

## IRELAND: FIGHT FOR FREEDOM PART 3

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<http://naukabezgranic.pl/podcasty/ireland/>

Welcome back! The year is 1909, Irish nationalists are fighting for more power within Ireland, hoping to get a little closer to Irish independence. Thomas Clarke is over from America to recruit soldiers into the IRB, he sees this as the quickest and easiest way of creating an Irish Army. In the North, Ulster unionist are arming themselves ready to fight against Home rule, if necessary. As we move into 1910 James Connolly, who is a Scottish socialist leader, comes over to Ireland and she's the injustice of the worker's rights. He goes on to set up the transport and general worker's trade union, to which 20,000 Irish workers join overnight. James Connolly and James Larkin, his right-hand man, go on to join the IRB also.

Moving into 1912, we had the Home Rule crisis. This is where we had the Home Rule bill which passed 1883 was now going to increase in power, the Irish nationalists in the House of Commons had been fighting for this for quite some time. In the north, the unionists signed The Covenant in 1912. Half a million unionists signed a Covenant agreeing to put their lives at stake to ensure the protection of the North of Ireland against Home Rule. So, a half a million people are against the Home Rule bill.

Ireland's response to this, is to set up the Irish Volunteers. 4,000 people signed up to join the Irish Volunteers the first evening, and by the end of the week the Irish Volunteers stood 170,000 strong. Suddenly Thomas Clarke realised that the IRB needed to infiltrate the Irish Volunteers; they were loyal to the Home Rule bill, they had not signed up to fight the Empire. In 1913 we had 'The Lockout,' this is where the employers of Dublin responded to James Connolly and James Larkin's worker's union, demanding higher working wages and better working conditions. They responded by locking out approx. 20,000 workers from their places of employment and refused to pay them. This caused rioting in the streets there was a huge amount of fighting between the Irish Volunteers, the British Police, the British soldiers, the workers that were part of the union and this cause James Connolly to set up the Irish Citizens Army which would later become essential to the 1916 Rising.

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In 1914 the Great War begins to break out in Europe. The Irish Volunteers and the Irish Unionists are called to stand with the British army against the Germans. 90% of the Irish Volunteers were inspired by John Redmond who was of the belief that the only way to unite was to stand with the British army, north and south standing together against the Germans, and when the time for Independence came that might bring the north and south together as a unified Ireland. There was about 10% of the Irish Volunteers who disagreed, however, and said that any sort of fighting or defending of the Empire was a betrayal of the Nationalist view, the Nationalist goal. This 10% was led by a man called Eoin O'Neill, who was a playwright and teacher, was now Chief of Staff of the Irish Volunteers. With about 7,000 Irish Volunteers left in Ireland and the rest at war, the British Empire was distracted in Germany; John Devoy over in America saw this as an opportunity to begin.

Devoy and Sir Roger Casement start working away over in America, gaining support, money and weapons to be smuggled from New York over to the west coast of Ireland. Nearing the end of 1914 a military council of the IRB was formed and they began to plan the Rising of 1916, though they didn't know when it would be but they knew they needed to strike while Britain was at war.

Throughout 1915, Thomas Clarke went around the country recruiting and planning, guns to be smuggled into the country, Constance Markievicz set up the Cumann na mBan, a woman's league of Irish Volunteers who would also take up arms for Ireland's fight for freedom. In August of 1915 we saw Dublin stand together, united, for a sad occasion; a state funeral of an Irish Republican Brotherhood leader and Parliament member for Home Rule Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa who died at 83. The IRB and, primarily, Thomas Clarke saw this as an opportunity to gain support for the IRB and sent Padraig Pearse, who was immensely talented with words, to speak at Jeremiah's funeral. He said:

*'They think that they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools! - they have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.'*

*Padraig Pearse, 1915*

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This became one of the glorified speeches of the movement of the IRB, and it rally support around the country and more and more people were volunteering to join the IRB but needed to be armed. Now, Sir Roger Casement was of the belief that my enemy's enemy is my friend and therefore he went over to Germany and secured 20, 000 rifles and 1,000,000 rounds of ammunition onto the *Aud* ship, which would sail to the south west of Ireland, unloaded and the guns transported to Dublin. The IRB military council arranged nine different strategic points around Dublin, which the Irish Volunteers would take by force and hold out as long as possible, fighting off whatever opposition the British threw at them.

However, the *Aud* arrived on the 20th April, literally one day early, and instead of being greeted by Irish Volunteers to transport the weapons, Sir Roger Casement was greeted by the Royal Irish Constabulary and he was arrested for high treason. The *Aud* never received the single from the shore and was nearly captured by the British navy, however the captain stunk the ship!

When news of the loss of the weapons reached Eoin O'Neill's ears, the Chief of Staff for the Irish Volunteers, he put an ad in the newspaper cancelling the 'movements' of Easter Monday had been cancelled. This enraged the military council and on the morning of Easter Monday it's said that Constance Markievicz stormed into O'Neill's office demanding his life for his betrayal, his treachery. Now Constance Markievicz, Joseph Plunkett, James Connolly etc., all travelling to Phoenix park and met with only 2,000 volunteers, who would fight for Ireland's freedom. On they marched to the nine different locations, the Rising in itself is amazing from a military point, because there was no resistance. Most of the British soldiers were off in World War 1 fighting, to give you an idea; six armed soldiers guarding Dublin Castle. So really the issue wasn't taking the city the issue was keeping it.

Easter Monday, into the Tuesday, taking the city was easy and as news spread by Wednesday 6,000 British soldiers were being transported into Dublin. Throughout Thursday the British soldiers attempted full frontal assaults on the strategic strongholds of the IRB members but to no avail, basically the IRB would pick off the inexperienced infantry as they were coming across bridges, trying to get into the buildings. This went on till

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Thursday evening until the British realised they needed artillery to beat the rebels. On Saturday morning the artillery arrives from Britain and they bombed the city centre of Dublin, causing a massive explosion of a pharmaceutical chemical warehouse which caused an inferno to erupt in the city centre, spreading from building to building like wild fire.

The rebels couldn't hold up against burning out buildings and the entire city centre was essentially an inferno by Sunday morning the rebels were forced to surrender. All through the Sunday and Monday, the IRB members were arrested and sent to prison camps in Britain, apart from the 15 leaders of the IRB, such as James Connolly, Padraig Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh. These leaders were marked and executed over 14 days under court marshal and trial. The only man to excuse execution was a man called Eamonn De Valera, who would later become the most important political figure over the following 50 years. He also becomes the first Irish President, it is his joint American citizenship that protects him from execution, however he did get sent to jail for 3 years until 1919.

The 1916 Rising had caused 485 deaths, 260 were civilians; women and children, 126 British soldiers, 82 Irish rebels and 17 police. It wasn't a massacre of a rebellion, it was a huge stalemate of a rebellion, which left Dublin in ruin, however it left behind Irish people with a taste of freedom, a vision for an independent Republic, and throughout 1917-1919 the feelings of rebellion, of independence still felt strong and it gave birth to Michael Collins and Eamonn DeValera which paved the way to a Free State Ireland. It won't be until 1949 in history when the Irish Republic is official but it was the 1916 rising that freed Ireland from the chains of the British Empire and Ireland free, shall always be at peace.

Note: This is spoken English and spoken grammar, the script reflects the story telling style.