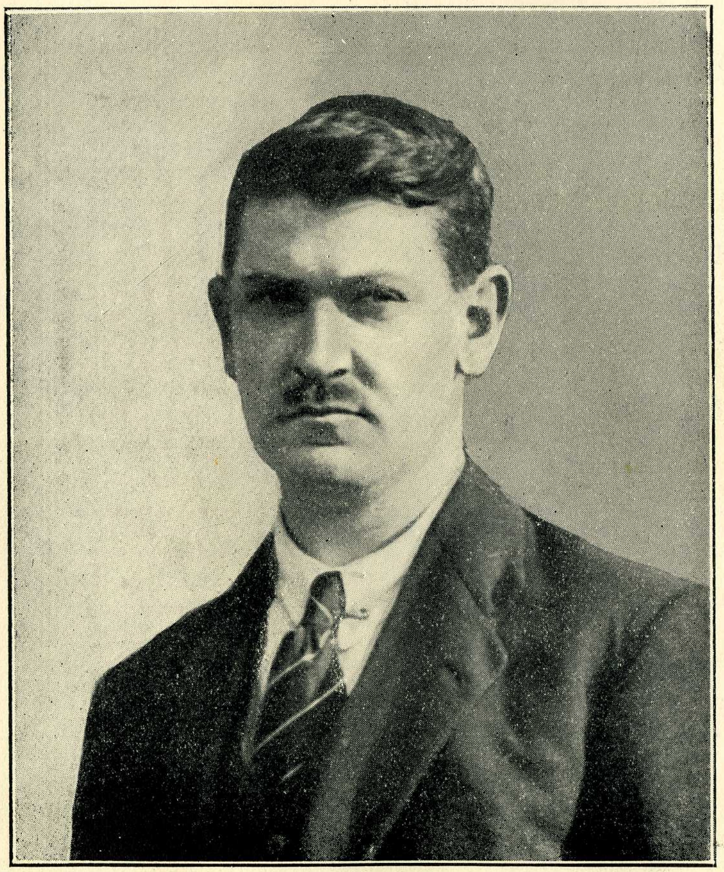
ARGUMENTS FOR THE TREATY

By MICHAEL COLLINS

President of the Provisional Government.



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Why the Treaty was Signed.

In the course of the Debate in Dail Eireann on December 19th, 1921, Mr. Michael Collins spoke as follows :—

He said that much had been said in private session about the action of the plenipotentiaries in signing the Treaty, and in signing it before putting the document before the Cabinet. He wanted to speak as clearly and as briefly as he could as to what the exact position was.

They came back to Dublin from London on that momentous Saturday to a meeting of the Cabinet. Certain things happened at that Cabinet meeting, and the Delegation returned to put before the British Delegation as well as they could their impression of the decisions—he would not say conclusions—arrived at by the Cabinet. He did not want to press unduly the word "decisions." He wanted to be fair to everybody, and he would only say that they were decisions.

They went away with certain impressions in their minds, and they did their best to put them on the paper that they handed to the British delegates. It was well understood at the Cabinet meeting that Sir James Craig was to receive a reply from the British Premier on the Tuesday morning. Some conclusion between the British and themselves had, therefore, to be come to, and it had to be handed to the British Delegation on Monday night.

The Irish Delegation went away with a document which none of them would sign. It had to be faced, and if in the meantime a document was presented which they could sign there was no opportunity of referring it to Dublin. On Monday night they did arrive at a conclusion to which they thought they could agree, and to which they did say "Yes" across the table. It was very late. On that same day he signed the document, and he did not regard his word then or now as of less importance than his signature to the document.

The answer which he gave as he put his signature to the document was the same as he would give in Dublin, Berlin, New York, or Paris. Distance from London to Dublin was of some importance, and it was not easy to consult the Irish Cabinet and other friends. There had been talk about the atmosphere of London, and about the slippery slopes. If the members were so eloquent about the slippery slopes, before the delegation went over, why did they not speak then? Slopes were slippery, but he submitted that such observations were entirely beside the point.

His signature had been given in honour, and he was going to stand by it. He did not seek refuge in subterfuge, and he stood by his acts and his signature before that assembly. It was also suggested that the delegation broke down before the first bit of British bluff. He would remind the deputies who made that remark that the British had put up a good deal of bluff for the last two years in this country, and that he did not break down before that bluff. Did anybody think that he had in any way lowered his position during the two months' negotiations?

The result of the delegation's labours was before the Dail to reject or accept. The President had suggested that better results might have been obtained by more skilful handling. That was not the issue, for surely the capability of the delegates was not expected to improve, or increase, because of their selection as plenipotentiaries. If it was thought now that through stupidity they failed in their task, that, he submitted, was a greater reflection on the Dail than it was upon the delegates.

It was even suggested that by their action the delegates had made a resumption of the conflict inevitable. Again, he would emphasise the fact that the responsibility rested entirely on the Dail for having selected them.

It would be remembered that at the time he protested against his own selection, and that he urged the President to go. It was then that the objections should have been raised, and not now. Before he came to the Treaty itself, he wished to say a word on the vexed question as to whether the terms of reference meant any departure from the absolutely rigid line of the isolated Irish Republic.

Mr. Collins here read the letter, dated September 29th, from Mr. Lloyd George, who was then at Gairloch, in Scotland, in which he wrote in regard to the demand for an Irish Republic:—" On this point they (the Government) must guard themselves against any possible doubt. There is no purpose to be served by any further interchange of explanatory and argumentative communications upon this subject. The position taken up by His Majesty's Government is fundamental to the existence of the British Empire, and they cannot alter it. My colleagues and myself remain, however, keenly anxious to make, in co-operation with your delegates, another determined effort

to explore every possibility of settlement by personal discussion. The proposals which we have already made have been taken by the whole world as proof that our endeavours for reconciliation and settlement are no empty form, and we feel that conference, not correspondence, is the most practicable and hopeful way to an understanding such as we ardently desire to achieve."

Mr. de Valera, replying to that letter, said:—" Our respective positions have been stated and are understood, and we agree that conference, not correspondence, is the most practicable and hopeful way to an understanding. We accept the invitation, etc."

This question of association originated as far back as August 10th, and was bandied about until these final communications; but the communication of September 29th from Mr. Lloyd George made it clear that the association of the Irish Delegation with that of the British Government was not to be on the basis of an Irish Republic. If it had been, their reply to Mr. Lloyd George could only have been a plain, straightforward refusal to enter any conference unless and until the Irish Republic was first recognised.

What the association, in the President's mind, was had at last been made somewhat clear. It differed from the Treaty in words only, not in substance. As one of the signatories of the Treaty he, naturally, recommended its acceptance. He did not recommend it for more than it was. Equally, he did not recommend it for less than it was. In his opinion, it gave Ireland freedom—not the ultimate freedom that all nations hoped for and struggled for, but freedom to achieve that end.

A Deputy had stated that the delegation should have introduced this Treaty, not as a bargain for England, but with an apology for its introduction. He could not imagine anything more mean, anything more despicable, anything more unmanly than this dishonouring of one's signature. When one made a bargain he should stick to it. To say that one had made a bad bargain would not do. Business could not be done on that basis. The Treaty had not been signed under personal intimidation against any of the delegates. If personal intimidation had been attempted there was not a man amongst them who would have signed the document. At a fateful moment he was called upon to make a decision, and if he were called upon at that present moment for a decision on the same question his decision would have been the same.

Mr. Collins went on to say that they did not go to London to dictate terms to a vanquished foe. " If we had vanquished them," he said, " they would have had to come here and sue for peace. The intimidation was the intimidation by the stronger of the weaker. We knew we had not vanquished them, we knew we had not driven them out of our country."

To return to the Treaty. Hardly anyone, not even those who recommended it, really understood what it meant. They did not understand the immense powers and liberties which it gave them. That was his justification for signing it, and he was going in that assembly to put them before the Irish people. The Dail might reject the Treaty, and he would not be responsible, but he was responsible for making it clear to the people what they were. So long as he had made that clear he was perfectly happy and satisfied.

