

Transcript for Episode One: Easter Rising

### **Intro 0:00-1:40**

Hello, I am Sam Amenn, and this is the first episode of the Art of Asymmetrical Warfare Podcast. Today we will be discussing Easter Rising.

Theme song: Symphony no. 5 in Cm, Op. 67 - III. Allegro

Easter Rising may be one of Ireland's most famous rebellions and has a huge mythos and legacy associated with it. This mythos was created the moment the guns were silent as the participants worked through the Anglo-Irish War and the Irish Civil War they kept going back to 1916 as the origin point for their rebellion and trying to figure what had happened and why they had happened and as they dealt with the creation of the Free Irish state and things didn't turn out the way they thought they would they would go back to 1916 and tried to figure out who had failed who and who had betrayed who. This conversation continued into history and as historians researched the rising, they had to deal with these many conflicting stories.

And even as outside of Ireland as Americans and Europeans they try to understand the rising within a greater context whether that context be the world war I context whether it be small nations fighting against colonial masters whether it be the rise of democracy, whatever you want the context to be there still seems to be a struggle to understand Easter rising.

That's our task for today (laughs) to contextualize Easter Rising and place it in the greater narrative of Ireland's struggle not even for independence because for a while that was a minority belief but really for self-governance and the right to govern for all Irish people not just a specific minority

### **Daniel O'Connell 1:40-3:23**

To provide context we have to go back, maybe surprising to 1843 and stand with Daniel O'Connell and the monster meeting of Tara.

Daniel O'Connell should be a giant in Irish history, and I think he's overshadowed by Charles Parnell and Eamon DeValera. But he was a lawyer and a politician and his big success was in 1829 where he successfully campaigned for Catholic Emancipation i.e. the right for Catholics to sit in Parliament to have governmental jobs and to make things easier for Catholics because there were a right of laws that restricted what Catholics could do. And, so, that made him super famous and he tried his luck again in 1843 when he fought to repeal the union. So, at that time the King was the king of England and Ireland and Ireland was definitely a colony or semi-colony. So repealing the union would have given self-governance back to Ireland while still acknowledging the queen as the queen. But he failed and he failed through a combination of being old and sick and also his methods were no longer working.

Daniel O'Connell believed that the only way to gain independent was to use the British system against them and he didn't believe in violence. He thought it was a waste and that it had never

helped the Irish cause before so why would it help now. Unfortunately, there was a group of young Irish people called the young Irishmen who disagreed with him and they took away his support, so he dies in mid-1800s without repealing the union.

And out of his failure, like I said, comes the Younger Irishmen and then they rebel in 1848 and they're defeated and out of that defeat comes the Irish Republican Brotherhood (the IRB). The IRB was a secret oath-bound physical force organization that believed that parliamentary politics would only lead to compromise and disappointment, so they believed in physical force.

### **Charles Parnell 3:24-5:45**

The next man to pick up the cause of Irish self-governance and Irish independence is Charles Stewart Parnell.

Charles Parnell was an Anglo-Irish Protestant who believed in Irish nationalism, he flirted a little bit with the IRB, but I don't think he was ever a member. His focus was parliamentary politics, like O'Connell and he joins the Irish Parliamentary Party, the IPP. The IPP was a nationalist party that believed in independent rule for Ireland and so he makes his name fighting for agrarian reform during the land wars and later, he takes control of the IPP and creates the Home Rule bill along with the British PM, Gladstone. Home Rule would have created an Irish Parliament within Dublin, it would have allowed both Catholics and Protestants to sit in that parliament and Ireland would still be able to govern itself but still associate with England. And Parnell was this close to getting it passed but his own personal life jeopardized his own political career. It seems that he was having an affair with a woman who was still married and she was in the process of getting a divorce, but I think he moves in with her before the divorce was finalized and of course, in England and Ireland of the 1800s, this was a massive scandal. And it ruined him. However, he made things worse because he didn't step down, he didn't step away from politics. He didn't even acknowledge that the affair was a problem. And so, the IPP tries to distance themselves from him because they're trying to salvage what they can from this disaster. So, Parnell creates his own party and he splits the IPP and he just kind of crashes spectacularly. I think it's hard for people to understand how huge Parnell's failure was. He was a hero of Ireland and I think it's something that still stings within Ireland.

O'Connell had this idea that we use the British system against them, and we'll get Irish independence and freedom. So, Parnell takes that theory and he tries to take that one step further. Repeal the Union didn't work so let's try Home Rule, but he fails. So, what's the other option? The other option is physical force. So, while Parnell is out there in Parliament, trying to fight for Irish independence the IRB are still around and they're killing people and attacking people and causing great agitations. And they shoot themselves in the foot with the Phoenix Parks killings. They stab Ireland's chief secretary and the permanent undersecretary. And this caused a huge reaction both in Britain and in Ireland and there's a man hunt and it destroys the IRB.

