

EDITORIALS FROM FIANNA
FÁIL.



By Terence MacSwiney.

By An Chartlann.

FIANNA FÁIL.

THE IRISH ARMY.

A JOURNAL FOR MILITANT IRELAND.

Fianna Fáil was a radical Irish nationalist newspaper edited by Terence MacSwiney in his native Cork from 19th September, 1914 to 5th December, 1914, spanning only eleven weekly numbers before it was suppressed by the British Government.

P. S. O'Hegarty, a childhood friend of Terence MacSwiney, wrote in his *Short Memoir of Terence MacSwiney*:

'*Fianna Fáil* represented perfectly what was best and most permanent in Terry's character; his impersonality, his tolerance, his firmness, and the clarity of his general ideas. At a time when the other side had no arguments but mudslinging he kept his pen clean, and wielded it with a courtesy and a decency which were rather in keeping with the old heroic tradition that he so loved than with a time of yellow journalism.'

MacSwiney launched *Fianna Fáil* in protest against the First World War and the decision of the majority of the Irish Volunteers to fight on behalf of the British Government. The motto of the newspaper is a famous quote from John Mitchel:

'The passionate aspiration for Irish Nationhood will outlive the British Empire.'

The following are extracts, taken from the first edition of the paper and from extracts quoted by the aforementioned *Short Memoir of Terence MacSwiney*.

RALLY FOR HISTORIC IRELAND.

Why have we come? A new paper, and of all places in Cork, why? Because we believe that in Cork genuine nationalists of all parties and sincere lovers of Ireland are crying out in their hearts for a rallying part from which to declare war on the ancient enemy of our race; war on their allies within our gates, who would sell her honour openly and without shame.

We have come to let them know that Ireland is not to be delivered over to serve as a prop for a decadent and tottering empire; that they have mistaken a momentary apathy for acquiescence. We have arisen in fire and defiance that they may realise the wrath that has been growing in volume and heat till it should burst at last into the open light of day. We have come to proclaim from the heart of our ancient city that the ancient enemy of Ireland, the enemy that exhausted the resources of Hell to destroy our people, is still our only living enemy to-day.

We have come to proclaim it openly, defiantly, and successfully. And we are proud that from our fine old native city a voice shall go forth to declare that Cork stands for Ireland first and last, before all empires new and old, but chiefly and above all before the British Empire. Yes, and we can see already the fire of old days light up in the eyes of our fellow citizens when they hear that Cork is rallying to Ireland, that Cork is true to the historic traditions of our land, that Cork is jealous of her own proud and high repute, and burns anew to lay bare the sword for Ireland, the old Ireland that is ever young, the Ireland of the Gael.

Let *that* be understood, the Ireland of Cuchulainn and Fionn, of Patrick and Columbcille. For the insufferable insolence of those people, superior and condescending, new-come from the later Pale to praise us – praise with its insolent limitations, deigning preciously to acknowledge our limited rights – always emphasising the limitations, we have come to lash their insolence and teach them respect for our former dignity and future destiny.

We know that deep in the hearts of the people of this city is loyalty to our ancient race, that baffled and bewildered by a degenerate

press and slavish public men, Cork but awaits a voice to arouse her with the old appeal to the old flag, and that loyalty of hers to Ireland's splendid destiny will become manifest and burning till it burns up for ever weakness, disgrace, and treachery.

We know that the best spirits in Cork are aching to give evidence of their allegiance to Ireland, the Ireland of imperishable tradition, and to disown all those who are blind to her honour and unworthy of her destiny. Rally to us, then, fellow-citizens, and we shall let our comrades elsewhere in Ireland know that when the battle is again set for Ireland and the call to the field is sounded, wherever the fight is thickest, there we in Cork shall claim an honourable place.

OUR LATER PROPHETS.

When our anger flares up at the underbred manner, vulgarity, and insolence of the later Palesmen, who come to us condescending and patronising, we can answer them in only one way, with the pride of the Gael; we tell them we are born of an older race and finer blood. We know it is the one way to answer *them*; but when that is said, we know also the question is not of race only; there is the higher bond in the immortal spirit, the breath of God in man that animated our people away back in the mists of history, the same breath that burns pure and clear to-day in the later children of our land.

