

THE SITUATION IN IRELAND

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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MY belief is that there is little solidity behind the resistance to the Free State. Then why has the Free State Government found it so difficult to restore order? Many causes seem to be operative.

'The position of the Free State Government is morally weak,' says an old Sinn Féiner. 'Most of the members of the present Government have used much the same arguments as are now being used by the activist Republicans. Even the argument from majority rule is not safe for us. In the old days we had the general sympathy of the country in regard to our objective, but only a small minority heartily approved our methods. So now the Republicans can argue that the real desire of the people is for a Republic and that they have as much right as we had to make war upon "England's agents" and to terrorize cowardly "neutrals." The fact is that in the old days we said a little more than we thought and we condoned acts that were not defensible. Now the Free State Government has to pay the penalty. It must move very cautiously.'

'The present Government is so very unpopular,' say others. It is true that the Government is unpopular, at least in Dublin. But that is not entirely the fault of the Government, and I should not be surprised if twenty years hence the present Government is remembered as the least unpopular of Dublin Governments. For Dublin is critical, suspicious, and cynical enough to paralyze any Government that has its seat in

the city. It is hard to see why the present Government should be exceptionally unpopular. Almost everyone admits that it is straight and that it has shown a great deal of patience, except in the matter of the reprisals executions. It is criticized, however, on the ground that it has not shown the qualities of leadership.

As an example of this, people cite the Government's failure to organize and arm the civil population for the purpose of discouraging the practice of using revolvers or high explosives as arguments in political and social controversies. Seeing how few the activist Republicans are, and how little sympathy they now command, one is apt to believe that this nuisance might have been easily suppressed, at least in the towns, if the Government had appealed for aid to the householders. But human nature, or at least Irish nature, is very tolerant of all nuisances except organization, and if you question the average householder you find little enthusiasm for the idea of local self-defense.

The Republicans in the towns have had sense enough to avoid striking at anyone except those who take an active part in supporting the Government or criticizing the Republicans. The average citizen knows that he can purchase comparative immunity by maintaining a neutral attitude. True, you may be shot by accident in the streets. But that risk is, after all, small, and it is accepted with creditable equanimity. 'Better be dead than be frightened,'

said a lady who had taken her children to a *matinée* while revolvers and machine-guns were at work in the neighborhood.

Probably it was a knowledge of the difficulty of organizing the townsman that made the Government decide to work entirely through the army. The decision would be less criticized were it not for the army's shortcomings. The old Sinn Fein army was quite an efficient guerrilla force. But a guerrilla army is a very bad agent for catching guerrillas, and the Free State forces are still in the early stages of the process of transforming themselves from guerrillas into a regular army.

There are many who contend that the chief difficulty in restoring order arises from the presence of those one hundred thousand young men — be the number more or less — who would have emigrated to America during the last eight years had it not been for the prohibition on emigration. 'A fertile and sparsely inhabited country like Ireland ought easily to have absorbed this addition to its labor force, but from lack of organization, education, and stable conditions it has entirely failed to do so.' So says a banker who has made a study of Irish economics.

Certainly everybody in the town and in the country agrees that the bulk of the Republican forces is now made up of young men who have no chance of getting a job which can fairly be considered preferable to that of a Republican soldier. And the longer the fighting goes on, the less chance there is of a decent means of livelihood being found for these men. This is the clearest instance of the way the forces of disorder, once let loose, tend to gather momentum.

But it is by no means the only one. Professional men are withholding their income tax because they are not compelled to pay, because they hear their

neighbors are not paying, because they are getting no protection in return for their taxes. Farmers have been withholding their rents, and they are not quite sure that they want to see law and order restored till they have got a guaranty that they will not have to pay up the arrears. Agricultural laborers are quite ready to make common cause with the Republicans, since they think that they may thereby be put in a position to overawe the farmer or to get hold of a piece of land. Railway workers are not very keen about the restoration of stable conditions, since they know that these will bring with them a cut in their wages which is overdue.

I have heard men contend that for this reason it will take at least a generation to restore stable conditions, but I cannot believe it when I remember that this is a small island, that the most numerous section of the population are steady, conservative farmers, and that these men are beginning to realize that the interruption of communications and the demoralization of labor are costing them more than their rent.