### **1912 and John Redmond 5:45-8:55**

So now it's 1912. O'Connell struck out. Parnell struck out. The IPP still exists. Ironically, I think they recovered better from Parnell's fall than the IRB did. The IRB is limping along and now it's

up to John Redmond who is the new leader of IPP and who studied under Parnell to pass Home Rule. This is the third version of Home Rule and, again, Redmond is really really fricking close. And one of the reasons he is close is because when Gladstone worked with Parnell to create the first Home Rule bill, he made Home Rule a key platform for the Liberal party. So, the new Prime Minister, Asquith, who is a colonial liberal or an imperial liberal has this albatross around his neck, basically, which is Home Rule. He needs the IPP to hold a majority in parliament and if he loses the IPP then his party loses power in parliament, but he doesn't want to pass Home Rule. He's against it. He thinks it goes against everything the British empire stands for. A lot of his cabinet are anti-Irish and on top of that you have the Ulster problem.

So, Edmund Carson who was leader of the Ulster Unionist Party the UUP and James Craig, who is also part of that party have created the Ulster Volunteers. The Ulster Volunteers was a paramilitary group dedicated to defending Protestants from Catholics. There is historical reason to be nervous or weary in Ireland. I think the most recent movement for this period, 1912, is the 1798 Uprising which was led by Wolfe Tone and a number of Protestants were killed, as were a number of Catholics. The British were brutal when they put it down. It is something that sticks in Ulster memory and so the Ulster Volunteers, they're smuggling weapons, they're training, they're making a big noise because they also know the louder they are the more nervous the nationalist Irish will get, which will then put pressure on Asquith to do something to solve the Home Rule problem.

Asquith's solution is to wait on it and sit on it. And he is able to sit on it from 1912 to 1914, when he is pressured to pass it. So, it does pass in 1914 and the nationalists are excited, and John Redmond feels like, you know, he's validated in trusting Asquith. And then an archduke gets assassinated in Serbia and World War I Begins.

Asquith uses World War I as an excuse to delay the effects of Home Rule until after the war. So, technically, Home Rule is passed but it's not going to go into effect until at least three years after 1914. And then to make matters worse, Asquith turns to John Redmond and says now I need you to go recruit for soldiers in Ireland because we have this huge world on the continent, and I need men. And so, then John Redmond feeling like he has to because he's lost his leverage. Home Rule has passed and he can't really fight the logic behind do we really want to enforce home rule on an island that is known to be a powder keg with two sides, the Ulster Volunteers and the Nationalists getting ready for war with each other during a world war. We don't have the manpower to do that. And so, Redmond gets that logic and he feels that he has to recruit. However, this comes as a betrayal to a number of nationalists and Redmond who formerly had a number of war relations with some of the nationalists is cut out and he loses contact with a lot of former organizations within Ireland.

### **The Many Organizations of Ireland 1914 8:56-13:58**

So, what does this mean for Ireland? So the IPP was a huge source of political power in Ireland and the UUP was another source of power in Ireland, but what I think a lot of people overlook is that you had a number of smaller organizations that were popping up because people were losing faith in the IPP or because they didn't trust the British government or because they were nationalists, extremists.

One of these groups is Sinn Fein. Sinn Fein is created in the 1900s by Arthur Griffith. Arthur Griffith is an Irish figure who should really be bigger than he is. He really sets the stage or the ideological thought for a lot of the rebels who come out of Easter Rising and create the IRA and fight the British during the Anglo-Irish War. He was a politician and a writer and two of the things he contributed to the conversation of Irish independence is dual monarchy, like the Austria-Hungary empire. So, Ireland would rule itself and Britain would rule itself, so they would be independent states, but they would share the queen. This contradicts a lot of republican hopes and dreams, but it kind of makes sense, given Ireland's position in regards to Britain at the time. The other important ideological doctrine he introduces is parliamentary absenteeism. So, he argues that anyone who runs as Sinn Fein and who wins should not sit in British parliament because the British parliament government is illegitimate. They have no power over Ireland

Ronan Fanning's book, *Fatal Path*, which is where I get a lot of this information on the British government's relation with Ireland at the time makes a compelling argument that while Griffith's idea makes emotional sense and while I think there is some satisfaction that comes from telling the British government f-off you're not legitimate so we're not going to bother with you- although we'll run in your elections. Some bizarre logic there. He makes this argument that it hurts the nationalist's cause in the long run because what happens, especially after Easter Rising, is that Sinn Fein take a lot of seats from the IPP but they're not replacing them in parliament. So, the Irish voice diminishes but the UUP keeps a steady hold onto their power base. So, they're not diminishes in parliament. In fact they're voice may even sound louder because you don't have the IPP and you don't have Sinn Fein to argue against them.

And Fanning makes a legitimate point and it makes sense IF you still want to engage with the British parliament and the British parliament system. And there is an argument that well you're not going to get what you want if you don't engage with the system. But Griffith's argument is well I don't care because I never wanted to engage with the system in the first place. That's not my goal. My goal is to break away completely from the system and I know I'm not going to do that within parliament. So, we're going to run for election, we're going to take seats, from people and we're going to basically give Britain the middle finger (laughs). I get both arguments, but it's something that has a huge impact in Irish politics once Sinn Fein became a powerful party. And it has a huge effect on the Irish Civil War and the first few years of the Free Irish State, which we'll talk about in another episode. So, he created Sinn Fein.

In addition to Sinn Fein there are a lot of small groups like the Gaelic League groups which is basically continuing and preserving Irish culture and a lot of rebels would go to play some kind of sport match or learn Gaelic languages and that's where a LOT of people met and conspired. There is *Cumann mban* which was the female auxiliary group which was created by Kathleen Clarke and Constance Markievicz and it was a nationalist group that believed in physical violence to liberate Ireland.

