

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN:

In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom

THE Proclamation of the Irish Republic is both a defiant call to arms, an eloquent justification of actions, a dramatic statement of ideals and a poignant prayer to Irish nationhood. In equal parts powerful and moving, its words have echoed down through the last century of Irish history. The Proclamation's principles have defined the modern Irish state and, at times, provided a forceful critique of its failings.

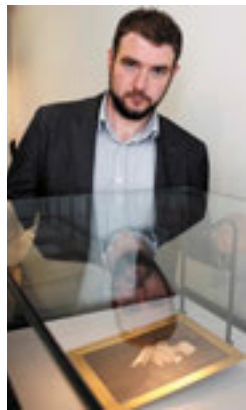
On Monday 17 April, the Military Council devoted one of its last meetings to approving the text. Yet like everything else which was veiled in secrecy by the Military Council, we know little about its creation. Its language — expressive and heroic — suggests that it was largely the work of Pearse. He, more than anyone else, knew that the Rising's importance would lie in its symbolic rather than its military impact.

As the IRB's orator-in-chief, it was only natural the Proclamation would be his composition. However it is clear that Connolly's influence can be seen and his socialist convictions are most likely responsible for much of the prose of its mid-section — which assert the rights of a sovereign people to social justice and total control of the nation's resources.

Within the Proclamation, the rebellion's leaders claimed legitimacy for their actions by arguing they represented the latest in a long line of Irish revolutionaries who 'six times during the past 300 years' have asserted Ireland's right to freedom by the use of arms.

Still the Proclamation was a progressive statement of intent which promoted a generous social and political vision for a new Ireland. It also alluded to Ireland's Protestant minority and rejected 'the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority in the past.' Yet in contrast to Sinn Féin's Democratic Programme of January 1919, the Proclamation made no attempt to outline the political or economic structure of the Republic. This is again

The lines above begin the most famous document in modern Irish history, writes **Richard McElligott**



indicative of the gulf between the romantic idealism of 1916 and the hard-headed practicality of the revolutionaries who followed.

The final handwritten draft, consisting of two sheets of paper, was given to MacDonagh for safe-keeping. When the Military Council convened on Easter Sunday morning at Liberty Hall, MacDonagh handed the sheets to Connolly for printing. Connolly had arranged for three men, Michael Molloy, Liam O'Brien and Christopher Brady, to oversee the production of the document. All three were compositors and printers by trade and considering the conditions they worked under, they managed a minor miracle in getting the Proclamation produced.

The Proclamation was printed in the tiny printing shop room in Liberty Hall on an obsolete Double Crown Wharfedale printing press which Connolly had purchased in 1915. The machine was troublesome and time-consuming to use and required constant mechanical attention. Lacking sufficient type for the printing press, they were forced to print the document in two halves. The upper part down to the words 'among the nations' was set up first. It was impossible to achieve inking of the type evenly, which resulted in a lot of smudging and faint printing. The lack of type also clearly affected how the text was reproduced. For example, 'THE IRISH REPUBLIC' of the heading, has a C which is smaller than the other letters and looks like a converted O. For the main

text, the compositors ran into considerably trouble with the letter E. In all, 23 Es used in the document are of a different font or style to the surrounding letters.

Connolly initially wanted 2,500 copies produced on full-size posters. In the end, due to a shortage of paper, only 1,000 copies were printed. The material used was cheap and of poor quality, being so thin that it easily tore. The fact it could not survive for long in outdoor conditions helps explain the rarity of original copies.

The process lasted far longer than was expected and was not finished until Easter Monday morning. Therefore only for the Military Council's reluctant decision to postpone the Rising for 24 hours, the Proclamation would not have been ready to launch the Republic. Seán T O'Kelly, the future President, was detailed by Connolly to hang copies throughout the city centre. Aware of its historical importance, the self-proclaimed 'bill poster to the Republic', folded one copy into an official British Government envelope he had taken from the GPO and posted it to his mother. It arrived to her house a week later and now hangs in Leinster House. Other Volunteers handed out duplicates to members of the public. A few enterprising newsboys managed to sell copies to curious passers-by.