They must look facts in the face. For their continued national and spiritual existence two things were necessary—security and freedom. If the Treaty gave them those, or helped them to get them, then, he maintained, it satisfied their national aspirations. The history of this nation had not been, as was so often said, a history of a military struggle of 750 years.

It had been much more. It had been a history of a peaceful penetration of 750 years. It had not been a struggle for 750 years for the ideal of freedom symbolised in the name republic; it had been a story of slow, steady, economic encroachment by England. It had been a struggle on their part to prevent that—a struggle against exploitation, a struggle against the cancer that was eating out their lives. It was only when they discovered that it was economic penetration that they discovered that political freedom was necessary before it could be stopped.

Their aspirations, by whatever terms they might be symbolised, had had one thing in front all the time, and that was to rid the country of the enemy's strength. Now, it was not by anything but their military strength that the English held this country. That was a simple, blunt fact which, he thought, nobody would deny. It was not by any form of government, it was not by their judiciary, or anything of that kind. Those people could not operate were it not for the military strength that was always there. Starting from that, he maintained that the disappearance of that military strength gave them the chief proof that their national principles were established.

As to what had been said about the guarantees of the withdrawal of the military strength, no guarantee could alter the fact of their withdrawal, because Ireland was the weaker nation, and would be the weaker nation for a long time to come. But certain things did give them a certain guarantee. They were defined as having the constitutional *status* of Canada, Australia, and South Africa.

If the English did not withdraw their military strength their association with those places gave them to some extent a guarantee that the English must withdraw it. He knew that it would be finer to stand alone, but if it was necessary to their security, if it was necessary to the development of their own life, and if they found that they could not stand alone, what could they do but enter into some association?

He was going to give a constitutional opinion, and he would back that opinion against the opinion of any deputy, lawyer, or other in that Dail. His opinion was:—

"The *status*, as defined, is the same constitutional *status* in the 'community of nations known as the British Empire,' as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa. And here let me say that in my judgment it is not a definition of any *status* that would secure us that *status*; it is the power to hold and to make secure, and to increase what we have gained. The fact of Canadian and South African independence is something real and solid, and will grow in reality and force as time goes on. Judged by that touchstone, the relations between Ireland and Britain will have a certainty of freedom and equality which cannot be interfered with. England dare not interfere with Canada. Any attempt to interfere with us would be even more difficult in consequence of the reference to the 'constitutional *status*' of Canada and South Africa. They are, in effect, introduced as guarantors of our freedom, which makes us stronger than if we stood alone."

In obtaining the constitutional *status* of Canada, Mr. Collins went on, their association with England was based, not on the present technical legal *status* of Canada. In reply to one Deputy, who spoke that day, he would say that the real position of complete freedom and equality which Canada enjoyed was given to them to-day—the *status* which enabled Canada to send its ambassador to Washington, which enabled it to sign the Treaty of Versailles equally with Great Britain, which prevented Britain from entering into a foreign alliance without the consent of Canada; the *status* which Canada claimed, gave her the right to be consulted before Britain might enter another war.

"It is not the definition of that *status* that will give it to us," he declared. "It is our power to take it and to keep it. And that is where I differ from the others. I believe in our power to take it and to keep it. I believe in our future as an Irish civilisation. As I have said already, as a plain Irishman, I believe in my interpretation against the interpretation of any Englishman.

"Lloyd George and Churchill have been quoted against us. I say the quotation of those people is what marks the slave mind. There are people in this assembly who would take their word before they would take mine—that is the slave mind."

Continuing, he said that the only departure from Canadian *status* was the retaining by England of the defences of four harbours and the holding of some other facilities, to be used possibly in time of war. But if England wished to re-invade us, she could do so with or without these facilities. And with the constitutional *status* of Canada we are assured that these facilities can never be used by England for our re-invasion.

If there was no association, if they stood alone, the occupation of those ports might possibly be a danger. Associated in a free partnership with those other nations, it was not a danger, for their association was a guarantee that they would not be used as a jumping-off ground against this country.

He was no apologist for this Treaty. He was not afraid to stand to it. They had, for the first time in an official document, the former Empire styled " the Community of Nations known as the British Empire." Common citizenship had been substituted for the subjection of Ireland. " It is an admission by them," he said, " that they no longer can dominate Ireland."

As he had said, the English penetration had not merely been a military penetration, for even now the penetration went on. He need give only a few instances. Every day their banks became incorporated with, or allied to, British institutions ; every day their steamship companies went into English hands ; every day some other concern, some other establishment, in that city was taken over by an English concern, and was a little oasis of English customs and manners, and English people. Nobody noticed it, but that was the thing that was destroying their Gaelic civilisation. That was one of the things which he considered important, and as to the nation's life, more important than the military penetration ; and the Treaty gave them an opportunity of stopping it.

If they had come back with recognition of an Irish Republic, they would need to start somewhere. Were they simply going to keep themselves in slavery and subjection for ever for the sake of keeping up an impossible fight ; or were they going to start on their own feet ?

He had an argument based on the comparison of the Treaty with the second document, but in deference to what the President had said, he would not at that stage make use of that argument. He did not want to take anything that would look like an unfair advantage. Whatever else the President would say, he would admit that he (Mr. Collins) did not seek an unfair advantage over anybody.

Mr. de Valera—Your aims are the highest.

Mr. Collins said that he had explained something as to what the Treaty was, and he also desired to explain, as one of the signatories, what he considered the rejection of it would mean. It

had been said that the alternative document did not mean war. Perhaps it did ; perhaps it did not.

" I say here," said Mr. Collins, " that the rejection of the Treaty is a declaration of war until you have beaten the British Empire. Apart from any alternative document, I say that the rejection of the Treaty means that your national policy is war. If you do this, if you go on that as a national policy, I for one am satisfied, but I want you to go on it as a national policy, and to understand what it means. I, as an individual, do not now any more than before shirk war.

" The Treaty was signed by me, not because they held up an alternative of immediate war—it was not because of that I signed it. I signed it because I would not be one of those to commit the Irish people to war without the Irish people committing themselves to war." He added that if his constituents sent him to represent them in war he would do so.

He was not going to refer to anything that had been said by the speakers on the opposing side—but he did want to make a remark in regard to the President's mention of Pitt. That remark, it would be admitted, was not very flattering to them. What happened at the time of the Union ? Grattan's Parliament was thrown away without reference to the people, and against their wishes. Were they to throw away the Parliament which the Treaty offered without reference to the people and without their consent ?

In their private sessions thay had been treated to harangues about principle. No deputy had stated a clear, steadfast, abiding principle on which they could stand. Deputies had talked of principles. At different times he had known deputies to hold different principles. How could anyone say that those deputies might not change their principles again ? How could anybody say that anybody—a deputy or a supporter—who had fought against the Irish nation on principle might not fight against it again on principle ? He was not impeaching anybody, but he did want to talk straight.

He was a representative of plain Irish stock, he said, whose principles had been burned into him. He could set for them a principle which everybody would understand. The principle was :— " Government by the consent of the governed." Those words had been used by nearly every deputy at some time or another. Were the deputies going to be afraid of those words supposing the decision of the people went against them ? Many deputies had admitted that their constituents wanted the Treaty. They were responsible to their constituents.

They had stated that they would not coerce the North-East. He stated so publicly in Armagh, and no one had found fault with it. They as a delegation had done their very best to secure a form of things so that in the future they would have good-will when the North could come in with an Irish Parliament. He did not say that that was an ideal arrangement, but their policy was one of non-coercion, and if anybody else could, let him find a better way out of it. He could not find one.

This Treaty gave them, not recognition of the Irish Republic, but it gave them more recognition on the part of Great Britain and associated States than they had got from any other nation. America did not recognise the Irish Republic. The issue before him was very clear in his mind's eye. When things in London were coming to a close he received a cablegram from America. He was told that his name had the distinction of being well-known there, but what he was going to say now would make him unpopular there for the rest of his life.

