or shelter, but that all shall be provided with the means and facilities requisite for their proper education and training as Citizens of a Free and Gaelic Ireland.

The Irish Republic fully realises the necessity of abolishing the present odious, degrading and foreign Poor Law System, substituting therefor a sympathetic native scheme for the care of the Nation's aged and infirm, who shall not be regarded as a burden, but rather entitled to the Nation's gratitude and consideration. Likewise it shall be the duty of the Republic to take such measures as will safeguard the health of the people and ensure the physical as well as the moral well-being of the Nation.

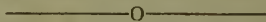
It shall be our duty to promote the development of the Nation's resources, to increase the productivity of its soil, to exploit its mineral deposits, peat bogs, and fisheries; its waterways and harbours, in the interests and for the benefit of the Irish people.

It shall be the duty of the Republic to adopt all measures necessary for the recreation and invigoration of our Industries, and to ensure their being developed on the most beneficial and progressive co-operative and industrial lines. With the adoption of an extensive Irish Consular Service, trade with foreign Nations shall be revived on terms of mutual advantage and goodwill, and while undertaking the organisation of the Nation's trade, import and export, it shall be the duty of the Republic to prevent

the shipment from Ireland of food and other necessaries until the wants of the Irish people are fully satisfied and the future provided for.

It shall also devolve upon the National Government to seek co-operation of the Governments of other countries in determining a standard of Social and Industrial Legislation with a view to a general and lasting improvement in the conditions under which the working classes live and labour."

The day's work was done. The Dail rose, having been less than two hours in session. But to give effect to what they had done that day, the blood of some of Ireland's best had to be shed, and for three cruel glorious years the Irish people gave the lie to the Roman historian who said: "that the Celts boldly challenge danger while future, but lose their courage before its presence," and were a living refutation of the charges of Mommsen in general against the Celtic peoples—their "incapacity" to "preserve the self-reliant courage" or "to attain or even to tolerate any organisation, any sort of fixed military or political discipline."



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