

## **The Greenshirts: fascism in the Irish Free State 1935-1945.**

White, Martin

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author and no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without the prior written consent of the author

For additional information about this publication click this link.

<http://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/jspui/handle/123456789/1696>

Information about this research object was correct at the time of download; we occasionally make corrections to records, please therefore check the published record when citing. For more information contact [scholarlycommunications@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:scholarlycommunications@qmul.ac.uk)

THE GREENSHIRTS: FASCISM IN THE IRISH FREE  
STATE, 1935-45

MARTIN WHITE

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
QUEEN MARY  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2004

## ABSTRACT

General O'Duffy's National Corporate Party/Greenshirt movement was Ireland's largest fascist movement. This thesis explores the origins of Irish fascism, arguing that it was not simply an imitation of continental models, but that it had its roots in the Irish historical and political tradition.

Previously dismissed by historians as ephemeral or even non-existent, research reveals that it was a nationally organized party that presented a raft of policies aimed at creating a mass base. The Greenshirts were a small movement and constituted a concentration of fascist tendencies developed by an element in its much larger forerunner, the Blueshirts. The party was to be short-lived but influenced a number of fifth-column and extremist organizations during the war years, as well as the more successful post-war nationalist party, Ailtiri na hAiseirighe.

The NCP blended a number of key ideas borrowed from continental fascism, including corporatism and the leadership principle, with a combination of fascist and indigenous pseudo-military style and organization. This was embedded in a political and cultural mould that was a development of romantic ideas that had been widely promoted during the struggle for Irish independence, with a particular focus on nationalism, violence and anti-rationalism.

The Greenshirt movement was completely dependent on its leader General O'Duffy, an experienced and able politician, who promoted his movement both at home and abroad at a number of international fascist conferences. He looked to participation alongside Franco in the Spanish Civil War to raise his domestic and international profile. However, the poor record of his Irish Brigade and his absence from Ireland's political scene, led to the rapid demise of a movement which had been in decline since its inception, and which had failed to gain widespread support amongst the population or interest in the national press.

## CHAPTER HEADINGS

Frontispiece 1

Abstract 2

Index 3

Abbreviations 5

Glossary 6

### *INTRODUCTION 7*

#### *1. BUILDING A FASCIST MOVEMENT 17*

The Life and Times of General Eoin O'Duffy 17

Ireland in the thirties: The emergence of the Blueshirts 19

The economic crisis and the Blueshirt split 22

Preparing the ground 28

O'Duffy and international fascism 31

Seeking allies 42

#### *2. THE ORGANIZATION AND HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL CORPORATE PARTY 51*

The foundation of the party 51

O'Duffy's Keynote Speech and NCP party platform 56

The organization of the party and membership 65

Internal party issues 88

NCP campaigns 99

The demise of the party 107

#### *3. THE POLICIES AND IDEAS OF THE NCP 118*

Introduction 118

Preparations 120

Anti-Communism 127

The corporatism of the NCP 134

The structure of the corporate state 146

Labour in the corporate state 149

National Policy 154

Social Credit and the NCP 167

Agriculture in the corporate state 170

The 1936 *Ard Fheis* of the NCP 176

#### *4. THE SOURCES OF IRISH CORPORATISM 180*

Introduction 180

The development of corporatism 181

Catholic social thought 186

The life and thought of Michael Tierney 195

The Corporatism of James Hogan 206

Fine Gael and corporatism 213

The corporatism of Ernest Blythe 223

Conclusion 233



*5. FASCISM AND CORPORATISM IN IRISH POLITICS AFTER THE GREENSHIRTS* 236

Introduction 236

Irish Christian Front 237

Irish Friends of Germany/*Cumann Naisiunta* 245

The People's National Party 250

Ailtiri na hAiseirighe-A brief history 255

The political programme of Ailtiri na hAiseirighe 261

*6. THE CLAIM OF O'DUFFY TO ROOT IRISH FASCISM IN THE INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE* 273

Introduction 273

The Greenshirts as a fascist movement 274

O'Duffy's attempt to root Irish fascism in the independence struggle 286

The Gaelic Republic 290

Masculinity, violence and self-sacrifice 300

Populism and the Public Band in Ireland 309

Authoritarianism and Personalism in Irish political culture 313

Economic and social issues 316

*7. CONCLUSIONS* 323

*BIBLIOGRAPHY* 328

*APPENDICES* 337

1. Map showing geographical distribution of NCP members 337
2. Map showing NCP meetings and conferences 1936-7 338
3. Map showing branches staying loyal to O'Duffy after the Blueshirt split 339
4. Members of the NCP 340
5. Chart to show the relevant strength of the NCP by county 350
6. Persons connected with the Irish Friends of Germany 352
7. Members of the People's National Party 353
8. Party Programme for PNP for National Planning 354
9. *An Cumann Naisiunta*, by Ernest Blythe 356
10. O'Duffy's Itinerary 1935-6 358
11. Ernest Blythe-a brief biography 361
12. The National and Political Policy of the National Guard 367

## ABBREVIATIONS

ACA	Army Comrades Association
BF	British Fascisti
BUF	British Union of Fascists
CAUR	Comitati d'azione per l'Universalita di Roma
C na nG	Cumann na nGaedheal
Co.	County
CP	Centre Party
CTSI	Catholic Truth Society of Ireland
D/D	Dail Debates
D/Jus	Department of Justice
FF	Fianna Fail
FG	Fine Gael
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GPO	General Post Office
IFS	Irish Free State
IRA	Irish Republican Army
L of Y	League of Youth
MA	Military Archives (G2 Military Intelligence, Dublin).
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NCP	National Corporate Party
NG	National Guard
NLI	National Library of Ireland
PRO	Public Record Office, Kew, London
PRONI	Public Records Office of Northern Ireland
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SF	Sinn Fein
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
TD	Teachtaí Dála
UCD	University College Dublin
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
YIA	Young Ireland Association

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<i>Ailtiri na hAiseirighe</i>	Right-wing, corporatist political party.
<i>Ard Fheis</i>	Annual Conference of political party
<i>Blueshirts</i>	Collective name for right-wing uniformed political force
<i>Cumann Poblachta na hEireann</i>	Political party formed by moderates in IRA.
<i>Cumann na nGaedheal</i>	Pro-Treaty political party forming first IFS government
<i>Dail Eireann</i>	The Irish Parliament
<i>Eire</i>	Ireland
<i>Fenians</i>	A revolutionary nationalist movement originating in the USA that helped launch the home-rule movement.
<i>Fianna Fail</i>	De Valera's anti-Treaty political party.
<i>Fine Gael</i>	Pro-Treaty, conservative coalition.
<i>Gaelic</i>	Celtic language spoken by minority in Ireland.
<i>G.A.A.</i>	Gaelic Athletic Association founded in 1884 as a nationalist body aiming to promote Irish games.
<i>Gaeltacht</i>	Irish-speaking enclaves in the IFS.
<i>Garda Siochana</i>	Civic Police-unarmed police force.
<i>Irish Free State</i>	Dominion created by treaty with Great Britain.
<i>I.R.A.</i>	Anti-Treaty para-military organization.
<i>I.R.B.</i>	Pre-independence, secretive nationalist group. Irish Republican Brotherhood.
<i>Leinster House</i>	Seat of Irish Government.
<i>Saor Eire</i>	Left-wing political party formed by members of I.R.A.
<i>Seanad Eireann</i>	Upper house of Irish Parliament.
<i>Sinn Fein</i>	Political wing of independence movement.
<i>Stormont</i>	Seat of Northern Ireland's Parliament.
<i>Taoiseach</i>	Prime-Minister.
<i>T.D.</i>	Teachtaí Dála, Member of Parliament.
<i>Ulster Volunteer Force</i>	Para-military force organized in 1913 to coordinate the activities of anti-home rule unionists.
<i>Volunteers</i>	Para-military force that fought for independence.



