

Republican SINN FÉIN Poblachtach

Theobald Wolfe Tone Commemoration
Bodenstown, County Kildare



2003

“Objective of ‘peace process’ was to bring the armed struggle for Irish freedom to an end”

Seán Ó Brádaigh, Author of “Bold Robert Emmet, 1778–1803”

THE annual Republican pilgrimage to the grave of Theobald Wolfe Tone, the Father of Irish Republicanism, took place on Sunday, June 15 in glorious sunshine.

The parade assembled in Sallins village, Co Kildare and led by colour parties from Armagh and Kerry, carrying the Tricolour, Starry Plough and Leinster flags, and by contingents from Cumann na mBan and Na Fianna Éireann, marched to Bodenstown Churchyard. Seán Ó Sé, Dublin was Chief Marshall.

At the memorial in the cemetery, proceedings were chaired by Fergal Moore, Monaghan who in the course of a short address welcomed all those who had travelled from all over Ireland, as well as from Scotland and England. He then called on Veteran Republican Johnny Gilraine, Dublin and Leitrim, to lay the wreath on behalf of the Republican Movement.

He then handed over to Seán Ó Sé, Chief Marshall, who called the parade to attention for the playing of the Last Post and Reveille by bugler James Callan, Dundalk.

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Fergal Moore read a message from Republican Sinn Féin Patron, George Harrison, New York and Mayo, greeting those present and reiterating his support for the All-Ireland Republic.

The Chairperson then introduced Peig Galligan who spoke on behalf of the National Graves Association who own and maintain the fine monument over Wolfe Tone's grave. Seán Ó Brádaigh, author of *Bold Robert Emmet* (Irish Freedom Press, 2003) delivered a fine oration.

Following the oration the parade marched back to Sallins village where the parade dispersed after the playing of *Amhrán na bhFiann*.

The speech by Seán Ó Brádaigh is carried below:

A Chathaoirligh, agus a Mhuintir Dhílis na Poblachta

Fearaim fáilte romhaibh go dtí an láthair bheannaithe seo inniu. Seo í an áit ina mbailíonn Poblachtaigh le chéile le breis agus dhá chéad bliain, chun onóir a thabhairt do chuimhne Thiobóid Wolfe Tone, chun machnamh a dhéanamh ar a phrionsabail, ar a ghníomhartha agus ar na haidhmeanna uaisle a chuir sé roimhe.



Tháinig na hÉireannaigh Óga agus na Fíiníní anseo sa naoú haois déag. Sa bhfichiú haois labhair an Píarsach anseo, agus Liam Ó Maoilíosa. Labhair Brian Ó hUiginn agus Tomás Mag Uidhir anseo, chomh maith le Tomás Óg Mac Curtáin, Antaine Mag Anna agus Dáithí Ó Conaill. Bhí gach guine acu dílis do chúis na Poblachta. Is mór an onóir domsa gur iarradh ormsa labhairt libh inniu thar ceann na Gluaiseachta atá dílis fós do Phoblacht na hÉireann.

Ba dhuine de shárlaochra na hÉireann é Tone. D'oibrigh sé go tréan ar son cearta na gCaitliceach nuair a bhí siad faoi chois. D'eagraigh sé fir agus mná na hÉireann ar son cearta an náisiúin Éireannaigh agus thug sé a anam ar son a tíre.

Tá an t-ádh orainn gur fhág Tone a scríbhinní ina dhiaidh, inar léirigh sé go cruinn soiléir na haidhmeanna uaisle a bhí aige.

“An ceangal le Sasana a bhriseadh – síorchúis ár n-uile chrá polaitiúil – agus saoirse mo tíre a dhearbhú: b'in iad mo chuspóirí. Pobal uile na hÉireann a aontú; na sean-easaontais ar fad a ruaigeadh as cuimhne; agus an t-aon ainm amháin i bpáirt,

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Éireannach, a chur in ionad na sainainmneacha, Protastúnach, Caitliceach, Easaontóir: b'in iad mo mhodhanna."

