



LEAVE THE PAST: Banners commemorating Easter 1916 on south Belfast's lower Ormeau Road

PICTURE: Mal McCann

ON THIS DAY

APRIL 1 1921

Nurse Gets 10 Years

MISS Linda Kearns, Sligo, has been sentenced to ten years' penal servitude after trial by courtmartial in Belfast. Miss Kearns, who is a nurse, lived near Sligo with her father. On November 30th she was arrested in Sligo when driving a motorcar containing arms. She was tried by courtmartial in Belfast in March and since then has been imprisoned in Armagh Gaol.

The following sentences by Field General Courtmartial in Derry are announced: James Leonard, Belcoo, County Fermanagh received two years' hard labour. Accused, who declined to recognise the court, was charged with having seditious literature.

William John Armstrong, Donaghmore, County Tyrone, charged with having firearms and ammunition, was sentenced to five years' penal servitude. The evidence against him was that during a raid by the Special Constabulary on 10th January a rifle and cartridges, fifteen of which were flat-nosed, were found at the accused's premises. At his trial he declined to recognise the Court, declaring that, as a soldier of the Irish Republic, he claimed the right to hold firearms until ordered to hand them over by the Government of his country which he considered was Dail Eireann. (Educated in Belgium, Linda Kearns (1888-1951) joined Cumann na mBan and operated a Red Cross field hospital during the 1916 Rising. Like most of her organisation, she took the Republican side in the Civil War and was imprisoned by the Free State, later joining Fianna Fáil.)

Irish News Reporter Appointed to Westminster Post

MR Thomas H O'Donoghue, Chief Reporter of The Irish News, has been presented with gifts by his colleagues on the occasion of his departure to take up an important position on the Official Debate Staff of the House of Commons. The ceremony took place in the Board Room and amongst those present were Mr T McCarthy, editor; Mr P J Magauran; Mr W J Flannagan, BA; Mr P J Kelly; R Hayes; W Duggan; W Smith and Mr T Whyte, Manager.

Mr McCarthy spoke of the sense of loss which would be occasioned by Mr O'Donoghue's departure from our midst. His talents as a journalist were recognised and appreciated all over Ireland and, in his opinion, there was not in the country a better reporter. The Editor concluded by presenting Mr O'Donoghue with a silver-mounted wallet of Treasury notes. Later at the National Club Mr Joseph Devlin, MP paid tribute to Mr O'Donoghue's high intellectual qualities and keen journalistic instinct. (Despite the rise of Sinn Féin, The Irish News, controlled from 1905 by Joe Devlin and edited by his ally, Co Cork-born Tim McCarthy, continued to advocate Home Rule and oppose abstentionism.)

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Ireland needs to move on from its old myths

HERE is something sacrilegious about the way a bloody rebellion in Dublin has become intertwined with the message of Easter – the most central part of Christianity. Blood sacrifice on the cross, and the terrible beauty born on O'Connell Street, will forever be intertwined in modern Irish myth.

And we are great myth makers. In his fine poem Easter 1916, Yeats eulogised them: "I write it out in a verse – / MacDonagh and MacBride / And Connolly and Pearse / Now and in time to be, / Wherever green is worn, / Are changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born."

And here we are now, in the 'time to be', with our myths and the memories of more than 105 years of Irish history since, contemplating dreams broken, and a country which is not yet a nation once again. There are those who claim to be part of an unbroken line to the men and women who took on the British empire then – some in power in the 26 counties, locked in uneasy coalition; and some in power in the six.

But each in their own way has failed to live up to the ideals they claim to hold so dear. It is worth going back to primary sources.

Let Ireland be judged on the proclamation of the Irish Republic from April 1916. "The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens." It went on to promise "the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts".

Yet what see is a failure to confront the evils which undermine liberty – poverty, corruption, and prejudice; we have governments north and south which govern for the few, not the many; and who will always put self-interest before the interests of others. I know that is harsh, and will feel unfair to some who are in politics because they care about their communities.

But as the sum of its parts, politics

Tom COLLINS



in Ireland over this past century has been a lesson in failure.

Time and time again defeat is snatched from the jaws of victory. The peace process has delivered a settlement of sorts, but the opportunity it presented has been squandered by begrudgery; and more than two decades on, it has yet to be cemented in.

Peace and stability twists and turns in the wind at the mercy of a British government unfit to govern, at the mercy of paramilitaries on both sides of the political divide, and at the mercy of indigenous politicians incapable of vision and imagination.

The confluence between religious zeal and politics is not just an Irish nationalist thing. For God and Ulster has been the rallying call of unionism from before people were sporting Easter lilies. And for all the holier than thou

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attitude of its leaders – who can rightly point to republican atrocities – unionism's flirtation with violence is every bit as sinister.

And here I am not thinking of the comical pictures that have resurfaced this past week of Frank Spencer look-alike Peter Robinson in his red beret – but of the gun running that secured partition, the state-sponsored terror of the B-Specials, the sectarian murders that sustained the unionist cause.

It says something about the state of things, that eyebrows are barely raised by unionist politicians' continued association with loyalist paramilitaries.

The protocol is a pretence. These 'unsettled loyalists' are more concerned about shipments of illegal drugs than deliveries from John Lewis.

This Easter is an opportunity to think again. There's a saying that if you keep doing the same things, you will keep getting the same results.

One of the most refreshing things about recent months is the willingness of civil society to try and reframe the national question – to look at the shape of a new Ireland, free to make its own choices in the world, for the betterment of all its people.

Disappointingly the response from many established politicians has been to dismiss the need to think again about how the governance of Ireland is shaped.

If ever there was a time to think again, it is now as we emerge from the darkness of a global pandemic that has robbed many of us of those we hold dear, and which has blighted the lives of many others.

We cannot go back to the way things were. Romantic Ireland's dead and gone; 'No surrender' no longer cuts it. Flags and emblems don't put food on the table.

Our current political leaders rely on the status quo to survive. If they cannot move forward, they should move on.