## INTRODUCTION

General Eoin O'Duffy had been a key figure in the Irish Free State for nearly twenty years when he founded the National Corporate Party in June 1935 after losing control of the Blueshirts in an acrimonious dispute the previous year. The NCP was O'Duffy's personal creation and its policies reflected his political vision that was largely borrowed from the examples of continental fascism. At the centre of O'Duffy's programme was a commitment to replacing the liberal democratic parliamentary system inherited from the British with a corporate political structure which would end the divisiveness of post-Civil War party politics but which would also give O'Duffy personal power and authority. O'Duffy stated that he intended to create the republic that had inspired the nationalists of the independence struggle but within an authoritarian framework that owed much to fascist ideas from the continent. The Greenshirts, as the NCP was popularly known, were a fascist force, encapsulating those fascist ideas that had been nurtured by a small minority during the Blueshirt years. However, O'Duffy's main motivation was his own self-interest and self-promotion though, lacking personal charisma, O'Duffy had no chance of emulating Hitler and Mussolini in inspiring a mass following.

O'Duffy revived, reinvented and promoted nationalist and republican ideas in the nineteen-thirties, believing that a fascist state was the best way of realizing the united Ireland that he, like many others, had fought for after the 1916 Rising. I will argue that O'Duffy attempted to root his radical policies in Irish political culture. He had to legitimise his movement given the nature of post Civil-War Irish politics. Historians have failed to analyse the potential for fascism in Ireland prior to O'Duffy. I will argue that the ideas which were synthesized after World War One to form fascist movements throughout Europe were in evidence amongst the visionaries and leaders

of the Irish independence struggle and O'Duffy was able to twist these ideas, as other fascist leaders had done, to his own ends. However, these ideas were only one small aspect of the forces driving the nationalist struggle and they did not develop into an Irish form of fascism after independence. The ideas of regeneration, the embodiment of the National Will, a physical force tradition and hostility to the ideals of liberal parliamentary democracy coupled with a vehement hatred of the English had all been promoted by Irish nationalists. Fifteen years on, O'Duffy revived and used these ideas, placing them in a new setting inspired by the pan-European shirted movement of the thirties to create an Irish variant of fascism.

Following his dismissal as Chief of Police by Eamon De Valera, in 1933, O'Duffy took over the leadership of the Army Comrades Association (The Blueshirts). He renamed the ACA as 'The National Guard' in order to broaden its appeal and membership. Ex-servicemen from the Free State Army had created the ACA in February 1932, under the leadership of Austin Brennan, as a non-political benevolent organization that aimed to look after the interests of its members, particularly those in need. Over the next five years, the organization assumed a number of different names and guises. It evolved into a movement to defend free speech, following the intimidation of politicians by the IRA, and ultimately into a political party, the NCP, advocating corporatist and fascist policies.

In the months preceding the creation of the NCP, O'Duffy became actively involved in the international fascist scene. This had a decisive influence on the direction in which he was to lead his new party. Always a staunch nationalist and advocate of Irish unity, O'Duffy committed his party to a policy of 'palingenetic ultra-



nationalism'<sup>1</sup> based on a cynical use of Irish nationalist mythology and a commitment to strong government coupled with a marked hostility to liberalism, parliamentarianism and communism. O'Duffy was an excellent organizer, and spent the months before the launch of the party trying to lay the foundations for a radical assault on the Irish political system. It was to be a frustrating period.

Whilst the party failed to have any lasting impact on Irish politics, its significance for the historian lies in the eclectic source of the ideas for its political programme. Some of these ideas came from continental models, such as Mussolini's Italy and Salazar's Portugal. Other ideas, however, were a continuation and development of the ultra-nationalist, anti-democratic tradition strand of the independence movement. The myth of an independent Gaelic utopia that had been developed by the Irish cultural elite at the turn of the century was used by O'Duffy in an attempt to legitimise his movement, which was in reality heavily dependent on foreign political models such as Mussolini's Italy.

The corporatist ideas that were central to the political package offered by the NCP were derived initially from the writings of Irish academics such as James Hogan and Michael Tierney, who advocated a form of corporatism inspired by Catholic social encyclicals. Corporatism was adopted for a time as party policy by Fine Gael under O'Duffy. Ernest Blythe took these ideas a stage further and it was this authoritarian corporatism that O'Duffy promoted in the NCP. O'Duffy had nothing but praise for Mussolini's corporate state but I will also show that corporatist ideas had been advocated by nationalists like Griffith and discussed by Sinn Fein.

Academics and historians have begun to show more interest in the period, particularly as the Irish Government has released a number of key files on the period

---

<sup>1</sup> A term used by Roger Griffin in *The Nature of Fascism* (London, 1991), *passim*. The use of this definition in locating O'Duffy's movement in the fascist camp is examined in chapter six of this thesis.

that provide new insight into the Blueshirts and other right-wing movements of the era. The Blueshirts have been the subject of two major books, Maurice Manning's *The Blueshirts*<sup>2</sup> and Mike Cronin's *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*.<sup>3</sup> A number of essays and articles have also appeared in print. The Blueshirt movement has also been the subject of at least two post-graduate theses.<sup>4</sup> However, none of these historians has given serious consideration to the National Corporate Party.

The only exception to this trend has been research done by Fearghal McGarry as part of a larger study on the influence of the Spanish Civil War on Irish politics in the nineteen-thirties.<sup>5</sup> McGarry devotes a sub-chapter to a brief overview of the NCP that sets the scene for the creation of O'Duffy's pro-Franco Irish Brigade.<sup>6</sup> Maurice Manning's *The Blueshirts* was the first published analysis of the Blueshirt movement. It is largely a chronological study, though the book concludes with two short chapters that attempt to analyse the political ideas of the Blueshirts and to assess to what extent the movement was fascist. Manning concludes that the Blueshirts were essentially a product of the Irish Civil War, and that those elements of fascism that did begin to emerge were quickly quashed when the movement was absorbed into Fine Gael in 1933. However, Manning goes on to admit that:

“...there were some, and especially O'Duffy, who did see the movement in an international context, and would have been pleased to use the term ‘fascist’.”<sup>7</sup>

This faction was in a minority. The result, says Manning, is that “the movement had some of the appearance but little of the substance of fascism.”<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>M. Manning, *The Blueshirts* (Dublin, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* (Dublin, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> J.A.C. Ebert, , *Irish Politics 1932-35. A Study of an Irish Political Movement (The Blueshirts)*, PhD. Thesis, Ball State University, New York, 1972.