We despise and repudiate the new Palesmen, not because of their late arrival, but because of their great presumption and little principle. And our hand is not only to the people of the Gael. How we take to our hearts Emmet and Tone, Mitchel and Davis! No, we reiterate, it is not a question of flesh and stock; and exulting we make a hymn of the great truth; it is in the immortal spirit lies the succession to our land. Davis is the spiritual son of Cormac, Emmet of countless martyrs to freedom; the gallant soldier, Tone, of the valiant Owen Roe – both alike done to death by treachery. Spirit of Shane the Proud, what finer spiritual son could you desire than the spirit of the later Shane, the proud and gallant Mitchel?

Yes, the succession of our race shall be known by this infallible test of the spirit; and pause and hear, while our later prophets speak; Emmet, calm and confident on the verge of the grave, commanding his epitaph be not written – not till we win a partial freedom, but till Ireland stands among the nations; Davis repudiating the bauble of a parliament that gives not a genuine freedom; Tone, who would strike Ireland for ever clear of her ancient and treacherous foe; and Mitchel, who put Ireland's historic faith in one line: 'The passionate aspiration for Irish nationhood will outlive the British Empire.'

OUR PURPOSE.

We take as our headline this prophecy of Mitchel's, and it is our purpose to labour to make it good. The present crisis has called us into being – not to disseminate news but principles; to help in framing a policy for Ireland consistent with her sovereign rights, that will seize the opportunity of the moment, and restore to her the supreme power of deciding her affairs within her and her relations without. That is our minimum; anything less would be inconsistent with the vigour of the battle our fathers waged, inconsistent with the conscious vitality of our people too-day stripping for another fight.

EXTRACTS TAKEN FROM *SHORT MEMOIR OF TERENCE MACSWINEY.*

If Mr. Devlin had ventured, following Mr O'Brien's path, to suggest volunteering for the Empire, that parade would have been rent and split with the escaping fury. It is certain. It is equally certain that if he stood for Ireland, or if Mr. Redmond, or if both of them, stood for Ireland militant and uncompromising, all sections of men there and elsewhere throughout Ireland, moderate and extreme, new and old, would follow them through fire and water. Was there ever such a chance given to a man or men in Ireland? It is unthinkable that they will refuse to take it.

What is the great new factor in the situation? The eagerness of the men called extremists – simple lovers of Ireland without qualification, no more – to stand in with the men called constitutionalists. They are anxious, eager, almost pathetically eager it might be said, to strengthen and support any party leader who will take the straight course for Ireland. They recognise that the older party leaders are, perhaps, battle-weary. They want it to be recognised that they themselves are young, full of fire and vitality, that they are not battle-weary; and that they want a fight. They wish the leaders to realise that there is this support behind them, that they themselves can be relied on, that they crave to be called to sacrifice and trials of endurance for Ireland, to enter the last and victorious battle for Irish liberty. Whatever the cost to them, they crave it. They want it to be realised, approved, and acted on. And then let the issue be set.

We want Ireland set on fire, and we think our personal sacrifice is not too high a price to pay. Think of the logic of sacrifice; the blood of our enemies may be shed in Ireland, but it must not be shed first; that would light up chiefly the feeling of vengeance. But let Irish blood be the first to fall on Irish earth and there will be kindled a crusade for the restoration of liberty that not all the powers of hell can defeat.

Ponder the words of Mitchel from the dock, speaking of his defiance to Lord Clarendon:

‘My lord, I knew that I was setting my life on that cast, but I knew that in either event the victory should be with me, and it is with me.’

We have not yet realised the certainty and magnitude of such a victory; we are about to learn it anew. We shall have again the victories of our soldiers in arms. What we need to distinguish now is the two orders of triumph, and how the one we are considering leads up to the other. Our Volunteers are yet not fully alert, not fully trained, hardly at all tried. The philosophy of Mitchel is needed to rouse them, to make them quick and eager and ready for death or victory. A sacrifice will do it; like a breath from Heaven it will blow on their souls and kindle the divine fire; and they shall be purified, strengthened, and made constant, and the destiny of Ireland will be safe in their hands.