He was not going to hide anything for the sake of American popularity. He received a cablegram from San Francisco telling him to stand fast, and they would send him one million dollars a month. " My reply," said Mr. Collins, was—" Send us half a million, and send us one thousand men, fully equipped." I received another cablegram from a branch of the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic, and they said—" Don't weaken. Stand by De Valera." My reply is, let that branch come over and stand by us both.

The question was whether they were going on with this war, merely for the purpose of making propaganda in America. He was not going to take that responsibility. There was never an Irishman placed in such a position as he by reason of these negotiations; but he knew when going to London that the English would make a greater offer if he were there than if he were not there. He did not care whether his popularity was sacrificed or not, as he knew that he would be unfair to his country if he did not go. In trying to come to a decision on the matter, he tried to put before his mind what both the dead and the living thought of it.

No man had more regard for the dead than he, and it was not fair to be quoting them against him. The decision should be a clear one, and they should be judged as to whether they had done the right thing in their own consciences or not. They should not put the responsibility on anyone else, but in God's name abide by their decision.

The Substance of Freedom.

At a great public meeting held in Dublin on 5th March, Mr. Collins spoke in favour of the Treaty

Do labáir sé mar seo:—

Céad agus dá fiċead bliaḋain ó ṡoin do ṫáinig Ógláig na hÉireann le ċéile ar an ionad so agus d'eiliġdear a gceart agus a saoirse féin d' Éirinn. Ni h iongaḋ go gcuirfeaḋ an Cóṁṫionól só inḋiu an Cóṁṫionól san céad agus dá fiċead bliaḋain ó ṡoin i gcuimne ḋuinn.

Tá dá ḋeifiriḋeaċt ṁóra ann áṁ. An céad ḋeifiriḋeaċt go ḃfuil Párliméid níos fearr, Párliméid go ḃfuil níos mó neaṁs-pleáḋċas ag baint leis, againn anois ná mar a ḃain Óglaig na haimsire sin (1782) amaċ do Grattan, agus an tarna ḋeifir-iḋeaċt gur sguraḋ Óglaig, 1782, aċt ná sgurfar Óglaig an lae inḋiu aċt go raċfaiḋ siad i líonṁaire agus i dtreise i dtreó is ná faiġiḋ éinne baint d'ár saoirse san aimsir atá róṁainn, agus sin sgiat cosanta aḃfaḋ níos fearr agus níos treise ná éan Cáipéis, na aḋḃar Cáipéise.

Continuing in English, he said :—

We gather here to-day to uphold and to expound the Treaty. It was not our intention to hold any meetings until the issue was definitely before the electorate. But as a campaign has been begun in the country by Mr. de Valera and his followers we cannot afford to wait longer.

Mr. de Valera's campaign is spoken of as a campaign against the Treaty. It is not really that.

The Irish people have already ratified the Treaty through their elected representatives. And the people of Ireland will stand by that ratification. The weekly paper of our opponents, which they call *The Republic of Ireland*, admits that ratification. Document No. 2 lapsed with the approval by the Dail of the Treaty, they said in a leading article in the issue of February 21st; and in the issue of February 28th it is said " alternative documents are no longer in question."

No, it is not a campaign against the Treaty.

Nothing would disconcert Mr. de Valera and his followers more than the wrecking of the Treaty, than the loss of what has been secured by the Treaty.

It is a campaign, not against the Treaty, but against the Free State. And not only against the Free State, but still more against those who stand for the Free State. " Please God we will win," said Mr. de Valera last Sunday at Ennis, " and then there will be an end to the Free State." And if there were an end to the Free State, what then ? What is the object of our opponents ? I will tell you what it is.

In the same leading article of February 28th (in the *Republic of Ireland*) they say :—" The Republican position is clear," and " We stand against the Treaty for the maintenance of the Republic."

" The maintenance of the Republic," exclaimed Mr. Collins. That is very curious. Because in the previous week's issue we were told by a member of the Dail Cabinet that before the Truce of July last it had become plain that it was physically impossible to secure Ireland's ideal of a completely isolated Republic in the immediate future, otherwise than by driving the overwhelmingly superior British forces out of the country.

The Republic was an ideal which it was physically impossible to secure last July. By February it has become their policy to maintain the Republic.

In his speech at Ennis last Sunday Mr. de Valera repeated that he was not a Republican doctrinaire. He said that it was as a symbol, an expression of the democratic right of the people of Ireland to rule themselves without interference from any outside power, that they had raised the banner of the Republic ! I do not quarrel with that description. The Republic was a symbol, an expression of our right to freedom. But at Limerick Mr. de Valera speaks of the possible disestablishment of the Republic.

These appear to be contradictory views, but the object of our opponents is becoming plain.

The ideal of a Republic was physically impossible in July, and it was dropped by Mr. de Valera in favour of Document No. 2. But now alternative documents are no longer in question, and Mr. de Valera and his supporters once more stand for the Republic. What has happened since to account for the burial of the Republican ideal and its subsequent resurrection ?

I will tell you what has happened since.

The Treaty has been brought back. It has brought and is bringing such freedom to Ireland in the transference to us of all governmental powers, but, above all, in the departure of the British armed forces, that it has become safe, and simple, and easy, and courageous to stand now for what was surrendered in July, because the British armed forces were still here.

We could not beat the British out by force, so the Republican ideal was surrendered. But when we have beaten them out by the Treaty the Republican ideal, which was surrendered in July, is restored.

The object of Mr. de Valera and his party emerges. They are stealing our clothes.

We have beaten out the British by means of the Treaty. While damning the Treaty, and us with it, they are taking advantage of the evacuation which the Treaty secures.

After the surrender of the Republican ideal in July we were sent over to make a Treaty with England.

Some of us were sent very much against our wishes. That is well-known to our opponents. Everyone knew then, and it is idle and dishonest to deny now, that in the event of a settlement some postponement of the realisation of our full national sentiment would have to be agreed to.

We were not strong enough to realise the full Republican ideal. In addition, we must remember that there is a strong minority in our country up in the North-East that does not yet share our national views, but has to be reckoned with. In view of these things I claim that we brought back the fullest measure of freedom obtainable—the solid substance of independence.

We signed the Treaty believing it gave us such freedom. Our opponents make use of the advantage of the Treaty while they vilify it and us. The position gained by the Treaty provides them with a jumping off ground. After dropping the Republic while the British were still here, they shout bravely for it now from the safe foothold provided for them by means of the Treaty.

It is a mean campaign.

We were left with the Herculean labour and the heavy responsibility of taking over a Government. This would be a colossal task for the most experienced men of any nation. And we are young and not experienced. While we are thus engaged our former comrades go about the country talking. They tell the people to think of their own strength and the weakness of the enemy. Yes ! and what is it that has made us strong and the enemy weak in the last few months ? Yes, the enemy becomes weaker every day as his numbers grow less. And as they grow less, louder and louder do our opponents shout for the Republic which they surrendered in July last.

What has made the enemy weaker ? The enemy that was then too strong for us ? Is it the division in our ranks, which is Mr. de Valera's achievement, and which is already threatening a suspension of the evacuation? Or is it the Treaty which is our achievement?

Mr. de Valera, in Limerick last Sunday, compared Ireland to a party that had set out to cross a desert, and they had come to a green spot, he said, and there were some who came along to tell them to lie down and stay there, and be satisfied and not go on.

Yes, we had come by means of the Treaty to a green oasis, the last in the long weary desert over which the Irish nation has been travelling. Oases are the resting-places of the desert, and unless the traveller finds them and refreshes himself he never reaches his destination.

Ireland has been brought to the last one, beyond which there is but a little and an easy stretch to go. The nation has earned the right to rest for a little while we renew our strength, and restore somewhat our earlier vigour.

