

POBLACHT NA h EIREANN.

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 her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

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 in 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 people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish 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 religious and civil 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 Mac DIARMADA, **THOMAS MacDONAGH,**
P. H. PEARSE, **EAMONN CEANNT,**
JAMES CONNOLLY **JOSEPH PLUNKET,**

¹¹The Proclamation of the Irish Republic,' *National Museum of Ireland*
<<https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Collections-Research/Collection/Resilience/Artefact/Test-3/fb71e3dc-2e95-4406-bc46-87d8d6b0ae5d>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

Abstract

This image, extracted from the *National Museum of Ireland*, is a photograph of the physical original which is housed in the aforementioned institute in Ireland's capital, Dublin. Produced via printing press in the city's Liberty Hall by the compositors, Liam Ó Briain, Michael Molloy and printer; Christopher Brady on Sunday, April 23rd and Monday, April 24th, 1916; the 2,500 estimated copies sought to proclaim Ireland's independence from The United Kingdom of Great Britain. The seven original signatories were, Éamonn Ceannt, Thomas Clarke, James Connolly, Seán Mac Diarmada, Thomas MacDonagh, Patrick Pearse and Joseph Plunkett.²

It is the purpose of this piece, to analyse the specified document embedded within the image above and extract from its content information that may prove valuable for better contextualising the historical circumstances surrounding its conception.

Introduction

On Easter Monday, April 24th, 1916 at 12:45pm,³ members of the self-proclaimed "Provisional Government," under the voice of their president, Pearse, conveyed from the steps of Dublin's Post Office, the text of what would come to be known as the *Proclamation of the Irish Republic*; a proclamation which has since been ascribed through the annals of history as the opener of the *Easter Rising Revolution*.⁴

Through the words of Paul Bew, author of *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity 1789-2006*; whilst many on the day prior to the uprising, were 'crying joyfully in the churches "Christ has risen,"⁵ the *Military Council of the Irish Volunteers*, chaired by Clarke, convened at Liberty Hall, and there decided to strike on the morrow at midday.⁶ As such, according to Maureen Buckley in her article, *Irish Easter Rising of 1916*, 'without opposition, a Provisional Government set up headquarters in the General Post Office and at noon hoisted above them the Tricolor, a green, white and orange banner connoting the union in peace of the Irish of the South and North,⁷ and alongside such, numerous other buildings were occupied by recruits of the *Citizen Army* and *Irish Volunteers*⁸ (from thereon known as the *Irish Republican Army*) which amounted to approximately 1,000 persons under leadership of Connolly,⁹ an expert military tactician,¹⁰ and 'Pearse, [the] admitted leader of the radical faction within the Volunteers.'¹¹ This military maneuver withstood British forces for five days within the confines of

²The Proclamation of the Irish Republic,' *National Museum of Ireland*.

³Ibid.

⁴Maureen Buckley, 'Irish Easter Rising of 1916,' *International Honor Society in Social Sciences*, 31(1956) 49-55 (p. 53) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41884424>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

⁵Paul Bew, Ireland: 'Squelching, 'by way of a hors d'oeuvre': Conflict in Ireland, 1891–1918', in *The Politics of Enmity 1789-2006* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2011) pp. 1-33 (p. 13) <<https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199561261.001.0001/acprof-9780199561261-chapter-8?print=pdf>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

⁶Bew, p. 13.

⁷Buckley, p. 53.

⁸Bew, p. 13.

⁹Buckley, p. 53.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 50.

¹¹Buckley, p. 53.

Dublin and its surrounding areas,¹² until April 29th brought an official and unconditional surrender under Pearse's supervision, who 'delivered up his sword to Brigadier-General Lowe.'¹³

Spoken of by Bew as 'Romantic Nationalists,' the notion of a blood sacrifice is said to have appealed to Pearse, MacDonagh, and Plunkett.¹⁴ Michael McDonagh, co-author of *Ireland. With Chapters on the Irish Free State*, likened such resolve to offering 'themselves up as a holocaust for their country,'¹⁵ whilst with regards to Pearse, Bew notes that 'he acted as he did partly in conscious emulation of Christ's sacrifice on the cross,' for by 'following His example [*Christ*] he would redeem the Irish nation.'¹⁶

