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To Rise Again, Revising the Republic

Theo DORGAN

If we situate the Irish struggle for independence, and the eventual emergence of the Irish Republic, in a lineage of Republics achieved by revolution, we think naturally of the French and American republics as predecessors. Unless we examine the matter carefully, it is fatally easy to consider that the Irish Republic, like its antecedents, was the outcome of a successful revolutionary process. This is to risk glossing over the not inconsiderable difficulty that Ireland, to my way of thinking, never experienced a revolution. The four essential components of revolution are these: a developed revolutionary thesis that proposes a new politics, a leadership cadre capable of leading and developing the pre-revolutionary politics, a military element capable of defeating the incumbent power should that prove necessary, and finally a significant degree of popular assent to the revolutionary project once the bid for power has finally been launched.

I believe that Ireland presents an interesting case study in failed revolution, that it might be useful to consider the Easter Rising as a trigger event to a proto-revolution that would be derailed by its own incoherences and internal contradictions. I think it might also be useful to consider the Rising as an event that collapsed a certain revolutionary potential that was building in Ireland at the time, not least because it contained in itself a number of mutually-contradictory, often unspoken or unformulated aims.

In Section VIII of his long poem “The Rough Field”, in the section entitled “Patriotic Suite”, John Montague offers us an epigraph from Friedrich Engels: “The real aims of a revolution, those which are not illusions, are always to be realised after that revolution.”

First sight, this appears self-evident, not to say trite; of course the aims of a revolution can only be realised once that revolution has been carried through. That, after all, is the point of making revolution – to create a situation which allows you to carry out and implement those purposes for which you undertook to embark on revolution. Moreover, the process of revolution in and of itself is an unstable and short-lived phenomenon which cannot be paused in order to stabi-

lise and establish its purposes – in fact, one can say that it is only when a revolution has been carried through and has realised its aims that it can be said to be complete. In other words, the revolution is over when it is in a position to establish and implement the purposes for which it was conceived.

Central to this understanding is the need for a developed pre-revolutionary politics, a counter-thesis to the prevailing orthodoxy of those to be deposed; you will forgive me for being somewhat obvious here, but unless the new politics that will supersede the old is in fact radically different from what it replaces, there hardly seems much point in calling the process a revolution.

My first question, then: was the Rising an element in an unfolding, consciously revolutionary project? To answer this question, we need to ask, what was the primary motivation of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and Volunteer cadres who planned and organised the Rising? Alas, there are grounds for saying they had no loftier nor more sophisticated aims than that proposed by the 19th century Fenians: to break the connection with England.

The involvement of the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) in the Rising is sometimes put forward as evidence that there was in the insurrectionary movement a progressive politics capable of being expanded into the architecture of that Ireland whose liberty would be gained by force of arms. Briefly, James Connolly and the ICA were invited to join with the main body of the insurrectionists, which was not the same thing at all as saying that the majority force was open to a progressive perspective – as things would turn out, quite the opposite. For the moment I am content to suggest that the Rising, effectively, was a gesture neither rooted in nor aimed towards a possible politics.

On reflection, perhaps, we can better understand Engels to mean that there is in revolution an agenda that reveals itself once the rupture achieved by armed action has taken place; it might be a reserved agenda, to which some insiders are privy, unevenly or not clearly understood by the majority of participants and contributors, or it might be an agenda which does not disclose itself until the act of insurrection has been carried to a successful conclusion.

There are two principal ways in which this proposition can manifest: once the proto-revolution has been carried to completion, that is to say when the insurrectionary forces have taken power, either a cadre with a hitherto-undisclosed revolutionary agenda advances to implement their plans, or the dislocating effect of making revolution unleashes imperatives which, unforeseen until then, nevertheless must be obeyed by those who find themselves exercising power – and these imperatives, then, present as the purposes of the revolution *ex post facto*.

Armed action against incumbent power without a declared agenda, or worse still armed action with a hidden or reserved agenda, is more properly termed a putsch – and history tells us that such actions are often the prelude to, when not

the excuse for, repressive actions which rarely have the democratic common good as their primary focus. Still less is a putsch likely to gain popular assent, since the principal actors will not have shown, before taking power any particular commitment to explaining their political project and working to gain support for that project.