'If they would go up to the mountains and fight it out decent I would n't mind. But they've no right to be interfering with the traffic and the business of the country.' That is a young Sinn Fein farmer who was on the run up to the truce and is still withholding his rent.

'What's the cause of all this trouble?' 'It's the boys and girls pampered up with wee bits of paper and things wrote on them.' That is the pronouncement of a Catholic woman of the working class. Cross-examination showed that what she had in mind was the Irish history taught in certain schools and the propagandist literature with which that teaching is supplemented.

Her diagnosis is not very far from the conclusion I arrived at after talking

to some half-a-dozen activist Republicans, men and women. My friends were, I think, fairly representative of the best and most formidable element in activist Republicanism, the solid core which has surrounded itself with that queer conglomerate of romantic boys and girls, disappointed place-hunters, and simple, guileless robbers. They were all of them up to, and some of them well above, the average in character and intellect. Only one of them could be even suspected of a tendency to hysterics. Anyone must admire them for their courage, their loyalty to the cause, and their single-mindedness. But there is such a thing as too much single-mindedness, and it seemed to me that no one but a victim of propagandist education had a right to be quite so single-minded as were these activists.

The gist of our discussion was as follows. I put it to them that I could understand a man preferring an independent Republic to the Free State, but I could not understand how a Republican minority was justified in using rifles to persuade the Free State majority to change its mind. Here they all broke in, pointing out that 'there is no majority for the Free State as against the Republic. There is only a majority for the Free State as against a war with England.' Admitting that this is so, I ask whether the majority had not every right to choose the Free State in preference to a war with England. I say I can understand the minority refusing to coöperate in the new State, declining to pay taxes, even carrying on the war against England on their own account, but I cannot see what right they have to use force against a majority of their fellow countrymen.

Here the milder sort drift into the well-known theological argument from the broken pact and the apostolic succession of presidents and dails, and

claim that the people have never voted on the treaty, that the Republic has never been lawfully disestablished, and that its army could not but resist when attacked. I reply that whether the country was ever allowed to vote on the treaty or not, at least it succeeded in making it plain that it wanted to vote for the treaty; and that it still would do so is not seriously disputed, and indeed is admitted by the question 'Is the majority always right?' which Republican propagandists are forever scrawling upon Dublin walls. I would like to know whether the Republicans would consider themselves bound by a plebiscite if it were held? Even the mildest of my friends answered that 'they would not be bound unless the threat of war were removed.' In other words, the majority is not entitled to make peace while a minority is entitled to declare war. For all admit that it was a very small minority that approved the original decision to make war on England.

But this doctrine presents no difficulty at all to the fiercer Republicans. Three out of my six pointed out that it was a mere corollary following directly from the proposition that the materialist majority are sheep who must be driven by the minority of energetic idealists. Two of them implied that rifles might be used to persuade the sheep to 'go where the green fields are.' The third said it outright.

I was better able to appreciate the colossal impudence of these idealists after I had talked to a few of the sheep whom the energetic minority is trying to drive. The sheep are strong farmers, laborers, and so forth. They have not many ideas in politics beyond law and order and the tenant's right to purchase his land at a favorable price. But, for all that, they are highly intelligent men and, to put it mildly, they know quite as much about life and are quite as

well able to understand what makes for human happiness as the shepherds who want to drive them into a war with England 'so as to get finished with the fighting once for all.'

Indeed, after seven years' fighting these shepherds themselves seem to have very few ideas left beyond the use of force. Two out of my six asked what could a minority do except use force if it was sure it was right. I suggested the refusal to coöperate in the Free State and peaceful persuasion. They 'had not thought of that before, and besides, it was not suitable to Irish nature.'

Two others upheld the view that any principle for which men are prepared to fight and die must be right and must be worth fighting for. 'If the other side is also prepared to die for its principle?' 'Why, that's impossible. They can't really believe in it.' In short, they are eager to die for Ireland and are ready regretfully to face the necessity of killing any number of their fellow countrymen in the process. They have no idea of its being more important to live and let live for Ireland.

When I asked about negotiations or compromise, the answer I usually got was 'no lasting peace can be based on a compromise.' 'Let England recognize the Republic and then there will be peace.'