Then you had the boys' and girls' groups which were basically boy scouts where they would teach them how to fight and shoot guns so, you know, as you do.

And then, I think two of the more important groups are the Irish Citizen Army and the Irish Volunteers.

So, the Irish Citizen Army was created by James Connolly and Jim Larkin and they created it after the 1913 lockout. So, the 1913 lockout was a unionist strike for worker rights. And again, a lot of people met at this lock out. So, in Connolly's mind, Irish nationalism is connected to this bigger struggle for workers and if you have a platform that doesn't take that into consideration then you're worthless basically.

The Irish Volunteers was a group that was created by Eoin MacNeill and Bulmer Hobson. They created the Irish Volunteers in response to the Ulster Volunteers. Because like I said, they were making the nationalists fricking nervous. It's interesting because MacNeill did not believe that an uprising had any chance for success because he was still gun smuggling, he was still training men, he was still allowing them to march around and play soldier. And I don't know if he did that because he knows that the Irish people needed to let off steam or at some vague point in time there would be these conditions in which he would like yeah you know an uprising will succeed let's go it.

But what he doesn't realize, because MacNeill trusts Redmond. He is annoyed when Redmond starts recruiting for war, but he doesn't lose faith in Redmond. He looks at World War I and he doesn't think that there is no point to rebel during this period because again he doesn't think an uprising will win but also there are a number of Irish people who are going to fight for the British during World War I. The Battle of the Somme is a huge battle for Irish-British citizens. A number of Irish citizens will die for Britain during the Somme. However, what he doesn't know is that there are a core group of people within the Irish Volunteers who are planning to rebel. Who do believe that British difficulty equals Irish opportunity and are willing to work with the enemies of Britain to rebel against Britain.

### **The Seven Leaders of Easter Rising 13:58-20:30**

This group of men would be called the special committee and they were made up of IRB men plus James Connolly. The names of these men are Padraig Pearse, Tom Clarke, Sean MacDiarmada, Eamon Ceannt, Thomas MacDonagh, and Joseph Plunkett.

Tom Clarke was an old Fenian rebel. He joined the IRB in 1878 and was arrested to attempt to blow up London Bridge as part of the Fenian Dynamite Campaign in 1883. He spent about 15 years in jail and he meets his wife's uncle in jail and that's how he ends up meeting her and marrying her. When he returns to Ireland, he is the defacto leader of the IRB. Especially in Dublin and he, along with Sean MacDiarmada, who is a young nationalist, do a lot of the planning for Easter Rising and a lot of the organizing.

The next most important person for the Rising is Padraig Pearse. Padraig Pearse was a poet and a schoolteacher. He was a firm believer in reviving the Gaelic language, so he founded St. Enda's college, which was a bilingual institution. He focused on Irish traditions and culture. He is a romantic man and he believed in the power of martyrdom which I think he shared with Tom Clarke as well. He believed that Ireland needed to shed the blood of its best people to inspire the

rest of Ireland to rebel and win independence. And some historians had argued that he didn't necessarily care if the Rising succeeded, he just believed that if you got enough martyrs it would all work out and I think that's a bit unfair. I don't think he was counting on a massacre and I don't think he was asking people to fight just to die but he made it very clear that either the rising would succeed, or he expected them to die. And he himself was fully prepared to be a martyr. The one thing I will say is that there a comment I read once from a comment from Michael Collins in which he said that if James Connolly asked him to follow him into Hell, he would do it right away but if Padraig Pearse asked him, he would have to think twice. Which I think that just illustrates that if you were a romantic you probably loved Pearse. If you were a pragmatic person, you probably looked to Clarke and to Connolly.

The third most important person I think for the Rising is Sean Mac Diarmada also known as Sean McDermott. He was born surrounded by Irish history. He moved to Dublin and he became a member of IRB, Sinn Fein, the Gaelic League. He was an editor of the Irish newspaper Irish Freedom, which he founded with Hobson. He became very very close with Clarke and his wife and together they planned the rising. He also believed in the power of bloody sacrifice like Pearse, but he was also a bit pragmatic like Clarke. And he was very popular with all the rebels and I think his death besides Pearse, hit the hardest.

Then you have Joseph Plunkett, who came from a wealthy Dublin family, but he contracted tuberculosis when he was young, so he spent a considerable amount of time in the Mediterranean and North Africa. So he was well traveled, he was well educated and he also firmly believed in physical violence and in rebelling against British whenever he could. When he returned he joined the Gaelic league where he befriends Thomas MacDonagh, who is another member of this committee. He joined the IRB in 1915 and he was sent to Germany with Roger Casement to negotiate for military arms and military support. I read in some books; I think it's in Townshend's book Easter Rising 1916 where its hint that Plunkett thought he was a more competent military commander than he maybe he was. But I think he was just trying to fill this gap that definitely existed within the planning for Easter Rising, um, this tactical gap. Because I think this vague idea of let's take Dublin (laughs) right there's the idea and then there's the reality and I think that's what Plunkett was trying to fill that gap of what does it mean to take Dublin. What do we need to do, what do we actually need to do to be successful?

