

Tomás Mac Giolla
Óráid an Uachtaráin
1969 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis
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Duras anuraidh go mbá chontuirtí i bhfad an chrich-dheighilt eacnamaíochta idir taobh thoir agus taobh thiar na h-Eireann ná an teorainn idir Deisceart agus Tuaisceart. Faraor gear gur fíoraíodh an chaint sin le linn na bliana atá caite. Tá iarthar na h-Eireann geall le bheith banaithe de dhaoine agus ta an meath ag leathnú isteach i 1ar tíre. Ta Contae Laoise anois níos measa as na cuid mhaith de chondaetha an Iarthair. Ní "deireadh ne gcoillte ar lar" ata le caoineadh againn feasta, ach deireadh na bhfeirmeoirí bheaga, deireadh na nGaeltachtaí, -thuaidh, theas agus thiar - deireadh saoil, duchais agus dochais muintir tuaithe na h-Eireann.

Meastar anois nach bhfuil ach 97 duine ina aghaidh an mhíle chearnógach i gceantracha tuaithe sna 26 Contae. Ta breis agus 180 in aghaidh an mhiosúir cheanna i gceantracha tuaithe sna 6 Contaetha. Mar sin, caithfear admhail, o thaobh cos ar bhólg eacnamaíochta ar mhuintir na tuaithe de, gur measa i bhfad Rialtas na 26 gContae na Rialtas na 6 gContae.

Agus de reir mar imíonn na daoine, crapann agus feonn na seirbhísí sóisialta ata riachtanach de shaol comhuadair ar bith. Ta ospuideil i mbaol, agus scoileanna dha ndunadh as eadan.

Ach in ait bheith ag iarraidh cruachas mhuintir na tíre a fhuascailt is amhlaidh ata Rialtas Bhaile Atha Cliath ag cur leo. Ní bheadh se de naire na de chamhíneach ag Stormont 36,000 feirmeoir a dhaoradh chun imirce taobh istigh de threimhse ceithre mbliana, 1969 - 1972, agus Clar Forbartha Eacnamaíochta a thabhairt ar chlár basctha agus briste feirmeoirí bheaga na tíre, mar ata deanta ag Rialtas Bhaile Atha Cliath.

Ní leir go dtiocfaidh aoin athru ar dhearcadh Rialtas Baile Atha Cliath. Ta an Conradh Saor Thradála Ie Sasana ag tabhairt tuilleadh sciuirse don fheirmeoir bheag ar mheithe le margadh beithíoch agus meadu saibhris an fhir mhoir.

Freisin, meadófar go mor ar fhas an oirthir agus banu an Iarthair ma theann an tír seo isteach sa Chomhfhargadh. Níl tír ar bith de se thiortha an Chomhfhargaidh nar tharla de cheana féin go raibh an fhorbairt uilig i gceantar nó dho ar chostas na gceantracha eile. An Iodail an sampla is fearr den tarlu seo, ait ar aistrigh cuig mhilhuin deag daoine ó dheisceart go tuaisceart na tíre sin san aon bhliain deag ata caite.

Ni leir, adeirim, go bhfuil Rialtas Bhaile Atha Cliath ag iarraidh cabhru leis an bhfeirmeoir beag. An malairt ar fad. Agus muna ndeineann muintir na tuaithe fein rud eigan mar gheall air, is gearr nach mbeidh ar a gcumas dul i bhfeidhm ar phairtithe polaitiochta ar thabhachtar leo lion a gcuid suichan sa Dail na leas na udaoine faoi'n tir.

Ta rud stairiul ag titim amach fe lathair ua huaire. Is e sin go bhfuil an chumhacht polaitiochta ag imeacht as an dtuaith agus isteach sna bailte. Aistriodh ceithre suiochan Dala o thuaith fearann go baile fearann o 1968 i leith. Leis an imirce ón dtuaith atá Rialtas Bhaile Áthe Cliath a eadu imeoidh an lion ceanna aris ar a laghad faoi cheann cupla bliain eile. Mar sin de, beidh ocht suiochan imithe on dtuaith isteach sa mbailte. I gcomhtheais eilimh tuaithe agus cathrach bheith ag treasnail ar a cheile, beidh difriocht dairire de she suichan deag deanta taobh istigh de thriemhse deich mbliana.

In a aghaidh sin is uilig ta comharthas ann go bhfuil reabhloid ag aibhiu san Iarthar. Ta conartha Talun ag teacht ann in aiteanna agus ta eileamh ar cheartha sibhialta sa nGaeltacht. Ni ar shon gur ón nGaeltacht doibh, agus gur cainteoirí duchais Ghaeilge iad ata siad ag troid - ach mar Eireannaigh ag eileamh ceart maireachtala ina dtir fein, agus cead a gcuid traidisiuin culturtha a fhorbairt mar is dual doibh.

