

*First published in the Irish Independent, December 9, 1970.*

## **WHAT IS IRISH REPUBLICANISM?**

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To the Republican Movement which maintains direct organisational continuity from Fenian times, through the Irish Republican Brotherhood, past 1916 and the First Dáil to the present day, Republicanism in Ireland has a very strict, yet extremely comprehensive meaning.

In the strict sense, an Irish Republican was one who gave allegiance to the 32-County Republic of Easter 1916 and who denied the right of the British Government to rule here. With the establishment of the first Dáil Éireann in 1919 as the Government of that Republic its supporters were Republicans, just as were those who opposed the setting up here of two partition States — Six County and 26 County — in 1921 and 1922.

The “Treaty” States, both North and South subservient economically to Britain, suppressed the All-Ireland Dáil which was the embodiment of the Republic. For the Republican Movement then, a Republican today is one who rejects the Partition Statelets in Ireland and gives his allegiance to and seeks to restore the 32-County Republic of Easter Week.

But what happened in 1922 is deserving of a deeper analysis. North of the Border life went on just as it had for hundreds of years, except that now the local Ascendancy class had a private powerbloc called Stormont, a private army named the B-Special Constabulary and the full backing both militarily and financially of the British Government. This power they have used unashamedly to divide Protestant and Catholic working people to their mutual disadvantage, exploiting them both.

In the 26 Counties all the symbols and trappings of freedom were gradually won, but despite limited efforts in the 1930s and 1940s, the new State remains a new colony, an example of unfinished and interrupted revolution, territorially, economically, culturally — a model of “Neo-colonialism”.

So then a Republican in 1970 is one who seeks a great deal more than just physical control of the 32 counties for the Irish people. He stands in a line of succession going back beyond Wolfe Tone to the Gaelic leaders of resistance to the Norman invasion. But it was Tone “the father of Irish Republicanism” who articulated clearly the objective:

“The rights of man in Ireland. The greatest happiness of the greatest number. The rights of man are the rights of God and to vindicate one is to maintain the other. We must be free in order to serve Him whose service is perfect freedom.”

Fintan Lalor likewise sought something more than mere political freedom. He spoke of “constitutions and characters and enactments of freedom,” saying “these things are only paper and parchment . . . Let laws and customs say what they will, these truths are stronger than any law; those who control your lands will make your laws and control your liberties and laws.” The restoration to the Irish people of their social, cultural and economic heritage was his aim.

James Connolly maintained that “the whole age-long fight of the Irish people against their oppressors resolves itself in the last analysis into a fight for the mastery of the means of life, the sources of production in Ireland.”

To give depth and meaning to Republicanism — beyond just the right to fly the Irish Tricolour or to paint letter boxes green — is to see the Republican objective as one with political, social, economic and cultural dimensions. The Democratic Programme of the First Dáil in 1919 which fulfilled this role has since been carefully left to one side in certain quarters.

There are many calling themselves Republicans who would be perfectly satisfied with the name of a Republic for all 32 Counties while leaving the present social, economic and cultural system unchanged — or worse still, integrating it with the rampant capitalism of the EEC. They are deluding themselves and deluding others.

For the Republican Movement only a struggle on many fronts will achieve the Republican objective of restoring the “ownership of Ireland to the people of Ireland” (1916 Proclamation). Such a struggle inevitably gets bogged down in parliament, be it Westminster, Stormont or Leinster House, and those attempting it get absorbed into the Imperial system.

Have we not see the alienation of large sections of the Labour party from some of its parliamentary representatives recently, while the “Civil Rights” MPs in the Six Counties were at loggerheads with the Fermanagh Civil Rights Association over the Enniskillen march?

All necessary means must be used to restore Ireland and her resources to the Irish people, not precluding as a last resort the use of physical force against the British Army of

Occupation. The means are, of course, only secondary — the objective and its interpretation are paramount. For the Republican Movement the definition of Republicanism rests mainly on the nature of the ultimate goal and the condition of allegiance to the Republic of Easter Week.

We have outlined clearly in policy statements and through our official monthly, An Phoblacht, the nature of the social and economic system — based on the right of worker ownership and the native Irish tradition of Comhar na gComharsan — which we seek to establish in a free Ireland.