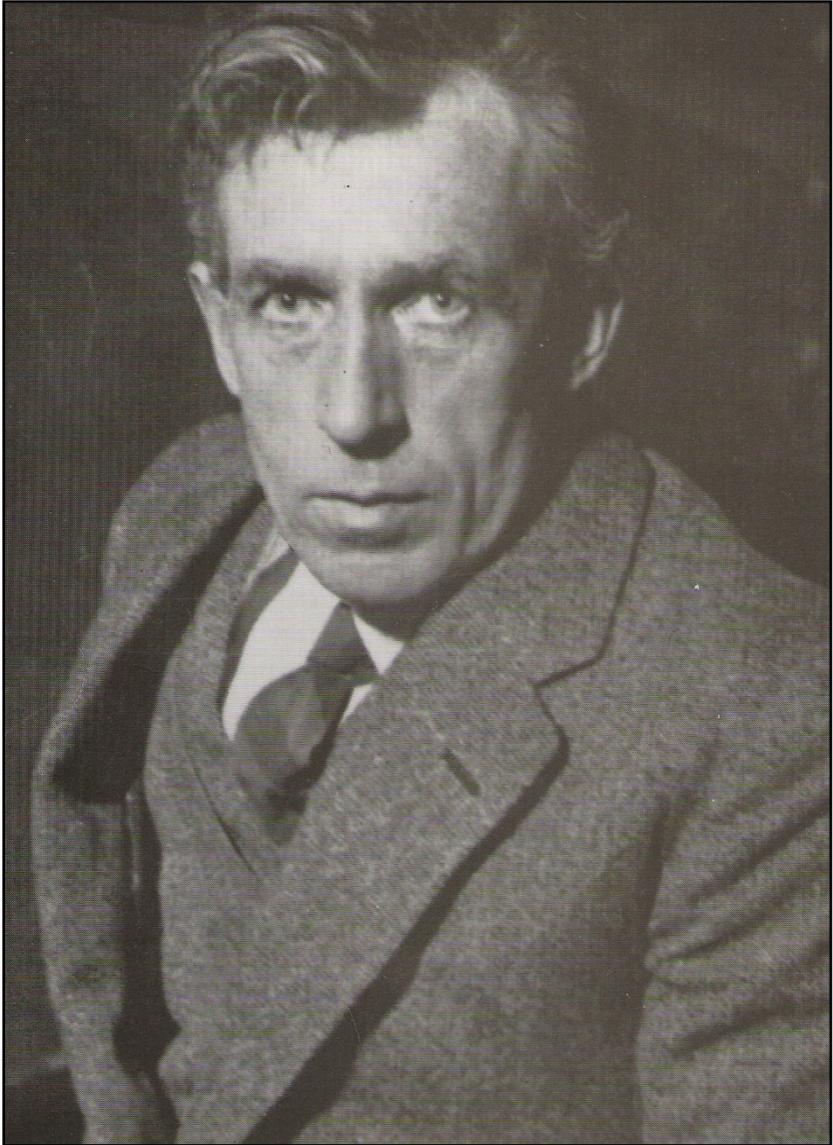
A black and white photograph showing soldiers in a trench during a battle. The soldiers are wearing helmets and are positioned behind a concrete or stone wall. They are holding rifles and appear to be in a state of readiness. The background shows a blurred crowd of people, possibly civilians or other soldiers, standing on a street or in a public square. The overall scene is one of a historical conflict.

**Not yet Emmet:**  
*a wreath on the grave of Seán  
Murray*

Peadar O'Donnell

Connolly Youth Movement





**Peadar O'Donnell**  
**1983-1986**

*Publisher's note*

This pamphlet was written by veteran Socialist Republican Peadar O' Donnell as a postscript to the life of Communist Party of Ireland General Secretary Seán Murray.

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# C O N T E N T S

Forward	7
Main text	10
Biographical notes on the author	34



## Forward

Ireland won political independence in 1782. It was expressed in a declaration that only the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland could make laws binding on the Irish people. It was a Parliament without a Government. The Government was in London.

The free Irish Parliament rested comfortably on the economic structure of the regime it displaced - protestant ascendancy in whom is vested ownership of land and the power of majesty. But it was a period of dangerous "French" ideas. The French rabble had stirred themselves out of their stupor and swept the medieval institutions that rotted their lives into the rubbish dump of history. Fear of the rabble rocked governments of the rich for the rich throughout Europe and sparks from it lit a new vision of life in generous minds to whom the rabble were people. The French ideas were an infection that enlightened governments must smother.

They touched Ireland finding tinder-dry conditions in the Protestant North. Carriers of the infection were busy among the Catholics. The British government took prompt steps to fence off the danger areas. This called for the help of two institutions, the Loyal Orange Order and the Catholic Seminary, Maynooth; priests educated in France were a security risk.

The Orange Order was recruited from men of proven loyalty. They were an oath-bound brotherhood but of such disposition they had no need of elaborate pledge - true faith and allegiance to His Majesty George III his heirs and successors by law so long as they supported the Protestant ascendancy; it was landlord orientated and regarded itself as elitist. Landlords led their tenants to inaugural meetings; the unit of organisation was the lodge. So trustworthy was the Orange Order considered that the officer commanding troops in Ulster asked permission to distribute arms through lodges in certain areas so that they might carry out activities which would put discipline at risk if required of regular units of the army.

Presbyterians and other non-conformist sects were denied membership. Maynooth, however, swamped in a sea of Catholics with a long history of disaffection needed to be tied in closer to the British overlordship. The oath imposed on professors and students

was more detailed. It ran.

“I. do take Almighty God and His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, my Redeemer, to witness and I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to our most gracious sovereign Lord, King George III, and him will defend to the utmost of my power against all conspirators and attempts whatsoever that shall be made against his person, crown and dignity, and I will do my utmost endeavour to disclose and make known to His Majesty, and his heirs, all treason and traitorous conspiracies that may be formed against him or them and I do faithfully promise to maintain, support and defend to the utmost of my power the succession of the Crown in His Majesty’s family against any person or persons whatsoever.”

And not only was it prescribed, there were frequent thorough checks that it was being observed and operated. This supervision which was practiced from 1795 into the second half of the nineteenth century left its mark on the Catholic Church in Ireland.

But the time came when London was to find Irish pressure, with international and especially Irish-American influence, too strong to withstand and once again a British Government agreed that only the King, and this time, the Dail and Senate, could make laws binding on the Irish people. Ireland had again won freedom.

The Treaty confirming this freedom was signed at 2.15 a.m. on 6th December, 1921. It differed from the 1782 Freedom in that a Government was based on it. Within hours Arthur Griffith met representatives of the Southern Unionists, properties survivors of the protestant ascendancy of the eighteenth century.

He wrote to Lloyd George, the British Premier, that he had assured that propertied group that their interests would be respected, that he would see to it that they were represented in the Dail that he would consult them on the constitution of the “Upper Chamber” and arrange for their representation there too. It was on the propertied tiers of Irish society in general that this version of the 1782 freedom rested.