J. Heatley, *The Blueshirt Movement*. MSc. Thesis. Queen's University, Belfast, 1987.

<sup>5</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> The Irish Brigade was a volunteer militia, recruited by O'Duffy, which fought on the Nationalist side during the early years of the Spanish Civil War.

<sup>7</sup> M. Manning, *The Blueshirts* p.243.



Manning gives very little space to discussing the NCP. He states that enthusiasm for the new party was half-hearted from the start:

“Indeed, the tiredness and lethargy which surrounded its inception and the absence of any manifest enthusiasm for the inaugural meeting were to be characteristic of its future fortunes...No attempts were made to organize branches on a nationwide basis; no attempts were made to hold meetings throughout the country; nor were there any attempts at publicity-seeking.”<sup>9</sup>

My research will show that O’Duffy initially expended as much energy on this venture as on any other of his many projects, with the result that a party with a small but active core membership of extremists was in existence by the summer of 1935. In spite of his effort I am in agreement with other historians that O’Duffy’s movement failed to have any lasting impact and quickly went into rapid decline over the year of its active life.

Manning does, however, make it clear that the foundation of the NCP was a move in a more openly fascist direction:

“He saw the Blueshirts as part of a world-wide phenomenon and was quick to identify himself as its leader. He was pleased to call himself as Fascist and enthusiastically immersed himself in the affairs of international Fascism, supported Mussolini’s invasion of Abyssinia and fought with Franco in Spain. His Fascism may have been emotional and instinctive rather than intellectual but he certainly took it seriously...he saw himself as a Fascist leader of a Fascist movement, and that is what he wanted.”<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 244.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 200.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. pp. 229-230.

Mike Cronin's *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*<sup>11</sup> takes a thematic approach to the subject, looking specifically at leaders and ideology, membership, the economic war with Britain,<sup>12</sup> and the social life of the Blueshirts. He accepts that there were fascists in the movement and discusses the dichotomy between the politics of some of the leaders, such as O'Duffy and Ernest Blythe, and the motivation of the rank-and-file membership. He classifies the movement, using Griffin's definition of fascism,<sup>13</sup> as potentially para-fascist.<sup>14</sup> Cronin describes the Blueshirts as:

“...a movement which skirted around the ideologies of generic fascism, yet which had at its core a group committed to a new political order if the Free State experiment collapsed under the guidance of De Valera.”<sup>15</sup>

Cronin argues that it was the influence of the rank-and-file that reduced the fascist potential of the Blueshirt movement. Cronin interviewed a cross-section of former Blueshirts and discovered that the ordinary Blueshirt member was motivated by the disastrous effects of government policies on farming, particularly the economic war with Britain. Cronin is able to demonstrate that there was a distinct split between a youthful, rural-based rank-and-file membership who were largely concerned with domestic and economic issue, and a middle-aged, Dublin-based leadership who tended to look to the continent for ideas to solve Ireland's problems.<sup>16</sup>

Like Manning, Cronin is dismissive of the NCP, but agrees that it was “openly fascist”<sup>17</sup> and that by 1935, O'Duffy was clearly a fascist.<sup>18</sup> He believes that it was

---

<sup>11</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* (Dublin, 1997).

<sup>12</sup> The economic war between Ireland and Britain was a tit-for-tat raising of tariffs on imports and exports which followed on from the Free State's defaulting on half-yearly annuity payments to Britain.

<sup>13</sup> R. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London, 1991), p. 26: “Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism.”

<sup>14</sup> Para-fascist movements have much of the trappings, rhetoric and authoritarian nature of fascism but “will react to genuine fascism as a threat” (Griffin, R., *The Nature of Fascism*, p. 122).

<sup>15</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* pp. 62-65.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 127-134.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p.63.



this overt expression of fascism that precluded most Blueshirts from joining O'Duffy after the split from Fine Gael. Cronin cites a membership figure of only eighty for the NCP, without acknowledging a source. My analysis of Blueshirt material in the National Archives will prove that this figure is a serious underestimate of the party's strength. However, it is also clear from research statistics that the movement was never a mass party and that it failed to emulate the success of the Blueshirts.

Fearghal McGarry's *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*<sup>19</sup> gives useful background information on the events leading up to the creation of O'Duffy's Irish Brigade. The author provides a brief introduction to the NCP, following a short outline of O'Duffy's earlier involvement with the Blueshirts. In discussing the level of activity of the NCP, McGarry echoes Manning in concluding that, "O'Duffy made little attempt to establish branches or attract publicity,"<sup>20</sup> and goes on to state that O'Duffy's involvement in the Spanish Civil War was "a response to his marginal position in Irish politics."<sup>21</sup> He blames the failure of the NCP on O'Duffy's declining leadership skills<sup>22</sup> and the lack of support for fascism in Ireland.<sup>23</sup>

Robert Stradling's *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939*<sup>24</sup> gives little information about the NCP before the outbreak of the Spanish conflict, but he argues that the party played a key role in recruiting, and maintaining support for, O'Duffy's Irish Brigade. Stradling describes General O'Duffy as "...the main founder of the Irish fascist movement, the Blueshirts, which in 1933-34 mushroomed into what was—in relative terms- the largest non-governing fascist organization in the world."<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup>F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork, 1999).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 43.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p.35.

<sup>24</sup> R. Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (Manchester, 1999).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 1.



Several historians have analysed the Blueshirt and Greenshirt movements either in the context of inter-war Irish political history, or as a manifestation of fascism, but most have been over-reliant on Manning's book as their main source of information. Roger Griffin's *The Nature of Fascism*,<sup>26</sup> describes the NCP as "an out-and-out fascist movement that was not even worth outlawing."<sup>27</sup> In the simplistic *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Fascism*,<sup>28</sup> Richard Griffith concludes that the Greenshirts were a form of "Catholic fascism, akin to the Portuguese model."<sup>29</sup> Bew, Hazelkorn and Patterson in *The Dynamics of Irish Politics*,<sup>30</sup> conclude that:

"O'Duffy personally was a Fascist, albeit one capable of striking a very traditional, rural conservative note that was almost bucolic in its simplicity."<sup>31</sup>

Richard E. Finnegan, in his essay *The Blueshirts of Ireland During the 1930s; Fascism Inverted*,<sup>32</sup> describes the Blueshirts as "a peculiar variant in Ireland of continental fascism."<sup>33</sup> He clarifies this by stating that:

"...the Blueshirts are fascist enough to warrant attention in terms of generic fascism but constitute in their creation, their maintenance, and their decay, an organization derived from the particular conditions of the Irish Civil War and as a reaction against the revived IRA's association with the governing party of Ireland."<sup>34</sup>

Finnegan analyses the different phases of the movement and in describing its final manifestation, the NCP, he notes O'Duffy's commitment to the international fascist scene. He erroneously concludes that:

---

<sup>26</sup> R. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London, 1991).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 121.