I mentioned Thomas MacDonagh. He was an assistant headmaster at St. Enda's school, and he was a lecturer at the university college Dublin. He was also a playwright and a poet. He met Pearse and MacNeill, again, through the Gaelic League and he joined the IRB in 1915. He actually ends up marrying Muriel Gifford whose sister was Grace. And Grace was engaged to Joseph Plunkett. And they were supposed to get married, I think, before the Rising, but the Rising actually pushes the wedding date off. Thomas was also responsible for planning the funeral of the Irish Fenian leader, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, where Pearse would give one of his greatest speeches.

Then we have Eamon Ceannt, who was a very religious and committed member of the Irish Volunteers. He joined the Gaelic League when he moves to Dublin and that's when he became involved in many nationalistic affairs, like many other members of the Irish Volunteers and the IRB and later the IRA. In 1907 he joins Sinn Fein and in 1915 he become a member of the IRB.

And then finally there's James Connolly, we mentioned he a couple of times in this episode. Connolly, again, is a figure that I think really should be bigger in Irish history and outside of Irish history. It was interesting because I was reading a book about the 1960s and 1970s IRA and that IRA had a very strong communist and socialist strain to it and they looked to James Connolly as a source of inspiration, not Collins, not DeValera, not even Pearse. Connolly really seemed to be there guy. Connolly is actually born in Edinburgh and joins the British Army when he was fourteen. He served in the British army for many many years before he realized that British imperialism was trouble and so he deserted and became a socialist and moved back to Scotland. He couldn't do what he wanted in Scotland so he went to Dublin when eh heard about the Dublin socialist club he quickly transformed it into the Irish Socialist Republican Party he along with Arthur Griffith against the Boer war and he writes a short book about labor in Irish history that is actually very critical of Daniel O'Connell. He is involved in the lockout of 1913 along with Jim Larkin. And that's where he'll meet a lot of his future fellow officers. He meets Constance Markievicz there, he meets Kathleen Clarke there, and he'll meet his future secretary, Winifred Carney there. So he was actually planning a rising of his own because he did not think highly of the Irish volunteers he thought they were gutless basically and they would never rebel against the British so when Pearse finds out he's planning his own rebellion, Pearse does everything he can to recruit Connolly to their cause. Because you don't want two uprisings on the same day, that would be terrible or even close within each other. That would just ruin everything. So, Connolly after talking to Pearse decides to join their group and help plan for Easter Rising.

There are a lot of historian who argue that the leaders of Easter Rising were ill prepared, they were idealistic, you know, some I think have even said they were moronic and I think that's a little unfair. I definitely think they were in over their heads in a lot of ways. But I think you do have men of talent like Tom Clarke and even men like Mac Diarmada and Plunkett and one Connolly joins, you have a real source of logistical planning that could have made Easter Rising successful.

### **Planning for Easter Rising 20:30-25:58**

But one of the things they can't do, because they're not dumb. They know they can't win this on their own. They know MacNeill has a point. So, one of the things they do is look back at Irish history and they look at what have people done in the past. What have our heroes down in the past. And they look at 1798 against which is huge uprising. What did the leaders of that uprising do? Well they went to France because, at the time, France was Britain's enemy and they asked France for help. And France actually did send a small detachment to Ireland to help the rebels, but it was like two weeks later. So, it was useless. There is a very bizarre moment where the French troops show up in Ireland and they realize the war is over and they have to diplomatically extract themselves from starting a bigger conflict in Ireland. So, the leaders of Easter Rising send Joseph Plunkett and Roger Casement to Germany and Roger Casement is a very tragic figure in Irish history.

Before he join the rebels he also served, I think, in the British army and he, I think he protests the Boer war first and then he is sent to the Congo and he writes about the horrendous treatment of

the Congolese and at the time Leopold of Belgium owns the Congo and so Casement writes the Casement Report which is used to strip the Congo away from Belgium. And so, he is a very compassionate man and that is one of the reasons why he is an Irish nationalist, because he recognizes British imperialism isn't much better. He's also a homosexual and while privately he is not embarrassed about it. He's very open about it, there was a push to write that out of his history and his narrative.

There is also some evidence that Padraig Pearse may also have been a homosexual as well. R. F. Foster in his book *Vivid Face* which I highly recommended does a great job documenting places in Pearse's journal and writing that suggests he may have been a suppressed homosexual

So they send Plunkett briefly talks to the Germany commanders, thinks they have an understanding, comes back to Ireland, Casement stay in Germany to recruit from the British prisoners, Irish men to help fight in Easter Rising and to make sure the Germans follow through on their promises to send weapons and men.

Things seem to be going well for the planners of Easter Rising. The men are drilling, they're being prepared. Some men know exactly what is happening, some men don't, orders are sent out that there's going to be a parade on Easter Sunday, and everyone should be ready, and they think it's going to be a success.

However, there is a huge problem.

You may have noticed that I have not yet mentioned MacNeill's or Hobson's role in planning for Easter Rising. That's because they didn't have one because they didn't know. Pearse and the others did not trust MacNeill and Hobson. They thought they did not have the courage to rise up against the British when the opportunity came, so they never told them about the rising which is kind of bizarre quite frankly. What is even weirder is that Hobson and MacNeill were never suspicious that anything was going on. (laughs) Until right up to a few days before Easter Rising is supposed to happen. I guess they just assumed they're drill, that's normal, ok. What is idiotic though, is that the British knew that something was happening. They were getting reports, they knew the Irish were more agitated than normal, they were more activity than normal. You had the Howth gun smuggling incident where Erskine Childers and his wife Molly managed to smuggle 1500 Mauser rifles into Ireland without the British being able to stop them. But they ignore it. They ignored the demonstrations and the reports and sent their men on holiday.