But there are some amongst us who, while they take full advantage of the oasis—only a fool or a madman would fail to do that—complain of those who have led them to it. They find fault with it. They do nothing to help. They are poisoning the wells, wanting now to hurry on, seeing the road ahead short and straight, wanting the glory for themselves of leading the Irish nation over it, while unwilling to fill and shoulder the pack.

We are getting the British armed forces out of Ireland. Because of that evacuation our opponents are strong enough and brave enough now to say: "They are traitors who got you this. We are men of principle. We stand for the Republic"—that Republic which it was physically impossible to secure until the traitors had betrayed you.

Have we betrayed you?

I claim that we have got in the Treaty the strongest guarantee of freedom and security that we could have got on paper. We have got the strongest guarantees that we could have got in a written Treaty between ourselves and England. We have got the greatest amount of real practical freedom in the evacuation of their troops. In their place we have the right to have our own troops, our own army. This is the proof, the making good—the proof that the status we have secured in the Treaty is what we claim it to be—something which gives us independence and the right and power to maintain it.

The status we accepted, which we forced the British to define, was the constitutional status of Canada. Constitutionally all the British nations of the Commonwealth have full freedom, and the same equality, one with the other: Canada equal to England, South Africa equal to Canada.

We have secured by the Treaty this constitutional position.

That is the substance of the Treaty—a position of freedom and equality with all the other nations—and we can, and will take full advantage of that position.

Legally, and obseletly, the Dominions are in subjection to the British Parliament. Constitutionally, actually, they are completely free. They have the advantage over us of great distance. We have the advantage over them of having the position they hold assured to us by a treaty. We have annulled our disadvantage of nearness by securing that advantage.

We have the signed agreement with England, defining our status. We have the free nations of the Commonwealth as witnesses to England's signature.

Our position cannot be challenged by England. Were she to challenge it she would challenge the position of Canada, Australia, and South Africa. Such a challenge would disrupt her Empire at once.

The occupation of the six ports is said to derogate from our status. It does not, any more than it does under Document No. 2. No arrangements afterwards mentioned in the Treaty can effect the status of freedom and equality defined in the Treaty.

As a result of the war Britain made peace with us as with an equal nation, and a Treaty was drawn up and signed to establish the peace.

By that Treaty we agree to certain arrangements between the two countries. The agreement was made as freely as any peace could be made between two belligerents, one of whom was weaker in a military sense.

The naval facilities are *granted* by us to Britain, and are occupied by Britain under the Treaty as by one independent nation from another, by international agreement. For any purpose of interference with our freedom these facilities can never be used.

The arrangement in regard to North-East Ulster is not ideal. But then the position in North-East Ulster is not ideal.

If the Free State is established, however, union is certain. Forces of persuasion and pressure are embodied in the Treaty which will bring the North-East into a united Ireland. If they join us they can have control in their own area. If they stay outside Ireland, then they can only have their own corner, and cannot, and will not, have the counties and areas which belong to Ireland and to the Irish people, according to the wishes of the inhabitants.

Then upon the area remaining outside will fall the burdens and restrictions of the 1920 Partition Act. These disabilities cannot be removed without our consent. If the North-East does not come in, then they are deciding upon bankruptcy for themselves and, remember, this is not our wish but their own.

We must not, however, take a gloomy view of this situation, for, with the British gone, the incentive to partition is gone; but if the evacuation is held up by our own disunion—if the Free State is threatened, as long as there is any hope of seeing it destroyed, the North-East will remain apart. Partition will remain.

Destroy the Free State, and you perpetuate Partition. You destroy all hopes of union.

It is best to speak out plainly

Destroy the Free State now and you destroy more even than the hope, the certainty of union. You destroy our hopes of national freedom, all realisation in our generation of the democratic right of the people of Ireland to rule themselves without interference from any outside power.

Let us look things straight in the face. Unless we are careful, says Dr. Fogarty, we may find ourselves one day without either Treaty or Republic. Make no mistake; we are not going to get both the Free State and the Republic at once—nor yet the Republic by means of the Treaty at once, nor by destroying the Free State.

Britain is in a stronger position than she was in July, She has offered us, and agreed with us, on a peace which the world considers a fair peace. In July world opinion was against her. World opinion is no longer against her. Somebody has said that it was the signing of the Treaty put world opinion on her side.

That is nonsense. Any offer from Britain which the world considered a generous offer would do that. The offer of July 20th last would do that. Britain knows well that she can keep world opinion without conceding a Republic.

She believes now, as she believed in July last, that she cannot afford to concede it. That it would break up her Commonwealth —that it would destroy her security and prestige if she were to acquiesce in a forcible breaking away, which would show her so-called Empire to be so intolerable, or herself so feeble as to be unable to prevent it.

But she will acquiesce in the ultimate separation of the units, we amongst them, by evolution, which will not expose her and not endanger her.

We must have a little patience. Have we not gained great things for our country?

We believe that the Treaty gives us the substance of independence, said the resolution of the Co. Council of Clare sent to Mr. de Valera, and that it will lead inevitably and in a short period to the complete fulfilment of our national aspirations.

It gives us scope for all, and more than we can achieve by the most strenuous united effort of the present generation to rebuild Ireland.

Do not believe those who tell you that under the Free State the British Government will be still here, that the British King has any power over you, or that you owe any subservience to him; that your soldiers will be the soldiers of the British Crown.

It is an infamous and deliberate misrepresentation. It is not so under the Treaty. And it will not be so in fact.

How can there be a British Government in Ireland, how can they tyrannise over us, how can they legislate for us, if they are not here? When were they, in their whole history, ever able to legislate for us without a pistol at our heads? Is the claim that, by some magic, they will now be able to legislate for us when the pistol is removed? Would they have kept their forces here, with the trouble and expenditure it involved, with the loss of prestige it involved, if they could have held us in subjection by the reading, or misreading, of a document, or by the presence of a figurehead with or without his ear to the telephone?

The real point on which the plenipotentiaries had to decide, on which the Dail had to decide, on which the Ard Fheis had to decide, and on which the nation will have to decide at the election, was and is, whether the Treaty really frees us from British control.

That it does so can be proved, and is being proved. The question is not whether the Treaty gives everything that everybody would like, and in the form and words which everyone would prefer. That, indeed, is not possible, because even the absolute Republican form would have been disliked by and would have alienated many Irishmen, probably as many as the Treaty form does.

The Unionists would say that they had sacrificed something in accepting the Free State. North-East Irishmen will think they have sacrificed a great deal when they accept it.

But the aim of all of us can be for unity and independence. In public matters it must be realised that we cannot get all each one wants. We have to agree to get what is essential.

We have to agree to sink individual differences or only to work for them on legitimate lines which do not undermine and destroy the basis on which all rests and which alone makes it possible for us all, as Irishmen and women, to pursue our own aims freely in Ireland, namely, the union and independence of the nation as a whole.

We must be Irish first and last, and must be Republicans or Document Two-ites, or Free Staters, only within the limits which leave Ireland strong, united and free.

Would any other form of freedom which was obtainable now, which would have been acquiesced in by so large a body of our countrymen, have fulfilled the objects of Sinn Fein better, have put us in such a strong position to secure any that are yet unfulfilled ?

We claim that the solid substance of freedom has been won, and that full powers are in the hands of the nation to mould its own life, quite as full for that purpose as if we had already our freedom in the Republican form.

Any difficulties will now be of our own making. There is no enemy nor any foreign Government here any longer to hinder us. Will we not take the fruits of victory, or do we mean to let them decay in our hands, while we wrangle as to whether they are ripe or whether they have exactly the bloom and shape we dreamed of before they had ripened ?

No freedom when realised has quite the glory dreamed of by the captive.

The bargain has been struck and the goods are being delivered. You may think a better bargain could have been made, but can we not stand together, accept delivery of the goods, and make use of the unquestionable value they contain.