It seems perhaps excessively naive to say that a proposed revolution needs, at a minimum, a social and political programme to be carried through and established once power has been seized. History teaches us that revolutions which consolidate themselves either begin with or quickly achieve a considerable popular mandate. Insurrections that rely on force alone, with no political programme, will inevitably become embroiled in a series of internal conflicts, as political tendencies which were temporarily subsumed into the simple common project of seizing power begin to express themselves in terms of division and divergence. Not untypically, in such situations, the contention for authority in the new situation is resolved by the deployment of superior force by one faction or another. Insurrectionary actions, if I might put it like this, are destined to endure a succession of revisionary shocks, as disparate forces attempt to establish political programmes that may differ very considerably one from another. The span from February to October 1917 in Russia, span from the ascendancy of Kerensky to that of Lenin, suggests itself as a case in point, the more disciplined and aggressive Bolshevik forces, with a unified programme, eventually prevailing over the vacillating and schismatic Mensheviks.

I do not think it possible to present the Easter Rising as a revolutionary event, presaging and initiating the emergence of a revolutionary Republic.

The Rising was not a seamlessly-conceived process, it contained in itself a number of divergences and contradictions, and even as it got under way it began to revise itself drastically, not least in its military aims and objectives.

The best way to understand what happened is perhaps to follow the timeline.

The Rising as planned by a core cell of the IRB acting inside a wider and looser coalition of forces was intended as a country-wide military enterprise, the objective of which was to seize and hold the centres of power in Ireland. Quite what was to happen once the administrative centres were in the hands of the insurrectionists is difficult to understand. Nevertheless, the Rising was intended to succeed in these purely military and material objectives.

That said, from a purely military point of view, even the planners of the Rising were to one degree or another aware that while they might have gained popular support in much of the island, the North East was never going to be an easy proposition; indeed, the overwhelming likelihood is that any attempt by insurrectionary forces to extend their remit over much of Ulster would have precipitated a civil war. The disparity between the number of weapons imported into Larne for the benefit

of the Unionist militia, the UVF – anything up to 150,000 modern rifles – and those weapons available to the Irish Volunteers, perhaps at best 20,000 semi-obsolete rifles with a negligible amount of more modern weaponry, would in itself have been enough to make it plain to the military planners of the Rising that they could, at best, hope to establish control over what would become, in time, the de facto 26 County Republic. Thus, even aspirationally, the Rising contained in itself, even at its fullest stretch, an element of unspoken concession, a tacit acceptance that the North would present, at the very least, a particular difficulty.

Secondly, following Mac Neill's countermanding order cancelling the planned nation-wide mobilisation of the Volunteers, those who decided to strike in Dublin, and those lesser forces called out here and there across the island, rose in the light of a lesser ambition. The prospect of military success was no longer realistic, if it ever had been; the Rising now would be a merely symbolic gesture, one intended to destabilise British rule for as long as possible, but with the principal aim being to galvanise national sentiment to the point where the agenda of national independence might gain unstoppable mass support.

The decision to go ahead with the Rising was, from a military point of view, absurd. En route to the GPO that Easter Monday morning, William O'Brien asked Connolly something to the effect of, "What are we doing?" Connolly's reply was terse and grim, "We are going to be slaughtered."

Insofar as the Rising was absurd, it may also be considered an unwarranted and even foolish political gesture. Its material effect was to allow the British authorities an opportunity to kill, wound, imprison and otherwise nullify insurrection-minded men and women who had been gaining in strength of arms, among them some of the most driven and gifted of their leaders. This was to deprive the political forces organising for independence, such as they were, of the corollary military power that might otherwise have been accumulated over a span of time. Remember that Mac Neill's countermanding of planned manoeuvres had authority only in the living span of the moment, that fatal Easter weekend of 1916, and he exercised that authority as leader of the Volunteers only; it was the IRB who had planned the Rising, it would certainly have been possible to organise for Mac Neill to be removed and replaced with someone more in tune with IRB intentions, so that the Rising as originally planned could have gone forward to a future date.

In effect, going ahead with a symbolic Rising cancelled the possibility of the actual Rising as originally envisaged.

Thirdly, as the events of Easter Week in Dublin unfolded with grim inevitability, even those taking part in the Rising began to question the utility or good sense of the struggle in which they were embroiled. To many, dying for Ireland seemed all too final – all the more so as the Ireland for which they were dying was

not noticeably supportive of them as bullets ripped through the garrisons, as cherished comrades fell to the left and right of them.

The reality of the fighting stripped away whatever inchoate romantic notions they might have been harbouring; wounds, fire and death tend to have that revising effect on dreams and dreamers.

