

Republican SINN FéIN Poblachtach

Theobald Wolfe Tone Commemoration
Bodenstown, County Kildare



2006

“Participation in partition parliament denial of sovereignty”

The Annual Wolfe Tone Commemoration to Bodenstown took place on Sunday, June 11. The parade, under the auspices of the National Commemoration, assembled in Sallins, Co Kildare at 2pm and marched to the grave of Theobald Wolfe Tone, the Father of Irish Republicanism, in Bodenstown Churchyard.

The proceedings were chaired by Cathleen Knowles McGuirk, Dublin, Ard Chomhairle, Republican Sinn Féin and the oration was delivered by Dr Seán Maguire, Mayo, son of the late Comdt- General Tom Maguire, last faithful survivor of the Second (All- Ireland) Dáil Éireann. It is carried below in full:

A cháirde

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“We have come to the holiest place in Ireland: holier to us than the place where Patrick sleeps in Down. Patrick brought us life, but this man died for us. And though many before him and some since have died in testimony of the truth of Ireland's claim to nationhood, Wolfe Tone was the greatest of all that have died for Ireland whether in old time or in new. He was the greatest of Irish nationalists. I believe he was the greatest of Irish men. And if I am right in this I am right in saying that we stand in the holiest place in Ireland and that the holiest sod of a Nation's soil is the sod where the greatest of her dead lies buried.”

That is the first paragraph of the address delivered by Pádraig Pearse at this spot on June 12, 1913.

Pearse spoke again in Glasnevin Cemetery on August 1915 at the grave of another unconquerable man, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa. During that address he said, “Our foes are strong and wise and wary but strong and wise and wary as they are they cannot undo the miracles of God who ripens in the hearts of young men the seeds sown by the young men of another generation.”

Pearse continued: “Life springs from death and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations.”

At Wolfe Tone's grave we are at the source of all the seeds sown by all the generations and we have the unbroken sequence of loyalty and faithfulness to Tone's teaching right down to the present day.

Tone had a close friend and comrade, Thomas Russell, a Cork Protestant who is remembered in the famous ballad as “The Man from God Knows Where”. He was interned without trial in the 1790s and was with Emmet who sent him to the North to organise the 1803 Rising there.

Those are the first three links in the chain, Tone, Russell and Emmet. Michael Dwyer carried on in Co Wicklow.

Thomas Davis, the Young Irelander, visited Bodenstown and found Tone's grave unmarked but guarded by the local blacksmith who would allow nobody to set foot on it. The blacksmiths were one group who suffered excessively in '98 because it was they who made the pikes. Through the blacksmiths we have the connection and sequence with the local people – unbroken all the time.

Tone was captured on a French warship in Lough Swilly, brought to Dublin and sentenced to death. While he was awaiting execution his captors made a botched attempt to cut his throat and tried to brand him as a suicide, a travesty which I do not believe. They tried to destroy his character as well as his body. They adopted the same manoeuvre with Roger Casement later on.

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When Tone's body was released for burial an attempt was made to keep the people away. It failed. The people would not tolerate his body being hijacked. The same treatment was given to Terence Mac Swiney. His funeral was hijacked also and we saw the same in our own day in the case of Frank Stagg.

Davis, a Young Irelander, was here. The Fenians were here and that brings us to Pearse as I have said already.

We know that Pearse's faithful disciples, Liam Mellows, Brian O'Higgins, Mrs Margaret Buckley and Miss Mary MacSwiney, Seán Russell and Dáithí Ó Conaill, among others, spoke here.

Pearse proclaimed the Republic at Easter 1916. The Proclamation was ratified by the people in the 1918 election and the deputies assembled in the Mansion House in January 1919. This was the First Dáil Éireann. It was the functioning sovereign Parliament of the 32 Counties.

There was another election in 1921 which elected the Second Dáil Éireann. There were six women elected to it. The members – Teachtaí Dála – swore to defend the Republic against all enemies foreign and domestic. The term Dáil Éireann by definition refers to the sovereign parliament of the 32 County United Ireland. The present occupants of Leinster House call themselves the 29th Dáil Éireann when in fact they are the 27th 26-County Assembly.