Are our opponents going to go on making difficulties—to stand aside when the help of every Irishman and woman is needed for the colossal task which is before us ? Think of the burden of building up the nation materially, one of our chief objects—Sinn Fein—and now capable of realisation. The Labour Party told us the other day that there were probably 130,000 men and women unemployed in Ireland, and thousands of children are hungry and naked, huddled together like swine in so-called houses ; that from all parts of the country were cries of desperation. "These murmurings," said Mr. Johnson, "presage something in our minds very like the rumblings of an earthquake." Unless something is done rapidly, unless something effective is done, a grave situation will develop in this country which will be a problem for an old-established government, let alone a new one.

Will our opponents help us so that something effective may be done ? How long must the children remain hungry while you argue whether common citizenship, a British King, a Governor-General has or has not the power still to prevent us from feeding and clothing them ? Isn't it time to stop Nero's fiddling ?

How can you reconcile it with the objects of Sinn Fein to stand aside, to give no hand, when from our country are going up these cries of desperation, when it is in our power now to silence those cries, in your power, you who are opposing us, who are putting thorns in the path of your own people at the moment when they are ridding themselves of the thorns the enemy put there—you, who keep crying out freedom, a Republic, and are ready to destroy your nation for a name at such a moment ? Those who are not with their own people are against them.

That is the question. Are our opponents going to keep on making difficulties ? At this serious crisis in our national history what is their policy ? What do they mean to do ? Will they tell us what they mean to do ? We have heard what they had to say, but what do they mean to do ?

What line of action do they propose to take ? Are they going to continue to give support to the indisciplined units which shoot enemy agents when we are not at war, and seize their arms when we are not at war ? What is the object of this ? The one object I can see, the one object anybody can see, is that those arms are to be used either against the people or to force the British to return.

Why are our opponents conniving at these things ? At the close of the Dail debates on Thursday last Mr. de Valera warned the Provisional Government that they must do nothing towards establishing a new police force—this challenge at a time when robbery is rife in the land, when human life is not safe, when the forces of disorder that always follow war are operating without check. It is the duty of any Government to stop these things. It will fail in its duty to the people if it does not stop them, and although we have agreed not to seek the support of the electorate for three months we want the support of the people now. We want your support for the police force which we are forming. It will be a People's Guard for the protection of all parties and classes.

Will our opponents hinder and obstruct that course ? Will they go on making difficulties ? We have a right to hear the answers to these questions. Let the people hear the answers. Above all, let us hear their policy and their programme.

We have a definite programme which we can expound and justify—which indeed is being justified daily. It may not be perfect, but what is the alternative ?

The question before the people of Ireland is, do they approve of the Treaty or do they not approve of it ? The Treaty has been signed by the plenipotentiaries of both countries, and it has been ratified by the Parliaments of both countries. To return to power representatives to carry the Treaty into effect and to take full advantage of it, to reap the fruits of evacuation, to establish an Irish Free State, in accordance with the national character, so that the British forces which have abandoned Ireland may never be able to return to Ireland, and the liberties of our own people may be definitely secured ; or the return to power of representatives whose policy is to use the position gained by the Treaty to destroy the Irish Free State and take the certain risks involved in such a betrayal.

And if they succeed, and if, and when, the British forces return, what will happen? Will the idea of a Republic be put back into its pigeon-hole; will the abandoned little orphan, Document No. 2, be re-adopted, and will that, too, be a second time abandoned in the chaos and loss which will ensue?

War, though necessary and noble, for necessary and noble ends, has terrible effects incidental to it, not only material ruin, but moral effects when prolonged unrighteously; a tendency to lose balance and judgment, to forget or misinterpret the real object of the national struggle, to grow to believe that strife, even fratricidal strife, is noble in itself. Such things must cease as soon as freedom is secured, or the nation will perish.

The Right of the People.

Mr. Collins was the principal speaker at a demonstration in support of the Treaty in Cork on 12th March. Addressing the meeting, he said:—

He came there as one of the "incompetent amateurs" who had seized the helm of the ship of the Irish State, and have driven it on to the rocks

The captain himself was here addressing you two or three weeks ago, and he told you he went to America to speak to the people of America, and ask them to recognise the Republic that was set up in Ireland by the free will of the Irish people, but little did he dream that the day would ever come when he would have to come to the Irish people themselves asking them to affirm the Republic that itself had set up.

And while the captain was away from his ship—that time in America—the weather was very stormy. There was a regular hurricane blowing—you in Cork will remember. The helm had been left by the captain in the hands of those very same incompetent amateurs who afterwards in calm water had the ship on the rocks, and, while he was away, somehow or other we steered it safely through those troubled waters—the roughest through which the ship of the Irish nation has ever had to be navigated in all her turbulent history.

Mr. de Valera laments, he says, that it should be necessary for him to remind the Irish people to be firm for the Republic. He

had to ask those who were confusing the issue whether it was or was not a fact that the Republic was established by the Irish people?

Why does Mr. de Valera not answer his question?

Well, perhaps he cannot! It is not too easy when one has been confusing issues to make them clear again. But I will help him.

What does Mr. de Valera mean by the Republic? Fortunately he has told us in a speech he made last Sunday week in Ennis. He means by a Republic, he says, the democratic right of the people of Ireland to rule themselves without interference from any outside power.

Accepting that definition, I can answer Mr. de Valera's questions. The Irish people have not disestablished their democratic right to rule themselves.

They have claimed that right and fought for it through many generations. They have now at last established that right. They have done more. They have secured recognition of that right by the Power which through all the centuries had denied it. The departure of his forces is the real recognition of that right. It was those forces alone that prevented the Irish people from exercising their right.

If Mr. de Valera's definition is right we could never have had a Republic hitherto. It was, therefore, never established, because it is only now by means of the Treaty that the interference by the outside Power has ceased. That interference has come to an end—that interference, the absence of which Mr. de Valera lays down as the condition necessary for the existence of a Republic. We took a certain amount of government out of the hands of the enemy while he was here.

We took as much as we could. But we could not grasp all of it, because he used the whole of his forces to prevent us doing so, and we were unable to beat him out of the country by force of arms.

But the enemy is going—will soon be gone, if, indeed, Mr. de Valera and his friends will but allow them to depart.

There is, however, now no longer any outside power to prevent us exercising our democratic right to rule ourselves. And if Mr. de Valera's definition is right, if he really means the democratic right of the people to rule themselves, then I say the people have secured that democratic right.

And perhaps it is I who should be exhorting Mr. de Valera and his followers to stand by that democratic right, and not to destroy it or disestablish it, and to cease fomenting strife and making difficulties and delaying evacuation.

They do these things by the disunion they are causing. That disunion in itself encourages the cowardly element in Belfast to an orgy of bloodshed and ruffianism. Generally, Mr. de Valera and his friends are stepping into the shoes of the departing enemy, by preventing, or attempting to prevent, in their autocratic manner, the right of the Irish people to govern themselves.

And now let me say that I agree with Mr. de Valera's definition in that it is for their democratic right, for the power to exercise it, that Ireland has always fought.

It is for that right that we fought in the recent struggle, and it is for that right our fathers fought, and it was the desire to secure that right that inspired the Land War, and inspired the Home Rule agitation, and inspired the Repeal Agitation, and inspired the Young Ireland and the Fenian Movements. That simply is the case. It was an elementary right we fought for, not the name of a form of government.

Indeed, it would seem that Mr. de Valera himself holds the opinion that we never had a Republic. Now, if that is so, we never had one to disestablish. One of the signatories of the Treaty is now a supporter of Mr. de Valera. This man must, therefore, be a little wiser than other men, belonging to both parties as it were. When Mr. Cathal Brugha spoke here in Cork he quoted this former member of the Dail Cabinet with approval. In view of this position, the words of Mr. Barton may be of importance. Mr Barton wrote in a paper which they call *The Republic of Ireland* that it had become plain that it was physically impossible to secure Ireland's ideal of a completely isolated Republic, otherwise than by driving the overwhelmingly superior British forces out of the country.

Obviously then we could not have had a Republic before the Truce. It was as stated, and I agree, an ideal only possible to realise by driving the overwhelmingly superior British forces out of the country.

