

# 1916 Oration to North Tipperary Ógra Fianna Fáil in Soloheadbeg

Sunday 12th, April 2009

## HOME OF THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

IT IS A GREAT HONOR FOR ME TO BE HERE IN TIPPERARY TO GIVE THE ORATION ON EASTER SUNDAY MORNING  
TO COMMEMORATE THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO FOUGHT IN EASTER WEEK 1916

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE MEMBERS OF TIPPERARY OGRA FIANNA FAIL FOR INVITING ME HERE TODAY  
TD? SENATORS? COUNCILLORS?

WHAT GIVE ME THE GREATEST HONOUR IS TO BE IN THE COUNTY WHERE 90 YEARS AGO THIS YEAR THE  
FIRST SHOTS IN THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE WERE FIRED  
AFTER THE STORY OF EASTER WEEK  
THE NEXT GREAT CHAPTER OF THAT LONG ROAD TO FREEDOM WAS WRITTEN HERE IN THE PREMIER  
COUNTY  
A BOOK WHO'S FINAL PAGES HAVE NOT BEEN WRITTEN

AT THIS TIME OF CHALLENGE, IT IS WELL TO REMEMBER THAT WE HAVE FACED BIGGER AND GRAVER  
CHALLENGES THAN WE CURRENTLY DO.  
THESE CURRENT DIFFICULTIES "THESE WILL PASS, WILL PASS AND CHANGE .....AND BE NO MORE"  
AND WE MUST REMEMBER THAT WE HAVE PREVAILED IN THE PAST.  
THROUGH OUR BELIEF IN OURSELVES AND BY WORKING TOGETHER FOR A COMMON PURPOSE WE WILL  
PREVAIL AGAIN

AFTER THE GUNS GREW SILENT AT THE END OF THAT HISTORIC EASTER WEEK IT WAS 3 YEARS LATER WHEN  
ON THE 21<sup>ST</sup> OF JANUARY 1919 THE MEN OF TIPPERARY RE IGNIGHTED THE FLAME THAT WOULD  
EVENTUALLY LEAD TO THE BRITISH EMPIRE SUING FOR PEACE.  
THE MEN WHO SURVIVED EASTER WEEK, MEN LIKE LEMASS AND BRUAGH WERE TO BE JOINED IN THE  
FIGHT BY THE MEN AT SOLOHABEG

TADHG CROWE, PADDY MCCORMACK, PADDY O'DWYER, MICHAEL RYAN AND SEÁN O'MEARA SEAN TREACY,  
DAN BREEN, SEAN HOGAN AND SEAMUS ROBINSON,  
AND IN TURN THESE MEN WERE JOINED BY OTHERS  
FROM THAT SMALL BEGINNING HERE IN TIPPERARY GREW THE BEGINING OF THE END OF THE BRITISH  
PRESENCE IN THIS PART OF OUR COUNTRY  
THE TIPPERARY BRIGADES WAS TO BECOME LEDGENDARY IN THE BLACK AND TAN WAR  
IT'S COURAGE AND BRAVERY WAS SPOKEN ABOUT AROUND THE WORLD IN THE SAME WAY AS THE CORK  
NO 3 BRIGADE LED BY TOM BARRY AND THE CORK NO 2 BRIGADE LED BY SEAN MOYLAN

IN THE EARLY STAGES THE TIPPERARY BRIGADE CONCENTRATED ON ATTACK ON RIC BARRACKS HOLLYFORD, WAS THE FIRST MAJOR ATTACK MAY 10-LL, 1920 WHERE WITH JUST 13 RIFLES, 260 ROUNDS OF AMMUNITION AND A FEW GRENADES. SEAN TREACY SHOWED INSPIRING LEADERSHIP TO HIS GROUP OF 15 MEN FOLLOWING ON THE 3<sup>RD</sup> OF JUNE DRANGAN RIC BARRACKS WAS ATTACKED AGAIN SEAN TREACY LED THIS RAID IN WHICH ERNIE O'MALLEY WAS BADLY BURNT. THE FIGHT LASTED FOR SEVEN HOURS IN JULY REAR CROSS R.I.C. BARRACKS WAS ATTACKED BY A GROUP OF FIFTY VOLUNTEERS

THE ATTACK LASTED FOR OVER FIVE HOURS. DURING THE ATTACK SEAN TREACY, ERNIE O'MALLEY AND JIM GORMAN WERE WOUNDED. THERE WERE NEARLY FORTY MEN IN THE BARRACKS WHEN IT WAS ATTACKED. THE FIGHTING HERE WAS THE FIERCEST THAT OCCURRED DURING ALL OF THE BARRACKS ATTACKS.