<sup>28</sup> Griffith, R., *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Fascism* (London, 2000)

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*. p.121.

<sup>30</sup> P. Bew, E.Hazelkorn and H.Patterson, *The Dynamics of Irish Politics* (London, 1989).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>32</sup>R.B. Finnegan, 'The Blueshirts of Ireland During the 1930s; Fascism Inverted,' in *Eire-Ireland* xxiv; 2 (Summer, 1989).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p. 78.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 79.

“No organization was created. No meetings, no publicity and no votes. It was a still-born endeavour.”<sup>35</sup>

In the last decade, a large amount of material has become available following the release of previously closed government files in the National Archives, Dublin.<sup>36</sup> However, the historian is at a distinct disadvantage due to the lack of an NCP archive of primary source material. Until recently, the historian researching the NCP had to rely heavily on Manning’s pioneering study. With the release of Department of Justice files on O’Duffy and the Blueshirts, the historian has a new source of material with which to correct many of the misconceptions that have led to the view that the Greenshirts/NCP was a movement with little or no substance. This thesis uses evidence that had been previously unavailable to the historian, in order to present the first systematic study of the NCP, the source of its corporatist ideas, and its ideological links to earlier Irish political ideas. Whilst agreeing with historians such as Cronin and McGarry that the movement was a short-lived, marginal phenomenon in Irish politics, this thesis will argue that it was not a paper exercise of O’Duffy’s but a serious, albeit unsuccessful attempt, to introduce fascism onto the Irish political scene.

During the war years, a number of small groups emerged with a blatantly fascist outlook, such as the Irish Friends of Germany and Ailtiri na hAiseirighe (Architects of Resurrection). The chapter on these groups will demonstrate the continued influence of leading Blueshirts/ Greenshirts, the overlap in membership, the common policy strands, and particularly the continued influence of corporatist ideas on the political right. The overtly pro-Axis inclination of these movements and their advocacy of fascist policies are evidence of a distinct fascist strand in Irish politics. Whilst

---

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 79.

<sup>36</sup> Much of the new material on the Blueshirts is to be found in the Justice 8 Series of files, Department of Justice, in the National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

acknowledging a debt to continental ideas, however, they continued to claim to be rooted in the Irish political experience.

My analysis of the NCP, its history, organization and successors, will demonstrate that a particular form of Irish fascism did arise in Ireland in the thirties and that it had its roots in the independence struggle. O'Duffy hijacked the myths of Gaelic nationalism, combined them with Catholic social theory and added the trappings of continental fascism in an attempt to produce a distinct political programme. The party was rightly regarded by many as an irrelevancy and a foreign import. O'Duffy knew that to have any chance of success he would have to give his fascism a distinct Irish angle by adding the myths of Irish republicanism, thereby hoping to give his movement the legitimacy it needed if it was to be successful in the polarised nationalist climate of Free State politics.



## CHAPTER ONE: BUILDING A FASCIST MOVEMENT

### *THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GENERAL EOIN O'DUFFY*

Eoin O'Duffy was born in County Monaghan, in the Irish province of Ulster, in 1890, the son of a farmer.<sup>1</sup> As an adult, he found employment as an assistant surveyor. He was not involved in the Easter Rising of 1916 but he joined the Irish Volunteers<sup>2</sup> in 1917. He was also a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood<sup>3</sup> and became a member of the Supreme Council of that organization.<sup>4</sup> He was actively involved in the independence struggle in Ulster and, in 1921, he became Director of Organization of the Irish Republican Army<sup>5</sup> GHQ staff. He was Deputy Chief of Staff of the IRA at the time of the Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921) that set up the Irish Free State. He was elected TD (Member of the *Dail*)<sup>6</sup> for Monaghan in the second *Dail*.<sup>7</sup> Ernest Blythe, later his colleague in the Blueshirts, was elected to the same multi-member constituency. O'Duffy supported the Treaty settlement and he became closely associated with Michael Collins.<sup>8</sup> During the Irish Civil War, O'Duffy was General of South-Western Command for the pro-Treaty government forces. During the war, in September 1922, the Irish Government appointed him as Commissioner of Police (*Garda Siochana*), and for a short while, at the time of the 1924 army mutiny, he was appointed as head of the army.<sup>9</sup> He was Commissioner of Police during the whole

---

<sup>1</sup>F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork, 1999), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> The Irish Volunteers was a militia founded in 1913 to support Home Rule for Ireland. The Volunteers split over the issue of recruitment for the British army. The more radical minority was involved in the 1916 Rising.

<sup>3</sup> The IRB was a revolutionary, nationalist organization, the Supreme Council of which organized the 1916 Rising.

<sup>4</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> The IRA was the successor to the Volunteers and Army of the Republic.

<sup>6</sup> Dail Eireann, the Irish Parliament.

<sup>7</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* p. 74. Michael Collins had played a major part in the Anglo-Irish War, had signed the Treaty and became Minister of Finance in the new government. He was shot by anti-Treaty forces during the Irish Civil War.

<sup>9</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* p. 19.

period of the Cosgrave<sup>10</sup> administration, but De Valera's Fianna Fail government dismissed him after its second election victory in 1933.<sup>11</sup>

O'Duffy was an excellent organizer and was largely responsible for creating an effective, unarmed police force in the Irish Free State.<sup>12</sup> Members of the *Garda Siochana* held him in great affection for his tireless promotion of their welfare during his time as Commissioner.<sup>13</sup> He provided cultural and sporting activities for the *Gardai* through an organization called the *Costa Siamsa*. He was later to provide for a similar range of social activities as the leader of the Blueshirts.<sup>14</sup> He realized the importance of a programme of events as a means of recruiting young people to the movement, particularly in rural areas where there was little entertainment.

O'Duffy had been prominent in the National Athletic and Cycling Association<sup>15</sup> and had managed the Irish team as *Chef d'equipe* at the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games.<sup>16</sup> He was also prominent in the Gaelic Athletic Association.<sup>17</sup> O'Duffy was responsible for much of the organization surrounding the international Eucharistic Congress of 1932 that took place in Dublin. The event attracted huge numbers of people, including cardinals and political dignitaries from around the world.<sup>18</sup>

De Valera's dismissal of O'Duffy was a result of political pressure from within Fianna Fail and also from the IRA. De Valera needed a man whom he could trust at a time of potential social and political unrest caused by the transfer of power to the

---

<sup>10</sup> William Cosgrave became President of the Executive Council of the Free State in 1922, and his Cumann na nGaedheal party held power until 1932.

<sup>11</sup> *Oxford Companion to Irish History*, Ed. S.J. Connolly (Oxford, 1998), p. 405.

<sup>12</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* p. 19.

<sup>13</sup> G. Allen, *The Garda Siochana* (Dublin, 1999). Chapter 6 is an overview of O'Duffy's role in the creation of a modern Irish police force.

<sup>14</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* Chapter 7, 'Politics as Pastime,' pp. 168-192.

<sup>15</sup> O'Duffy left the sum of one hundred pounds to the NACA to purchase a silver challenge cup to be known as 'The General O'Duffy Perpetual Challenge Cup,' to be competed for in an event at the discretion of the Association. General O'Duffy's Last Will and Testament, NAI.