The fourth revision came when the defeated garrisons were paraded to general derision past the citizens of Dublin. I often wonder how those defeated soldiers of the declared Republic felt, being spat upon and jeered by the very people for whose liberty they had risked their lives? Is it unreasonable to suggest that some, perhaps many, would have revised, if they did not abandon, the generous impulses that led them into the fight? Certainly, a proportion of Rising veterans would, once they came to power, display a contempt for the poor and powerless and the unconvinced that in some instances was surely born of that bitter experience.

The fifth revision, of course, was the unanswerable revision of failure. For the Rising to be complete, it needed to succeed, even in its truncated ambition. Revolutionary energy depends on many things, but at the heart of the enterprise must always be the hope for success – no matter how remote or irrational such a hope may be. Those who took part in the Rising, having accepted that it would have a largely symbolic value and effect, were dashed in their hopes that the Rising would in itself prove catalytic to a movement for independence. With failure came the abandonment of such hopes, and a drastic revision of military strategy. The planned Rising was conceived as an open engagement in arms between forces in uniform, never mind that they were unevenly matched. As such, it was a late expression or manifestation of a naive but honourable concept of warfare. The next stage of Ireland's struggle for independence, in its military aspect, would be conducted as a protracted guerilla struggle in which only one contending force would identify itself in uniform; the insurrectionary forces would emerge from and sink back into the civilian population, indistinguishable in dress from that population, refusing direct engagement after the old style, striking only when asymmetric advantage was clearly on their side.

From Clare's Dragoons to Barry's flying columns is a considerable fall in the imagination which can all too easily be portrayed as a fall in virtue; from the dashing cavalier to the farm boy shooting a constable from behind a hedge – this fall from the unreal and the romantic to the ugly, prosaic truths of guerilla warfare, however much it was forced by circumstance on the rebel forces, ceded a considerable propaganda advantage to the enemy who could now, with some apparent plausibility, present war as murder.

But I am getting ahead of myself here.

When I argue that the Rising was self-revising, I am not attempting to suggest that the protagonists were engaging in any kind of self-critical analysis while Easter Week took its course.

Indeed, with very few exceptions, and these all too quickly demonised and marginalised, only a handful of the protagonists would subsequently attempt to draw lessons from the failure of the Rising and attempt to construct a politics informed by this analysis.

I mean simply that the intentions which animated the intended Rising were drastically revised, undercut and to an extent nullified in the course of the Rising as it took place, both by the contradictions embodied in the gesture itself and by the fatal political vacuum at the heart of the event.

These revisions are perhaps best understood as revisions in understanding brought about by the collision between facts and aspirations. The repercussive effects of this new, revised understanding would go on to have a profound effect on how the succeeding war of independence would be framed and fought. And that war would, in its turn, have a profound effect on the nature of the State that it would help bring into being.

The catastrophic failure of the Rising is not that a military adventure was defeated by superior opposing forces, but that its aim might still have been achieved if the gesture had been underpinned by a comprehensive, encompassing and realistic political programme. If there had been a politics behind the Rising, a politics of national liberation and self-determination capable of capturing and expressing a national consensus, most especially a politics of proposing the social good as a primary aim, then the Rising might well have achieved even its truncated purpose of triggering not just national insurrection but a revolution into justice. One might reasonably have expected the insurrectionary forces to draw the obvious lesson from the extent and nature of their defeat, that politics must always and ever come first.

Instead, a defeat in arms led to a continuation and even expansion of armed struggle which had no aim but had *nó* aim but the transfer of legislative power to an ostensibly independent Irish Parliament. It seems reasonable to describe this as a negative or entropic revision of the original, generous impulse. The Proclamation of the Republic was the self-given charter of the Rising as it imagined itself on the bright Easter Monday. Its understandings and formulations would be considerably revised and recast by the week's end, and its talismanic value would in time come to outshine and supersede its actual contents, its propositions – all save one, that phrase which above all others endures in the popular imagination, the promise to cherish all the children of the nation equally. In that phrase, and in that phrase alone, we see the authentic seed of revolution.

That a revolutionary politics was possible at the time, we can see from the Democratic Programme laid before the first Dáil in 1919. This document, in brief, was designed to set out the political and social imperatives which would, in theory, inform and guide the policies and legislation of the Dáil.

Unanimously adopted, the Programme was, in fact, a very radical document. Among its rather startling propositions was this, for instance:

[...] the Nation's sovereignty extends not only to all men and women of the nation, but to all its material possessions, the Nation's soil and all its resources, all the wealth and all the wealth-producing processes.