## **WAR OF INDEPENDENCE**

THE NEXT PHASE OF THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE WAS CENTRED IN

DAVIN'S FARM OF RATHSALLAGH, ROSEGREEN TIPPERARY THE GENERAL HEADQUARTERS FOR THE BRIGADE WAS KNOWN AS 71

MOST OF THE BRIGADE'S ADMINISTRATIVE WORK WAS CARRIED OUT IN A "DUGOUT" ON DAVIN'S FARM, KNOWN AS "71", CALLED AFTER A CERTAIN HOUSE IN DUBLIN'S SOUTH SIDE, WHICH SEAMUS ROBINSON HAD A ROMANTIC ASSOCIATIONS WITH A LADY.

TODAY I WOULD LIKE TO PAY TRIBUTE TO DAVIN FAMILY SUPPORT TO THE CAUSE OF THE REPUBLIC. THEY WERE A UNIQUE FAMILY IN THAT FOUR OUT OF FIVE SONS (KENNEDY, JEROME, JAMES AND THOMAS) WERE INVOLVED IN THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AND MR. AND MRS. DAVIN FOUR DAUGHTERS (MARGARET, EILEEN, KATHLEEN AND MARY), WHO WERE MEMBERS OF CUMANN NA MBAN,

FROM DAVIN FARM KNOWN AS 71 THE TAN WAR IN TIPPERARY WAS CARRIED OUT

IT WAS NOT ONE SINGLE ACT THAT ALLOWED THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE TO SUCCEED TO QUOTE ROBERT KENNEDY IN A DIFFERENT CONTEXT BUT THE MEANING IS JUST THE SAME

“IT IS FROM NUMBERLESS DIVERSE ACTS OF COURAGE AND BELIEF THAT HUMAN HISTORY IS SHAPED. EACH TIME A MAN STANDS UP FOR AN IDEAL, OR ACTS TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF OTHERS, OR STRIKES OUT AGAINST INJUSTICE, HE SENDS FORTH A TINY RIPPLE OF HOPE, AND CROSSING EACH OTHER FROM A MILLION DIFFERENT CENTRES OF ENERGY AND DARING THOSE RIPPLES BUILD A CURRENT WHICH CAN SWEEP DOWN THE MIGHTIEST WALLS OF OPPRESSION.”

AMBUSHES SUCH AS THOMASTON AND NEWTOWN CROSS AND MANY MORE, WERE ORGANISED AND COORDINATED FROM 71 ON DAVIN'S FARM.

THESE WERE ALL “ACTS OF COURAGE AND BELIEF” WHICH HELPED “SWEEP DOWN THE MIGHTY WALLS OF OPPRESSION”

ON THE SAME DAY TIPPERARY ROSE TO ITS FEET IN 1919 THE FIRST DAIL TOOK THE FIRST STEPS TO TAKE ITS PLACE AMONG THE NATIONS

### **TRIUMPH DESPITE THE ODDS**

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW THAT GREAT IRISH WRITER SUMMED UP AN APPROACH TO LIFE  
"SOME PEOPLE SEE THINGS AND SAY WHY? BUT I DREAM OF THINGS THAT NEVER WERE AND SAY WHY NOT"

IT IS THAT QUALITY THAT IS NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER A COMBINATION OF HOPE AND DETERMINATION THESE WERE THE QUALITIES OF THE MEN AND WOMEN OF 1916 AND THE QUALITIES OF PREVIOUS GENERATIONS WHO STRUGGLED FOR FREEDOM AGAINST SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE ODDS  
TO QUOTE THE PROCLAMATION