<sup>16</sup> M. Manning, *The Blueshirts* p. 67.

<sup>17</sup> The GAA was founded in 1884 by Michael Cusack to promote Irish sports such as hurling and Gaelic football. It was closely connected to the nationalist movement.

<sup>18</sup> The Roman Catholic Church organized the Eucharistic Congress in order to promote devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Over one million people attended a special Mass in Dublin's Phoenix Park.



outgoing government's Civil War enemies. Opposition parties, namely Cumann na nGaedheal and the National Centre Party, and some of the Irish press (particularly the *Irish Times*), spoke out against O'Duffy's dismissal, and Cumann na nGaedheal politicians such as Cosgrave painted him as a political martyr.<sup>19</sup> In reality, in the run-up to the 1932 General Election, the Cumann na nGaedheal administration had already begun to discuss his replacement as he had, as Ernest Blythe put it some years later, "...gradually become too arbitrary and obstinate."<sup>20</sup> One proposal of Cosgrave's had been to send him as Ireland's ambassador to Washington.<sup>21</sup>

Officers of the ACA, including Tierney and Blythe, approached O'Duffy on his return from holiday in May 1933 with the intention of offering him the leadership of the organization.<sup>22</sup> At a special ACA convention in Dublin on July 20<sup>th</sup>, O'Duffy was elected as the new leader of the movement. He used the rest of the conference to initiate the major changes that would transform the organization into a major shirted movement with its own political agenda.

## IRELAND IN THE THIRTIES: THE EMERGENCE OF THE BLUESHIRTS

As leader of the Blueshirts, O'Duffy headed a movement whose political programme he developed and made his own. O'Duffy had a vision of a corporate, authoritarian republic led by himself which he hoped would come to fruition through the efforts of the Blueshirts and Fine Gael. However, he was to find out that the movement he had co-opted was unwilling to follow him down his increasingly fascist path. O'Duffy saw the emergence of the Blueshirts as a response to crisis which

---

<sup>19</sup> M. Manning, *The Blueshirts* p. 69.

<sup>20</sup> See Ernest Blythe writing in *The Irish Times*, 2 November 1970.

<sup>21</sup> G. Allen, *The Garda Siochana* p. 105.

<sup>22</sup> M. Manning, *The Blueshirts* pp. 69-71.

threatened the political or economic ruin of Ireland. He even argued that a possible revolution might end in a communist seizure of power. The following sub-chapter puts the appearance of Ireland's shirted movement in the context of a small nation emerging from a bitter war of independence and a bloody civil war. The animosities engendered by these military struggles continued to be a deciding factor in politics.

The Blueshirts were a response to the crisis of politics and economics in nineteenth-thirties Ireland. During the twenties, a decade of comparative stability after the disruption of the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War, the foundations of a liberal-democratic constitutional state were laid down by Cumann na nGaedheal, a conservative political party that emerged from the pro-Treaty faction of Sinn Fein. Irish political life continued to be polarized by the Treaty issue. The defeat of Cumann na nGaedheal in 1932 after ten years in office, and the elevation to power of Eamon De Valera and his anti-Treaty, republican Fianna Fail party, threatened to challenge the stability of the infant Irish Free State. The Thirties also saw the re-emergence of the IRA as a major, now legalized, para-military force. The Blueshirts appeared on the scene at the same time. Civil War animosities, never very deeply buried, flared again, and a climate of mistrust, increased lawlessness and political violence threatened the stability of the infant democracy. An economic slump, exacerbated by Fianna Fail's tariff war with Britain, fuelled the disputes between left and right, government and opposition, the IRA and the Blueshirts. It led some to question the continued existence of a political structure which seemed to institutionalise Ireland's continued dependence on Britain, and to seek a radical solution for its replacement.

A reinvigorated IRA, legalized and tolerated by an acquiescent Fianna Fail government, gave rise to a fear of a revival of Civil War animosities. This fuelled the



rapid growth of the Army Comrades Association in 1932-33. The ACA had originally been formed to support ex-servicemen of the Free State Army. These same men now saw their erstwhile Civil War enemies in power. The ACA rapidly broadened its appeal and became associated with Cumann na nGaedheal, whose candidates it had defended from hecklers during the 1932 and 1933 election campaigns,<sup>23</sup> thereby demonstrating their commitment to the right to free speech.<sup>24</sup> The IRA had become increasingly violent towards politicians who they believed had betrayed the Irish Republic. The outgoing Cumann na nGaedheal government had been formed from the pro-Treaty faction in the second *Dail* and to the doctrinaire republicans of the IRA they were regarded as traitors.<sup>25</sup>

Under the leadership of O'Duffy, the Blueshirts began to take on a political complexion of their own. Renamed as the National Guard on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1933, the movement initially sought a position in politics independent of Cumann na nGaedheal. Under O'Duffy, the Blueshirts adopted policies supporting the creation of a corporate state, the reunification of Ireland and the promotion of law and order (important in a state where memories of civil war were still fresh, and where an armed terrorist organization, the IRA, was still very active). They also took a firm stance against communism and strongly opposed the government's policies on land annuities and the conduct of the economic war with Great Britain.<sup>26</sup> The Fianna Fail government increasingly saw the Blueshirts as a potential threat to democracy, largely based on impressions of shirted movements abroad, and banned the organization.

---

<sup>23</sup> For example, the attack on C na nG candidates by hecklers at Paulstown, Kilkenny as reported in *The Kilkenny People*, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1932.

<sup>24</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* p. 20.

<sup>25</sup> See *An Phoblacht*, the leading republican newspaper, especially late 1933-early 1934, for an analysis of the Blueshirts from a Republican perspective.

<sup>26</sup> Land annuities were loan repayments due to the British government for land purchases under the Land Acts of 1891-1909. By the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, they were to be collected by the Irish Government and handed over to the British. De Valera continued to collect the annuities but refused to transfer them to Britain. A tariff war ensued that was disastrous to the Irish economy, and for the farmers who provided the overwhelming majority of exports.

However, events were to push the movement into an alliance with Cumann na nGaedheal and the National Centre Party. O'Duffy had decided to lead thirty thousand Blueshirts in a march to Leinster House, the seat of *Dail Eireann*, in honour of Michael Collins, Arthur Griffith<sup>27</sup> and Kevin O'Higgins.<sup>28</sup> The four weeks' notice of the march gave the government time to assess the situation. They feared that there a serious prospect of public disorder, and perhaps even an attempt to emulate Mussolini's March on Rome, and so they responded by not only banning the march, but also the National Guard.<sup>29</sup> Re-named the Young Ireland Association, the Blueshirts were forced by further government repression into an electoral alliance to form Fine Gael, nicknamed "the cripple alliance" by Fianna Fail's Sean Lemass.<sup>30</sup> Maurice Manning believes O'Duffy was chosen as President of Fine Gael due to Centre Party pressure. The party hierarchy was worried that with Cosgrave as leader the new alliance would be perceived as a mere continuation of Cumann na nGaedheal.<sup>31</sup> It was an electoral alliance that had to unite different factions promoting an eclectic mixture of ideas ranging from traditional conservatism<sup>32</sup> to fascism,<sup>33</sup> each vying to see their ideas adopted as official party policy.