Mar Phoblachtoiri, ag leanacht de theagasc Wolfe Tone agus Tomas Daibhais, is dual duinne treisiu leo ar gach bealach is feidir linn. Is mo an cheist seo amhain na cumas laithreach ghluaiseacht na Poblachta. Mar sin, na biodh se le ra i ndeadh na hArd Fheise seo, gur muid “an dream bocht silte nar chuir le cheile” nuair ba ghaire eigeandail mhuintir tuaithe na hEireann.

[Translation of the above section into English]

We stated last year that the economic divide between East and West would be much more dangerous than the divide between North and South. Alas, this past year proved that statement true. The West of Ireland has been stripped of its people and the decline is broadening in the middle of the country. County Laois is now worse than a lot of the counties in the West. It's not the destruction of the forests that we are lamenting but the end of small farmers, of the Gaeltachts, North, South, and West – the end of the native, natural life of the country people of Ireland.

It is now believed that there are only 97 people to the square mile in certain rural areas in the 26 counties. This compares to 180 + people to the same measure in rural areas in the 6 counties. Because of this, it must be admitted, from the view of economic repression of the rural people, that the government of the 26 counties is worse than that of the 6 counties.

And as the people leave, the social services that are important for any sort of community life wither and die. Hospitals are in danger and schools are closing indiscriminately.

But instead of trying to relieve the distress of the people, the Dublin government is actually making things worse. Even the Stormont government would not have the audacity and brazenness to force 36,000 farmers into emigration in the four year period 1979 -72, and then to call this plan, which will cause decimation amongst the small farmers of the country an Economic Development Plan, as the Dublin government has done.

It is not likely that there will be any change in the attitude of the Dublin government. The Free Trade Agreement with England will add further torment to the small farmers dependent on rearing cattle and will add to the wealth of the ranchers.

Furthermore, if we actually join the Common Market, the expansion of the East coast and the clearing out of the West will be greatly accelerated. None of the countries who have joined the Common Market have escaped this pattern where economic development was concentrated in one or two areas at the total expense of everywhere else. Italy is the clearest example of this where fifteen million people have had to migrate from the South to the North of the country in the last eleven years.

It is not clear, we assert, that the government is trying to help the small farmer. In fact the opposite seems to be the case. And unless the rural people themselves speak out about this, then within a short time they will not even be able to put pressure on the TDs who are depending on their votes.

An event of historic significance is happening at the present time. Political power is moving from the rural to the urban areas. In the two year period from 1968 alone four Dail seats have been moved from rural to urban constituencies. With the migration from the countryside which the Irish Government is enabling at least the same number again will be transferred within the next few years. In that situation eight seats will have moved from the rural to the urban areas. In the context of the rural and urban demands being in conflict with each other then in reality, an effective difference of sixteen seats will have occurred over a ten year period.

In spite of this there are many indications that revolution is brewing in the West. Land leagues are developing in places, and there is a growing demand for Gaeltacht civil rights. It is not because they are from the Gaeltacht and that they are native Irish speakers that these people are fighting, but as Irish citizens demanding the right to live in their own country and to develop their native cultural tradition in their own way.

As Republicans, following the teachings of Wolfe Tone and Thomas Davis, it is our duty to support them in every way we can. This task, on its own, is beyond the capability of the Republican Movement. Still, let it not be said after this Ard Fheis that we were the one miserable group that did not put our shoulder to the wheel at this hour of need for the rural people of Ireland.

[End of Translation of section in Irish]

The terrible events of last August are still sharply etched in the minds of all of us. The savage fury of the attackers and the heroic stand of the defenders in both Derry and Belfast roused the whole nation. There was a new realisation at last in the 26 counties of the true nature of the Unionist Regime in the North, and with it a tremendous surge of support and sympathy for those who were suffering under it. It is ironic that in all the confused recriminations of the following weeks nothing but praise was heaped on the British Army, and the British Government Representative Mr. Callaghan, by all except Republicans and U.V.F.

Yet it was the British Army and British Government who put the Stormont regime in power and who have maintained them in power ever since. It was they who set up the B Special force even before they set up the Unionist government. It was they who had final responsibility for every act carried out by Stormont and it was they who supported their right to pass repressive and coercive legislation and who condoned their blatant and daily suppression of basic human rights. It was the same Home Secretary and the same British Army who stood cynically by for two days watching the attacks, the shootings and the burnings while they waited for the propitious moment when they could move in as an apparently objective peace-keeping force to save the people and keep what they called "the religious factions" apart. Had they wished to prevent the slaughter, they could have done so but they were more interested in securing the British presence here and they wished to change their image from that of an occupation force to that of a peace-keeping force.