The second Dáil Éireann voted on the Treaty of 1921 and by a majority of seven voted to accept that Treaty which would give them a Home Rule type of government with the King of England at its head. Those who voted for the Treaty reneged on their oath which was freely given and thereby committed perjury which was and is a poor foundation for any enterprise and signs on them. None of the six women voted for the Treaty.

The faithful members of the Second Dáil continued the sequence that had been legitimately established and kept their unbroken links and sequence back to Wolfe Tone. They continued to strive to achieve his motto "to break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils and to unite Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter". Permit me an interesting deviation. In 1973 Brian Inglis wrote a book on Roger Casement. The book was reviewed by AJP Taylor, Professor of History at Oxford University. This is what he wrote, "Here is Casement's message for the present day. There is no Irish problem without solution. The problem that had marked Ireland for centuries is the British presence in Ireland. That problem can only be solved by British withdrawal." That is an independent Englishman's opinion. Having reneged on the Republic the Free State assembly attacked the faithful Republican forces in the Four Courts and released the Free State Reign of Terror.

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The Republican Sinn Féin members of the Second Dáil continued to meet and organise but life was not easy and numbers began to diminish as deaths took place. In 1938 at a Sinn Féin meeting Miss Mary MacSwiney proposed that the authority of the Second (All-Ireland) Dáil be passed on to the Army Council of the Irish Republican Army. This is a procedure recognised in international law that when a legitimate government is under attack it may pass on its powers.

The speaker here at Bodenstown in 1930 was one of the faithful members who voted for Miss MacSwiney's motion. He lived on to become the last faithful survivor of the Second (All-Ireland) Dáil Éireann. In 1969 he endorsed the Provisional Movement but when the Provisionals reneged and became a partitionist party that endorsement was promptly withdrawn in 1986. He recognised and endorsed the Continuity Movement as the successors of the 1938 leadership and consequently as successors to the Second (All-Ireland) Dáil Éireann and the lineal descendants of 1916, 1867, 1848, 1803 and 1798, right back to Wolfe Tone.

One of the arguments in favour of accepting the Treaty of Surrender is that the Irish Republican Army would be unable to carry on the fight any longer. Dom Brian Murphy OSB in his book Patrick Pearse and the Lost Republican Ideal refuted this theory and quotes from leaders in the south and west and he also quotes a memorandum from the British Commander, General Macready, to the British Cabinet, written on May 23, 1921: "I am convinced that by October unless a peaceful solution has been reached, it will not be safe to ask the troops to continue there another winter under the conditions which obtained during the last."

The 25th anniversary of the Belfast hunger strike is with us and those who reneged on Republicanism and became Stormont parliamentarians tell us that the hunger strikers were the beginning of their moves to accept the Good Friday surrender. Who do these people think they are that they can deceive people into their way of thinking. No matter how often Mr Adams and his hangers-on perform the Pontius Pilate manoeuvre and wash their hands in public they will convince nobody that Bobby Sands and his comrades died on hunger strike rather than wear a prison uniform no more than he died on hunger strike in order that young men and women could join the RUC/PSNI and wear a peeler's uniform.

Participation in a partition parliament attempts to deny the sovereignty of the Irish people. Sovereignty is unalienable and cannot be voted away no matter how great the majority.

The referendum which purports to withdraw the claim to the Six Counties is invalid because the Six Counties are an integral part of the ancient Irish nation. The Six Counties are as much part of Críoch Fodhla as any other county.

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Mr Adams must try again because to quote an American aphorism you can't fool all the people all the time. My only comment is what Pearse said: "Let no man blaspheme the cause that the dead generations of Ireland served." We can trace back through all the years and all the vicissitudes right back to Wolfe Tone. The chain is unbroken and it now behoves us as faithful inheritors of a glorious past to pass on our inheritance clean and unsullied to our children and grandchildren and generations yet to come.

Let the generations be able to look back on us and say they were faithful and they left us a priceless legacy.

We saw that Thomas Russell and his comrades were prisoners during the 1790s and now today we have Republicans held as prisoners in both partitioned areas of our country. We send them our warmest greetings and we will remain faithful to the principles for which they are suffering.