### *THE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND THE BLUESHIRT SPLIT*

Post-independence Ireland had a peripheral economy geared to supplying the market of its former administrator, and closest neighbour, Great Britain. During the years of

---

<sup>27</sup> Arthur Griffith was President of the Dail in 1922 and the founder of Sinn Fein.

<sup>28</sup> Kevin O'Higgins was the assassinated Minister of Justice in the Cumann na nGaedheal administration in the twenties.

<sup>29</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* p.22.

<sup>30</sup> Sean Lemass was Minister for Industry and Commerce 1932-9.

<sup>31</sup> M. Manning, *Courage to Succeed* (Dublin, 1983), p.23.

<sup>32</sup> Men like Cosgrave and Dillon, as long-standing members of C na nG and the Centre Party were political and economic conservatives.

<sup>33</sup> Men like O'Duffy, Blythe and Gunning moved in an increasingly fascist direction as the thirties progressed.



British rule, Ireland had become a major supplier of agricultural produce to the British market. Independence had not fundamentally changed this relationship of economic subservience and dependency.<sup>34</sup> The close links with Britain had led to a specialization in dairy farming in large parts of the country, particularly in the south, in order to supply the British market, whilst the west of Ireland was largely involved in subsistence farming on small-scale holdings.<sup>35</sup> The Free State was a classic example of a peripheral economy with few manufacturing industries, a small range of goods, low living standards and vulnerability to market fluctuations.<sup>36</sup> The effects of the economic war on a nation which was only marginally industrialized and relied on farming for its main exports were not uniform across the whole country, but mainly affected those areas that produced for the metropolitan market.<sup>37</sup>

The economic war fuelled the growth of the Blueshirt movement, coming as so soon after the economic privations following on from the Wall Street Crash (1929). It was a further threat to the livelihood of larger farmers and the surrounding communities. The Blueshirts opposed the government's economic policies, which threatened to damage the very infrastructure of the Irish economy. Fianna Fail geared its economic policies towards reducing Ireland's dependence on Britain through a gradual process that was intended to re-orientate agriculture away from dairy farming and the export market to a concentration on tillage and subsistence farming.<sup>38</sup> Fianna Fail hoped that by concentrating on the cultivation of wheat, Ireland would be able to support a larger population, thereby reducing the number of those forced to emigrate due to economic necessity. Fianna Fail used the implementation of more tariffs on imported goods to stimulate the creation of an industrial sector catering for the home

---

<sup>34</sup> A.W. Orridge, 'The Blueshirts and the Economic War' in *Political Studies* 31:3 (September, 1983).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Great Britain was Ireland's metropolitan market.

<sup>38</sup> A.W. Orridge, 'The Blueshirts and the Economic War.'



market.<sup>39</sup> The argument over economic policy produced a cleavage between those who sought to loosen ties with Britain, and those who wanted to keep those ties for economic reasons. The economic war hurt agriculture badly, the price of cattle halving between 1932 and 1935.<sup>40</sup> In turn, it raised questions about sovereignty, land rights and land use. Irish economic activity had peaked in 1929, and the early Thirties saw a rapid decrease in output, trade and employment.<sup>41</sup>

As a major focus of the anti-government campaign, the issue of land annuity payments and the economic war had led to violence, illegal activity, and increasingly aggressive speeches from O'Duffy and other Blueshirts such as Ned Cronin and Major Coughlan. It was O'Duffy's encouragement of illegal activities, such as the non-payment of land annuities and the obstruction of the sale of sequestered cattle, which finally led the Fine Gael executive to seek his resignation as party leader.

Contrary to Fine Gael policy, the annual Blueshirt Convention of 19<sup>th</sup> August 1934 had passed a resolution calling on farmers to withhold the payment of land annuities and for labourers to refuse to pay their rates.<sup>42</sup> O'Duffy's intemperate speeches were out of line with the constitutionalism of men like Cosgrave, Dillon and McGilligan. It was a clear threat to the interests of the pro-metropolitan conservatives of Fine Gael, and they reacted accordingly. The Executive had failed to control O'Duffy and they could not risk being associated with the unconstitutional and illegal tactics that he was advocating. *Cumann na nGaedheal* had spent ten years in office building up Ireland's standing as a democratic nation with a liberal, free-market economy, a balanced budget and a reputation for financial prudence.

---

<sup>39</sup> In 1931, there were 68 Articles concerning tariffs. By 1936, there were 281. P.J. Neary and C. O'Grada, 'Protection, Economic War and Structural Change: The 1930s in Ireland,' in *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. xxvii: 107, (May 1981).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Anonymous editorial, 'The Irish Free State: the Split in the Opposition,' in *Round Table*, vol.97 (December 1934).

After he had left Fine Gael, O'Duffy continued to make inflammatory speeches such as that in Dublin on 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 1934; these were described by the *Garda* as seditious due to his continued advocacy of the non-payment of annuities.<sup>43</sup>

O'Duffy also wanted to make the economic war a national, rather than a party political, issue. He was also advocating an agricultural policy of increased land tillage and the breaking up of larger farms, coupled with the redistribution of land, hardly ideas likely appeal to the larger farmers who provided so much of Fine Gael's electoral base. Such a policy would mean a stress on subsistence rather than dairy farming, a policy much closer to that of Fianna Fail than to his colleagues.

Whilst most members of the Blueshirt movement were concerned with domestic issues such as the payment of land annuities, leases, remuneration for ex-servicemen and free speech, O'Duffy and a core of influential right-wing academics<sup>44</sup> were trying to steer the party in a different direction in which continental political ideas, not domestic issues, were the defining mark. As his speeches became more out of step with the policies of his Fine Gael colleagues, O'Duffy felt himself pressurized by members of the Executive into resigning his position as party President. The demands made by his party colleagues, for example that he submit his speeches in advance to the Executive for approval, made O'Duffy feel that his position was untenable.<sup>45</sup> He felt unable to comply with the demands of the Executive because he believed that this would have severely curtailed his freedom to express his ideas publicly.

Another contentious subject was the Ulster situation. O'Duffy was speaking out for more vigorous action on the North. The Executive of Fine Gael had also objected to General O'Duffy's belligerent speeches on the Northern problem and his proposal to

---

<sup>43</sup> *Garda Report on Seditious Utterance by O'Duffy on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1934, at Mansion House, Dublin.* JUS8/70, NAI.

<sup>44</sup> These key thinkers included James Hogan, Professor of History, University College, Cork, and Michael Tierney, Professor of Greek at University College, Dublin. See Chapter 4.