Táthar ag caint, le cúpla mí anuas, ar a thábhachtaí agus atá an tsoiléireacht i gcúrsaí na hÉireann. Ba é Tone an té ba shoiléire ar fad, cé is moite den Phiarsach é féin b'fhéidir, de cheannairí na hÉireann. Mhol an Píarsach é as géire a intinne agus glinne a chainte.

Ní raibh glúin dá dtáinig ó aimsir Tone agus na nÉireannach Aontaithe nach ndearna iarracht ar chumhacht Shasana in Éirinn a bhriseadh agus cearta náisiúnta agus comhchearta daonna a chur ar bun.

Ní raibh Tone i bhfad faoin bhfód nó go raibh éirí amach eile á bheartú. Ba dhuine ar dheilbh Tone é Roibeard Emmet, Roibeard Emmet calma, cuisle na hÉireann, laoch eile a gcomóramid a chuimhne i mbliana, 2003. Tá slabhra an leanúnachais ann ó shin, gan bhriseadh, agus dearbhaímid ar an láthair seo nach mbrisfean an leanúnachas sin go deo.

Molaimid diongbháilteacht Tone agus Emmet, ach ní leor an moladh ann féin. Is gá dúinn i bhfad níos mó a dhéanamh chun cuspóirí na laochra seo a bhaint amach. Ní leor, ach an oiread, foirmle focal a chruthú agus a athrá. Fir ghnímh a bhí sna laochra seo, agus déanfar ár seirbhís a mheas i dtéarmaí oibre agus saothair.

Mura bhfuil Éire chun bheith ina Sasana nua, nó ina Meiriceá nua, ní mór dúinne a fuair oidhreacht an Phoblachtachais, an oidhreacht sin a ghlacadh, a chaomhnú, a neartú agus cinnireacht a thabhairt don ghlúin óg atá ag éirí aníos in Éirinn inniu. Tá folús spioradálta i saol ár dtíre inniu agus tá dualgas orainne an folús sin a líonadh le cuspóirí uaisle Tone agus aisling na bPoblachtach eile, aidhmeanna náisiúnta agus daonna.

When we gather here in Bodenstown Churchyard, we come to honour the memory of Theobald Wolfe Tone, the Father of Irish Republicanism, as well as the memory of all the Founding Fathers of the Irish Republican Movement. It was the insight, the humanity, the generosity and the courage of Tone which made him such a great leader. To the indomitable Irish spirit of separatism, which had survived 600 years of onslaught, he brought the ideals of Republicanism, Democracy and the Rights of Man. He reformulated the Irish demand for the expression of Irish identity and nationality, in terms which were clear and unambiguous, and which reverberate and re-echo down the years since his time.

Tone's noble objective was to establish the rights of the Irish people in their own country. His powerful intellect recognised that this could not be achieved without ending English rule in our country. And he organised Irish people of all persuasions through the Society of United Irishmen in order to achieve this great goal.

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In doing all of this work, Tone and the United Irish Movement were acting as one of the most progressive forces in the world of the eighteenth century. The Republican Movement of today – those who refuse to accept the legitimacy of foreign rule in any part of Ireland – is still the most advanced and progressive movement in Ireland.

The Ireland of today is the product of a counter-revolution which succeeded in overthrowing the 32-County Republic of 1916 and the All-Ireland Dáil Éireann of 1919. The forced partition of Ireland in 1922 was brought about by threat of immediate and terrible war by England and by the collaboration of erstwhile Irish Republicans.

The more recent Stormont Agreement of 1998 updated and secured English rule in the Six Counties, again with the collaboration of former Republicans. In helping to bring all this about, these lost souls, we are told, had been infiltrated by English agents. There is scarcely a doubt about this, but they were already infiltrated, from deep within, by an overweening pride and arrogance, which has been the downfall of many before. No Irish patriot died for a new Stormont or a new-style English Crown police force. But some are so conceited in their self-importance that they think they can ignore this truth.

The objective of the so-called Peace Process never was a permanent peace in Ireland. Its objective was to bring the armed struggle for Irish freedom to an end. Just as in 1921-22, the English found more devious and wily ways of defeating Irish resistance to their rule.

