

Ireland's Easter Rebellion

The Irish Volunteers and the lads of the Red Hand of Ulster took to brother lead and sister steel in their defense against the tyrant Crown

By Blaine Owen

NIGHT in Dublin, April 22, 1916. A pair of Metropolitan Police stand silent in their heavy helmets, their brass buttons gleaming in the flickering carbon light which shines on a billboard behind them.

"Enlist!" scream the great letters of the billboard. "Save Catholic Belgium!"

Few people move about the streets of Dublin this night. The D.M.P. men move on slowly, swinging their batons, meet their sergeant, salute, move on again slowly. The quiet is unnatural, tense.

Three spots in Dublin are not quiet. In three scattered sections of the city, loud talk and strong words are being spoken behind locked doors.

Behind the barred windows of huge, gloomy Dublin Castle, General Maxwell strides up and down the great conference room in the natty uniform of the British army as he speaks to the gathered officers of the British Military Command and frock-coated Dublin Castle government officials.

An official paper lies on the table. "At last," they are saying among themselves, "we can go ahead." For the official document carries the order from London to disarm the Irish who have been defying his majesty's imperial rule, marching defiant through the streets of the city, and stopping trams and traffic for their parades.

Only half a mile away, across the River Liffey, Professor Eoin MacNeill strokes his reddish-gray, close-cropped beard, and speaks as commander-in-chief to the assembled leaders of the Irish Volunteers. Some shift in their seats, then rise and speak their minds.

"We've dallied too long," speaks up young Ned Daly, thin and stern. "And now," he says, "we must strike and keep faith with our men who have drilled for two long years, awaiting."

But the O'Rahilly shakes his head gravely. "MacNeill is right, boys, we've got to wait a while longer yet."

Decision and plans for strong action in Dublin Castle. Hesitancy, wavering, in Wynn's Hotel. Who then will sound the call to the people to go out and defend themselves against the order to disarm? . . .

FACING the riverfront, two quiet longshoremen stood before the narrow entrance of an old brick hotel, holding their rifles easily, their hat-brims pinned back with the Red Hand of Ulster insignia. Across the face of the building over their heads stretched a large sign: "We serve neither King nor Kaiser," the sign said, "but Ireland." Below this were the

words, "Liberty Hall. Office, Irish Transport and General Workers."

Inside, the broad shoulders of James Connolly threw a giant shadow across the marked and marred table where a draft of a "Proclamation of the Republic" was spread. Other leaders of the Citizens' Army clustered around, decisive, determined.

It was close to midnight when a small group of men marched up the riverfront and presented themselves to the sentries before Liberty Hall. "Volunteers," they said, and passed, Ned Daly in the lead, to take their places with the men inside.

All night they discussed, debated, and planned, these men of Ireland's army of the workers. The Citizens' Army, which they headed, had been formed three years before as a defense squad for the great Dublin Strike in 1913.

Guns had been smuggled to them by night from fellow-workers in other lands. Food had come to them from the mines and factories of England, Scotland, and Wales following Jim Larkin's "Fiery Cross" campaign. A righteous hatred of British oppression had been strengthened by a class hatred of the wealthy Irish allies of the Crown, when William Martin Murphy, the Heart of Ireland, had armed "scabs," and the Royal Irish Police had been sent against strikers.

Dawn of Easter Sunday saw three groups of messengers speeding from conference rooms. From Dublin Castle, Lancers galloped away carrying orders to captains and majors: "Disarm the Irish."

The O'Rahilly sped from Dublin by automobile, carrying the word for the priests of

the countryside to announce from the pulpits: "No Easter parade." This was the decision of Prof. Eoin MacNeill and most of his followers.

But from Liberty Hall, boys and girls of the Fianna (Irish Pioneers) ran out and cycled forth to the poorer sections of Dublin. Young Paul Reveres of the Citizens' Army, they carried the call to arms.

"We will march on Easter Monday," they said. "For Ireland."

This was not a quick decision of a handful of men, nor even a first step for freedom. Every generation in Ireland for close to two centuries had been stirred by desperate attempts to break the bonds of Britain's rule. Easter 1916 was a natural outcome of this almost continuous struggle.

TEN O'CLOCK in the morning, and sixteen hundred men stood about the union hall, gripping their guns, some of them laughing, some of them quiet and somber. Half wore the Sam Browne belts and the Red Hand of Ulster badge of the Citizens' Army. The others, mingled with them, wore the dark-green uniform of the Irish Volunteers and the round, bronze I. V. badge on their visored caps, the harp in the center.