History never repeats itself on the same level, and the new structure “elevated” a new strip of Irish people into the political super-structure, resting on an unchanged economic system within which the “rabble” was safely contained. How a great struggle for indepen-

dence came to so unworthy an end must be a puzzle to the youth of the oppressed tiers of Irish society.

## Main text

“The British socialists will never understand why I am here”, James Connolly mused in the G.P.O. in 1916. Luckily, he was not to know that his colleagues in the Irish Labour Party would also fail him. The mass resurgence that flowed from the execution of the leaders of the Easter Rising - the threat of conscription speeded it on - found in the term Sinn Fein a content that suited its mood.

Only a very thin sprinkle of individuals knew that there was already a Home Rule party only on tactics. Arthur Griffith was its theoretician. His goal was the transfer of the powers vested in British administrative structures in Ireland and those exercised direct from London to an Irish parliament. His plan was that, as a first step, Irish M.P.'s should boycott the British Parliament. It was of no more concern to Griffith than to Redmond that the Irish Parliament should pledge allegiance to the British Crown. They were spokesmen for the same class.

Groups came together spontaneously in cities, towns, villages, and at chapel gates throughout the countryside. They proudly proclaimed themselves Sinn Fein Cumainn. They would have no further truck with British establishments in Ireland. They would not elect anybody to speak in their name in the British House of Commons. So strong did this tide run that village traders had no choice but to follow their customers; many of them became sincerely committed. Lawyers, school teachers and young priests sifted in. At meetings at chapel gates and in trade union halls cries of “Up Sinn Fein” and “Up the Republic” rang out within the same burst of cheering. The makeup of the mass movement was a rich mixture of wage earners, small farmers and the almost landless men of the West-Protestant people in the Bible belt within and around Belfast held aloof.

Arthur Griffith had not taken part in the 1916 Rising, but it was known that he was a trusted friend of its leaders. He was a welcome speaker at Sinn Fein meetings in the parish halls and in the provincial towns. His speeches detailed the evils of British rule in Ireland. His standing was so high that when the time came to integrate the cumainn into a National organisation, he was named for President by a number of them. But he was not favoured by Dublin workers because

of his anti-Larkin role in 1913. Then, too, his teaching came under fire from the Socialist Party of Ireland, with headquarters in Liberty Hall.

While Sinn Fein was still a scatter of Groups, a bye election for a seat in the British House of Commons arose in Roscommon. Count Plunkett, father of one of the executed leaders, Joseph Plunkett, was nominated to oppose a nominee of John Redmond's party. It was joyously, though fiercely, contested election. Happy young men and women swept through villages and town lands in a mass canvass. Count Plunkett was elected. He was, of course, pledged to ignore Westminster and was, besides, a declared republican. But as abstention from the British House of Commons was the chief plank in Arthur Griffith's Home Rule policy, there was a whisper that the Roscommon result was, in fact, a Griffith victory. Count Plunkett was so incensed that he referred to the Sinn Fein Cumainn in his constituency as Liberty Clubs.

In order to clarify the issue, Count Plunkett called together a number of members of various organisations; it is likely the names were supplied to him by the I.R.B., for Count Plunkett was unlikely to know people so far apart as A.O.H. and trade union branches. He sought and got a list from Griffith. Arthur Griffith and Rory O'Connor polarised the "delegates" almost from the start. Arthur Griffith declared that Sinn Fein would not change course and that the Roscommon result was an endorsement of his policy; it was the first time he voiced that claim. Rory O'Connor was equally emphatic, that the thrust of the Roscommon election was towards the Republic. They did agree that a committee be set up; neither of them a member of it - to create a National Council and draw up a constitution for a convention of cumainn delegates. Griffith insisted the term should be Ard Fheis and he had his way. The group also agreed on a declaration that Ireland was a separate nation and denying the right of any foreign parliament to make laws for the Irish people; there is surely an echo in that.

Another bye-election cropped up while the clash of views over the Roscommon result was still unresolved; this time in South Longford. If the Parliamentary Party had the choice of venue for a showdown with Sinn Fein, they could not have better than South Longford. Then, too, they had an excellent candidate, the son of a man loyal to Parnell until the end. The party had, of course, got whispers of the

divisions within Sinn Fein and, in fact, a first meeting of the organising committee in Dublin failed to agree on a candidate. But the local cumainn did not look for guidance from Dublin. They not only chose their candidate but his election slogan as well. The candidate was Joseph McGuinness, a prisoner in Lewes jail and the appeal to the people was a simple one -"put him in to get him out". The dead walls seemed to sprout the words.

The Parliamentary party had its own ideas on issues to which voters must address themselves. John Dillon, one of the Parliamentary Party's senior spokesmen, put it honestly to the voter: they were being asked to abandon Home Rule, now within their grasp, and to substitute an impossible demand for a free Irish Republic. He paused while children shouted "Up the Republic", "Up Sinn Fein", "Put him in to get him out". There was no annoyance in his face, just pity. Equally anxious to keep the Home Rule issue to the fore, Joe Devlin at one of the best organised meetings of the campaign and fully aware that he was in a constituency that was a Home Rule bastion, asked the voters whether they were in favour of self government or; he pointed to a group of cheering children - would they follow children into a hopeless fight for an Irish Republic. There could be no halfway house.

Griffith was eager to raise the campaign to the level on which the Party leaders chose to fight it but the surge of young people sweeping through the constituency made that impossible. The picture of that young man, a neighbour's son, and the slogan "put him in to get him out" took over from platforms. It was a near thing but the prisoner was elected.

South Longford was to have given Sinn Fein such a beating that it would crawl into the shadows, but things had gone wrong. There were problems to face. There had been awhiff of suspicion that the Party was weak on partition. There were those who traced the defeat to that, but nobody aware of the impact of that cheery throng of young people careering through the constituency with no message but "put him in to get him out" could be in any doubt but Sinn Fein had a powerful arsenal, the thousand-odd prisoners. One by one a prisoner would go forward for election and one by one a prisoner would win. Young people from all over the country would cheer their way into people's hearts.

Had South Longford done anything to make it easier to get at the meaning of the Roscommon result? It had been a blow to the Party, but, beyond that, what? Could nothing be done beyond elect prisoners and face the British government with the embarrassment of holding elected representatives of the people in prison? But the British Government read the message of South Longford. Bonar Law in the British House of Commons announced a general jail release of Irish prisoners in British jails. As Eamon de Valera stepped outside his prison gate, he was handed a telegram. He was Sinn Fein candidate for East Clare.

The choice was a local one. There was no central authority to which he could refer to give him a directive on his election platform. He had been sentenced to death for his part in the Easter Rising and escaped execution only because of his American citizenship. He made the Proclamation of the Republic on which the Rising rested his election platform. This time it seemed that whole counties took to the roads: swarms of bicycles raced into East Clare and once there, people not only cheered but roared their way through towns and villages. No corner was too remote. "Up Sinn Fein", "Up the Republic" and to this was added a third that soon out-shouted the other two, "Up Dev". It was in vain that the Party platforms warned that unless they wanted to risk having their young men shot down in a futile and insane attempt to establish an Irish Republic, they should vote for Home Rule.

