

The Aftermath and the Beginnings of a New War Part 2

Political Condemnation at Home

John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, damned the Rising as “Wicked and Insane”. He along with Dublin Unionist, Edward Carson, jointly condemned it as a betrayal and stated that at this time of war with Germany that it should not reinvigorate debate about the Irish Question.

“[Home Rule] has been contested by the very same people who today have tried to make Ireland the cat’s paws of Germany. We have won Home Rule not because of them but in spite of them. This wicked blow of theirs was their last blow at Home Rule....Misguided and insane young Irishmen rushed and lost their lives...while those who sent them on this mission remained safely in America”
Attributed to John Redmond, Irish Independent.

Edward Carson, though stating that “the conspiracy of the Sinn Féiners” should be put down with “determination” also saw there was danger in inflaming national sentiment with harsh reprisals. “...it would be a mistake to suppose that any true Irishman calls for vengeance. It will be a matter requiring the greatest wisdom and the greatest coolness, may I say, in dealing with these men, and all that I say to the Executive is, whatever is done, let it not be done in a moment of temporary excitement, but with due deliberation in regard both to the past and to the future.”

A Divided Church

Of Ireland’s thirty one Catholic bishops only seven came forward to condemn the Rising. A message sent from Cardinal Logue (of Armagh) to Pope Benedict XV reiterated the following: “Insurrection happily terminated, insurgents have surrendered unconditionally. Hope peace soon re-established”. The Independent’s Rome Correspondent reported “The Pope is much moved by the incidents and will give instructions to all the Irish bishops to exhort the clergy and Catholic people to maintain perfect loyalty to England”. This reaction is perhaps not surprising as the Irish hierarchy was submitted to great pressure from the British Government and of course, Rome.



Archbishop Walsh (centre)

The Catholic Church was anything but uniform however, the Archbishop of Dublin, William Walsh was a strong nationalist (who was often highly critical of John Redmond), he explained to General Maxwell, the main reason for the Rising was the unsatisfactory measures in the Home Rule Act, most notably the lack of executive function. Archbishop Walsh, along with Limerick Bishop Dr O’Dwyer

were both highly critical of the British sentencing of the Volunteers. Catholic Priests on the streets of Dublin also saw the situation as radically different. Most notable of these was Fr Augustine, who spoke of Éamonn Ceannt’s dignified manner as he led his battalion to St Patrick’s Cathedral on their way to internment. Fr Augustine also saw the men as fighting “a good clean fight for Ireland”.

An Unsure United States of America

The United States of America was positioned between a rock and hard place. Though misinformation from the New York Times (which described the rebels as “Rioters”) and other American Newspapers sought to downplay the events, Americans had become fascinated with the story. Irish Americans were particularly irate when it came to the punishments handed down by the British authorities. During the month of the executions (May 1916), 20 000 Irish Americans met at Carnegie Hall in New York to protest strongly at the British Reaction.

Irish Americans played a kernel role in the organisation of the Rising. They supplied much needed funds and liaised with the Germans for arms. Now with the Rising over, they were putting increasing pressure on the American political class. It is often said that when the pro British president Woodrow Wilson questioned the loyalties of “hyphenated Americans” he had Irish Americans in mind. Eventually, on the 29th of July, the United States Senate passed a resolution looking for clemency for all Irish political prisoners. It arrived in London on the 3rd of August too late, as the last of the Rising leaders, Roger Casement was executed earlier that morning. More pragmatically the United States Government donated \$150 000 to families in Dublin as part of the Irish Relief Fund.