<sup>45</sup> P.J. Coughlan, *The Truth; The Story of the Blueshirts* p.6-8.



set up Blueshirt branches across the border in Northern Ireland, in defiance of a ban on the organization by the government of the province.<sup>46</sup> O'Duffy had even gone so far as to advocate military action by the Free State Army against the British occupation forces in the North, if necessary.<sup>47</sup>

Government bans had forced O'Duffy into an uneasy alliance with Cumann na nGaedheal and the National Centre Party. For a short while, the pressure from his party colleagues held O'Duffy back from espousing the more radical ideas that he had been developing. As President of Fine Gael, O'Duffy had promoted the corporatist ideas of men like Tierney, Hogan and Blythe. Corporatism, introduced into the coalition by the Blueshirts, was adopted as official party policy but received only lukewarm support from the Executive. The corporate policy involved the creation of intermediate quasi-governmental organizations of workers and employees to make decisions on issues governing particular industries and occupations. O'Duffy found this lack of support from the Executive frustrating. His demand for the end of a twenty-six county parliamentary democracy and its replacement with a thirty-two county corporate republic clearly put him outside the frame of reference of most of his conservative colleagues. None of these radical policies of O'Duffy were acceptable to the traditionalists who dominated the Fine Gael hierarchy. In his defence, after the split, O'Duffy was to claim that he had been trying to create a populist initiative to goad apathetic Fine Gael politicians into action.<sup>48</sup> When the Executive failed to respond to his programme, O'Duffy took his radical domestic agenda and combined it with a blend of continental-influenced corporatism and ultra-nationalism to form the policy basis for his new National Corporate Party.

---

<sup>46</sup> *An Phoblacht*, 'O'Duffy Wants to Wade in Blood,' 25<sup>th</sup> August 1934.

<sup>47</sup> Speech by O'Duffy at Cavan, 29<sup>th</sup> August 1934, reported in *The Anglo-Celt*, 1<sup>st</sup> September 1934

<sup>48</sup> Letter from Dillon to MacDermot, 25<sup>th</sup> September 1934, MacDermot Papers, 1065/2/4, NAI.



By co-opting the Blueshirts, the conservative Fine Gael alliance had hoped to tame their radicalism and to use their enthusiasm, youth and numbers to revive their political fortunes. Fine Gael was able to control the more radical elements for a short time. It was frustrating for O'Duffy as he came to realize that he wanted to move in a different direction from his colleagues. Most of the members of the Fine Gael alliance were unwilling to follow him and neither were most Blueshirts.

The constitutionalists on the Fine Gael Executive were unwilling to countenance O'Duffy's behaviour and he felt himself forced into resigning as President of the party, before he was voted out, on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1934,<sup>49</sup> though he denied that in so doing he had also relinquished the post of Director-General of the League of Youth.<sup>50</sup> He had every intention of remaining as Director-General. The result was a split between his supporters and the section now commanded by Ned Cronin that was still subsidiary to the Fine Gael party organization. Cronin had been a founder member of the Army Comrades Association, and he remained an active Blueshirt. He had joined Fine Gael as one of its Vice-Presidents, one of the three appointed by O'Duffy. In 1933, Cronin had been charged and imprisoned for sedition and had spent three months in gaol<sup>51</sup> and, like O'Duffy, Cronin could be an intemperate speaker; at Tipperary on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1934, he had said:

“De Valera has spoken about dictatorship, but I say here tonight if a dictatorship is necessary for the Irish people we are going to have one.”<sup>52</sup>

The choice of Cronin to replace O'Duffy seems strange in the light of Cronin's background and Fine Gael's concern about constitutional methods, but Cronin was popular within the movement. Cronin was not an intellectual and he did not adhere to

---

<sup>49</sup> M. Manning, *The Blueshirts*, pp. 151-156.

<sup>50</sup> P.J. Coughlan, *The Truth; The Story of the Blueshirts* (Cork, 1935), pp. 4-6.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* p.116.

<sup>52</sup> Cited by the Minister for Justice, *Dail Debates*, Vol.53. Col.2566-73, NAI.

the ideas of the corporatists within the party.<sup>53</sup> At this time, the Blueshirts were at the peak of their popularity and Fine Gael could not risk alienating this element in the coalition. The Executive of Fine Gael no doubt felt that it would be easier for them to control Cronin than O'Duffy. They did eventually close down the League of Youth in 1936, not without some opposition from Cronin however. At the time of the split, many chose to leave rather than take sides, causing irreparable damage to both factions of the movement.<sup>54</sup>

Pushed out of the political mainstream, O'Duffy was free to advocate those policies for which his erstwhile colleagues had increasingly censured him, inspired by his involvement on the international fascist scene. O'Duffy had made the mistake of assuming that he could mould the Blueshirts into a fascist movement. He had no intention of repeating the mistake and the National Corporate Party he set up in 1935 was completely under his own personal control. He took with him a small minority of the League of Youth who supported his views, or who were personally loyal to him. He left the remaining Blueshirts to a slow demise as Fine Gael gradually wound down the League of Youth until they disbanded it altogether in late 1936.<sup>55</sup>

### *PREPARING THE GROUND*

A number of attempts were made during October 1934 by the maverick right-wing politician, Patrick Belton T.D.,<sup>56</sup> to reunite the fractured Blueshirt movement and have O'Duffy reinstated as the leader. Belton made several efforts to bring Cronin and

---

<sup>53</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* p.77.

<sup>54</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* p.118.

<sup>55</sup> M. Cronin *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* p.37.

<sup>56</sup> During a long political career, Belton sat in the Dail for Fianna Fail, Cumann na nGaedheal, the National Centre Party, Fine Gael and as an Independent. He formed the Irish Christian Front to raise money for the Nationalist side in the Spanish Civil War.



O'Duffy together in order to come to some agreement and restore unity. Not only did he fail to do so, but Belton's persistence led to his dismissal from Fine Gael following a motion tabled to the Executive by Dr. T.F. O'Higgins.<sup>57</sup> The next few months saw verbal and physical confrontations between the two Blueshirt factions.<sup>58</sup> O'Duffy went ahead with the reorganization of his rump Blueshirt following. Few leaders and officers in the movement had joined him so he began by appointing new officers and reorganizing branches. On 6<sup>th</sup> October 1934, he launched a new paper, *The Blueshirt*, which began to appear weekly. It was largely written and edited by O'Duffy.<sup>59</sup>

It did not take O'Duffy very long to start to prepare for his re-entry into electoral politics. On 18<sup>th</sup> October 1934, at a Blueshirt convention in Ballytofeey, County Donegal, Patrick Belton announced that a new party, with O'Duffy as its leader, would soon be launched. However, Belton warned that a new party could only be launched once the Blueshirt movement had consolidated its organization, "for any new party that may be launched will have to absolutely depend on the Blueshirt movement."<sup>60</sup> He reiterated that the new party, which he provisionally named 'The National Party,' would be "above everything, a Blueshirt party."<sup>61</sup> Belton hoped to win over to O'Duffy those Blueshirts who had hitherto remained with Cronin and Fine Gael. He announced that the party's main platform would be its corporatist policy and that an electoral victory at both local and national levels would give the party the mandate to carry through a radical programme of constitutional change.<sup>62</sup>

The following month, in Listowel, County Kerry, a convention of western Blueshirts discussed the formation of a new party to be called the National

---

<sup>57</sup> Dr. O'Higgins was the second leader of the ACA in 1932. He was a strong supporter of corporatism.