There was no bitterness in the campaign. The party candidate was not one to promote it and there was too much laughter and song in Sinn Fein to give space to it. De Valera won. Countrywide rejoicing on the result went beyond anything in living memory or known to folklore.

The Parliamentary Party made no attempt to belittle the defeat it suffered in Clare. English newspapers commented that Sinn Fein had blotted out the Parliamentary Party completely. The British Government's threat of new coercive measures was flouted. Now there was a new wave of arrests. Irish prison jail conditions became progressively hairshirt and resistance to them more determined. Tomas Ashe goaded by indignities beyond endurance refused food. The committee set up by Count Plunkett's convention was recalled. They

had carried out their mandate to form a National Council. It was not a representative body, especially since it had been formed before the prisoners came home. They were, with very few exceptions, opposed to Griffith's goal of a dual monarchy. There was, too, widespread rejection of the name "Sinn Feiners" tagged onto the Irish Volunteers, by the British press during and after The Rising. There was a demand in Dublin for a clear break with Sinn Fein.

Tomas Ashe died on hunger strike. Cumainn marched in the funeral procession under their own named banners. It was a signal which the National Council could not ignore. De Valera was now its Chairman. The cumainn were instructed to elect delegates to attend an Ard Fheis - Griffith had his way - to be held in the Mansion House. As no constitution had as yet been drafted, the task was given to a small committee with Dev as Chairman and Arthur Griffith and Cathal Brugha members. And here the two slogans "Up Sinn Fein" and "Up the Republic" came into sharp conflict. Griffith was quick to declare he would not campaign for a Republic. Brugha was quick to declare he would have nothing to do with Sinn Fein if it had any lesser goal. Each had his following. Exchanges became stormy. De Valera was silent. He busied himself scribbling, crossing out one effort after another. In the end, he found one that seemed to him to bridge the gap between Griffith and Brugha. It ran: "Sinn Fein aims at winning the international recognition of Ireland as an independent sovereign republic. Having achieved that status, the Irish people may by referendum freely choose their own form of government."

Cumainn delegates swarmed into Dublin. Cathal Brugha presided at the opening session. He reminded the delegates there were different shades of opinion among them, but on one issue they were agreed: they stood for an Irish Republic. Sean Milroy who followed, made a gesture towards Griffith. He said they were not carrying their claim for Irish rights to the English Parliament but to the people of Ireland. There was some discussion on the use of the term Sinn Fein, but on De Valera's intervention the continued use of the name was agreed. The morning session was a chorus of hopeful speeches. There were three nominees for President: Arthur Griffith, Count Plunkett and Eamon de Valera. De Valera put it to Arthur Griffith that, as he had gone forward for election in Clare with the Republican

Proclamation as his platform, he could not seek election now on any lesser terms. Count Plunkett considered himself similarly committed. Arthur Griffith, however, was quite free. He could withdraw. The issue would then be between Count Plunkett and him and, since both were Republican, it would not matter which won; not that Dev was likely to have any doubts what would be the outcome of such a contest; it is just as likely Arthur Griffith had no doubt that this much-hallowed young man would win a three-cornered contest. Fr. O'Flanagan was able to announce to the cheering delegates that both Griffith and Count Plunkett had withdrawn and there was now but one nomination - a unanimously elected President of a Republican Sinn Fein, Eamon de Valera. Arthur Griffith was acclaimed Vice President.

In his election speech de Valera quoted the Sinn Fein aim: to secure the international recognition of Ireland as an independent Irish Republic. There was no mention of the clash of views which underlay the words. Fr. O'Flanagan was acclaimed Second vice President. An executive of twenty was elected. The only name that had to withstand a barrage of objection was Eoin McNeill as many Irish Volunteers held it against him that he issued a disruptive order on the eve of the 1916 Rising. De Valera spoke warmly in his favour. He was elected. Michael Collins was an early choice. The Irish Volunteers which had rapidly rebuilt since the release of the prisoners was an independent body. It held a convention immediately after the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis and elected De Valera as President. Cathal Brugha became Chief of Staff but the real power rested in the I.R.B. members who formed the majority of its National Executive. The burly figure of Michael Collins loomed large on the Republican scene. He was appointed Director of Organisation of the Irish Volunteers.

Collins had organised I.R.S. members while still a prisoner in Frongoch and had been admitted to membership of the powerful Supreme Council. He was a man of great energy, with an easy air of good fellowship which hid a penetrating assessment of individuals. "A hard man to fool" was an early judgment. He penetrated practically every Sinn Fein Cumainn - but that was only a pencil sharpener for his great task. He found recruits for his intelligence network among the most trusted elite of the British establishment. He built up the most efficient intelligence service Ireland has ever known. He

was immensely popular with Irish Volunteer officers, even with the diminishing number of senior officers outside the I.R.B.; in time, I.R.B. members formed the complete officer board of most Volunteer units.

In the interval between the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis and the General Election of 1918 - between October 1917 and December 1918 - British attempts to rule Ireland became steadily less and less effective, more and more repressive and ridiculous. Raids, arrests, even murders and arson, conditions leading to prison riots were only building up popular resistance and, what was worse, the world

Press was taking notice. The Royal Irish Constabulary listed the local agitators who were fomenting anti-British feeling. John Dillon, who, since John Redmond's death in March 1917, led the Irish Parliamentary Party, sought in vain to warn the British Parliament that Ireland was being driven steadily towards Sinn Fein. Then, too, the insane talk of conscription - the British had but one way out of an upset in Ireland - arrest the agitators responsible for the unrest. Of course there had to be an excuse. The Government got a gift of one: a man named Dowling was landed from a German submarine. The R.I.C. arrested him and promptly news of a full-scale German plot was fed to the world press. Sinn Fein knew nothing of Dowling, but that fact was brushed aside. On the night of 17th May, in a sudden swoop, arrests were carried out all over Ireland.

Seventy-three prisoners were deported to England, among them Arthur Griffith, Eamon de Valera, Count Plunkett. Michael Collins, as was his way, escaped arrest. Sir John French, who by now was Governor General of Ireland, issued a pompous proclamation, where-as-ing and threatening. Before taking up office he spoke his mind to Henry Wilson. "Johnnie", Henry records, pledged to enforce conscription, "if they leave me alone, I will get it done. I will set a date at which recruits must offer themselves in the various districts and, if they do not come, I will fetch them there." "The purpose of the mass arrest was twofold: without its leaders the Sinn Fein organisation would crumble and, anyway, it would be less effective in resisting conscription.

Lloyd George still hesitated. There was the Irish in America. While he was still in a dither, there arose a bye-election in Cavan. The result would be a guide whether the time had come to bring in

conscription. John Dillon saw the Cavan bye-election as a last ditch battle for his party's survival - if he won the Cavan bye-election, he could speak with greater authority in Westminster. He was almost as much out of touch with reality of the State of Ireland as Lloyd George, or "Johnnie" who boasted to Henry Wilson he would provide "one hundred and fifty thousand young Irishmen for distribution among the two and a half million on the Western Front where ,if they refused to fight, they would be shot.