There is also a more ominous, more menacing and longer-term objective behind this unholy alliance of English imperialism and Irish collaboration: it is to extinguish forever the assertion of Irish Republican resistance to English rule in our country. But there are still faithful Republicans in Ireland, North and South. We, you, I, men and women, boys and girls, renew our Republican vows here today at the grave of Tone and we pledge ourselves, as he and his comrades pledged themselves, never to desist in our efforts until we have ended English rule in our country for all time.

There is so much in the Ireland of today which is an affront to the noble ideals of our patriot dead. The dishonesty, the lies, the deceit, the mercenary and shameless selfishness and greed in public life are the very antithesis of the generous and honourable ideals of our patriots. The contrast is obvious and unmistakable.

Not only have we the unjust and undemocratic partition of our country, we also have an ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have nots. This has not happened by any accident or misfortune. This is the result of deliberate and premeditated policies, implemented under the cover of a clever smokescreen provided by well-paid and unscrupulous spindoctors.

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The education system has been fundamentally re-shaped to train workers for the multinational enterprises, which are now more powerful than governments and have been for many years the main instrument of providing employment in Ireland. Education has become more and more utilitarian, rather than having as its primary objective the development of young people's potential, intellectual, moral and physical.

Even in the universities, the classics, the Irish language, Irish history and Irish and Celtic studies have been downgraded, some would say virtually abandoned. Is this any wonder when the Smurfits and the O'Reillys now provide considerable finance for some of these colleges? Skills are certainly important, but the schools and colleges should also be helping parents to imbue their children with standards and values for life. They should be helping the pupils and students to appreciate and develop their Irish identity, as well as to develop their critical faculties, their capacity to think things through, to assess and appraise and evaluate all that they will have to encounter in life. The politicians and the bosses of finance and industry, however, prefer to keep young people malleable and compliant, a prey to advertising, hype and disinformation.

Many people, nevertheless, are coming to realise that they were misled by the hype with which the Stormont Agreement was put before them. Apart from its flagrant sell-out of Irish national rights, it institutionalises sectarianism and it cannot, even on a practical or pragmatic level, deliver justice and peace. The recent mass rallies against the war in Iraq – a war to remove weapons of mass destruction we were told – are a hopeful sign that there are still citizens, including many young people, who refuse to conform and who insist on thinking for themselves. It is while so many people are in this questioning and challenging frame of mind that we Republicans should be active in promoting our policies.

The travesty of democracy, which we witness daily in our country, is a well-managed spectacle of mockery and deception. From the local councils and the shady deals in land rezoning, to the mock theatre of Leinster House and Stormont, to the mandarins of Westminster and the European Union and the invincible-looking power of the United States and Britain, backed by the muscle and might of international capitalism, the ordinary, decent hard-working people of Ireland, in town and country are being exploited. And the weakest and most vulnerable, the old, the ill, the incapacitated, the disadvantaged, the many young people who come from our schools barely literate, are the most exploited of all. We have ever-rising levels of crime, some of it quite vicious and ruthless. We have this in a country where vast fortunes of wealth are made every day.

Both states fail to protect their citizens from exploitation by trans-national capital and manipulative commercial interests, from drug pushers and alcohol producers as well

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as from British spies and agents. Politicians get into power, backed by the generous finance of wealthy groups and individuals, and then they are the prisoners of these people. Two recent examples of this are the compliant hire of Shannon Airport to the US Administration and the revelations that Irish hospitals have to pay twice what is paid in Spain for essential drugs produced by pharmaceutical companies in Cork.

In a democratic system, power rests with the people; in Ireland today, there is a collusion and a conspiracy among the wealthy, the politicians and sections of the media to accumulate and share the spoils at the expense of ordinary people.

The priorities in public life in Ireland today are the priorities of rampant capitalism, and this is facilitated and made possible by politicians whose only interest is power for power's sake. Meanwhile, we have a plethora of tribunals, enquiring into all kinds of misconduct and costing millions of euro every year. A lot of fraud and corruption has been unearthed, but nobody ever seems to be prosecuted for misdeeds. And since shame and embarrassment are in short supply, these tribunals serve now as expensive and protective shock-absorbers, where wrong-doing can be reluctantly exposed, while even more corruptive practices proceed apace.