*"IN EVERY GENERATION THE IRISH PEOPLE HAVE ASSERTED THEIR RIGHT TO NATIONAL FREEDOM AND SOVEREIGNTY: SIX TIMES DURING THE PAST THREE HUNDRED YEARS<sup>[2]</sup> THEY HAVE ASSERTED IT IN ARMS."*

THE FENIANS 1867, THE YOUNG IRELANDERS 1848,  
LORD EDWARD FITZGERALD IN 1803, THE BOYS OF WEXFORD 1798, SARSFIELD IN 1690 AND O NEILL AND O DONNELL IN 1602

NO OTHER NATION IN HISTORY HAS SUCH A RECORD  
IN EVERY GENERATION  
IN EVERY CENTURY FOR 800 YEARS  
EACH GENERATION IN TURN  
STOOD UP AGAINST ENORMOUS ODDS  
ONLY TO BE BEATEN DOWN  
BUT ONLY TO HAVE THAT QUEST RENEWD BY THE SUCCEEDING GENERATION  
ONLY TO HAVE THE FLAG PASSED ON TO THE NEXT GENERATIONS

THE 1600 MEN AND WOMEN WHO ROSE OUT ON EASTER WEEK 1916 WERE TAKING ON THE BIGGEST STANDING ARMY THE WORLD HAD EVER SEEN

ON THE CONTIENT, A DAYS SAIL FROM DUBLIN, THE BRITISH EMPIRE WAS INVOLVED IN THE TITANIC STRUGGLE. A WAR DURING THE COURSE OF WHICH BRITIAN AND HER ALLIES  
AUSTRLIA, BELGIUM, CANADA, FRANCE, INDIA, NEW ZEALAND AND SOUTH AFRICA WOULD MOBILIZED OVER 17,000,000 (SEVENTEEN MILLION) MEN

YET DESPITE THOSE ODDS, DESPITE THE ODDS OF 11,000 TO 1  
KNOWING THEY WERE TAKING ON AN EMPIRE ON WHICH THE SUN NEVER SET  
AN EMPIRE THAT CONTROLLED 458 MILLION PEOPLE ONE-QUARTER OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION  
AND AN EMPIRE THAT COVERED MORE THAN 13,000,000 SQUARE MILES: APPROXIMATELY A QUARTER OF THE PLANET

AGAINST ALL THESE ODDS

THOSE ORDINARY YET EXTRAORDINARY MEN AND WOMEN WENT OUT ON EASTER MONDAY AND RAISED A FLAG AND DID AN EXTRAORDINARY THING ON AN ORDINARY DAY

THEY TOOK ON AN EMPIRE BIGGER THAN THE ROMAN EMPIRE AND THEY DEALT A FATAL BLOW. IN THE WORD OF MCHENRY AUTHOR OF THE HISTORY OF WORLD WAR 1 " LITTLE DID THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES REALISE AT THE TIME, THAT THE REBELLION IN DUBLIN WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN A FOOT NOTE IN THE HISTORY OF WORLD WAR WAS IN FACT THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE EMPIRE"

THE FLAG THE VOLUNTEER RAISED, THE TRI COLOUR, HAS A CURIOUS CONNECTION TO TIPPERARY

THOMAS FRANCIS MEAGHER, A MAN LIKE PEARSE AND CONNOLLY, WAS THE EPITOME AND THE PERSONIFICATION OF THE IRISH MAN WHO SAW THING AND SAID WHY NOT  
TF MEAGHER WHO CAME BACK FROM FRANCE IN 1848 WITH 2 GOOD IDEAS  
THE FIRST WAS REBELLION, FOR HIS LEADERSHIP ROLL IN THE REBELLION IN TIPPERARY IN 1848 HE WAS PUT ON TRIAL IN CLONMEL FOR HIGH TREASON

WHEN ASKED BY THE TRIAL JUDGE IF HE HAD ANYTHING TO SAY BEFORE HE PASSED SENTENCE THOMAS FRANCIS MEAGHER SAID

"YOUR HONOR IF YOU DO NOT SENTENCE ME TO DEATH I WILL TRY AGAIN"