There should be no confusion in Irish minds as to where the final responsibility for last year's events lies. The genial face of Jim Callaghan cannot hide the fact that he bears just as much responsibility for the shootings, burnings and general reign of terror as do his puppets Major James Chichester Clarke or Brian Faulkner. Were they not carried out under his flag, the Union Jack, and in the name of his Head of State, the Queen?

The objective of Mr. Callaghan and the British Imperial Government is now quite clear. They realise that the old 1920 solution to the Irish question has become outworn and obsolete and in danger of falling apart. It has served its purpose well for half a century and now a new political solution to the Irish

question must be found. This time the Westminster Government expects to get the full co-operation of her willing tools in Dublin and Belfast. Consider how quickly Wilson brought Lynch and Chichester Clarke to heel. In August Lynch made his strongly worded “We shall not stand idly by” speech and followed up with Hillery’s attack on British Rule in Ireland at the U.N. This was what the Irish people wanted and they waited for the action to suit the words. Chichester Clarke made a typically intransigent “no surrender” Unionist speech and the Dublin and Belfast Governments seemed to be poles apart. But within a couple of weeks, Clarke spoke in most conciliatory O’Neill type tones, soon Hillery dropped the U.N. initiative and then Lynch made his famous “We surrender” speech at Tralee. Wilson was again in command and ready to push ahead once more with his Federal solution, which is his strategic objective for a long time.

The first steps were taken with the Lemass/O’Neill and Lynch/O’Neill meetings and the next with the signing of the Economic Act of Union, the Free Trade Area Agreement. Terence O’Neill then spelled out clearly what was envisaged – a Federal Parliament in Westminster with Provincial Parliaments in Wales, Scotland, Belfast, and Dublin. Eddie McAteer, on behalf of the Nationalist Party, backed this up when he advocated “a little United Nations of the British Isles”, and we may assume John Hume would agree with it since he advocates acceptance of the constitutional position of the 6 counties. Before he left the political scene to take over personal control of his many commercial enterprises, Mr. Lemass advanced the idea of federalism but left it so vague as to give the impression that he had in mind a federal system of government within Ireland. However, a close examination of his statement, taken with Mr. Lynch’s statement in Leinster House in October 1969, reveals that the way is gradually being prepared for the imposition of Britain’s final solution on the Irish people. It would be more honest with the Irish people and especially with their own party members, if with Mr. Lynch and his colleagues, Mr. Blaney, Boland, Haughey, Colley and others in Fianna Fail who have finally and formally abandoned the objective of an Independent Republic and who believe in federation with Britain, would form a Federal Party to advance their ideas rather than continue to advance them behind cloak of Republicanism.

One lesson which Fianna Fail learned last year was that they had no control over the course of events in the North and during the Autumn they began a rather ham-fisted campaign of buying their way into the Civil Rights Movement and some Citizens Defence Committees. They had very limited success but their propaganda is geared towards calling off the street demonstrations and leaving the rest to Jim Callaghan. Many of the moderates and the political opportunists, some of the most vocal of whom were against the Civil Rights Campaign from the start, are also urging the calling off of the struggle because, they say, most of the demands of the movement have been met. The trust is they are not so much interested in the Civil Rights demands as in the maintenance of the status quo and they now want a return to purely Parliamentary methods. Who can say that

the Civil Rights objective have been achieved when two of the most basic Civil Rights for any community are still denied in the 6 Counties. I refer to Freedom of Political Association and the Freedom of Political Expression. Without these two freedoms it cannot be said that democracy exists. By decree in 1967 the Stormont Minister of Home Affairs (William Craig), under the notorious Special Powers Act, banned "Republican Clubs and all like organisations howsoever they shall be named". Thus Republicans have no legal right of Political Association and in fact Republicanism as a political philosophy is banned. It would appear that under Mr. Craig's sweeping decree neither Richard Nixon's nor Mao Tse-tung's brand of Republicanism could be legally propagated. No other open political organisation on either the right or the left is banned and no other political philosophy courses under similar interdict. Needless to say, their illegality does not prevent Republicans from forming Republican Clubs or implementing Republican policy. Under the same Special Powers Act the Home Affairs Minister banned the United Irishman, a monthly Republican journal with a circulation of 40,000 copies. No other newspaper or periodical on either the right or the left is banned. This ban is a denial of the citizen's right to buy the U.I. as well as a denial of Republicans' right to sell it.