So Pearse is feeling good and thinks things are going according to plan. And then things get really hairy.

First Casement is arrested by the British police. Casement had been Germany, like I said, and he slowly realizes that the Germans are not going to follow through on their promise and he loses all hope so he jumps on a Germany submarine, the *Aud* and rides it to Ireland to warn Pearse: call it off. There's no way we're going to win. It's going to be a blood mess and then he's picked up by the British police.

And then MacNeill finds out and MacNeill is *pissed*. And then Pearse uses this order from the British as an excuse as to why we should rebel. And the order basically says these are the leaders of the Irish volunteers these are the people we should arrest. But it seems to be a list of who was important in nationalist circles and not necessarily like the German plot later in the 1920s where the British would actually arrest the leaders of the IRA and so MacNeill isn't buying it. And MacNeill wants to stop the Rising but he won't call the authorities so he does the only thing he can do. He submits a counter order which basically says that the parade has been canceled which screwed up everything for Pearse and his group of conspirators. So, they have a meeting and decide it's too late, we have to go through with it. So, they sent out *another* order that says the parade will be resumed on Monday.

Needless to say, this causes all kinds of confusion and poor MacNeill gets a lot of crap for his counter order. Because there is this alternative narrative that if everyone had shown up when they were supposed to have shown up, Easter Rising would have been a bigger success. I don't know how true that is without German support, without the additional weapons they were expecting. I don't see how that's true. I think, maybe Easter Rising would have lasted a little longer and more people would have died. Maybe it would have been a bigger uprising and a bloodier uprising, maybe similar to 1798 but 1798 didn't succeed either. So poor MacNeill and Hobson get written out of Irish history because they didn't support 1916 and I think it's only recently that you see that they are returning to the Irish Narrative

### **Planning for Easter Rising 25:59-32:21**

It's Monday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1916 and the forces of the Irish Volunteers begin trickling into Dublin. Some people listen to Pearse's order and are ready to go. Some people thought it was canceled and then they show up because they heard something was happening or they were walking by in the first place and realized this-this is real. I have to get my weapons and come back. So, it is a mess, it is a chaotic mess. One of my favorite examples of how chaotic and uncoordinated it is, or it was, is the story of Richard Mulcahy and Thomas Ashe with the Fingal brigade. So, Richard Mulcahy, who's going to be the future chief of staff for the IRA and then later minister of defense in the Irish free state is sent out of Dublin to cut the telegraph lines so the British can't communicate. However, the forces in Dublin never take the telegraph exchange so once the British take that back from them, they're easily able to connect the telegraphy lines and it's all moot. So then, Mulcahy wanders the outskirts of Dublin because he's not really sure where he needs to go. He ends up running into Thomas Ashe's brigade, it's more like a battalion now because it's only 60 people. They don't really-don't know what's going on, but they have rifles. (laughs) so you know, and something's happening. I think at one point they steal a bakery truck, so they're riding the bakery truck up and down these roads around Dublin. They have a couple of bicycles and the bicycle is the mode of transportation for the IRA. IF there was ever a vehicle associated with the Anglo-Irish war, it would be the bicycle. And they uh, there's a battle of Ashbourne which is a small barracks and they defeat the British and are able to take the barracks. And it's one of the only victories the rebels have during Easter Rising and it's really fascinating because uh it seems that Mulcahy planned the attack and Ashe was the commander and so he used his charisma to get his men to listen but what's really fascinating considering that Mulcahy is going to be chief of staff of the IRA is that he uses the tactics that they'll use during the Anglo-Irish War and it seems that this is the first time they're really tested out. So, they win but

because it's uncoordinated, because they don't know where they need to be, because they have no way of communicating with headquarters it's a lot of sound and fury and that's the best way to describe Easter Rising. Is that you have the small engagements throughout the city itself. There are a couple of other battalions and brigades that show up in the countryside but it's not as many as they needed because of the counter order. So, it's really focused in Dublin. And you have these brave stands right no one can take away the bravery of these stands, but they don't contribute to anything because they're not coordinated.

So, back in Dublin, the Irish Volunteers have taken the General Post Office and that's become Headquarters or that's where Pearse, Clarke, and Connolly and MacDiarmada are stationed. East of the GPO, the General post Office, Edward Daley, Clarke's brother-in-law, takes the four courts. West of Daley, Eamon Ceannt takes the South Dublin Union, west of Ceannt's union is the Jacob's Biscuit Factory, which is controlled by Thomas MacDonagh's unit and that's also where they first print the proclamation of the Irish republic which is this huge announcement that Pearse reads out at the GPO saying that we've taken Dublin for Ireland and we're establishing a republic. James Connolly's Irish citizen army takes St. Stephen's Green which is west of the biscuit factory and it's commanded by Michael Mallin and then Constance Markievicz helps build the barricades there. And finally, you have Eamon DeValera's unit which takes Boland's Mill, which is far west of Connolly's position. However, they don't take Dublin Castle, which is the center of British control over Ireland, they don't take Trinity College, which cuts through Dublin, so if the British take it the southern units will be cut off from HQ and then, like I said, they don't take the telegraph lines, and they don't take the two main railroads. And this is a huge fricking problem because Dublin is surrounded by five barracks, two to the north and three to the south. And yes, the troops are on vacation, but Ireland's a small country, it's not going to take them that long to travel from whether they are to Dublin. Additionally, England is right next door. It's not going to take long to send reinforcements for England should they need to be there. But the Irish Volunteers don't have anyone. They are alone. So, Monday does end on a success, but it's only successful because no one actually expected the rising to happen and no one responded to it.