Sean Connolly headed one column, waiting for the word to march. Jim came out of the hall, his round face haggard from the three days and nights of conferences and planning. "All right," he said.

Just then a small, dark-haired man broke past the guards calling, "Jim, hi there, Jim." It was a Jewish clothing worker, Wicks, who had taken the Easter holiday to come over from London and see his friend Jim Connolly. "What's up?" he wanted to know.

"We're going out to take a crack at the old empire," Connolly answered.

"I'm with you," Wicks came back. "Give me a rifle." And he dropped into line with the first column to march away, toward City Hall, Sean Connolly in the lead.

Seven blocks away, the rifles of the old empire blazed forth from the sentry boxes which flanked Dublin Castle, and little Wicks dropped face forward on the paving blocks of Paine Street. But Irish bullets answered quickly, and the column swung on to Dublin's City Hall.

The firing began in earnest on both sides, and the square was alive with whistling death. Suddenly a cheer went up from the doorways and windows about the square, and men paused in the act of loading or cocking just long enough to see Sean Connolly, standing



R. Gikow

straight in the sun on the roof of the Hall, hauling down the colors of the British Empire. Another cheer, louder this time, came as he hoisted in its place the tricolor of the early United Irishmen.

Halfway up the pole, the rope jerked once, and the green, white, and orange colors stopped. An English bullet had dropped Sean Connolly. But the flag, which was later to become the emblem of the Irish Free State, was then being run to the top of the staff over the fortress-like General Post Office, some blocks away, occupied by Patrick Pearse, Tom Clark, Jim Connolly, and the headquarters command, while other columns took over buildings in key spots of the city.

High noon of the Easter Monday holiday heard the Proclamation of the Irish Republic read from the steps of the Post Office, and Pat Pearse, as provisional president of the Republic, addressed the gathered crowd while armed workers stood sentry on the roof and others built sandbag barricades in the windows.

The cry went up that the English soldiers were coming in force, and presently a company of lancers galloped toward them in brilliant military formation. Then the rifles of the Citizens' Army and Irish Volunteers barked from the streets and windows. Six riders pitched from their horses with the first volley. The rest wheeled and gave spur to their horses. "Did you see the Grand National being run?" Dubliners asked each other later, when speaking of the flashing retreat of the lancers.

Railway depots were seized and rails torn up on the line to Kingstown, where troops and munitions could land. The Canal circling the city was taken over by the rebels and guards placed on all bridges. Telephone wires were cut—all but a secret one to Dublin Castle, which was accidentally overlooked, and which gave the reactionary forces contact with their friends outside.

Great guns boomed from British men-of-war anchored offshore, and incendiary shells dropped on Liberty Hall, on the General Post Office, and on other buildings in the center of the city.

General Vane attacked the canal bridge at Mount Street with the Seventh Battalion of British regulars, and twice was repulsed with casualties of eighteen officers and 256 men killed and wounded. Rusty revolvers and short carbines were fished from old trunks and attic corners to defend the city. Women stood watch in window corners, and Fianna boys sniped with the men from the housetops.

Few shots were wasted by the Irish, and less than a hundred rebels were lost during the week's heavy fighting. But they waited in vain for the aid from the provinces which was to answer the expected British encirclement of Dublin.

The O'Rahilly was able to tell them why, when he returned. For it had been he who had taken the message to the countryside not to march, while telegrams were broadcast by Prof. O'Neill and read in hundreds of pulpits.

But with the rifles popping about him, the O'Rahilly, too, grabbed his gun and fought to

defend Dublin. He, too, was to lose his life as a result of his own previous sabotaging message to the provinces.

Five days the rebel flag flew, without a moment of respite from the rifle and artillery fire of the British forces. A thousand men were on the march to the aid of the Dubliners. More were joining at almost every milestone along the way. Liam Mellows, at their head, son of a British soldier, had been the first secretary of the Volunteers and was the organizer of the Fianna youth organization. There were five days of heroic defense of their city before the invading troops gained the upper hand.

Then battalion after battalion marched into Dublin behind the hated Union Jack. Cordons were thrown about block after block of tenements and homes. Men, women, and children were dragged from homes and beds.