John Dillon drew on all his resources to fight the Cavan election. He was encouraged by having an excellent local candidate. This time he would match the influx of young Sinn Feiners by a throng of party youth. He would have a team of experienced speakers that must relate to the sound commonsense of the voters.

Sinn Fein entered the fray with their usual buoyancy, but were quick to realize the Cavan voters did not identify readily with the cheering strangers. They did not take readily to outbursts of disruptive sloganing around party platforms, and just then, miracle of miracles, Sinn Fein found its champion. He burst on the scene, the greatest orator since O'Connell, a priest - Father O'Flanagan. He went through Cavan like a torchlight procession. Young Sinn Feiners were no longer stumbling.

Sinn Fein had made a happy choice of candidate - Arthur Griffith. He was not dependent on "put him in to get him out". Fr. O'Flanagan took party speakers head on: the phoney German plot was a first step in preparing the, ground for conscription. His powerful voice fairly bugled his message. The battle against conscription would be decided not on the floor of the British House of Commons, but here on the fields of Cavan.

Arthur Griffith won easily. The British Imperial War Cabinet, set up days before Griffith's election, with conscription for Ireland in mind again, saw cause to pause. Instead of conscription they made a new appeal for recruits, this time quoting words from President Wilson "we are consulting with our allies, not only to make the liberties of America secure but the liberties of every other people as well." Building on this, their appeal ended "will Ireland fight for this freedom? America will see her rights are secured."

Henry Wilson and other military covenantors were Irish

enough to scoff at this pathetic gesture. Rumour of an early General Election - it came through the Socialist Party - touched off a buzz of excited talk among the wreckage of the Citizen Army around Liberty Hall. What would Connolly's stand have been? He certainly would not have stood aside while Dublin workers were being put on a lead by Arthur Griffith.

He pushed his way into the I.R.B. when they thought they could have gone on without him. De Valera should have known all about that. Anyway, Connolly would not have yielded the leadership of Dublin working men to Griffith. What was holding Bill O'Brien back? Was he not heir to James Connolly? A deep man - maybe they were misjudging him. He must know Griffith had no more in mind than Redmond had. There was a noisy group - Bob de Couer, Dick McCormack and Hanratty - preaching what labour must do when the home Rulers tried to ditch the independence movement. For one thing, they must get no chance to sink roots in Dublin.

On 11th November the war ended. On 25th December the British Parliament was dissolved. The Irish people had to make a vital choice: the Republic or the Parliamentary Party. Senior labour members declared Labour would stand aside and leave the field open for the two main parties to fight it out. It was only fair to people that it should be so.

So it was that Sinn Fein and the Parliamentary Party, after a series of bye-election skirmishes, met in full confrontation for a decisive battle. Sinn Fein was badly handicapped, being stripped not only of its National leaders but many local leaders as well. But, for all that, the constituencies radiated confidence. Every seat would be contested. It only roused the people the more to have to bear the handicap of over one hundred of their leaders in jail and a great part of the country under military rule. There was direct military censorship of all letters' and reports in newspapers. There was R.I.C. interference at Cumainn level, but the bye-elections had provoked surprising self-confidence and new talent even at chapel gate level and the Parliamentary Party suffered from being unfairly identified with Government persecution. The usual postal facilities enjoyed by all parties was denied Sinn Fein. Its Election Manifesto was cut to ribbons by the Censor. Within days it sprouted from dead walls, hoard-

ings barn doors. Children made a game out of placing election emblems, where it made heavy going to tear them down. And so it went on. Aeroplanes showered leaflets warning voters of the risks in voting Sinn Fein. The warning leaflets were in great demand as souvenirs; children sold them at a penny each.

But what counted most was a practice young people had stumbled into in overcrowded constituencies during the bye-elections - mass canvass. Cheery throngs of young people and some not so young, singing and laughing, made a joke of the threatening leaflets, and now and then a miracle to cheer – a prominent member of the A.O.H. displaying Sinn Fein favours or a similar action by a small trader hitherto a stout party man who now declared that the like of him must follow their customers into Sinn Fein became more committed than the customers.

Michael Collins who, by now, was a household name and continued to give raids the slip, was Sinn Fein candidate for one of the Cork constituencies. In his election address he declared that “any achievement of government for Ireland that did not confer on the people of Ireland the supreme, absolute and final control of the country, external as well as internal, is a mockery and will not be accepted.” It is a much more wordy performance than one would have expected from so blunt a man. Of 73 candidates nominated, 47 were in jail. Such of the manifestoes as were smuggled out were intercepted in the post. The result of the election was declared on 28th December. Of the 105 returned for Irish constituencies, 73 were Republican, 26 Unionists and John Dillon’s party 6: John Dillon himself lost his seat in Mayo to de Valera, who was also returned unopposed for Clare.

The twenty-six available Republican T.D.’s met in the Mansion House on the 7th January and decided to convene Dail Eireann independent constituent assembly of the Irish Nation. An invitation to attend would be sent to every elected representative in Ireland. A sub-committee to prepare for the meeting and draft constitution was set up. On the 21st January Dail Eireann assembled.

Only those elected on the Sinn Fein ticket attended. The proceedings opened with the reading of the Proclamation of the Republic, first read by Pearse on the steps of the GPO on Easter Monday, 1916. The deputies adopted the declaration and promised by every

means in their power to put it into practice. A democratic programme - the democratic programme of the First Dail Eireann - was read and adopted. And herein lies an intriguing puzzle: Tom Johnson, one of the best-informed of the socialists on the fringe of the Republican Movement drafted the programme. What had Johnson in mind? He must have known that it meant nothing to the assembled deputies. He certainly was too experienced in working class activity to have any illusion that the mere adoption of the document would mean anything. Had Johnson eye on certain sections of the foreign press and was he anxious Dail Eireann would win favourable notice in it? He certainly was too quietly sincere a man to amuse himself by decorating Dail Eireann in gaudy phrases. But then why did he make no protest when Sean T. O’Kelly re-wrote and diluted his document? The fact is it did not matter in the slightest which was adopted, as nothing would come of it. But, if that was Johnson’s view, why did he trouble to contribute a draft in the first place?

To idealists, good intentions are enough to make any economic system work. In the haze of their intoxicated vision of a free Ireland the assembled deputies stopped short of Utopian socialism which denounced as immoral exploitation of man by man, simply because in a free Ireland exploitation was to them unthinkable. They spent no more than twenty five minutes, as if discussing it were a waste of time. There was no sense of criticism abroad. Any document bearing the stamp of Dail Eireann was Holy Writ. The formation of Dail Eireann was greeted by the usual spate of bonfires with the usual British reaction of arrests, baton charges and house raids. There was now greater passion and more defiant exultation in the war cries “Up the Republic”, “Up Sinn Fein” and wider use of “Up Dev”.