When the British government realizes that there's a rebellion, they do declare martial law and the fate of Ireland and Dublin is taken out of the civilian government and place in the military's hand.

Tuesday and Wednesday were spent being bombarded by the British field guns and then losing territory to the south. But the end of Wednesday the Irish Citizen Army has been pushed out St. Stephen's Green and they're holing up in the College of Royal Surgeons. Daly's troops in the Four Courts, they're starting to experience really intense fighting and then you have Thursday and Friday which are known to be the bloodiest days of the rising.

So, on Thursday you have the battle for South Dublin Union, and it was made famous by the ferocious fighting and by Cathal Brugha. Brugha is an interesting figure in Irish history (laughs) He is an incredibly stubborn fighter and so during Easter Rising he is wounded 23 times and everybody thought hew as going to die before the week was over (laughs) but he lives and he becomes minister of defense for the Ira and a very difficult thorn in the side of Richard Mulcahy and Michael Collins.

While Brugha is being turned into a pin cushion, you have Daly up north with the Four Courts and they fight tremendously hard on Thursday and Friday because if they lose the Four Courts then the GPO is vulnerable to attack. And Thursday morning starts with British armed trucks rolling down Bolton street and attempting to take King Street where Daly's troops are in position to meet them. Eventually the British have to drill through the inside walls, and travel from house to house, wounding and killing many civilians, to push Daly out of the Four Courts. So, he evacuates Four Courts properly on Friday Night.

Further bad news arrives on Friday when General John Maxwell arrives in Ireland. He was a traditional army man, he served in Sudan, in the Boer War, and in the first world war. He becomes the official commander in chief in Ireland. He ignores the civilian government completely and I think he does more than anyone to cement the legacy of Easter Rising. One of his first major contributions to that legacy is refusing to negotiate any terms of surrender, short of unconditional surrender.

So, then the artillery barrage has been kept up since Wednesday. One shell lands in Sackville Street and starts a fire and the fire starts to take control of the city and it gets so bad that the men inside the GPO can start to feel the heat through the walls. And then an oil works catches fire on Abbey Street so you have artillery bombardment, you know, you've lost St. Stephen's Green, you've lost the Four Courts, South Dublin Union is barely holding on, DeValera is at Boland's Mill doing DeValera things, you know Biscuit's Factory is on the verge of falling. Things are not looking good for the Irish Volunteers. And so, on Friday morning, the women were sent out of the GPO and then the building's hit with a shell and catches fire at 3:00pm. Again, things are getting worse and now headquarters is on fire. Connolly is wounded because he had joined out to check on men and the positions and so he's wounded in his left leg and needs to be carried out on a stretcher. Eventually Pearse and co realize they need to evacuate the GPO because it is on fire (laughs) and then at that point, I think Pearse looks around and realizes that there is no point in continuing this battle and so he surrenders.

### **Surrender 32:22-39:30**

And the order is passed around and there's actually some controversy about this because technically DeValera is the last unit within Dublin to surrender and he makes a big deal about this when he runs for president, you know, when he argues that he should be president of Sinn Féin and leader of the IRA. But really the reason he was one of the last to surrender is because he was one of the last to get the order. So, again, historians, because I think everyone likes to take potshots at Dev. Historians use this to argue that, you know, Dev is not as brave as he claimed to be, or you know, he is a manipulative person who used this incident to build street credit and I think that's just being a little harsh. DeValera could be manipulative and conniving but I don't think he was like purposely taking his experience at Boland Mills and contorting it. I think he was genuinely like, yeah, I was the last to surrender, right. It's true. And then he had no way of really knowing who was the last to get the order. He just surrenders when he felt he could. So that I think *that* piece of criticism of Dev is a little unearned.

So, Pearse sends out the order to surrender. He sends out poor Elizabeth O'Farrell to tell the British that they're surrendering. And she's sent out to the units in the countryside, so eventually Mulcahy and Ashe find out they're supposed to surrender. And this is how bad communicate was, they send Mulcahy back into Dublin and I don't know how he did this, but basically the British allow him to go talk to Pearse to confirm that they're supposed to surrender and then he has to go back to tell the Fingal Battalion that yeah this is real, we need to surrender. So, a lot of the volunteers were sent to Kilmainham and they were sent to Mountjoy prison. So, then this is where Maxwell did his utmost to cement the reputation of Easter rising and the seven men who planned Easter rising

So, Maxwell decides that he wants to squash ALL rebellion within Ireland, so he decides to arrest ALL Sinn Feinners. So, a number of people who had nothing to do with the Rising are thrown in jail. And the people in Ireland, I think, kind of tolerate this because the uprising was so unexpected and so big and they're not really supportive of the Irish rebels at this point, so they're kind of like just do what you have to do to take care of this. And then Maxwell decides they're going to try the rebels by military court, and this is a big deal because the Irish have always argued and will always argue that they're political prisoners. They're not criminals, they're not combatants that their fight is a political dimension and the only reason they use violence is because it's the only thing Britain seems to understand. So, when Maxwell decides they're going to be tried by the military court, they lose all their rights, they technically have a right to an attorney or representative but it's never told to them and only someone people realize they can do that. The trials last anywhere from a minute to may be a half hour. There are three or four British soldiers, like former lawyers, who are also in the military who sit on the committee to decide if these men and women should be executed. And it's done secretly, and it's done quickly. It seems like the idea is to kill as many of them as he can to instill the most amount of fear and to really, you know, teach this lesson that you don't rebel against the British.