We had the recent lengthy proceedings in the Special non-jury Court, where eight members of Sinn Féin Poblachtach were arraigned on charges which even that non-jury court, administering draconian legislation, found in the case of seven of the defendants, to be completely unsubstantiated. The eighth man, Pat O'Shea was given a four-year sentence. The Republican paper SAOIRSE described him as "the sacrificial lamb in a case which was politically motivated and driven and which has cost the taxpayer millions of euro". Estimates of the cost of this trial vary from €3m to €4m. These were charges which should never been brought in the first place. The arrest and charging was a political act on a par with similar events in Zimbabwe and Burma. And how many badly-needed hospital beds could have been provided with all this money, or medical cards for hard-pressed families, to name but one pressing need?

The Ireland of today is not a pretty sight. English imperialism is alive and well and holds six of our counties in direct occupation. This same power infiltrates the other 26 counties and dictates its terms to them. In the whole country, there is a basic affliction which is a lack of principle, standards, values and morality. Both states are in hock to English imperialism and neo-liberal capitalism and its free market and culture of greed,

The great, and almost daunting, challenge to us Irish Republicans is to confront and change all of this. In the 1790s Wolfe Tone and his comrades faced a similar challenge. They rose to the occasion in every sense of the word. They formulated

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their plans and they confronted those who were the exploiters of the Irish people, foreign and domestic.

The hallmark of their approach was that they sought no personal gain for themselves, their rallying cry was liberty, equality and fraternity and they gave generous and unstinting service. Then, they made their appeal to the broad mass of the Irish people, Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter, and they organised their generation. They were truly revolutionary and their message struck a chord with the common people. The broad mass of the people always retain and cherish a yearning for freedom based on justice.

We should direct our Republican message to the general public, the common people of Ireland, rather than to those who have a vested interest in the status quo. And among that general public I would count people who have traditionally supported Unionism. It is an undeniable fact of Irish history, that a previous generation of Protestants and particularly Dissenters/Presbyterians found Republicanism to be attractive. Many of them fought, suffered and died for it. It is time their descendants opened the history books and studied why this was so, and why, and in whose interests, it was changed. Our task should be to help them to do this, now that so many of them feel abandoned by England.

The United Irishmen made no differentiation between one religious persuasion and another. It did not matter, and it still does not matter, if one carried an ancient Gaelic surname, or if one's ancestors were planters, Huguenots or Palatines. There is only one test, allegiance to Ireland. We should remember that many of the Norman families became more Irish than the Irish themselves – níos Gaelaí ná na Gaeil féin. And that Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet and Constance Gore-Booth did not have Gaelic names.

For us today, our appeal should be inclusive and all-embracing. There is still only one test, allegiance to the historic Irish nation, with all the duties and responsibilities, equal rights and equal opportunities, that that entails.

Wolfe Tone was not long in his grave here in Bodenstown, when the veterans of 1798, the survivors of England's terror, were organising again and planning the next revolt against English rule. That came five years later in 1803. While the plans were good, there was failure in implementation on the day, July 23, 1803.

Robert Emmet's Rising was a sure and certain indication, however, that the Republican separatism of the United Irishmen represented a potent and formidable force. It was the first and early indication that Irish Republicanism was dynamic and compelling and would endure. Every generation since that time has challenged English rule in our country and the continuity from 1798 to this day has been clear and conspicuous.

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We cannot gather at the grave of Robert Emmet, because we do not know where his grave is. But the memory of his youth, his ability, his courage, his selflessness, is an inspiration to all of us. Leon Ó Broin, a historian of considerable authority, wrote a biography of Emmet which was first published in 1958. In the last chapter in that book he wrote that in Emmet

“Ireland had produced a man of pure gold” and that he was “the symbol of Irish patriotism in its noblest and most romantic form”.

The final paragraph of this biography reads as follows:

“It would not be right, however, to separate Emmet from his companions in the United Irish movement or from the long list of men, before his time and afterwards, who died of love for Ireland. He is the ‘darlin’ of Erin, before he is anything else. Emmet’s devotion and self-sacrifice were such that they do not need the help of any particular national tradition to justify them. He is the clean-hearted warrior par excellence, a man that any nation, no matter how exalted, no matter how glorious its history, could be proud of. He remains an example for all time, and for all peoples.”