The supporters of the Free State they regard as agents of England who may be treated as the R. I. C. were treated. They admit that years of guerrilla warfare have hardened them, and they think less of human life than they used to. One argument for the necessity of maintaining the Republic is that 'we shot so many as traitors and spies in the Republic's name. Are we now to write ourselves down as murderers by admitting that it is not worth the shedding of blood?' One man, the most materialistic among these ideal-

ists, admitted that he had thought of passive resistance to the Free State. 'But the boys would not part with the rifle. It had grown like a friend to them. They felt they owed it all they had won, and there was nothing but it to win the rest for them.'

It is, of course, not only among the Republicans that this hardening is apparent. On the Free State side, too, there is more talk of blood and iron than one cares to hear. And the blood and iron does not end in talk.

All Ireland appears to be divided into three parts — Regular country, Irregular country, and Ulster. Ulster we may put aside for the present. Regular country is the country occupied by the Free State troops. It comprises the low country and the towns. The mountainous regions are for the most part Irregular.

The country from Limerick to Tralee is fairly typical of the Regular area. Irregularities are here much less frequent than in Dublin. You might live a lifetime in Tralee and not hear a shot fired. But the marks of what has been and may be again are everywhere visible. The faces of the town clocks still record the hour at which they were put out of action by Free State or Irregular bullets. The military barracks are in ruins, the jails are packed with prisoners and fortified with barbed-wire entanglements. Nearly every village boasts of a police barracks burned out by the I. R. A. or a creamery or cottage blown up by the Black-and-Tans.

The larger railway-stations show a guard of Free State soldiers squatting behind sandbags. Here and there your train slows down to pass a temporarily repaired breach in the line, with perhaps a derelict engine lying at the bottom of the embankment. And now and then it comes to your notice that Irregularities are still occurring. Once we were told that the train that preceded

ours had been fired at. At another place the main road had been blocked by an obstruction for over a fortnight. It was rumored that the obstruction contained a trap mine. No one had yet had the curiosity to test the truth of the rumor.

Here are a few miscellaneous observations made during a month spent in touring in the South of Ireland. They may help to give a fair idea of the state of the country.

I have a journey of fifty minutes before me. The train is an hour late in starting and we take two and a half hours more in covering the distance. The delay is partly explained by the fact that twelve telegraph poles have been sawed through six miles out of the town.

We take a repair gang with us and drop them at the spot to replace the posts. No soldiers are left for their protection. Evidently it is assumed that the mischief-makers will not venture to show up by day.

A mile farther on we go slow over a newly repaired bridge. Another mile or so and we pass half-a-dozen carriages which have long lain derelict at the foot of the embankment. At the next station the guard comes round and tells us that, since we are so late, the train will go to Maryborough instead of Carlow as originally planned. Another train for Carlow will come along later to pick up anyone who is really particular about his destination. It is a matter of indifference to me, as I get out before the junction. I am, therefore, free to admire the equanimity with which the Carlovingsians receive the announcement.

Arriving at my friend's house, I hear a shot, and hope he has not been getting into trouble. A hasty look round relieves my anxiety. A Free State sentry has been showing off his shooting at the expense of a sea gull. Another day I

see an armored car let fly at the rooks on a ploughed field. 'That's all the good they're for,' remarks a passing laborer.

Again I pass some recruits on a route march. One of them is amusing himself throwing up his rifle and catching it. But in the whole month I have not seen a soldier drunk, and everyone admits that the conduct of the men is astonishingly good considering that they have as yet no tradition of respect for their officers.

In another county I met a teacher who had been driven by the house shortage to occupy a big house two miles outside the town. For economy and safety he deemed it wise to share the house with a co-tenant, a Dissenting minister. One night three young men knocked and demanded a subscription in the name of the Republic. The teacher was able to produce a proclamation by a high Republican authority declaring these nocturnal collections to be unauthorized and prohibited.

The young men then explained that it was not so much that they were Republicans but that they objected to caste differences. It was not fair that he should be living in a big house and they in small ones. He must pay over some money to compensate. My friend refused, so these social democrats fired a Verey pistol in at an open window and set a curtain alight. They then went round to the minister's side of the house and obtained admission there.