De Valera escaped from prison on 3rd February, 1919, but as the German Plot prisoners were still held, he had to hide in English cities for some weeks. On the 6th March, Pierce McCann, one of the members of Dail Eireann, died in Gloucester Jail. That night in the British House of Commons, it was announced that all the prisoners were to be freed. De Valera was now free to appear in public. Dail Eireann could assemble in full session. It was decided, however, that the meeting should be in private. It was held on 1st April. De Valera was elected Priomhaire which was translated as President. Sean T.

O'Kelly was elected Ceann Comhairle, translated Speaker. De Valera appointed ministers - Arthur Griffith got Home Affairs, Cathal Brugha, Defence, Count Plunkett, Foreign Affairs and Michael Collins, Minister for Finance, Robert Barton, Minister for Agriculture.

The Minister for Finance set to work at once. The Dail was in urgent need of funds and, since taxation was a function of the British Government, he must find another way of raising money. He got Cabinet approval for an issue of Republican bonds for £250,000. The terms for their redemption was in itself agitational - redemption would follow international recognition of the sovereign Republic, and there was nothing furtive in his method - he advertised in the commercial press and in the Sinn Fein organ, *Nationality*, edited by Arthur Griffith. The stock was in units ranging from one to a thousand pounds. It was over-subscribed. The military censor struck at the papers that carried the advertisement, suspending commercial papers for a limited period, *Nationality*, permanently. But Arthur Griffith's journal did not miss a stroke: It appeared the following week under a new title. Then began a sideshow which was thoroughly enjoyed by Griffiths' readers and by himself. As his journal under one title was suppressed, it appeared under another in even sharper and more seditious terms. Finally, he baffled the censor. His journal was published under "Scissors and Paste". He found extracts in highly respectable publications which, properly arranged, were as seditious as his own original writing had been; there was widespread belief that friends planted news and articles for his use.

But for all those cheery asides, the serious work of frustrating British Rule in Ireland continued to be pushed forward by Dail Eireann: at a public session on 10th April, 1919, the attitude towards the British presence was detailed. The British had no moral right. The Irish people owed obedience to the lawfully elected Dail Eireann only. They must behave towards the occupying forces in a way that would make it clear to the world that the Irish people resented their presence. The Royal Irish Constabulary differed from the occupying British forces. They were Irishmen who entered that service because its pay and conditions were attractive, but they were trained to serve as the eyes and ears of the enemies of their country. They must be so tackled as would create in them a sense of shame.' They should

be ostracised. The Irish Volunteers, as the vanguard of the people, had special tasks. Clashes, as yet unarmed, took place and made newspaper headlines. Dr. Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe, was moved to say, "the fight for Irish freedom has passed into the hands of the young men of Ireland and when they hit back at her opponents, it is not for an old man like me to cry "foul". Already, in County Tipperary, resistance to British occupation had jumped onto a new level: from resistance to attack. Gelignite was seized, the two R.L.C. men guarding it shot dead. One of the volunteers was arrested; by a daring, well-planned rescue, he was snatched from his armed R.L.C. escort on a Dublin-bound train. Tipperary was proclaimed a military area, to give R.L.C. and British soldiers greater freedom to raid and arrest. In sheer frustration the arrests extended to the kidnapping of children, in the hope of scaring the information from them withheld by adults. The Tipperary Brigade threatened reprisals which it was forbidden by the Volunteer Executive to carry out.

Dail Eireann clearly could not just look on whiles such things happened and yet proclaim itself to the world as the Government of the Republic. Cathal Brugha, as Minister for Defence, proposed that the members of Dail Eireann, its officials, the Irish Volunteers should all swear allegiance to the Republic and to its government. Arthur Griffith vigorously seconded him. Collins opposed: he wished the Irish Volunteers to remain subject to their own IRB dominated Executive. Brugha's motion was carried. The Volunteer Executive, by a majority vote, endorsed it. So T.D.'s and Volunteers alike pledged themselves to bear true faith and allegiance to the Irish Republic and the Government of the Irish Republic and further pledged themselves to support and defend it against all enemies, foreign and domestic, this obligation being taken freely, without reservation or purpose of evasion "so help me God".

British reaction was as usual, raids and arrests, but the propaganda warfare did not go their way. The Second International (Labour) Meeting in Berne recognised Ireland as an independent nation. The Irish representatives at Berne were Cathal O' Shannon and Tom Johnson. There is a suggestion in de Valera's tribute to Irish labour later that the Irish delegates were guided by Sinn Fein for, at an Ard Fheis early in April, 1919, de Valera said "when we wanted the help

of labour against conscription, labour gave it to us. When we wanted the help of labour at Berne, labour gave it to us. When we wanted labour to stand down and not divide us but that we should stand four-square against the enemy, labour came in with us. I say labour deserves well of the Irish people". This was leadership on stilts. De Valera was mistaken in thinking labour stood aside in the 1918 election at the say-so of himself and Griffith. He missed the developments on the ground. First of all there was little or no labour party apart from the trades union officials. They had to take heed of the contradictions and conflicts within trades union branches of English unions whose branch officials had contracted the vapid socialism of British labour who, if they dared, would have urged the nomination of candidates pledged to take their seats on labour benches in the British House of Commons. They fought off rank and file militants who demanded open support of Sinn Fein by raising the cry of trades union solidarity as the extreme slogan.

Sinn Fein leaders did not realise that their stand before the world would have been sturdier had Liberty Hall led a quota of Sinn Fein-backed candidates into the fray; a new version of the Citizen Army - how the cumainn would have cheered, "Here's Connolly". But Bill O'Brien, the grey eminence of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, feared that Redmondite factions within the branches would have defected had he opted for the Connolly line. He, too, preached trade union unity. It was a God-send to him and those like him that Sinn Fein proclaimed that "labour must wait". It smothered the contradictions and conflicts within the branches and among themselves.

British main embarrassment was Irish influence in America, with its growing, insistent demand for American pressure on Britain to withdraw its army of occupation from Ireland. Then, too, the young men of Ireland were mounting ambushes of growing daring - Tom Barry in Cork wiped out strong British forces in engagements that were more like battles than ambushes. It finally dawned on the British Government that its pretence to rule in Ireland could no longer be sustained. Lloyd George proposed negotiations to search out how Irish aspirations could be reconciled with membership of the British Commonwealth.

There was a preliminary, brilliant, wordy warfare between de Valera and Lloyd George. It ended in an agreement that delegates from each side should meet in London. The Republican Cabinet chose its team: Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins, Robert Barton, Gavan Duffy, Eamonn Duggan, Griffith and Collins were named as “Joint Leaders”. Any uneasiness about Griffith’s shortcomings on the Republic issue was more than offset by the presence of Michael Collins whose name by this time was as much a Republican slogan as Wolfe Tone. And Griffith was an able man, with a way with words and would see through any tricky phrases that Lloyd George might try. His position was a bit complicated. He was dedicated to an Irish parliament for all Ireland.