And now let us get away from these confusions and prevarications. Let us look at the position as it really is. Let us look at it honestly for a moment—just plainly as it is, not as it should be and not as we should like it to be.

A year ago, a time Mr. de Valera and his followers wish to bring back again, we were all in a different position from what we are to-day. I need not emphasise this to you people of Cork. You know what things were twelve months ago. You know it and you can put your knowledge of the real position above any empty declarations regarding the supposed position.

We were suffering under a murderous tyranny the enemy were directing against us. We were making a very valiant effort to uphold and exercise our democratic right to rule ourselves. We were making every effort to get rid of the enemy that was preventing us from doing this. We did make it very difficult for him to govern us. He was really alarmed. He tried by violence to get his Government back. His Government rested entirely on his violence. That was his only way of governing us. He knew that if he did not succeed in retaining his hold on us by violence he would have to relax that hold.

He called it restoring law and order. You will remember he was ignoring all law and order in his attempt to prevent us having Irish law and order of our own. Our people were being hunted, tortured, imprisoned, murdered, hanged. Your houses were being burned. Women and children in many districts were spending the nights shivering in the fields. There was no peace in Ireland night or day.

But we were not broken, and the enemy flung himself in vain against the spirit of the Irish people, and by the time the summer came the British Prime Minister himself had to invite over the "murderers" and "head of the murder gang," to discuss with him and his Cabinet terms of peace.

If we had been able to beat the British out, and this not only from the South of Ireland and the West of Ireland, but the North-East of Ireland as well, there need have been no negotiations.

There need have been no Treaty, because we would have had our freedom as a result of a military victory. When we had achieved that result we could have expressed that freedom in whatever form we liked. We could have expressed it by a republic or by a monarchy. I am sure we could have found some descendant of the last King of Ireland modestly hidden away in one of our villages, and we could induce him to come out into the light.

We had not beaten the enemy, but neither had he beaten us. That was the plain position. And we met to see if agreement were possible, to arrange what we could get from him in return for what we wanted—namely, his departure.

What we wanted was that he should leave Ireland so that we might have our country for ourselves to live in the way we liked best.

Actually the British were prepared to go if terms could be agreed on. They had given over their claim to dominate us and to hold us in subservience to their wishes. We had made this country too uncomfortable for them. There were too many ambushed positions in our country, and there were too many gloomy street corners in Cork and Dublin.

But even so they were not militarily defeated, and we were not in the position of dictating terms of peace. The British had not surrendered. Therefore, they need not agree to what would have been to them humiliating terms, any more than we would agree to what would be to us humiliating terms.

And we did agree to a settlement. They agreed to withdraw their forces, military and administrative and economic. If we would agree to maintain an international association with them and the nations they called their "Commonwealth," we got a guarantee that our freedom so secured would not be violated.

Now, what I want to tell you is that it is not the Treaty that is all-important in this regard. It is the fact of their withdrawal and evacuation that is all-important. The Treaty is the written endorsement of the freedom which we have obtained.

We have been told that "if the Treaty was signed under duress, then the men who went over broke their faith with the Irish people. If they signed it without duress they were traitors to their cause. He said it was under duress it was signed"—that is a typically de Valera argument. It's a "heads I win, tails you lose argument."

There is always duress present on both sides during such negotiations. I made it plain to all the plenipotentiaries in London that I did not regard seriously the threat of immediate and terrible war.

Let me bring you back to realities. First, there was the 72 hours' notice of termination of the Truce—three days. Nothing immediate or terrible about that. I made it clear what my feeling was. I stated over and over again that the conflict in Ireland would be resumed not after a formal declaration of war—immediate and terrible or otherwise, but would develop simply as a result of a policeman shot here, an Irish soldier or an Irish citizen there; then again restoration of law and order in Ireland; then again the day of the Stricklands; the day of the Smyths and Prescott-Decies; the day of the lunatic murderers of Canon Magner and Father O'Callaghan. Mr. de Valera talks of signing under duress. Duress there was, and let me tell you what it was.

It was the duress that the weaker nation suffers under against the stronger. And the plenipotentiaries were not responsible for that. On the British side there was duress in that world opinion pressed upon them to conform their practice to their professions—to make an honourable peace with us, if possible. And there was on our side the duress to accept really substantial terms when we were at the pinnacle of the greatest amount of success to which we could hope to reach in this particular national effort.

And let me put another aspect of it to you. Let me recall to you that in July last 25 or 26 men lay under sentence of death. Hundreds of our people were in penal servitude, thousands were in internment, dozens of others were lying with capital charges over their heads. An offer was made by Britain. That offer to go before the people required the signatures of the plenipotentiaries. That was the reason we signed it—in order that the people would have a chance of deciding.

Will anyone tell me that we five should have refused to give the people an opportunity of deciding? Will any man stand up in this assembly and tell me that he would have refused to sign, and would, by his refusal, commit these 25 men to death, commit dozens of others to death, and commit the country generally to further bloodshed and destruction?

I know we had forced the British to the utmost limit they would go. I know what the alternative was, and every man who faces the situation in an honest and straight manner knows what the alternative was.

The suggestion underlying the criticism of the opposition is that little or nothing has been achieved. Our opponents claim that they alone are the custodians of the nation's honour. The suggestion is, in a veiled way, sometimes openly, sometimes by innuendo only, that the British Parliament still has power to legislate for Ireland. It has not, and our opponents know it has not, and you know it has not.

It is a difficult thing enough to resume normal life after a struggle such as the Irish have had. It is the duty of people, calling themselves leaders, to help the nation in that effort, not to hinder it. It is a difficult thing to change the sword for the ploughshare. The enemy has gone, or is going, and the sword will not plough the fields that are lying fallow.

Is it the doctrine of Mr de Valera and his followers that suffering and fighting are to go on just because they are good in themselves? We hear about the hard road which the opposition is pointing out to the Irish nation, and the inducements that are put before the people towards ease, "towards living practically the lives of beasts."

This is the language of madness, or worse. There is no slavery under the Treaty. The chances of materialism are not greater than they would be under a Republican form of government, or any other form of government. It is undoubtedly for ourselves to decide.

We have a chance now of giving our people a better life, we have a chance of doing the things that the people require. We have a chance of securing that the people shall no longer live the life of beasts. We have a chance of ending our slums. We have a chance of ending the hovels of some of our country places. We have a chance now, not by travelling any soft road, God knows, but by a hard, united effort to make Ireland something for the next generation, which it was not for ourselves.

It is suggested that martyrdom and suffering are necessary as a refining influence. We know as well as any of our opponents their refining influence. We know what their value has been in the past, in 1916 and from 1916 onwards. But martyrdom and suffering were for an end, not for their own sakes—the end being freedom and the noble life that can be lived in freedom.

Our opponents have failed by argument to win the Irish people to support their barren and destructive policy, or rather their negation of policy. Other tactics are now necessary on their part.

Incitement to mutiny takes the place of argument in the hope of stirring up turmoil. Their only hope now lies in wrecking by arranging and exploiting incidental troubles. For factionist ends they are jeopardising the unity of Ireland. They are jeopardising its independence; they are jeopardising its progress.

"Go another round in the race," says Mr. de Valera to you, "and who knows that the other fellow will be able to finish it."

Yes! Who knows? And suppose he were able to finish it—what then? Is the safety and future of the nation to be staked on such a gamble?

The captain is trying to pull the ship off the rocks, we are told.

And how is he doing it? When the former Minister for Defence has by political propaganda been inciting mutiny in the army, and when Mr. de Valera is asked to speak on the situation, "It is too serious," he says, "to make a pronouncement."

Is that the way in which he is pulling the ship off the rocks?

The former Minister for Home Affairs obstructs the formation of a police force—a police force intended by us to deal with the outbreak of violence and crime which is endangering us—he cavils as to whether the force is to be under the authority of Dail Eireann or the Provisional Government. Do Mr. de Valera and his followers acquiesce in this obstruction—in this action which is conniving at lawlessness?

Is this his way of pulling the ship off the rocks?