Republicans and others are therefore still denied basic civil liberties and intend to press for a continued campaign to achieve them. What has been achieved has been got by a hard struggle. If the people now relax in their efforts, not alone will they make no further progress but much of what has been achieved will be gradually whittled away.

In spite of the deliberately fermented sectarianism during the course of the Civil Rights campaign, the Civil Rights movement must renew its efforts to emphasise its non sectarian character. This is also the most difficult and most challenging task for Republicans in the 70's. The unity of Catholic and Protestant workers is essential in the struggle against the Tory establishment and against British Colonial and neo-colonial rule in Ireland. A new nation will be built, not through the efforts of the Belfast, Dublin or London Government but through the efforts of the common people of Ireland. The mass of the people of all religions can be united behind a coherent ideological stand and this Republicans are now trying to inject into politics North and South.

There is, however, a dangerous attitude of surrender being propagated at the moment in the name of unity by the shoneen element in the 26 Counties. The way to unite, they say, is to remove all the obstacles to unity and they point to everything which makes us Irish and different from the British people as an obstacle to unity and advocate that it should be dropped. The Irish language, Irish games, music, history and literature are obstacles to unity and should be abandoned. According to them we can only become united by becoming English. In fact when we would have discarded all our distinctive Irish features we would have discarded all claim to separate nationhood. We cannot assimilate

culturally with England and remain politically independent. The Irish and Anglo Irish cultures can exist side by side. They can complement and enrich each other and the Irish nation, and can be an inducement rather than a barrier to unity.

The Republican struggle in Irish History has always been on two fronts.

The separatist struggle of the Irish nation against British Imperialism and the struggle for ownership of the land and resources and wealth of the nation by the mass of the Irish people against the foreign exploiters and the native gombeen men.

During the past few years we have been extending the area of conflict not alone with British Imperialism but with her Irish agents Unionism and Free Statism. Our objective is the re-conquest of Ireland from the Ground Landlords, the river barons, the speculators, the cartels and the monopolies and the struggle against them will now be intensified. If needs be, we must be prepared to win back our country farm by farm, river by river, mine by mine, shop by shop, and factory by factory.

At last years Fianna Fail Ard Fheis Mr. Lynch emphasised that Fianna Fail stood firmly on the side of private ownership and he made no qualification whatever of this statement, not even the constitutional one of "subject to common good". His statement had, of course, the desired effect of filling the coffers of TACA in good time for the general election. But the Fianna Fail Government have proved on a number of occasions that this was no empty phrase. This was one aspect of policy on which Mr. Lynch had the full support of his colleagues. Mr. Boland has consistently defended the iniquitous feudal system of Ground Rents inherited from Britain and confirms the right of the conqueror to private ownership of our urban land. If they are to be taken over, he says, they must be compensated to the extent of 14 times the yearly rent. Mr. Blaney likewise, protects the interests of the river lords, most of whom also acquired ownership of the rivers and lakes of Ireland by the robber right of conquest. Blaney's only answer to the campaign of the National Waters Restoration League for state acquisition of the River Rights is that it would cost the Irish people millions of pounds in compensation. Why should it? Have they not robbed us of enough down through the centuries? Must we pay them now for what rightfully belongs to us?

Mr. Haughey is also at pains now to defend this sacrosanct principle of the inviolable right of private ownership. He has said that the Irish people must pay half a million pounds to the London based Green Property Co. to compensate them for not being allowed to make a profit from the destruction of our capital city.

Mr. Lynch and his colleagues therefore stand firmly on the side of the speculators and exploiters. They place the rights of property above the rights of people and maintain their power by the same system of patronage and privilege in the matter of houses and jobs as their Unionist colleagues in the north have done for so many years.

In both North and South it is the rich property owners who make the laws and the poor men of no property who break them. The laws do not forbid the rich to exploit and plunder but they forbid the poor to resist their exploitation. Thus you have the distinction between the legal use of force and the illegal use of force.

The power of the establishment here can be smashed by the same methods as were used in the 6 counties. To do so the broad mass of people must be united behind a well defined programme. I believe the programme on which such unity can be achieved is a programme for the re-conquest of Ireland set out as a series of Economic, Social, and Cultural demands. We must therefore formulate such a programme and endeavour to unite all radical and progressive groups in a movement for the achievement of these demands, making use of all the methods of agitation and political action which would be likely to help our objective. The controversial use of Parliamentary participation by Republicans in furtherance of such a revolutionary programme has been the subject of debate at this Ard Fheis. Whatever political methods are used in the struggle ahead I am convinced that all Republicans now have a much clearer view of the way forward and the most vital ingredient for success is unity of action. I therefore close with an appeal to all members of the movement, once our decision has been made, to close ranks, and face the enemy forces together.

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