Any treaty arrived at must contemplate all Ireland. Any parliament resting on that treaty must be for the whole of Ireland. He had no mental block against pushing for an independent Republic. It was simply a matter that a form of wordy allegiance to the Crown meant nothing to him. His vision of Ireland took the shape of such freedom as would permit Irish industry to develop in the shelter of an Irish parliament. He really had no higher aim than that which dominated most revolutions: a change of management. The powers exercised by British institutions in Ireland and those exercised direct from London transferred to a popularly elected all-Ireland Parliament that was his dream. If a Republic could be negotiated, well and good. He would do his best to achieve it, but he would not break on the Crown.

Collins had no illusions about the range of Griffith’s dedication. His own aim was equally undimmed. He was committed to full freedom and in his view to win an independent Republic would be as easy as Dominion Home Rule. But as the negotiations proceeded, that view changed and he had to ask himself a new set of questions: could he let Griffith have his way and use his achievement as a stepping stone to the Republic?

With the draft of the terms of the completed negotiations, the delegates sought a meeting with the Republican Cabinet in Dublin; why Griffith went along with that proposal is not clear, since the delegation’s terms of reference were “to negotiate and conclude a treaty”. The trip was at the behest of Collins. He wanted to check what he had in mind with the head centre of the IRB. In the course of discussion

on the terms as set forth in that draft, Griffith said firmly he would not break on the Crown. This raised a storm, Brugha and Stack reacted angrily. De Valera as usual found a formula to smother the conflict: the delegates would submit a new draft. Furthermore, they would sign no agreement without the approval of the Cabinet, meeting in Dublin.

The delegates returned to London. Collins was at his ease now. With the head centre of the IRS on his side and his promise to promote acceptance of the “Stepping stone tactic” he was ready to accept the terms set out in the draft. Besides, he was convinced the British delegates would not budge from its terms. He refused to go with Griffith, Gavan Duffy and Barton to submit the alternative draft foisted on the delegates by the Cabinet in Dublin.

The British retired to study the new draft. They did not spend long over it. They rejected it out of hand. The Irish delegates by adhering to this draft were going back on all that had been achieved by the prolonged negotiations. Barton afterwards paid tribute to Griffith’s defence of the new draft. The discussion came to an abrupt end when Gavan Duffy began... “the trouble about going back into the empire”. As one man, the British delegates got to their feet. This was the end. They filed out of the conference room. It was a very unhappy Arthur Griffith who returned to the delegate headquarters at Hans Place.

But Lloyd George would not accept a break in which Collins was not involved. He sent his private secretary round to Hans Place to ask Michael Collins to meet him at 9.30 on the following morning. Collins was to come alone. What insight Lloyd George had to Collins’ thinking is, of course, unknown but he did sense that Collins by now was less out of step with Griffith on the issue of the Republic than on Griffith’s optimism that the Boundary Commission would mean a united Ireland. Lloyd George confirmed to Collins that the effect of adjusting the boundary on the basis of local plebiscites must strip Stormont of so much territory that its sway would not reach far beyond two counties around Belfast. They would be forced to negotiate their way into a united Ireland. Collins returned to Hans Place, his mind busy on his plan to run a dark hand - IRB members - through all governmental departments to the upper echelons of the army. What neither Collins nor Griffith knew was that Lloyd George had written to

James Craig assuring him that the Boundary commission was only a piece of make believe, that it would do no more than make minor adjustments, strips of small areas, with a majority protestant population would be added on and corresponding slices, catholic-laden detached. There was nothing to worry over.

The story later was that Lloyd George tricked Griffith by showing him a map with the areas that local plebiscite must detach from Stormont, shaded green. Among the shaded areas was the Glens of Antrim. Griffith agreed it would not make sense to extend the plebiscite immediately to The Glens and agreed too that a clause to contain The Glens temporarily could be inserted – economic and geographical conditions permitting or some such wording. As Lloyd George intended this clause was later interpreted to ensure that Stormont would control a viable area - the six counties. The working of Collins' mind on that morning was recalled in talks to win the First Southern Division to his side. But he was not the only one with a busy mind. Within a few hours of signing the treaty, Arthur Griffith met representatives of the southern unionists, Lord Midleton, Jamieson and The Provost of Trinity College, to put their minds at ease. He wrote to Lloyd George that he had assured the southern unionists that he would see to it that their interests were safeguarded, that they would be properly represented in the Lower House and that as regards the Upper Chamber he would consult them on its constitution and provide for adequate representation there too.

Collins and Griffith each knew there were many people of influence trapped within Sinn Fein who were on tip toe to break free. Here was their chance and a powerful slogan to go with it: "What is good enough for Michael Collins is good enough for me". They might do little more than tear strips off the mass movement, but Griffith knew voices would back him. There were many hidden cables to relay this message. Above all, there was Maynooth. A day or two before receiving Lloyd George's letter, when Dail Eireann was clearly the voice of the Nation, the Hierarchy refused de Valera's request that they recognize the Republic. Then there was the press. The only danger lay in the rabble that rallied to Larkin and the land-hungry men already buzzing around demesne walls. Collins' thoughts did not stray far from the L.R.A., within which the I.R.B. had already built up so much

influence. He promptly conferred with a group of its leading I.R.B. members to whom he revealed his thinking.

To his relief he found that the Head Centre had been at work. They not only approved but also enthused. The Dail Cabinet by four votes to three favoured recommending The Treaty to Dail Eireann. The commercial press broke out in a blaze of approving headlines. Fifteen members of the Catholic hierarchy wrote a letter to the Irish Independent recommending its acceptance. Dail Eireann approved by sixty-four votes to fifty seven. Headquarters staff of the I.R.A. was divided. Their dissenting officers together with OIC Dublin Brigade, Liam Lynch O/C of the powerful First Southern Division and other officers formed what they called the Military Council of the LR.A to distinguish it from the Army Council around Dick Mulcahy, the new Minister for Defence. The Military Council demanded an LR.A. Convention. Mulcahy refused but offered that two nominees of the Military Council could attend the newly organised G.H.O. meetings. The officers chosen were Ernie O'Malley and Oscar Traynor. O'Malley found, on visiting his command area, the Second Southern Division, that his officers wanted a clean break with Mulcahy. He let the Military Council know he would abide by the wishes of the officers of his command. A substitute was appointed. After further pressure, Mulcahy agreed to call a Convention but preparation had not gone beyond choosing delegates on Brigade level until it became clear the Convention would be overwhelmingly anti-treaty.

Griffith banned the Convention. Mulcahy warned that any officer attending a banned convention would be dismissed. The convention was called over the signatures of the majority of the LR.A. officers from Brigade level upwards. The Convention elected an Executive of sixteen. De Valera called the T.D.'s who had voted against the Treaty together. They constituted themselves Cumann Poblachta. The I.R.A. Executive was little less estranged from de Valera than from Collins; Dev had so whittled down the Republican stance in a desperate effort to preserve unity and the press had so ridiculed and mocked his wording that republicans in general were confused. Neither Cumann Poblachta nor the I.R.A. Executive related the Treaty to the tiers of Irish society whose interests it served; the nearest to such a statement was by Seamus Fitzgerald, one of the T.D.'s for Cork.