It went on to proclaim that

all right to private property must be subordinated to the public right and welfare.

Equally radically, and in words that surely embody the after-echoes of *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité*, the Declaration stated:

It shall be the first duty of the Government of the Republic to make provision for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the children, to secure that no child shall suffer hunger or cold from lack of food, clothing or shelter, but that all shall be provided with the means and facilities requisite for their proper education and training as Citizens of Free and Gaelic Ireland.

Influential elements of the IRB, Michael Collins prominent among them, had argued down even more radical propositions, certainly on political instinct, being often deeply conservative men, but mostly on the grounds that adopting and attempting to implement such a radical and thoroughgoing programme would detract from and indeed confuse what they saw as the primary aim, the breaking of British power in Ireland. "To break the connection with England" was always and ever the aim of the Fenians and their lineal successors. Tragically, it would prove to be their only aim.

I ask your forgiveness if once again I make an obvious point, but the Democratic Programme was not conjured from thin air, there was an antecedence for its politics, a provenance in debate, discussion and organization, for the programme of social justice and national development towards which it aspired. Nothing will come of nothing, the old king said, and the Democratic Programme was in some sense a distillation of much that had been learned in the labour movement, drawing on lessons foreign and domestic.

Nevertheless...

Unanimously accepted the Democratic Programme may have been, but it was sidelined, ignored and effectively repudiated every bit as quickly as it was adopted.

Twenty years earlier, in the paper *Workers' Republic*, on 22nd July, 1899, Connolly published an article entitled, simply, "Physical Force in Irish Politics":

Other countries and other peoples have, from time to time, appealed to what the first French Revolutionists picturesquely described as the "sacred right of insurrection", but in so appealing they acted under the inspiration of, and combated for, some great governing principle of political or social life upon which they, to a man, were in absolute agreement...Our people have glided at different periods of the past century from moral force agitation, so-called, into physical force rebellion, from constitutionalism into insurrectionism, meeting in each the same failure and the same disaster and yet seem as far as ever from learning the great truth that neither method is ever likely to be successful until they first insist that a perfect agreement upon the end to be attained should be arrived at as a starting-point of all our efforts.

It is a melancholy truth that neither Sinn Fein, nor the Irish Republican Army nor indeed the IRB had anything like a coherent, theorized social programme for the post-independence state. This is the lesson that should have been learned from the Rising, the lesson that should have informed and indeed transformed the subsequent War of Independence. Revision may usefully be understood as taking thought again, as reconsideration in the light of new facts, new understandings. We might think of revision, indeed, as renewal of vision. There is no doubt that the facts of the Rising, even as it was unfolding, gave rise to recasting of what had been hitherto understood. The pity of it is, such revision as took place was very much in the wrong direction, a narrowing and a condensation where there should have been a broadening of thought, an expansion of understanding. It is a failure that haunts us to this day.

I very much doubt, certainly on the evidence to date, that 2016 will see the emergence in Ireland of a politics based in a broadening and deepening of thought and understanding.

More specifically, I see no signs as yet of a political nexus emerging that will gain and hold instructed popular assent for the implementation of a politics that would be as wide and deep in its propositions as was the Democratic Programme adopted in 1919.

The mainstream parties, Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, and Labour, take it as axiomatic that their primary political task is the management of the economy according to the dictates of political formations in the EU (principally the European Commission and the European Central Bank), in accordance with strategies evolved

and enunciated by the International Monetary Fund. Their stance, to be blunt, is servile, managerial and contemptuous of the key proposition of a Republic, that the people are always and everywhere sovereign. Their policies and perspectives are, objectively, dismissive and contemptuous of popular concerns, at best patronising and at worst, it seems to me, vicious in their disregard for the better impulses of the people at large. Successive governments since accession to what was then the European Economic Community have pursued agricultural policies as enunciated in the Common Agricultural Policy that have in effect elevated an exploitative stance towards the land over an ethos of sustainable stewardship. The development of native industry has been superseded by a strategy of turning Ireland into an aircraft carrier for the multinationals, buttressed by a subservient tax regime – an extraordinarily dangerous concentration on industries that by their nature are deracinated, driven always and ever by no other imperative than shareholder profit. We have effectively ceded the Irish fisheries in their entirety – a reputable economist, Gerard Delanty, has calculated that the total outflow of profit from these fisheries has made us a nett contributor to the coffers of the EU since 1976. We signed a contract with Shell which not only makes over to that company, for a pittance, the most lucrative gas deposit yet discovered in Irish waters, but provides for the State buying back at prevailing market rates such gas as we may need in the future. Worst of all, and a source of considerable unrest in Ireland at present, so far unfocused and undisciplined, the State undertook to impose on the citizens a gigantic and entirely disproportionate responsibility for losses incurred by mainly German, French and British banks in reckless speculation during the years of the so-called Celtic Tiger, the decade prior to 2008.