"Enlist, Save Catholic Belgium!" The posters still screamed, while barracks were turned into crowded prisons—Portobello, Arbor Hill, Kilmainham, Mountjoy. Citizens, Army men, Volunteers, trade unionists, women and children—anyone who hated the British was suspect, and everybody hated the British. The small band who had continued to hold the Post Office finally were forced to march out of the flaming building and lay their arms at the foot of the Parnell monument.

The courtyard of Arbor Hill Barracks echoed with the sharp crackle of firing squads carrying out the orders of drumhead courts-martial. Jails and barracks overflowed with prisoners constantly being rounded up from the cities and provinces following the surrender.

The echo of the executioners' guns vied with a growing roar of protest from workers all over Ireland, England, Scotland, and Wales. Cables came even from Australia and America. And prisoners were not safe behind walls in seething Ireland of those flaming days. So ships of the fleet were loaded in the dead

of night with hundreds of revolutionaries, and steamed off to England, where Irish filled Knutsford, Lincoln, Dartmoor, Wormwood Scrubs, and other prisons.

Day after day, fluttering official announcements would be posted by a grim-faced adjutant on the bulletin board of Dublin Castle. Con Gilbert was tried, found guilty, and executed at dawn yesterday, the posted *communiqué* would say. Tom Clarke, Eamonn Ceannt, Ned Daly, Michael Mallin, Sean Heuston, Joseph Plunkett—all their names appeared one after the other on the deserted bulletin board. Then Patrick and William Pearse were shot, and their friend Thomas MacDonagh.

Flying columns of troops were sent into the countryside, to County Galway, County Louth, County Wexford, where the town of Enniscorthy had been seized when word had reached them of the uprising in Dublin, and to Drogheda. Arrests were made wholesale, even in places where no parade or fighting had taken place.

One British officer, later admitted to be insane, didn't even bother about a secret court-marshal, but took three Irish suspects out and had them shot on his own responsibility.

The news spread miraculously, no one knew quite how, until regiments in India mutinied before the Crown, and soldiers in Flanders fields laid down their arms in protest. The executions must be stopped, was the swelling cry.

Jim Connolly lay under guard in the military hospital, his leg smashed by a dum-dum bullet, his side torn open with another wound. But the drumhead court-martial decreed that five more British bullets must tear into his torn body for the glory of His Majesty the King and the imperial law of John Bull.

They propped him up before the firing squad, this man who had been carried from his bed. "Don't be afraid," he mumbled to the soldiers who stood before him. Then the guns spoke. Sean MacDermott hobbled to his place before the wall leaning on his stick to aid his crippled legs. The guns spoke again. But they were not to speak the last word.

From Connolly House in Dublin today come daily the strong words of the revolutionaries of the Easter Rebellion of '16. The Hearst of Ireland, William Martin Murphy, pressed for Connolly's murder in '16, and the fascists burned the building in '34. But the fire of Connolly's words and his example can never be extinguished, for they are burned into the hearts of the Irish people, still sweating under the heel of British imperialism.

"We are out to free Ireland for the Irish. But who are the Irish?" asked Connolly. "Not the rack-renting, slum-owning landlord, not the sweating, profit-grinding capitalist, not the sleek and oily lawyer, not the prostitute press man—the hired liars of the enemy.

"Not these, but the Irish working class, the only secure foundation upon which a free nation can be reared. The cause of labor is the cause of Ireland. They cannot be severed!"



Painting by Jean Guérin

The Story of John L. Lewis

Puzzling and fighting his way through the jungle of wrong-headed policies left by Gompers gave the miners' chief a very good schooling

By Bruce Minton and John Stuart

IN THE fourteen years that followed the 1919 bituminous coal strike, John L. Lewis watched the United Mine Workers lose membership and its power steadily diminish. During this time Lewis was to learn that so long as he followed the lead of the A.F. of L. executive council, which in turn received its direction from the Gompers heritage, the United Mine Workers were doomed to ineffectiveness. Whatever mistakes Lewis made in this period were the mistakes of decades of A.F. of L. leadership. For Lewis they became a reservoir of experience which he eventually drew upon in his attempt to transfuse life into the American labor movement.

By 1920, Lewis had been officially elected to the presidency of the United Mine Workers. Because of his retreat during the 1919 strike, he faced dissension in the union. The militant Alexander Howat, president of the Kansas district, defied Lewis by leading a strike against a newly passed state law instituting compulsory arbitration. When Howat was jailed, he continued to conduct the strike from his cell. Lewis opposed the strike on the ground that it violated a contract between the union and the operators. Actually, Lewis reasoned that Howat's open opposition would obstruct the official leadership of the U.M.W. Lewis removed Howat and the Kansan's supporters from the union. The conflict between the two men stretched over many years; Lewis, however, managed to retain his original victory though the running fight split, and so weakened, the union.