He stated publicly that the only supporters of the Treaty he found in his constituency were the people who had been consistently anti-republican, the well-to-do. The I.R.A. Executive gave itself no task beyond a continuous search for some form of reconciliation with Collins, a harmless exercise he encouraged while building up a paid, professional army. It was inevitable that an arid policy should lead to disagreement on some proposal or other. A clash between Liam Lynch and Rory O'Connor caused the withdrawal of the majority of the Executive headquarters, to the Four Courts. There, Joe McKelvey, hitherto Deputy Chief of Staff, was appointed Chief of Staff to replace Liam Lynch.

It so happened that this disruption took place while General Maxwell was consulting with his staff on details of carrying out an order from London to attack and capture the Four Courts. That order was withdrawn. Orders were given instead to supply the Treaty forces with any army supplies they might need to carry out this task. At one o'clock on the morning of the attack – it began at 4.00 a.m. – Liam Lynch and Liam Deasy conferred at the Four Courts with Rory O'Connor and other Executive members. Unity was restored.

Lynch continued as Chief of Staff. The bombardment of the Four Courts opened at 4.00 a.m. Liam Lynch and Deasy, in the hope that as yet no word of the midnight meeting in the Four Courts would have leaked out, thought it safe to go south by train, but they were arrested on their way to Heuston Station. Mulcahy said again and again that Lynch had promised to concern himself only with making peace and that it was only on that condition he and Deasy were allowed to travel south.

Anybody who knew Lynch would not doubt but that any undertaking he gave would be fulfilled, but such was his state of mind just then that there would be no doubt peace was his main preoccupation. He was slow to give up hope of making peace. It was only when he did he set about the duty allotted to him by the Executive, and it was then too late to take effective measures. The Four Courts had fallen. Dublin was in the hands of the Treaty forces. Lynch decided he would hold a line from Limerick to Arklow and beat back any attempt by Treaty forces to drive south. Collins, whose gift for organising an effective intelligence service still served him well, knew of Lynch's

plan.

His response was the obvious one - sea-borne troops landing at Cork and Fenit. Only about 100 Tipperarymen hurried to Dublin while the Four Courts was still under attack. They were not directed there by any senior officer. As they drove to Dublin, they over-ran Free State army posts. At Blessington they drove their charabancs up to the building occupied by the "Staters", drove in the windows with the butts of their rifles, disarmed the garrison, ordered them to leave the village. The officer they had chosen thought it well. To let Oscar Traynor, O/C Dublin, know they intended to push into Dublin to relieve the Four Courts. Lile O'Donel, acting as courier, found Traynor in the Hammond Hotel, sitting with de Valera and Cathal Brugha. The O'Donel family and the de Valera household were close friends. She was taken over by a member of Cumann na mBan to have a cup of tea while Oscar Traynor wrote his reply. Now nobody who knew Traynor would have a doubt but that his reply to the Tipperary men's message would reflect de Valera's mind - it could be, of course, that Traynor's own view did not differ from Dev's in any way, but if it did, he certainly would accept Dev's. The men at that table in the Hammond Hotel would know nothing of the experience of the men who had swept a network of garrison posts aside in their drive towards Dublin. They would know, however that there was no organised support for them and did not see them for what they really were - the first of a flood of country units hurrying to Dublin. Traynor's order was that they were to withdraw. Lile O'Donel often told of the outburst of anger at Traynor's order and how "touch and go" was the decision to obey it. It has to be borne in mind that Traynor's order could have been overruled by the Chief of Staff, but he had not as yet shed his hope of somehow keeping the armed conflict within Dublin.

The Treatyites were clearly on top from the outset. They won a majority of the elected T. D.'s. They had the backup of the press at its most hysterical and unscrupulous, since the Irish Independent tore into Larkin in 1913. The "men of substance" within Irish society supported them and the Roman Catholic Hierarchy was prompt to declare support for "the terms of Agreement for a treaty". It was a framework for Home Rule within the British Empire. There is, of course, no access to the minutes of the discussions fed into the consensus

enshrined in the joint pastoral. It is easy to speculate what Cardinal Logue who, no doubt, was a dominant influence on the gathering of bishops would contribute. The Cardinal was a Home Ruler in the Redmondite mould. He favoured recruitment into the British army on the outbreak of the 1914-1918 war. His main contact with the political scene was the weekly visit of James McMahon, under "Secretary for Ireland" he was an Armagh man. His mother lived there.

Then there was Dr. Cohalan, Bishop of Cork, whose tirades against the I.R.A. were so vehement he achieved near popularity - he was irreverently known in Cork as Danny Boy. He certainly would not push past Griffith. But the position of other Bishops was not so simple. For instance, Dr. Gilmartin was surrounded by priests whose families were passionately republican. There were two bishops whose nephews were officers in the I.R.A. This raises the question was there some outside coercive influence that forced such men to enter into vehement condemnation of republicans. The oath prescribed in 1795 and continued into the latter part of the 19th century was no longer binding. Had the purpose of the oath been taken over by Rome and did that explain Leo XIII's continuous concern that Home Rule for Ireland would not mean separation from the British Empire? Was this, in effect, the inspection which the British Government had practised on Maynooth?

It could be, however, that the Irish bishops simply went along with the men of substance who would guarantee stable government and keep the rabble that the early French professors so feared, in check. The joint pastoral would not have been noisily resented had it been simply issued and left to work out its own influence. But their Lordships took daring, even reckless, steps to enforce it. They turned the confessional boxes into political check-points to deny the sacrament of penance to active republicans thus rendering them practically excommunicate. It may very well puzzle research students in later years why republicans did not strike back. The explanation is simple: they looked on the excommunication as a repeat performance of 1798, 1848 and 1867. They did not stop to argue. "At Boolavogue...:" was reply enough. .

Dev did permit himself one taunt in reply to Dr. Gilmartin's statement that a majority of the Dail had voted for the Treaty; "It's a

pity His Grace did not hold that view when in the name of a united Dail, I asked the bishops to recognise the Republic". As against the solidly structured Treatyites, with their government and paid professional army, the Republicans were in disarray. The I.R.A. Executive was not only bankrupt of ideas itself but was scarcely within speaking distance of the politicians who also opposed the Treaty; they were not even within speaking distance of de Valera or Brugha. Neither group did anything to discover and disclose to the people the interests behind the barricades set up across the path of the Independence Movement; people will always be victims of deceit till they learn to relate every political manifesto and slogan, all peace treaties to the interests that project them.

Neither the I.R.A. executive nor Cumann Poblachta saw that a worthwhile democratic development is never achieved except through a desperate struggle with the ruling classes. Given that they had been able to reveal what play of social forces constituted the Treaty in terms that made sense to the republican mass, there might have been such an uprising on a national scale as brought the Tipperary men to Blessington. It was not the social revolution that was the issue at that stage but the final struggle for worthwhile democracy. That is how the end product of the Treaty is to be seen, the imposition of the rule of the upper classes in Irish society, with the survivors of the protestant ascendancy of the eighteenth century that Arthur Griffith was so quick to turn to on the morning of the 6th December kept discreetly in shadow.