At this moment—and it is a serious moment in the nation's life—the only policy of our opponents has become, it seems, by hidden manoeuvre, to stir up trouble.

Their desire evidently is by any trickery to delay the expression of the people's will in an election; to prepare intimidation for the time when that election must inevitably come. Is this for the chance of being able to declare another war against the enemy who is departing? If this is so, let them tell us; let them inform us as to what they are going to do and how they are going to do it. Let them put their policy, their constitution, their programme, before the people.

What is their object? I, for one, do not know. I know what their tactics are—they are the tactics of a discredited and defeated faction.

Dublin Castle has Fallen.

On the 17th March, Mr. Collins paid his first public visit to his constituency since the Treaty was signed. Speaking to a great gathering in Skibbereen, he recalled last St. Patrick's Day, when the enemy was hammering his hardest. There was no freedom to speak the Irish language. The guns of the enemy were in action; the firing squadron was at work; the hangman was busy.

Very few hoped to be there all together as they were to-day. He certainly did not expect to be amongst them. Perhaps you did not expect to see me here, and we did not expect to see the ships sailing away to England with the Auxiliaries, the Black-and-Tans, the R.I.C., the British soldiery, and with the civilian occupants of Dublin Castle.

We did not expect to see the Auxiliary division walking out of Beggar's Bush Barracks and our men, who had been hunted and harried, who would have been shot like dogs if they had been caught, taking possession of these barracks in the full light of day as recognised soldiers of the Irish nation. We would almost as soon have expected to see our soldiers, by force of arms, beating the enemy out of all the strongholds, but we have beaten him out by means of the fight made in Ireland and the fight made in London.

You will remember that I was supposed to have been shot or captured many a time. If one of those reports had been true you would not have been a bit more surprised than you were when you read in the papers that Dublin Castle had been surrendered into my hands for the Irish nation.

This time last year the present P.M.G. was in penal servitude, and now he is at work at the head of his office preparing to take over the huge machine. You see already Irish letters on the stamps, which you use every day, and in a short time we will have our own Irish-designed stamps instead of stamps we have been used to from our childhood.

This is an everyday indication of what is happening.

We are forming a police force to put down those outbreaks of violence, which were not altogether unexpected and which usually follow on such conditions as prevailed in Ireland for the past three years, for in every country there is always an unlawful element ready to come in or to arise at times of change like the present, when authority is being transferred as it is to-day. Our opponents are not satisfied with this force.

They have many grievances. Its formation is causing them sleepless nights. It is being enrolled under the Provisional Government instead of under Dail Eireann, or is it the other way round? In any case, whatever way it is, our opponents are saying it is wrong.

They say there will be trouble—that violence and outrages are minor matters; that protection of our people and property are trifling affairs, fit work for incompetent amateurs, beneath the dignity of high-minded men of principle, who know so much more than others about freedom and "upholding the Republic," and the "Democratic right of the people to govern themselves" —with no right evidently to protect themselves—who know how to talk about these things, at any rate, in much finer language than you and I would be able to think of if we pressed our heads for a week.

I am not a civilian in war, and I am not a war man in peace.

We are plain people here in Co. Cork. We don't bother much about words, but we do understand facts, and we see the enemy going out of Ireland, the enemy that was here in our father's time, in our grandfathers', and in their grandfathers' time.

When we see the enemy marching out, we know it means something, and twenty Mr. de Valeras, no matter what their eloquence, will not persuade us that it does not.

When we see troops surrender their strongholds, the troops under whose protection the battering ram was used all over Cork in the Land War, the troops that protected the corn which would have saved the millions that suffered from the famine, the troops that beat the Fenians and subdued the '48 men, caused burnings and horrors of '98, the troops that through all the centuries kept us crushed—when we see these going and see our troops coming into their places we know that means something, and twenty Erskine Childers will not persuade us that it does not.

The leader of our opponents and his followers all wish we were back again where we were last year. Do you wish it?

I cannot say I wish it. To my eyes it is more hopeful and better to see Sean M'Keon taking over Athlone from the British than lying under sentence of death in Mountjoy Jail. It is hinted to us that under the new Irish Government the British Government will still prevail here.

The British Government had kept them in subjection by destroying their Government and re-placing it by the British one. The troops were kept here to maintain the British Government, and, without these troops, there could never have been a British Government here, and when they went that Government could not be here. The British fought with tooth and claw for three years to maintain their Government and to destroy our efforts to have our own Government, and to get out of the way the men in Ireland who were preventing them from succeeding.

The British failed in the task, and they have surrendered all right to govern us, but we are, say our opponents, under the authority of Lloyd George and his Cabinet. All Government is being or has been handed over to us.

The British game is up. Dublin Castle has fallen, and with it will have gone all bureaucratic regulations and tyrannies which the people of Ireland suffered under the British regime.

The departments which the British used as the means of governing us are ended, they are handed over to the representatives of the people, and we are still under the British Government our opponents say.

The Governor-General is worrying them, and the telephone that we heard one of the deputies speaking about, the Governor-General having his mouth at this end of it, and Lloyd George his ear at the other end. How can we be free, how can we govern ourselves when such a thing exists?

We are not afraid of any telephone. We have dealt with more than a telephone. All these things are not the things that matter now. At the Ard Fheis Mr. de Valera asked, "Are you going to keep, as in the past, trying to secure the recognition of your fundamental right to whatever form of freedom you please?"

No, we are not, we are not wasting time by forcing a door which is already open. We have already secured recognition of the right, and we mean now to exercise that right.

I ask, what function of Government is there that we cannot fulfil now as we please? The future rests entirely with ourselves—a new order of things is facing us.

Free State or Chaos.

Speaking at Waterford, on March 26th, Mr. Michael Collins said :—

The Treaty and establishment of the Free State meant peace, freedom, and security. The alternative was chaos, disunion, and anarchy. There was no other alternative.

If the people repudiated the action of Dail Eireann in signing the Treaty what could they hope for ? Up to the time of the evacuation their opponents' policy was represented by an unsigned document, fashioned on the lines of the Treaty. With the departure of the enemy secured by the Treaty, Mr. de Valera and his followers had grown bolder. No more was heard about Document No. 2. " The Republic," which was surrendered by Mr. de Valera in July, was restored as the policy of Mr. de Valera and his followers in February and March.

You know our policy and you know our programme. It may not be perfect, but it is straightforward. It is easily understood and can be carried out. Freedom under the Free State is definite and practical.

If you prefer Mr. de Valera's policy, which he tells you is now a Republic, can he give it to you ? Mr. de Valera was no more able to get a Republic now than he was able last July.

Unless we are prepared and are able to beat out of Ireland the British Forces which would be sent here if we attempted to set up a Republic, and unless we are prepared, and are able, to beat those in North-East Ulster who do not share our national views, supported, as they would be, by British forces, the realisation of the full republican ideal for all Ireland is at present impossible.

Policies are useless unless they can be carried out. Mr. de Valera can give you something. He can perpetuate disunion, can give you the loss of all that you have won, can give you anarchy—full measure of that anarchy of which his tactics have already given you an unpleasant sample. We are already hearing less about his policy and more about his threats—threats against you, the people of Ireland, if you dare to approve of the acceptance of the Treaty.

Such freedom as Ireland had won was beyond the wildest dreams six years ago—they did not dream that by means of one struggle thay should have reached up to so high a step on the ladder of freedom. Will you take that freedom ?

If we are wise, unless we are all possessed by madness, we will take it, and thank God for it, and will reap the rich fruits we can gather under it—prosperity, spiritual freedom, power to become again the distinctive Irish people of the Irish nation, to speak our own language, to grow rich again in our own Gaelic culture.

Mr. de Valera said at Ennis they ought not to be afraid to face each other in argument. The people might be excused if they said it was not now time for argument—that it was time for work. There was colossal work to be done that would take all their strength.

Their arguments having failed to win the people to their changing and impracticable policies, a " Black-and-Tan " campaign, and worse, is taking their place.