It is from patriots like Tone and Emmet that we Irish Republicans of today take our inspiration. There is a moral and spiritual vacuum in the Ireland of today. The mass of the Irish people are coming to realise now that that is so and they seek an alternative.

There has been much talk in recent months of the need for clarity in conducting our affairs. Tone spoke with great clarity. He and Patrick Pearse were probably the clearest and the most unambiguous of all who set forth the gospel of Irish Republicanism. Sinn Féin Poblachtach, in our time, was crystal clear in 1986 when the Republican position was being abandoned and again in 1998 when English rule was being updated and secured.

We need to continue to speak with clarity, with honesty and with relevance, and to demonstrate to all the Irish people that the cause of the common name of Irishman is still the basis for progress, in order to advance from the moral decay and the spiritual vacuum to a new order based on integrity, equity and on national rights and human rights. The time for double-talk is over and it is indeed time for clarity. The Protestants and Dissenters, as well as the Catholics, will understand when I say that the truth shall make us free.

We are not alone in the task we seek to accomplish. We have many active supporters who are not present here today. We have our Republican prisoners, who are also a source of inspiration to us as they keep their lonely vigil for Ireland, and to whom we send greetings from this historic spot. We have many friends and sympathisers throughout Ireland and we have active supporters abroad. All share with us our vision of a new Ireland – ÉIRE NUA, a New Democracy of four provinces

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with regional, local and community self-government. For us the model is neither Boston nor Berlin. For us the task is to restore the historic Irish nation on the basis of liberty, equality and fraternity, and to put the people of Ireland in charge of their own destinies. We will continue to work to accomplish this noble task, for which so many have laboured over the centuries. We will continue to work, regardless of the defections of recent years and regardless of the sinister efforts by certain elements in the Establishment and in the media to denigrate our work and to smear our good name.

In the Six Occupied Counties, the nightmare of the nationalist people continues. In some areas it is particularly acute and communities live in continual fear of attack. The Stormont Agreement has not brought reassurance to the Unionist people either. And neither Westminster nor Leinster House can bring peace with justice, because both of these institutions operate to a different agenda. As Wolfe Tone said of the Ascendancy of his time: "They see Ireland only in their rent rolls, their places, their patronage and their pensions."

The ÉIRE NUA programme for a four-province federal Ireland represents a modern, progressive project, based on the original ideas of Tone. It is the surest guarantee of a secure place in Ireland for all our people. We must do more to promote it.

I have referred to the clarity of Tone. It is a valuable exercise to ponder once more his historic words about breaking the connection with England. To put them in context, we find these remarkable words in Tone's journal, where he refers to a letter written to him by Thomas Russell, "the man from God knows where", one of Robert Emmet's finest comrades, who died on the scaffold in Downpatrick, Co Down, in October 1803. I quote:

"Russell wrote me an account of this, and it immediately set me thinking more seriously than I had yet done upon the state of Ireland. I soon formed my theory, and on that theory I have unvaryingly acted ever since.

"To subvert the tyranny of our execrable government, to break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils, and to assert the independence of my country – there were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter – these were my means."

This was the Republican programme as formulated by Tone. It has still to be accomplished. It will certainly not be achieved by time-serving politicians who are in partnership with the very English government which Tone sought to remove from Ireland. Tone listed three objectives, and the first of these was "to subvert the tyranny of our execrable government". Here he nailed his colours to the mast and openly

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declared his intention to subvert English rule in Ireland. He overtly and publicly declared himself to be subversive, of English rule.

We are all aware that this word "subversive" has been used in recent years as a term of opprobrium, as a reproach and a slur, to discredit Republicans. We do not seek to subvert the authority of the Irish people; we strive rather to assert, establish and uphold the authority of the Irish people in their own country. Therefore, like Wolfe Tone, we labour to subvert English rule in Ireland, and here today at his tomb, we reaffirm that intention, proudly and unashamedly. Tone's programme for Ireland is still our programme.

An Phoblacht Abú! June 15, 2003