Had all this been revealed the struggle would have gone to a new level. It is likely that it would have spilled over to the abolition of slum and tenement landlordism, the expropriation without compensation of those in possession of estates or sheltering behind the demesne walls. It would have done more. It would have laid the basis for a workers' and farmers' government, not as a terminus but as a marshalling halt for the deployment of the new forces that had been roused. The fury of the reaction this provoked would have identified what gaps must be torn in the capitalist structure before it would be safe for the government to shift the emphasis to the promotion of State enterprises. But that speculation aside - the reality is that the roots of the present regime are not in the independence struggle but

in the interests that brought about its defeat. Is this defeat to be related to the failure of labour to move forward in 1918? And does this failure also explain why labour is still on crutches? This is not to hide the fact that the leadership of the anti-treaty forces was uninspired, confused, feckless. The period is, however, enriched by folklore of the bravery of people so hopelessly led, of the calm courage of men facing firing squads.

That is why such phrases as “when we won our independence” is resented by so many people - it is dangerously near the ultimate blasphemy - “Emmet’s Epitaph may now be written”.



## **Biographical notes on the author**

Peadar O'Donnell (Irish: Peadar Ó Domhnaill; 22 February 1893 – 13 May 1986) was an Irish Republican socialist, Marxist activist and writer.

### **Early life: War of Independence and Civil War**

Peadar O'Donnell was born in The Rosses, a district in the west of County Donegal in North-Western Ireland, in 1893, being a native Irish language speaker. He attended St. Patrick's College, Dublin, where he trained as a teacher. He taught on Arranmore Island off the west coast of County Donegal before spending time in Scotland.

By 1919, he was a leading organiser for the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. He also attempted to organise a unit of the Irish Citizen Army (a worker's militia who had taken part in the Easter Rising) in Derry. When this failed to get off the ground, O'Donnell joined the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and remained active in it during the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921). He led IRA guerrilla activities in Derry and Donegal in this period, which mainly involved raids on Police and Army barracks. In 1921, he became the commander of the IRA Donegal Brigade. He became known in this period as a headstrong and sometimes insubordinate officer as he often launched operations without orders and in defiance of directives from his superiors in the IRA. In the spring of 1921, O'Donnell and his men had to evade a sweep of the county by over 1000 British troops.

After the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1922, O'Donnell and his IRA comrades were split over whether to accept this compromise, which ended their hopes for Irish Republic but which granted a self governing Irish Free State. O'Donnell opposed this compromise and in March 1922, as elected, along with Joe McKelvey as representative for Ulster onto the anti-treaty IRA's army executive. In April he was among the anti-Treaty IRA men who took over the Four Courts building in Dublin and helped to spark the outbreak of civil war with the new Free State government. The Irish Civil War would rage for another nine months. O'Donnell escaped from the Four Courts building after its bombardment and surrender, but was subsequently captured

by the Free State forces, and imprisoned in Mountjoy Gaol. At the end of the Civil War, he participated in the mass Republican hunger strike that was launched in protest at the continued imprisonment of Anti-Treaty IRA men, resisting in this manner for 41 days.

Unlike most Irish Republicans of this era, O'Donnell did not see the republican cause solely in Irish nationalist terms. O'Donnell also advocated a social revolution in an independent Ireland, seeing himself as a follower of James Connolly, the socialist Republican executed for his part in the Easter Rising. The period 1919-1923 had seen much social unrest in Ireland, including land occupations by landless men in rural areas and the occupation of factories by workers.

O'Donnell believed that the IRA should have adopted these people's cause and supported land re-distribution and worker's rights. He blamed the anti-treaty Republicans lack of support among the Irish public in the Civil War on their lack of a social programme. Some Republicans, notably Liam Mellows, did share O'Donnell's view, but they were a minority.

## **Post-Civil War politics**

In 1923, while still in prison, he was elected Teachta Dála for Donegal as a Sinn Féin candidate. In 1924, on release from internment, O'Donnell became a member of the Executive and Army Council of the IRA. He tried to steer it in left-wing direction, and to this end founded front organisations such as the Irish Working Farmers' Committee, which sent representatives to the Soviet Union and the Profinintern. O'Donnell also founded the Anti-Tribute League, which opposed the repaying of fees to Britain owed since the Irish Land Acts. He also founded a short lived socialist Republican party, Saor Éire.

In addition, O'Donnell and the IRA found themselves in conflict with their former friends of the Civil War era. Éamon de Valera, who had founded Fianna Fáil from anti-Treaty republicans, came to power in Ireland in 1932, and subsequently legalised the IRA in 1932-36. O'Donnell announced that there would be "no free speech for traitors" (by which he meant Cumann na nGaedhael, the Free State party) and his men attacked Cumann na nGaedhael political meet-

ings. In response, Eoin O'Duffy, a former Free State General and Garda Síochána commissioner, founded the Blueshirts (a semi-fascist organisation, originally named the Army Comrades Association) to resist them. There was a considerable amount of street violence between the two sides before both the Blueshirts and then the IRA became banned organisations. O'Donnell saw the Blueshirts as a fascist movement based on the big farmer class and that was against the full independence of Ireland.

O'Donnell's attempts at persuading the remnants of the defeated anti-Treaty IRA to become a socialist organization ended in failure. Eventually, O'Donnell and other left-wing republicans left the IRA to found the Republican Congress in 1934. However, this organisation made little impact in Irish politics.

## **Spanish Civil War**

O'Donnell happened to be in Barcelona, attending the People's Olympics on the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and joined Spanish Republican militia that supported the Popular Front government against Francisco Franco's military insurgents. When he returned to Ireland, he encouraged other Irish Republicans to fight for the Spanish Republic - accordingly, IRA men, led by Frank Ryan and some Communist Party of Ireland members joined the International Brigades, where they were known as the Connolly Column (after James Connolly). This was a very unpopular stance in Ireland, as the Roman Catholic Church publicly supported the Spanish Nationalists under Franco, and portrayed the war as an anti-Communist crusade.

Attitudes to the Spanish Civil War also mirrored the divisions of Ireland's civil war. O'Donnell remarked that the Bishops had condemned the anti-Treaty side in the latter for opposing a democratic government, but were now advocating the same thing themselves. Eoin O'Duffy led Blueshirt sympathisers to fight on Franco's side.

## **Writings**

After the 1940s, O'Donnell devoted more of his time to writing and

culture and less to politics, from which he withdrew more or less completely. He published his first novel, *Storm*, in 1925. This was followed by *Islanders* (1928), *Adrigool* (1929), *The Knife* (1930) and *On the Edge of the Stream* (1934). O'Donnell also went to Spain and later published *Salud! An Irishman in Spain* (1937).

After World War II, he edited the Irish literary journal, *The Bell* (1946-54). Other books by O'Donnell include *The Big Window* (1955) and *Proud Island* (1975). He also published two volumes of autobiography, *The Gates Flew Open* (1932) and *There Will be Another Day* (1963).

*Islanders* and *Adrigool* were translated into Irish (Donegal dialect) by Seosamh Mac Grianna as *Muintir an Oileáin* and *Eadarbhaile*, respectively.