They are becoming violent—a way with weak people when beaten in argument. A little of their own pepper has got into their throats.

Where reason has failed to convince the Irish people, pepper and revolver shots, incitements and threats will not avail.

What was Mr. de Valera's idea of a free choice ? To allow his supporters to fire revolver shots lower and lower over the heads of large crowds in which there are women and children, hoping for a stampede, indifferent to the danger of those women and children ? To resort to every manœuvre to delay giving the people the opportunity to exercise their free choice at an election ? To prepare intimidation in advance for the elections ? To look on in silence while his former Minister of Defence incited to mutiny in the army, and while his former Minister of Home Affairs put difficulties in the way of establishing an efficient police force to deal with crime and to protect the people and to make threats of violence against the force when it is established ?

Did Mr. de Valera approve of that ? Was the nation to be dragged down these slippery slopes ? When they failed in Dail Eireann to defeat the Treaty they said : " There is a constitutional way of resolving our differences." " We will accept no verdict except that of the people."

The people were already silently giving their verdict. Mr de Valera was not pleased with it. So they heard no more of constitutional ways. The people were now to be intimidated and terrorised. The country was threatened with civil war.

Lest you should think I am scoring off Mr. de Valera for a mere party advantage, I want to put the position to you as clearly as I can. Statements were made in certain papers with regard to his speeches, and he published an explanation. In my opinion that explanation does not make his position any clearer.

He states it was to future generations he was referring when he spoke of "civil war," and of "wading through Irish blood," in order to get Irish freedom. No one can speak for the next generation, and no one can tie the hands of the next generation. He does not make clear which of the two possible interpretations of his speeches he wishes the public to accept—That :

1. Thinking in the language of mutiny for the next generation he pictures the Irish Volunteers of the future—Does he mean the army of the Irish Nation ?—refusing to obey the will of the people as voiced in the nation's Parliament and wading through Irish blood ; or

2. That the way to independence is forever barred because it could only be achieved through civil war, and civil war is impossible.

He says that his remarks were in answer to the statement made that the Treaty was freedom to achieve freedom. That was my statement, and I do not shrink from it. Nobody knows better than Mr. de Valera that the Treaty gives freedom to achieve freedom.

The whole of his present position is founded upon that fact. He is already using the freedom won to shout for a Republic.

If he is opposed to civil war and if the Constitutional way is barred, and if the way of force is barred by the nation's own pledged word, then the way to a Republic is barred, and Mr. de Valera has no practical policy, and he has no right to ask for the suffrages of the Irish people.

Since he has asked for their suffrages and claims to stand for independence under a Republican form of Government, which he suggests can only be achieved by civil war, then he must be in favour of civil war. He cannot have it both ways.

If Mr. de Valera can by reason and argument induce the people of Ireland to entrust the nation's fortunes to him and his party to carry out on behalf of the Irish nation whatever is his policy there is still no need for civil war.

What Mr. de Valera would do in that event I don't know. Let us assume he would establish a Republic, the country having been evacuated of British troops by means of the Treaty. In that event the duty of the army, no matter what were their individual views, would be to support Mr. de Valera's Government, and I would exhort the people to support that Government, as a Government, even if I were in political opposition.

If the people by a majority decide in favour of our opponents, although I believe that decision would be a fatal and disastrous decision, yet it would have been made, and I, for one, would still stand in with the people in whatever conditions arose as a result of that decision.

Mr. de Valera must know, and it is his duty as their leader to enlighten any of his inexperienced followers who do not know, that while it was perfectly justifiable for any body of Irishmen, no matter how small, to rise up and make a stand against their country's enemy, it is not justifiable for a minority to oppose the wishes of the majority of their own countrymen, except by constitutional means.

They did not use these threats of civil war in Waterford in 1918, when defeated by a political opponent, nor use them anywhere in the 1918 or 1921 elections. For soldiers of the nation, while holding individual views, there was only one course—obedience to the constituted authority. Unless this was driven home to the minds of the people, there was no future before the Irish nation, except anarchy, chaos, and ultimate destruction.

Whatever Mr. de Valera's meaning, the effect of his language was mischievous. A leader must not be unmindful of the implications of his words, especially in speaking to people emerging from a great national struggle with their outlook and emotions not in a normal state.

If Mr. de Valera really wishes to convince the public he did not mean to indulge in violent threats and in the language of incitement and wants to wipe out the impression caused by his speeches, he must take instant action. His explanation as published will not do. He must press home the foregoing truths to all his supporters, and he must publicly dissociate himself from the utterances of the former Ministers of Defence and Home Affairs, and from such mutinous views as those expressed by Comdt. Roderick O'Connor.

We would not be hearing those blood-and-murder speeches, we would not be seeing the revolver, if argument could have prevailed. Is peace never to be allowed to our poor people ? The people were not intimidated by the threats or tanks and machine guns of the old enemy, neither will they be intimidated by the threats and feeble weapons in the hands of the new enemies of the Irish nation.

Our unfortunate country has never witnessed a more sinister or more cowardly campaign. We have got rid of the enemy ; such freedom is within our grasp now as we had not dared to hope for. Are new enemies arising from amongst ourselves to be allowed to snatch it from us ?

Our opponents are keeping passions alive, directing them from their legitimate use against the enemy who was standing in the way of our freedom—directing them, now that the enemy has gone, for illegitimate use against the people of their own nation to deprive them of that freedom ; or, at the very least, to prevent the people of Ireland, if they can, from exercising their free choice in taking or rejecting that freedom.

And I say, deliberately, that in doing so, Mr. de Valera and his followers are proving themselves to be the greatest enemies that Ireland has ever had.

Mr. de Valera told you on St. Patrick's Day that it was the saddest one he had spent in five years, and I can well believe it. Is his conscience troubling him ?

Does he see in his mind's eye those terrible doings in Belfast, dream of the worse things that yet may happen, see our poor Catholic and Nationalist countrymen at the mercy of a relentless majority who, taking advantage of our weakness from disunion, are making a last desperate effort to keep the British forces in Ireland, and to get them to return in order to maintain their ascendency.

In the North-East three months ago they were in a chastened mood. There was nothing left for them but to mend their ways, to consider, with what grace they could muster, how they could—without too great an appearance of surrender—join in with the rest of their countrymen. No other alternative was left to them.

But they had received new allies where they least expected them. The " North " and the " South " had at last joined together. The wreckers were united. It is an unholy brotherhood.

Had Mr. de Valera any better scheme for unity than the proposals of the Treaty ? Did he remember the abandoned Document No. 2. How did he intend to bring them in ? If he could achieve what he says is his policy, the establishment of a Republic ? If not, how could he deal with the situation ?

If we were presenting a united front to England and North-East Ulster, I defy anyone to deny that at this moment we would not be seeing the North-East Ulster " Parliament " legalising tyranny, instituting flogging, establishing for our helpless fellow-countrymen up there the very reign of terror, under the very same so-called Law and Order Act, from which we have just emerged.

We can yet stop that horror if we will close our ranks and can speak to England and the North-East as one people. Is there any use in asking our opponents to think of Ireland, of what she may become, free and splendid, or once more tortured and degraded, to forget himself, his party, to give language a rest for a little, to think of the facts which principles and ideals stand for ?

Leaḃra Gaeḋilge.

SÍOL ÉABA—'Neill' 'Triúr Ban' agus roinnt eile de na scéal-taiḃ ar a seasann clú Ṗádraic uí Conaire mar uġdar—sid iad aḋḃar an leaḃair seo. Glan Ġaeḋilge agus toġa scéalta. Clúdaċ ríġin 5/- a luaċ.

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CUISLE NA hEIGSE. Cnuasacht dán do ceapadh le n-ar linn féin. EAMON CUIRTEIS do chruinnigh. Na dánta atá ins an leabhrán so, toghadh iad a saothar na bhfile is fearr a sgriobh agus atá ag scriobhadh i n-a dteangain féin le fiche éigin blian. Cludach, 3/6.

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