After the rebel surrender, a total of sixteen leaders were executed, fifteen of which, within two weeks, and inclusive of all seven founding signatories of the *Easter Rising Proclamation*.¹⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, not with exception, likened such acts to atrocity - and in particular, the summary execution of Connolly would prove especially potent, given that his battle wounds made him incapable of sustaining himself, and as such, he was stretchered and propped for the firing squad.¹⁸ Ironically the nature of these executions were what altered the public perception of the *Easter Rising* events. Bew states that on that day the insurrectionists were chanting upon the streets that "Ireland had risen,"¹⁹ yet it became only true under the strong handed response of wartime Britain following these perceived acts of barbarity. Bew once again attests that, it was through these events that:

Such a powerful symbolism compelled the Irish people to identify the insurgents as representative Irishmen with whom they shared much—not crazed subversives: not as 'partly socialistic' and 'partly alien', as the Irish Catholic, an authoritative voice.²⁰

For the British, it can now perhaps be perceived as a no-win situation, for had such individuals been allowed to remain as spokespersons for the Irish nationalist cause, whether confined to imprisonment or released back into the public sphere, their nationalist compassion and dedication to their cause would likely never have relented. Prisoner execution, however, given the period of war and the period in question, was no Irish exception, remembering indeed that trench conflict often included similar scenarios for those perceived as "cowards," and from which over 300 British would suffer shared fates to the Irish rebels.²¹ Perhaps the style in which these men, (Connolly in particular) were inhumanely discharged, could have been adjusted more tactfully to subvert a larger proportion of public

¹²Ibid., p. 49.

¹³Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁴Bew, p. 13.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁷Department of the Taoiseach, 'The Executed Leaders of the 1916 Rising,' (2018)

<<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/583995-the-executed-leaders-of-the-1916-rising/>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

¹⁸Buckley, p. 55.

¹⁹Bew, p. 13.

²⁰Ibid., p. 15.

²¹John Sweeney, 'Lest we forget: the 306 'cowards' we executed in the first world war,' *The Guardian*, 14 November 2009 <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/nov/14/firstworldwar.uk>> [accessed May 10th 2020].

resentment that would soon follow; however Professor Michael Laffan concluded in Bew, that indeed, 'far more men were killed than was necessary to remove dangerous revolutionary leaders, but too few to deter future rebellions.'²²In essence; Irish Independence was an inevitability - and those in opposition could only realistically amend the duration through which it would succeed. Writing in 1973, Laurence McCaffrey recalls his 1966 encounter in *Irish Nationalism and Irish Catholicism: A Study in Cultural Identity, Church History*, during the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising - a rebellion he himself notes as a "Blood Sacrifice" - and one he coins as the inspiration behind the ensuing Anglo-Irish conflict, and later, the emergence of Ireland as a sovereign state. Expectantly tribute was paid to the martyred leaders of that rebellious week²³ - as their names remain enshrined to what might be paralleled to the *United States Constitution* or the traditional *Masonic Cornerstone* which 'symbolises sturdiness, morality, and truth.'²⁴To summarise the above overview, Éamon de Valera, an *Easter Rising* commandant who evaded death and was instead interned in prison, said later of the rebellion that 'the blood that had been spilled was enough to show the world that they were in the fray,' and he was right.²⁵

Document Analysis

The document itself, produced by the aforementioned signatories, and under the details specified within the abstract, will be examined within the following section, headed in sub-section, and in chronological-paragraph order for the purpose of practical reflection.

Design

If we are to contextualise the origin of the proclamation - we can safely relate its design to the rapidity of its conceivment. In fact, though the motivations behind it were of course complex and lengthy, whilst denoting a series of historical precursors - the act of creation, was begun sporadically, resulting from an almost literal "last-minute decision." Its purpose might also be said to resemble that of an eviction notice, albeit one which intended not to foreclose a property, but instead that of a sizable territorial expanse. *The Museum of Ireland* highlights the haste with which the proclamation was reproduced, with 'individual copies show[ing] idiosyncrasies in terms of ink pressure and spacing,'²⁶a result of the shabby state of the printing press. Examples of such errors may be seen on paragraph 3 of the proclamation; line 2.