Likewise, he quarreled with the Illinois district president, Frank Farrington, a far different man from Howat. Farrington, corrupt and reactionary, was building a strong place for himself in the Middle West by arousing discontent against Lewis among the rank and file. Lewis sparred cautiously with Farrington for years, waiting for an opening which would allow him to demolish the Illinois clique. Finally, in 1925, with Farrington in Europe, Lewis disclosed that the district president was receiving \$25,000 a year from the Peabody Coal Co. Farrington admitted the charge. But his expulsion by no means ended the factional war which he had promoted, and as a result the membership of the United Mine Workers dwindled.

Again, in the 1922 bituminous strike to preserve the 1920 wage scale, Lewis pursued a short-sighted policy. On the first day of the strike, he signed a contract with the employers in western Kentucky whereby the miners resumed work in that district in re-



"Organization upon an industrial basis."

turn for an extension of the old terms until the following year. A few days later, he signed two-year contracts for southeastern Kentucky and Tennessee. The flow of coal from these sections hampered the progress of the nation-wide strike.

Unfortunately, Lewis's lack of vision did not end here. He greeted the spontaneous walkout of nearly 100,000 non-union miners in southern Pennsylvania with delight—but when it came to signing contracts at the strike's conclusion, Lewis abandoned them to the mercy of the operators. His excuse was that the industry included "twice too many mines and twice too many miners." To preserve the bargaining strength and jobs of the U.M.W. membership in the face of an oversupply of miners, Lewis mistakenly deserted the non-union fields where, lacking organization, the miners were unable to resist disastrous wage cuts. The competitive advantage thus gained by the non-union operators over those operators who had signed wage contracts with the U.M.W. provided an excuse for the owners of union mines to violate contracts. And Lewis discovered that his attempt to save the U.M.W. by excluding the "surplus" workers from the United Mine Workers not only did not help the union, but seriously threatened its very existence. Partial unionization failed; it was another lesson which later caused Lewis to realize not only the necessity of organizing all the mines, but also all industry.

The 1922 strike ended with another victory that in reality was another setback. Membership in the U.M.W. decreased. The union was forced by terror and injunction to withdraw from one district after the other. Gone

were Alabama and West Virginia. Union control vanished in Colorado, Utah, Texas, Maryland, Virginia. When Lewis extended the bituminous contract in 1924 for three more years—the famous Jacksonville agreement—he achieved this agreement only by paying a stiff price for it: he relinquished western Kentucky, and maintained only nominal control over less than one quarter of the mines and miners in Oklahoma, less than two-thirds of the miners in Arkansas. Within a year, the owners were violating the Jacksonville agreement: 110 mines in Pennsylvania alone shifted to open shop.

In an attempt to preserve the Jacksonville agreement, the U.M.W. called another strike in 1927. But Lewis now knew that the owners were too powerful for the union to expect improved conditions; he raised the slogan, "No backward step." Years of negotiations, the method Lewis had learned from Gompers, had undermined the principle of blanket agreements covering all union mines. Now the U.M.W. had no alternative but to allow each district to settle on whatever terms it could obtain from the operators.

The inevitable result was loss of membership. The United Mine Workers fell from 402,700 members in 1924 to approximately 150,000 members in 1932. For all his energy and determination, Lewis closed his twelfth year as president of the U.M.W. with the operators more secure in their oppressive power than they had been for thirty years.

The blame did not rest solely with Lewis. During the war, the coal industry had expanded; by 1923, the capacity of bituminous mines alone surpassed one billion tons. Production never exceeded half this tonnage. Oil, gas, electric power, improved combustion methods, rationalization of processes in the railway and iron-and-steel industries restricted the already oversupplied market still further. The price of coal sank; operators speeded up the workers, mechanized the mines, chiseled wages. In three years, 200,000 miners were squeezed out of the industry; those still able to find employment averaged 171 work days a year. The disparity between the labor supply and the falling demand helped shatter union standards and union strength. In the space of twelve months, the number of non-union mines increased from 40 percent to 60 percent. The southern coal fields, 50 percent organized during the war, by 1927 had completely succumbed to the open shop. Moreover, the output of non-union districts rose precipitously; the unorganized fields in West Virginia and Kentucky produced 23 percent