The minister appeared inclined to submit meekly, but Dissenting ministers are bad, treacherous men. The innocent and unsuspecting robbers were moving trustfully about the house when the man that carried the pistol suddenly found himself on his back at the bottom of a flight of stairs and the minister in possession of the pistol. The three were then told that they

were an incompetent crew and sent home with their tails between their legs.

The household lived safely on the prestige acquired by this exploit till the minister was called away. Since then the teacher has had two of his pupils out staying with him. One is a Republican, the other a Free Stater, so whichever army appears he has always one boy ready to negotiate and the other in reserve to fight. I found another household protected on a similar plan. The maidservant had one brother a private in the Republican army and the other a lieutenant in the Free State army. The Republican, by the way, was kind enough to write to his sister to warn the brother that he should apply for a transfer as X town was going to be no place for a man that wanted a quiet life.

Only yesterday I was again in Waterford looking for a train to Wexford. Experience has taught me that it is better to make inquiries on the spot rather than to trust to time-tables. So I went to the station and found a porter who was evidently enjoying the uncertainties of life.

'There'll be a train starting for Wexford to-morrow morning 7.30 A.M.,

sure enough. We have her in now.' 'Any train in the afternoon?' 'Well, there might be one. We got her off at 4 P.M. to-day.' 'What time had I better be down to get her?' 'Oh, it would be hard to say that.' 'Shall I be sure of getting her if I come down at one o'clock?' 'Oh, you will that. We could n't get her off before she come in and she's not due till 12.30.' 'How many hours will she take to get to Wexford?' 'She's timed for two hours, but she took five and one half the day.' 'You're still getting breaks on the line then, are you?' 'You may say that. The Dublin train was four hours late this day. They had a chair lifted at Ballyragget.' 'Well, if I come down at two o'clock to-morrow you think I'll be safe not to miss the train for Wexford?' 'Well, she's not expected to start before that, but you may take it from me, sir, it's the unexpected that generally happens on this line.'

After this interview I was more ready to believe a friend who told me that he and his pony raced the Wexford train last week and beat her by an hour and a half. The trade revival in Ireland has begun, but it has still some difficulties to contend with.

CONVERGING PATHS

BY FRANCESCO COPPOLA

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DURING the last months the question of Franco-Italian relations has again been brought forward. In Italy it was the *Messaggero* which first openly declared itself in favor of the 'closest possible economic agreement,' an opinion which was emphatically echoed in France by *Temps*, *Matin*, *Figaro*, and many others. Most of the other Italian and French journals, and even official agencies in Italy, France, England, and Germany, later joined in the discussion until an official statement by the Italian Government put an end to it.

Two conclusions should be drawn from all this. First, that the Ruhr problem is a European, and not merely a Franco-German, issue, which cannot fail to influence Franco-Italian relations in some degree; second, that the respective positions of France and Italy in the political and economic equilibrium of Europe and the whole world are so disproportionate that both nations are instinctively conscious of the fact and are making efforts, from time to time, to reach some solution of the problem — a solution which will be difficult to find in programmes and platforms but which sooner or later will inevitably be brought about.

The view of the *Messaggero* can be summarized thus: France came out of the World War with an increased importance in the European balance of power, and with a still more considerable colonial aggrandizement and growth in natural resources, to which latter she is presently going to add the Ruhr Basin. It must be remembered

that the Ruhr Basin has well nigh a continental monopoly over iron, coal, and phosphates. France, however, is short of the man-power needed to reënforce her European strongholds, to develop her colonies and increase their value, to take full advantage of her natural resources, to reconstruct her devastated regions, in short, to cultivate all of her national field.

We in Italy derived no advantage from the Peace of Versailles; we obtained neither colonies nor natural resources; and upon our narrow and impoverished land we still have an overflowing and steadily increasing wealth of precisely that human force which France so badly lacks. Consequently we shall be able to lend our people to France with the object of developing her territorial acquisitions in exchange for a share in her natural resources.

Such an agreement would be purely economic, says the *Messaggero*. However, the French journals retorted that it should be a political agreement even more than an economic agreement — and we cannot deny that the French are right. Indeed, it seems absurd to think of international relations as economic relations only — as relations that do not presuppose and do not automatically generate political relations. It seems even more absurd to think of economics as an aim and of politics as a means — a way of thinking which often prevails in our country, and which seems a survival of materialistic positivism, now obsolete. In