The prelude that rushed-forth the events of Easter Monday came with the news of the capture on April 20th, of the German vessel *Aud*,²⁷an arms shipment which was intercepted by the British Navy, resulting in the loss of vital supplies contained within. The cargo was expected to include 'machine guns, twenty thousand rifles and ammunition and explosives.'²⁸Co-conspirator, Sir Roger Casement, 'a British diplomat turned radical Irish nationalist' disembarked from a German submarine the following day, on April 21st, Good Friday, in an attempt to send warning that, even if received, the shipment

²²Ibid., p. 16.

²³Lawrence J. McCaffrey, 'Irish Nationalism and Irish Catholicism: A Study in Cultural Identity, *Church History*, 42(1973) 524-534, p. 524 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3164971>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

²⁴'Behind the Masonic Symbols: The Cornerstone,' *The Grand Lodge of Ohio* <<https://www.freemason.com/behind-masonic-symbols-cornerstone/>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

²⁵Bew, p. 20.

²⁶'The Proclamation of the Irish Republic,' *National Museum of Ireland*.

²⁷Bew, p. 12.

²⁸Buckley, p. 52.

would be insufficient for the intended aims.²⁹ Casement was arrested shortly thereafter, alongside other leaders,³⁰ and joined the list of martyrs when hanged on August 3rd, 1916.³¹ Nevertheless, Casement did manage to send word of the events to Chief-of Staff, Eoin MacNeill, who 'issued a countermanding order, cancelling activities planned for the next day. O'Neill's order was [even] published in the Sunday Independent.³² Nonetheless, following an "emergency" meeting, the *Irish Republican Brotherhood's* Military Council (I.R.B) opted to go-ahead, but postponed the original date by a single day - Easter Monday.³³ Bew makes an important note, that 'the willingness of the militants to deceive their own chief-of-staff, [...] also helped to deceive the governmental system,³⁴ however, there is indeed evidence to suggest that such deception extended to many of the volunteers themselves, individuals who were to testify that they were oblivious to the events planned for Easter Monday, and anticipated instead, a typical set of military maneuvers. W. T. Cosgrave, a senior officer under integration for court-martial stated that 'he had never "heard of the rebellion until he was in the middle of it" [believing that] he was merely going out for a route march.'³⁵ Stephen Gwyn in Bew corroborates this notion, furthering that 'many of whom had no idea for what purpose they had been mobilised.'³⁶

Header / Titles

The uppermost line, printed in Irish, reads 'POBLACHT Na H EIREANN', meaning - 'Irish Public' and is the sole passage underlined within the document. By preceding all other content, importance is placed on it for two likely reasons. Firstly, as mentioned in Gabriella Elgenius' Doctoral research, *Expressions of Nationhood: National Symbols and Ceremonies in Contemporary Europe*, 'ethnic symbolism referring to the ancient language, religion, kinship system or way of life is crucial for the maintenance of ethnic identity through periods of change.'³⁷ With regards to the latter point, it was mentioned by William O'Brien in Bew in the late period of the nineteenth century that pursuance of the Irish language was small; 'even [for] patriotic young men,³⁸ which is perhaps why the *Irish Citizens Army* integrated Irish language courses into their volunteer organisation, so as to personify the Irish nationalist cause.³⁹ So why is language so vital to buffering national identity? Referring to Hobsbawm in Elgenius, national language suffices to establish social continuity, and can extend beyond such, as a communicative tool. Hobsbawm highlights how 'the significance of all emotionally charged signs lies in the ritual practices connected with them, such as standing up when singing the national anthem and saluting the flag;⁴⁰ the raising of the flag being one of the first acts undertaken by the rebels, as I've highlighted on paragraph 2. The second aspect of 'POBLACHT Na H EIREANN' -

²⁹Bew, p. 12.

³⁰Buckley, p. 53.

³¹Department of the Taoiseach, 'The Executed Leaders of the 1916 Rising.'

³²Bew, pp. 12-13.

³³Buckley, p. 53.

³⁴Bew, p. 12.

³⁵Ibid., p. 15.

³⁶Ibid., p. 15.