At around 12.45pm, shortly after the GPO was taken, Pearse emerged from the front door and beneath the building's shadow read aloud the Proclamation to

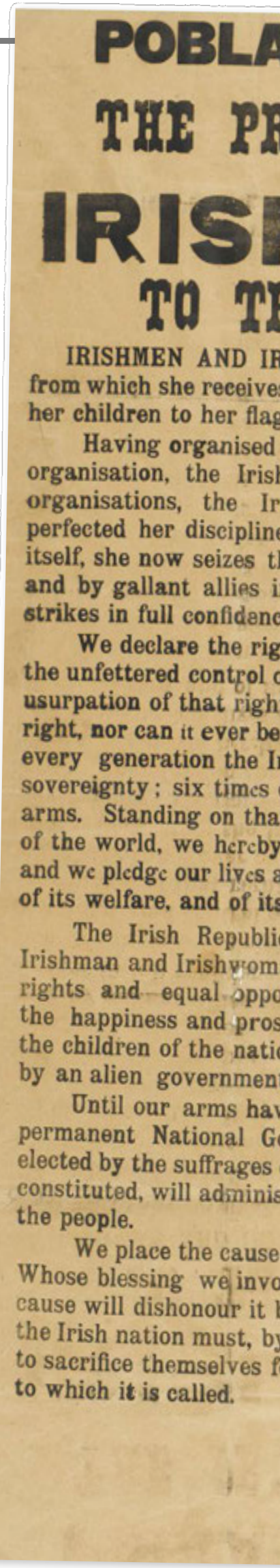
a small crowd of inquisitive and bewildered onlookers. The writer Stephen McKenna recalled: 'For once his magnetism had left him; the response was chilling; a few thin perfunctory cheers... but no enthusiasm whatever; the people were evidently quite unprepared, quite unwilling to see in the unformed figure, whose burning words had thrilled them again and again elsewhere, a person of significance to the country. A chill must have gone to his heart... this dismal reception of the astonishing Order of the Day was not what he had dreamed of when in many an hour of fevered passion and many a careful weaving of plan he had rehearsed the Act.'

Accounts by those in the GPO noted that Pearse suddenly seemed plagued with self-doubt over the unenthusiastic reception which greeted his pronouncement of the Proclamation. However once more Volunteers began to arrive and explained that copies posted around the city were attracting attention and excitement, his mood lifted.

Their document was the first formal assertion of the Irish Republic. By simply standing up and declaring it the Proclamation made real, at least to the rebels of 1916 and those who followed, the dream of a sovereign independent state. The men and women who subsequently fought the War of Independence were not fighting to achieve a Republic; they were fighting to preserve the Republic Pearse and his comrades had created that Easter.

The Proclamation had avowed the revolutionaries' resolve 'to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally' — sadly the history of independent Ireland often revealed the poverty of that noble sentiment.

Dr Richard McElligott lectures in Modern Irish History in UCD. He is the co-ordinator of the Uncovering 1916 and the Irish War of Independence courses which are being hosted by the National Library of Ireland in the spring of 2016



ACHT NA H EIREANN.
PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
OF THE
IRISH REPUBLIC.
TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generations
 through her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons
 her children and her men to join her, to fight her battles and strikes for her freedom.

and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary
 Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military
 Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently
 waited, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal
 that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America
 and in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she
 has won the day of victory.

It is the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to
 the determination of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long
 struggle for freedom by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the
 right of the Irish people, but it has been extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In
 the past the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and
 independence, during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in
 arms, and again asserting it in arms in the face
 of the most powerful empires, they have proclaimed the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State,
 and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom,
 and the exaltation among the nations.

The Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every
 Irish citizen. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, 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, cherishing all
 national feelings and aspirations equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered
 by past misfortune, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.
 We have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a
 government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and
 of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby
 transfer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for

the people of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God,
 to take upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that
 Republic shall be brought into bondage by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour
 of its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children
 and its men, it shall prove itself worthy of the august destiny
 with which it is entrusted.

Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government,
THOMAS J. CLARKE,
SEAN Mac DIARMADA, **THOMAS MacDONAGH,**
P. H. PEARSE, **EAMONN CEANNT,**
JAMES CONNOLLY. **JOSEPH PLUNKETT.**

THE PRINT RUN

The document was printed in a tiny printing shop room in Liberty Hall on an obsolete Double Crown Wharfedale printing press on Easter Sunday and early Easter Monday, 1916. James Connolly initially ordered 2,500 copies to be printed, but due to a shortage of paper only 1,000 were produced. There are now believed to be fewer than 50 copies of the originals still in existence.

THE IMPERFECT 'C'

Notice how this 'C' is slightly smaller than the letters that come before it? A scarcity of type at the printers meant that different fonts and sizes were used. This 'C' looks to be a converted 'O'.

Check your attic to see if you own one of the scarce Proclamations

If you have any suspicion your great-grandfather or great-grandmother might have been around Dublin in 1916, then it could be worth your while to have a rummage around the attic.

There are now believed to be fewer than 50 copies of the original Proclamation still in existence, with about half in public ownership — in libraries, universities and museums around the world. Four are owned by the State — in the National Museum, National Library, Kilmainham Jail and Leinster House.

But when they come up for sale huge sums have been known to change hands. The highest price paid was €390,000, at an Adam's auction in Dublin in 2004. It was the first time one had come on to the market for 15 years.

Four years later a copy signed by Seán McGarry, who fought in the GPO and was Tom Clarke's bodyguard, sold for €360,000.

Prices have dropped in recent years, with one original selling for €90,000 in 2014, just seven years after the owner had paid €240,000 for it.

THE AUTHORS

We don't know for certain who was responsible for the wording of the Proclamation, but as the IRB's orator-in-chief, it was only natural that much of the wording would come from Patrick Pearse. James Connolly's influence can also be seen, particularly in the socialist prose of the document's mid-section.



A PROCLAMATION IN TWO PARTS

The document was printed in two separate runs and then pieced together, due to the lack of type at the printers that day. The upper part down to the words 'among the nations' was printed first. The lower half was later found — still on the printing press — by British soldiers after they entered Liberty Hall during the rebellion, and souvenir copies were run off.

WANTED! Christopher Brady, the man who printed the document...

DESPITE not fighting in the Rising, Christopher Brady is a central figure to the story of the event, as he was responsible for printing the Proclamation. A printer by trade, Brady had been employed at Liberty Hall since 1915,



where he printed *The Workers' Republic* newspaper and union materials for the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union.

Brady recalled that James Connolly and Thomas MacDonagh informed him and two workmen at Liberty Hall of the importance of the document he was to print only on Easter Sunday. Owing to the secrecy around the document and the manner in which it was sprung upon the workmen, they were not entirely prepared for the task. He recalled that "the shortage of type was so great that wrong fonts had to be used and I had to make a new

letter by converting an 'F' into an 'E' from sealing wax to make up the supply."

As they printed the Proclamation, an armed guard of Irish Citizen Army men protected the room, while Brady was also given an automatic pistol by

Connolly for his own protection. The printing had to be carried in two separate halves — when British soldiers arrived in Liberty Hall during the rebellion, the lower half of the Proclamation was still set for printing, and some souvenir copies were run off.

Brady was ultimately unsuccessful in his applications for a 1916 medal in later years, though he appealed directly to the Taoiseach in 1968, writing that "for a long time after the Rising I was on the run as the much wanted man who had printed the seditious Proclamation".

Donal Fallon