This is, in many ways, the culmination of a process that began when, all unexpectedly, we found ourselves with a State of our own to run with the signing of the Treaty in 1922. The men, and they were mostly men, who had fought the War of Independence, found themselves suddenly charged with the responsibility of a country to manage. Because, of course, there had been no politics in the War of Independence other than the single-minded pursuit of breaking the connection with England, they were faced with a stark choice, a choice made all the more urgent by the implacable opposition of a sizable minority to the Treaty; they had the opportunity to develop a set of values and institutions that would give shape and effect to the Democratic Programme, a massive task to be sure, or they could do what expedience, the imperatives of the moment and perhaps natural inclination prompted – which of course is what they did: the Free State government adopted the departing régime's corpus of civil and criminal law, their system of Government Departments, their tax system and their Revenue Commissioners, the style of their military and their concern for the paramount rights of property, all these in their entirety. In the popular jibe, and there is always a deep wisdom

in the sardonic wit of the powerless, the only thing that changed was that the harp replaced the crown on the stationery and on the postboxes of the new State.

The state class that rapidly emerged displayed an attachment to power and the exercise of power that was blithely prepared to pay lip-service to republican ideals without having the slightest intention of carrying them into effect.

Their lineal successors today are every bit as prepared to import and implement policies that, far from being grounded in a principled and disciplined inquiry into what best serves the interests of the Irish people as a people, are recklessly and indifferently predicated on the needs of external political and financial interests.

We have now a disdainful State-management class of professional politicians and senior civil servants, and at the same time a growing mass defection from political responsibility on the part of a citizenry reduced to a rubber stamp electorate.

Until now we have had two main parties, with their roots on opposite sides of the Civil War, whose distinction one from the other is close to arbitrary, even theological, rather than ideological. These have ruled for decades now, increasingly often in coalition with smaller parties who inevitably bear the brunt of popular dissatisfaction when things go wrong. Both governors and governed alike have consistently evaded the all-important question: what kind of Republic do we want to be?

It isn't as if we have entirely forgotten that one brief moment when the independence movement, in the shape of the first Dáil, gave assent, even if it was only lip service, to a radical project of national sovereignty and self-possession.

There will be those who suggest that the growing popularity of Sinn Féin as a possible party in government, perhaps as the dominant party in the next electoral cycle but one, might hold out some hope of establishing a republic in something more than name. I have doubts about this. Sinn Féin, it seems, has a number of internal contradictions to resolve, and I do not believe this can be done easily. On the one hand, the party leadership has proved itself very successful in garnering financial support from the Irish-American business community, a notoriously hard-headed and by-and-large conservative bloc. It seems to me unlikely that they could have done this while proposing themselves as a left-wing alternative to the neo-liberal apologists of the mainstream parties. On the other hand, their support for populist issue-based causes in the Republic is presented as evidence of their having embraced an option for the poor; in the domestic discourse, they present themselves as a left-wing alternative to Fine Gael/Fianna Fáil/Labour. The best insight I can offer into this tangle of contradictions is that there are two conflicting tendencies in Sinn Féin at present, a core of young left-wing progressives struggling to establish a principled left politics, and an older cohort still wedded to the incoherence of nationalism as a substitute for a thought-through politics.

Perhaps as a reflection of a larger confusion across the European states, it seems to me they are proposing contradictory versions of the main thrust of their political analysis partly because the situation is confused beyond all precedent, and partly because they have not yet worked out their core values and positions.

The fact that Sinn Féin presents itself as an anti-austerity party in the Republic while claiming the imperatives of *realpolitik* as excusing their implementation of austerity politics in the North suggests, perhaps worryingly, a parallel with the Labour Party in the Republic at the time of the bank crisis: Labour, in theory at least the inheritors of Connolly's option for the poor, argued strenuously at the time against imposing on the Irish people the burden of paying for the losses incurred by reckless speculators – yet once in power they threw up their hands and told us that things were in fact much worse than had been thought, and that they had no alternative but to implement the very policies against which they had so convincingly argued.