³⁷Gabriella Elgenius, 'Expressions of Nationhood: National Symbols and Ceremonies in Contemporary Europe.' *Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy The London School of Economics & Political Science University of London*, (2005) 1-370 (p. 191) <<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/16390523.pdf>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

³⁸Bew, p. 2.

³⁹Brian Hanley, 'The Irish Citizen Army after 1916,' *Saothar: Journal of the Irish Labour History Society*, 28(2003), 37-47 (p. 39) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23199762>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

⁴⁰Gabriella Elgenius, 'Expressions of Nationhood: National Symbols and Ceremonies in Contemporary Europe.' p. 269).

is of course its translational meaning. 'The Public' are the intended audience, and will be referenced multiple times throughout the proclamation. The Irish citizenry are those for which the proclamation is intended (hence the emphasised Irish spelling).

Regarding the other emboldened titles which head the proclamation - both 'THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT' and 'IRISH REPUBLIC' are interlinked, in that a 'Republic,' according to Professor George Winterton in *Monarchy and Republic*, as noted on the *Australian Parliaments* webpage 'denotes much the same as “democracy”, and refers to a regime constituted wholly on a popular basis by election.'⁴¹ As such, the I.R.B. correctly address themselves as a Provisional Government, as it is their endeavour to proclaim the yet independent Ireland a sovereign state, and upon success, form a democratic parliament. Lastly, the final bold statement is that of: 'TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.' Acknowledging that proportions of the Irish populace were perhaps less than competent with the Irish language - this statement was likely purposed to repeat that of: 'POBLACHT Na H EIREANN,' and additionally - the act of double repetition itself can only be a positive emphasis.

Body of Text: Paragraph 1

The distinction between Irishman and Irishwomen, which also sees repetition in paragraph 4, likely takes its motive from the desire to encapsulate as many sources of support as possible, as indeed the entire proclamation exposes with mention of allies and familial ties abroad, as-well-as each of the main volunteer corps, (paragraph 2) alongside consistent religious tones. Additionally, the flag as a universal symbol of nationhood is also mentioned in the first paragraph, as it is indeed well-known that when structuring a newspaper expose, for instance, the opening stages aim to draw as much attention from the audience as possible. An article from media outlet, *ABC* surmises that, 'the first sentence or paragraph of a news story [...] summarises the point of the story and encourages people to keep reading,'⁴² and it is not unlikely that Pearse, a law professional, teacher, and poet⁴³ had his influence on the creative nature of the proclamation. God, flag, and nation appear knotted into a crusade-like form, no-doubt intended to bond the readership and spectator into mutual association and subsequent brother and sisterhood, remembering that even in the 1970's, 95% of Ireland's population still identified as Catholic,⁴⁴ and that 'Catholic liturgy was the mortar cementing the Irish community, touching all the essential aspects of life-birth, marriage, sickness, death: the moments that provide purpose and meaning.'⁴⁵

Body of Text: Paragraph 2

As stipulated in my previous paragraph, the mention of foreign support aims to allude to the expansive nature of nationalist support. Indeed, there were American based contacts which raised thousands of

⁴¹Parliament of Australia, 'A Note on the Meaning of 'Republic.'

<https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Senate/Powers_practice_n_procedures/~/~/~link.aspx?_id=24BC1DFCD1C4D10ABD91B77239C71DF&_z=z> [accessed May 10th 2021].

⁴²'Describing Different Parts of a News Story,' *ABC* (2018)

<<https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Collections-Research/Collection/Resilience/Artefact/Test-3/fb71e3dc-2e95-4406-bc46-87d8d6b0ae5d>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

⁴³Eugene McNulty, 'Breaking the law: Patrick Pearse, cultural revival, and the site of sovereignty,' *St Patrick's College, Dublin* (p. 3) <<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/77222469.pdf>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

⁴⁴McCaffrey, p.528..