THE JUDGE PASSED THE DEATH SENTENCE

WHICH WAS COMMUTED TO TRANSPORTATION FOR LIFE TO TASMANIA. IN HIS LAST LETTER WRITTEN FROM IRELAND IN JULY 1849 HE WROTE

NEVER WAS THERE A COUNTRY SO UTTERLY DOWNCAST, SO DEPRESSED, SO PITIFUL, SO SPIRITLESS" BUT THEN HE WENT ON TO WRITE "YET I DO NOT, COULD NOT DESPAIR FOR HER REGENERATION  
NATIONS DO NOT DIE IN A DAY THEIR LIVES ARE RECKONED BY GENERATIONS AND THEY ENCOMPASSED CENTURIES THEIR VITALITY IS INEXTINGUISHABLE"

160 YEARS AGO IN THE HEIGHT OF THE FAMINE THOMAS F MEAGHER HAD FAITH ENOUGH TO BELIEVE THAT THE IRISH PEOPLE WILL NOT ONLY SURVIVE BUT WOULD TRIUMPH

IT IS THAT SPIRIT THAT IS REQUIRED MORE THAN EVER

NOT ONLY THE SPIRIT BUT THE SELF BELIEF

THAT WE HAVE AND WILL COME THROUGH

THAT WE HAVE AND DID COME THROUGH TOUGHER TIMES

AND

THAT WE HAVE THE SELF BELIEF AND THE SPIRIT TO COME THROUGH THESE TIMES

THOMAS FRANCIS MEAGHER SECOND GOOD IDEA WHEN HE CAME BACK FROM FRANCE IN THAT FAITHFUL YEAR OF 1848 WAS A DESIGN FOR A FLAG FOR THE NATION. BORROWING THE CONCEPT OF THE FRENCH TRICOLOUR HE PRESENTED THE NEW FLAG

WHEN ASKED THE SYMBOLISM OF THE COLOURS

HE SAID

THE WHITE IN THE CENTRE SIGNIFIES A LASTING TRUCE BETWEEN THE 'ORANGE' AND THE 'GREEN', AND I TRUST THAT BENEATH ITS FOLDS THE HANDS OF THE IRISH PROTESTANT AND THE IRISH CATHOLIC MAY BE CLASPED IN GENEROUS AND HEROIC BROTHERHOOD.

THAT HOPE OF BROTHERHOOD A HOPE OF TONE AND THE UNITED IRISHMEN IS CLOSER TODAY THAN EVERY AND IT IS THE SACRID TRUST OF THIS GENERATIONS AND FUTURE GENERATIONS TO MAKE THAT NOBLE CAUSE A REALITY

IT WAS THIS FLAG THAT WAS RAISED OVER THE GPO ON EASTER MONDAY 1916 THE COLOURS OF WHICH HAD THE SAME MEANING THEN AS THEY DO NOW

AS THAT FLAG WAS RAISED  
PADRAIG PEARSE READ THE PROCLAMATION  
**THE PROMISE CONTAINED WITH IN THE PROCLAMATION**  
IS  
A STATEMENT OF INTENT,  
A CONTACT WITH THE PEOPLE,  
A SOLEM PLEDGE  
IN IT HE SPOKE OF HOW IRELAND SHOULD BE  
AND THAT CONTINUES TO BE OUR CHALLENGE TODAY

*“THE REPUBLIC” PEARSE SAID “ GUARANTEES RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL LIBERTY, EQUAL RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO ALL ITS CITIZENS, AND DECLARES ITS RESOLVE TO PURSUE THE HAPPINESS AND PROSPERITY OF THE WHOLE NATION AND OF ALL ITS PARTS,”*

THE WORK OF EACH GENERATION IS TO FULFILL THE PROMISE OF THE PROCLIMATION

THE CHALLENGE OF EACH GENERATION IS TO SPAN THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THE IDEALS AS SET OUT IN THE PROCLIMATION AND  
THE REALITY OF THE WORLD IN WHICH WE FIND OURSELVES IN

THE HOPE IS THAT EACH NEW GENERATION WILL CARRY THE FLAG TO CREAT AN IRELAND WHERE ALL THE IDEALS OF THE PROCLIMATION ARE FULFILLED

AND THOUGH WE ARE IN DIFFICULT TIMES  
I BELIEVE AS OTHERS BEFORE ME BELIEVED  
WE CAN, WILL AND SHALL PREVAIL AGAIN