But the principal problem facing Sinn Féin is only partly of their own making – the intractable, deep-rooted refusal of the Unionist community to entertain a united Ireland. Sinn Féin, in principle and by historical necessity, presents itself as an all-Ireland party. It follows that they cannot consider themselves successful until and unless they come to exercise power, with the consent of the people, in a united Ireland. Bluntly, none of us here alive today are even remotely likely to see this happen. I do not say that it is impossible to see Ireland united, but there is a bitter paradox here. The only conceivable way in which Ireland can be united is if we in the 26 Counties build a Republic of the 21st century, economically viable, sovereign, founded on principles of justice, equality and tolerance. The task, surely, is to make citizenship in such a republic attractive to people emerging from the backward-looking Unionist tradition, more attractive than citizenship of a declining imperial and industrial power that will very likely, in any case, be in the process of disintegrating. To come to power as the dominant party in such a future republic, however, Sinn Féin would first have to split itself in two – to adopt one formation as a republican party in the North, in the sense that in England, Scotland and Wales there are republican tendencies, a republican politics, and to present in the South a party that unreservedly accepts the existing Irish Republic as a legitimate political entity which may retain the right to propose an extension of that Republic's border to the whole of the island.

I see no signs that Sinn Féin are prepared to adopt such a radical position, and must therefore conclude that, rough-hew it how they will, they must inevitably be sucked down into the irreconcilable contradiction between what we say we want and what we are actually prepared to do to get it that has made Irish politics for the past 100 years so static and dispiriting.

We should remember that the Rising of 1916 was a considerable shock, to the British, of course, and to the Irish of all traditions, but a shock, too, in the larger politics of the 20th century. Something new under the sun, a small nation rising in arms against a world-dominant power.

I cannot conceive a way out of our present impasse unless and until we can conceive of an equally new and radical gesture, this time principled, based on a widely-accepted politics, having wide and deep popular assent, that will be a shock to the globalised world, and to ourselves.

I bring to mind here the ringing declaration of the Democratic Programme:

We declare that we desire our country to be ruled in accordance with the principles of Liberty, Equality and Justice for all, which alone can secure permanence of Government in the willing adhesion of the people.

There is nothing at all ambiguous about the warning encoded in that final clause: the right to govern depends always and only on the willing adhesion of the people. My profound sense at this moment in our history is that we are sliding inexorably towards the withdrawal of that consent to be governed in accordance with a mutually-understood compact. I need hardly point out the dangers of such an historical moment.

Neither the first Dáil nor any Dáil since has conceived the Republic in terms of the Democratic Programme, no matter how much lip service has been paid to its ethos and values, no matter how much in our naivety we have always assumed that somewhere in back of government that ethos, those values, were somehow mysteriously at work. Well, there is precious little mystery about what is happening at present: nobody now alive has seen a government so resolutely determined to save the apparatus of the State at the expense of the people and our actual, human interests. Aggregating the sum of our disaffections, and drawing from that mass of negatives a positive, it is hard but not impossible to see a way forward. One such path to salvation certainly suggests itself, the enactment of the Democratic Programme, or some radical, modernised restatement of it.

It may be that we are too deeply in thrall to some toxic indifference, too dispirited and lacking in imagination, too habituated by now to handing ourselves over to new masters who will prove to be the old masters in a different set of clothes, I do not know. Perhaps the habits of servility are too engrained in us, perhaps in the present age of the world at large it is too late to undo the profound damage that neo-liberalism has done to the fabric of enterprise, civility and society. I do not know.

And yet, still, stubborn as ever, with many thousands of others, I dream of a State in which I might yet feel at home. I think of my neighbours, my family and my friends, their matter-of-fact generosity and goodness, and I dream of a poli-

tics founded in such values. I look about me, at the singers and artists and poets, the community activists, the men and women who decently and unremarkably take on their duties and responsibilities with tact and care, I look about me at the rising generation, their sense of the wider world, their unassuming acceptance of ecological responsibility their ease with technology and with each other, and I dream of a country where our first care is to care for each other. I dream of a Republic where we might truly cherish the children, a Republic of stewardship, of welcome and decency, innovation and ancient values, a hardheaded practical Republic, a Republic with a sense of humour – and who am I to deny myself this dream, who am I to say we might not, cannot, will not rise again? That this time we might get it right?

I dream of a new Rising, not in arms this time but a Rising in our hearts and minds and spirits, in common cause with like-minded men and women all over the world, a Rising that roots in the heart and yet is practical, hard-headed, generous and clear, a Rising that says we hold this world in common, that we can stand in this world together, or go down to a common doom.