⁴⁵Ibid. p. 532.

pounds for the cause,⁴⁶ whilst collaboration with Germany, Britain's wartime foe, was also true.⁴⁷ 'Secret' is also stressed regarding the coalition of organisations, again, perhaps to vent the notion of strength in numbers, but also to remind the public in what might now seem Orwellian, that the I.R.B. ('Big Brother') were watching. *The Irish Brotherhood* was indeed a secretive group,⁴⁸ and was founded in 1858, with all leaders of the Easter Rising holding membership.⁴⁹ The three mentioned organisations were essentially para-military too; the *Citizen Army* and *Irish National Volunteers* being founded in 1913,⁵⁰ the former by Connolly⁵¹ and the latter, in response to Protestant militia formation resulting from a Home Rule Bill possibly being passed, which Unionists felt ostracised by.⁵² The use of 'gallant' as a descriptor for Germany and her allies, seems, however, rather risqué, given that by war's end, 35,000 to 50,000 people from Ireland had been killed fighting for Britannia, with many also wounded.⁵³ This bold, and rather unnecessarily provocative claim (in that its inclusion may have done more to foster public resentment than rally support) likely stands as a hedged bet, noting that 1916 saw Germany and her allies in a dominant wartime position having launched a strong offensive in Verdun which drastically reduced French operational strength elsewhere.⁵⁴

Body of Text: Paragraphs 3 and 4

This paragraph contains nationalistic sentiments, which under a charismatic orator would rile a crowd into frenzy. Indeed, given that the proclamation was to precede premeditated rebellion, this was likely the purpose; the intention being, not to inform, but to convince! In a shared perspective, Urs Stäheli and Eric Savoth in their piece entitled; *Seducing the Crowd: The Leader in Crowd Psychology*, assert that 'affirmation strips claims bare by reducing them to slogans, images, or metaphors. Crowds are visually oriented and thus tend to react most strongly to simple and redundant stimulations that are easy to grasp.'⁵⁵ 'Alien government' in reference to Great Britain is another such example, as with: 'the Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman.' In-short, paragraphs 3 and 4 are a loose declaration of rights⁵⁶ that true patriots are entitled to claim under a barrage of metaphoric icing.

Body of Text: Paragraphs 5, 6 & Conclusion.

To conclude, the latter stages of the proclamation placed a bow-tie-like emphasis upon the almost sermonic piece - leaving the reader and listener with a thunderous proclamation, and with further emphasis on their 'Most High God' - capitalised for effect, but also to represent Catholic embodiment of the movement as intrinsic, given the nature of Catholicism in Irish culture as a fundamental

⁴⁶Buckley, p. 50.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 52.

⁴⁸Bew, p. 9.

⁴⁹'Irish Republican Brotherhood.' <<http://irishrepublicanbrotherhood.org>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

⁵⁰'Irish Volunteers Commemorative Organisation.'

<<https://irishvolunteers.org/pages/history-of-the-irish-volunteers>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

⁵¹Buckley, p. 50.

⁵²Ibid., p. 49.

⁵³ Sean Brophy, 'Ireland's Decade of Conflict 1913-1921 (II)', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 105(2016/2017) 462-268 (p. 463) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24871509>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

⁵⁴ '10 Significant Battles of the First World War,' *Imperial War Museum*

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/10-significant-battles-of-the-first-world-war>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

⁵⁵Urs Stäheli and Eric Savoth, 'Seducing the Crowd: The Leader in Crowd Psychology,' *New German Critique* (2011) 63-77 (p. 69) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41288115>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

⁵⁶ 'The Proclamation of the Irish Republic,' *National Museum of Ireland*.

identity. Bew's own description of the Rising's events reveal much about how Irish perspectives over the rebels were felt through the religiosity with which it was perceived to have been enacted. Bew states that 'these men all died as good Catholics,'⁵⁷ disclosing perhaps, that support relents primarily from their Catholic devoutness? The overall impression gained from that of historical analysis is that the proclamation attempted to appease all sides, as a mechanism for absorbing as much support as possible. Metaphor use simultaneously intended to rally the crowd into war - for after all, this was the starting pistol. And so to finish through the appropriate words of Buckley:

Where the Easter Rising itself had failed, its aftermath had succeeded in uniting the people of Ireland in a realization of nationhood. After six years of civil war, the twenty-six southern counties won home rule. Irish officials then proceeded to sever the ties with England one by one, until in 1949, Ireland was declared a Republic.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Bew, p. 15.

⁵⁸Buckley, p. 55

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