So, the first three leaders to be executed are Padraig Pearse, Tom Clarke, and Tom MacDonagh And one of the reasons why they were shot on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, is because they signed the proclamation and that made sense, you know in a lot of ways. Shoot the guys who signed the document. But then on May 4<sup>th</sup>, Joseph Plunkett is shot, and the British were so kind as to let him marry his fiancée the night before and it was literally just a marriage ceremony and she's forced to leave the prison cell so.

But then you have Edward Daly, Willie Pearse, who is Padraig's younger brother, and Michael O'Hanrahan were also executed with Plunkett. And this, when people look back at these executions, this is where people start to question, well, what was Maxwell thinking. Because Pearse, Willie Pearse was eighteen years old and he was a courier. He had nothing to do with the uprising, with the planning of the uprising, he didn't really fight even. But because he was Pearse's younger brother, it seemed that Maxwell just connected them in his head. Edward Daly and Michael O'Hanrahan were leaders of unit who fought during Easter Rising. But there were also a number of leaders who fought and weren't executed. So already this idea of justice is being unevenly applied.

On the 5<sup>th</sup>, John MacBride, who is another commander of a unit in Dublin is executed. And then on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Eamon Ceannt, who against was a signer of the Proclamation and a planner of Easter

Rising is killed. So is Sean Heuston, Con Colbert, and Michael Mallin. And then Thomas Kent is executed on the 9<sup>th</sup>. And finally, Sean Mac Diarmada and James Connolly are executed on the 13<sup>th</sup>. And Connolly had been wounded in the leg, and his wound had grown inflamed so he couldn't stand to be shot so they tie him to the chair to shoot him.

The Asquith government knows all this is happening and it's only around the 9<sup>th</sup> I think when Asquith starts questioning the wisdom of shooting prisoners this way, so he reaches out to Maxwell and tells him you need to wrap this up. You need to stop because not the Irish population is turning against the British because of these executions but also because a number of citizens were murdered during Easter Rising and the most famous of these is Francis Sheehy-Skeffington. Francis was a strong feminist and a strong pacifist and he was out during Easter Rising helping the wounded and helping to feed those who needed to be fed and he was arrested by a British office captain Bowen-Colthurst who then arrests him throws him in jail and takes him out of jail and shoots him. And the British try to cover this up and, you know, immediately after Easter Rising no one is quite sure what has happened, but his wife, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, is making a huge fuss about it and wants to know where is my husband. And there were a number of other people who had been killed, as well, during the rise, so the population is turning against the British at this point. Which is kind of weird. The British did more, I think, to turn the population against Britain than the rebels did.

Dublin was leveled, right. You have artillery bombardment, it caught on fire, a lot of it burnt down. And so you could blame the rebel for that and I think a number of civilians did but you can also look at the British and be like well who had the artillery guns, who was firing at the city, who was so incompetent that this happened in the first place, so I think there's a lot of factors that contribute to the people turning against the British and also contribute to the ending of the execution policy.

And it's interesting too, because Eamon DeValera was next on the list to be executed. So Irish history would have been very different if Asquith had waited one more day, which he was kind of famous for doing.

So, once they stopped executing the prisoners through, they have to figure out what to do with them. So, a lot of prisoners are sent to prisons in England and Wales and one of the most famous prisons is Frongoch which is known as the University of Revolution which, I think, that is where Collins and Mulcahy are sent to. Prisons allow people like DeValera and Collins to exert their influence and negotiate with prison guards about the treatment of prisoners and so when the prisoners are released, certain men make a name for themselves and they are the men who end of leading the IRA and Sinn Fein during the Anglo-Irish War.

So that leaves poor Roger Casement. Roger Casement was arrested before Easter Rising and he is put on trial and they don't know what to do with him because he has this international reputation because of the Casement Report. And so, the British take out his diary which, you know, have detailed journal entries about his homosexual relationships. And then they print it and they use it against him and then they hang him for treason on August 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Conclusion 39:31-46:09**

It cannot be said that Easter Rising was a success. I think they held on longer than they should have and, like I said, you have a good couple of men who knew what they were doing, like Connolly and Clarke as well as British incompetence. I think Easter Rising sticks in our mind, because, the Rising itself was a huge deal and, like I said, Dublin was leveled. A number of people had been killed. It's in the middle of World War I, which you think would have taken away from the Rising, but I think in a lot of ways it heightens the scrutiny on how the British handled it. To have this huge rebellion during the war in the first place, I think, is an eye opener for a lot of people and then how quickly the British executed the prisoners is another eye opener. And then the other thing to consider too is that the US has not yet joined WWI. It is trying to keep a policy of neutrality although it does favor the allies, so like England and France, but Britain is very very keen on getting America involved and there is a huge Irish American population in America. And so, they are pressuring Woodrow Wilson to intervene in the Irish problem. And I don't know if Wilson would have ever seriously intervened, but I think it is something that is in the back of England's mind. Ronan Fanning in his book *Fatal Path* definitely makes an argument that Asquith and then later Lloyd George would be very keen on keeping America satisfied with their handling of Ireland.

So, it's not a success and part of the reason for that is because it was a muddled planning and the secret nature of their work hurts their cause. That counter-order really bites them in the ass and MacNeill and Hobson may not have agreed with the rising, but I also think hiding it from them was a terrible mistake. It also creates a very harmful divide within the Irish nationalists. After Easter Rising, Sinn Fein takes power from the IPP but they don't sit in British parliament, they create their own the Dail and then you have the creation of the Irish Republican Army, the IRA, which is supposed to answer to the Dail. But within the heart of the IRA is still the IRB.

So DeValera and Brugha took an oath to join the IRB to participate in Easter Rising but as soon as they are released from jail they forsake their oath and grow very very suspicious of anyone who is still part of the IRB and two of the more high profile members of the IRB are Michael Collins and Richard Mulcahy who also happen to be in charge of the IRA right (chuckle) so this creates a huge sense of distrust and divide between the IRA and Sinn Fein during the Anglo-Irish war and a number of things contribute to exasperating that divide that we won't talk about in this episode but this divide never heals and it contributes to the Irish Civil War.

The other thing Easter Rising does is that if you weren't part of Easter Rising then you get shut out of politics for the most part. So it becomes this litmus test of are you nationalist enough, are you republican enough, you know, where were you in 1916 becomes a very important question and that's why a lot of the men who fight during WWI get overshadowed because Easter Rising because the only truth. Right. The Irish only rebelled against the British. They never fought for the British Empire during World War. So, I think there are a lot of thorny legacies that get tied to Easter Rising because of the Anglo-Irish War and the Irish Civil War and what it means for Irish identity. I think also it is difficult because the IRA never went away. The IRA exists into the 20s and then they move up north and they exist in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, and then you have this idea well we can't tolerate people physically rebelling against the state even though that's how the Irish state was created and that's something that as we get closer to the anniversaries of the

Anglo-Irish War, we already had the anniversary of Easter Irish, but as we get closer to these anniversaries it's something that I think a lot of people are going to be struggling with.

I think Easter Rising also provides a number of important military and tactical lessons about what not to do when fighting the British and I think it might also be part of its enduring legacy. Like I said, Mulcahy and Ashe practiced these hit and run tactics that the IRA would utilize during the Anglo-Irish War. Collins distrusted Pearse because Pearse was more of a romantic whereas Connolly seems to be more of a pragmatic strategist and it's that type of fighting that is going to work against the British. These giant stands, these giant sieges they're not going to work. And it's interesting because if you look at the Irish Civil War, the anti-treaty people look to 1916, they look to the tactics on how to defeat the Free Irish state and there is another battle in Dublin where again Irish rebels are held up in the Four Courts and they're being bombarded by British guns, but this time it is their fellow nationalists who are shooting at them.

So, yeah, I think Collins learned from 1916 the importance of intelligence and communication and then Mulcahy and the others learned about the importance of mobility and discipline and the element of surprise. But I think Easter Rising leaves many wrong lessons as well such as the importance of martyrdom. I think Pearse may have had a point in the sense England was only going to listen to violence but that doesn't mean you should sacrifice yourself just to sacrifice yourself and I don't know, I think that becomes a hard tension within the IRA in the 1920s. There is also this idea of a patriotic duty of rejecting any sort of compromise for an independent Ireland. Putting Home Rule on hold wasn't good enough for a number of nationalists, compromising by fighting for Britain in the hopes that they'll remember it and keep their promise about Home Rule wasn't going enough. They weren't willing to work with MacNeill and Hobson and again that creates a sense of distrust that never goes away. And also, when Pearse reads his Proclamation, he proclaims an Irish Republic, but no one defined what an Irish Republic actually was and what does that mean. Um, up until 1916, whenever anyone talked about an Irish entity, you know O'Connell foresaw Ireland still being associated with England, but they could rule themselves, Home Rule is a version of, again, being associated with England but having your own parliament, Griffith believed in this dual monarchy idea, so again you see this in the Irish Civil War when people are arguing about the treaty, it's because there's this undefined idea of what the hell were we fighting for in the first place, what did we mean by an Irish republic. And that is also an enduring legacy of 1916.

I think in the end, Easter Rising was neither a failure nor a success. It was yet another attempt by those who believe in physical force to win liberation through violence. It failed, but so had parliamentary politics. By the end of 1916, the IPP was finished as a political force and the physical force rebels were all in jail. All odds pointed towards Easter Rising becoming just another disappointing rebellion. The only reason it didn't was because the survivors realized that to win their independence, they needed both Sinn Féin and the IRA, parliamentary politics and violence.

I hope you enjoyed today's episode and you'll come back for episode two in which we will talk about some of the women who contributed to Easter Rising. If you enjoyed this episode, please go to our website, [www.samswarroom.com](http://www.samswarroom.com) where you can find supplementary material, book

reviews, and a transcript of this podcast. Thank you and look forward to discussing asymmetrical warfare with you another time.