<sup>58</sup> M. Manning, *The Blueshirts* pp. 170-171.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>60</sup> Patrick Belton TD, quoted in 'The New Party,' in *The Blueshirt*, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1934.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*



Association.’ In contrast to Belton’s earlier statement, those present assumed that Belton himself would emerge as the leader as he already had a seat in the *Dail*,<sup>63</sup> whereas O’Duffy did not. The pressure to launch a new party seemed to be gaining momentum as on 14<sup>th</sup> November, Patrick Belton, speaking at Lifford, County Donegal, announced:

“We intend to build on the Blueshirt organization a national political party that, we hope, in a few years will out both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael.”<sup>64</sup>

Belton went on to say that overtures had been made to him to set up a new party, and that he was pleased to be associated in this venture with Mr William R. Kent T.D. of Cork.<sup>65</sup>

That same month, a meeting of the county and district staff of the Sligo and Leitrim Divisions of the League of Youth (O’Duffy Section) passed resolutions calling on deputies in the *Dail* who had been elected with Blueshirt votes to stand by O’Duffy, leave Fine Gael, and help set up the new party. The meeting urged county and local councillors to do the same.<sup>66</sup>

On December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1934, *The Blueshirt* printed several letters arguing the case for and against the League of Youth transforming itself into a political party,<sup>67</sup> a possible move on the part of O’Duffy to encourage debate at branch level. On 4<sup>th</sup> December 1934, he had issued letters to all branches of the League of Youth appealing for funds specifically to launch a new party and to pay for electioneering expenses.<sup>68</sup> The sum he asked for was ten thousand pounds, a considerable amount.<sup>69</sup> This financial appeal

---

<sup>63</sup> ‘Mr Belton Likely to be Leader,’ *The Irish Press*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1934.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> William R. Kent was T.D for West Cork, a stronghold of the Blueshirt movement. He had been a colleague of Belton’s in the Centre Party.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Mr Belton Likely to be Leader,’ *The Irish Press*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1934.

<sup>67</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 22 December 1934, ‘Letters.’

<sup>68</sup> E. O’Duffy, Letter Appealing For Funds, 4 December 1934, D/Jus8/286, NAI.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

was accompanied by *A Summary of the Policy of the New Movement*.<sup>70</sup> It was a very modest two-page document written by O'Duffy. There were no new policy initiatives different from those of previous Blueshirt organizations. The main points were: the need for national unity; an end to the economic war; anti-communism; the corporatization of economic life and the protection of free speech.

The defence of free speech had been part of the Blueshirt agenda since its inception as the ACA. In 1932, it had referred to the problem of the IRA who had begun a concerted campaign to disrupt the electoral speeches of Cumann na nGaedheal candidates. By 1935, it referred to the moves made by the Fianna Fail government to control the Blueshirts through legislation such as the bill to ban the wearing of political uniforms.

Several items in the twelve point *Summary* referred to the awakening of the national spirit, patriotic self-reliance and the mobilization of youth "in a movement of constructive national action,"<sup>71</sup> an early indication of the direction in which O'Duffy intended to take his new party. However, it would be another six months before the party appeared. During this hiatus, O'Duffy channelled his energy into the international fascist scene through his attendance at several conferences abroad, and it was this that was to lead to the creation of a new fascist party in Ireland.

### *O'DUFFY AND INTERNATIONAL FASCISM*

O'Duffy had first shown an interest in Italian Fascism after a visit to Italy and a meeting with Mussolini during a *Garda* pilgrimage to Rome in 1929.<sup>72</sup> The two hundred and fifty strong *Garda* contingent had worn the sky-blue ribbon of the

---

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> D. Keogh, *Ireland and Europe 1919-48* (Dublin, 1988), pp. 41-42.

pilgrimage medal, a colour that was to soon represent O'Duffy's political movement. The Italian Government showed an interest in O'Duffy and his Blueshirts from an early stage. According to Keogh, O'Duffy was described as a fascist by Dino Grandi, the Italian ambassador to Great Britain.<sup>73</sup>

During his time as leader of the Blueshirts, O'Duffy had been careful to avoid the fascist label but by late 1934, with the increasing success of fascism abroad, not least Hitler's assumption of power in Germany, he was proud to be associated with international fascist conferences. It was at this time that O'Duffy made a trip to Switzerland to attend a conference sponsored by the German Nazis. A year later, in September 1935, he made a trip to Germany where he was feted by the Nazis. In the early days of the Irish Free State, the Irish Government attended a range of international conferences in order to build up its legitimacy as a genuine independent nation.<sup>74</sup> In like manner, O'Duffy seemed to be using the international fascist scene to appear as a major political figure playing an almost statesman-like role.

Only the month before his resignation from Fine Gael, O'Duffy met with Terje Ballsrud, a member of the recently banned Norwegian Greyshirts, who was visiting Dublin.<sup>75</sup> Ballsrud had already met with Oswald Mosley, leader of the British Union of Fascists, in London. The Norwegian fascist made a visit to Leinster House accompanied by Ernest Blythe, Tom Gunning and Ned Cronin, all leading members of the Blueshirts and Fine Gael. The meeting with Ballsrud is a further indication of the direction in which key figures in the movement were heading. Whilst in Dublin, Ballsrud also met with Lodi Fe who had been appointed by the Italian Government as cultural attaché to the Irish Free State. Lodi Fe was also in Dublin to promote Italian

---

<sup>73</sup> D. Keogh, *Ireland and Europe 1919-48* pp. 41-2

<sup>74</sup> G.M. MacMillan, *State, Society and Authority in Ireland* (Dublin, 1993), p. 202.

<sup>75</sup> *An Phoblacht*, 'Greyshirt Leader's Visit,' 18 August 1934.



fascism and he organized a section of the Italian community into the *Fascio Dublino Michel Angelo* with Edward Tomacelli as its secretary.<sup>76</sup>

It was late in 1934 that O'Duffy made contact with other European corporatists and fascists in a series of meetings that were covered by the national press and *The Blueshirt*. In December 1934, he attended the International Action of Nationalism Conference in Zurich, which the Nazis had organized. Others in attendance included Oswald Mosley from Great Britain, General Poudroux from France and Mr J.F. Hirst from the USA. The Nazis funded the conference, which was a forum for the discussion of Nazi ideas, including racist doctrines.<sup>77</sup>

The same month, O'Duffy attended the Montreux Conference organized by the *Comitati d'Azione per l'Universalita di Roma* (CAUR), and sponsored by Mussolini's Government. CAUR had already shown some interest in the Blueshirts. Nicola Pascazio, representing CAUR, met with O'Duffy in Dublin, where the latter had confessed to him, in spite of all past and future statements to the contrary, that the March on Leinster House, which led to the Government ban on the Blueshirts, had been intended to imitate Mussolini's March on Rome. He also informed Pascazio that he was not afraid of being labelled a dictator or a fascist.<sup>78</sup> Pascazio also met with Tom Gunning, O'Duffy's secretary. The Italian ambassador in London, Dino Grandi, believed that by August 1933, Ireland had progressed to the point where an Irish fascist revolution was inevitable.<sup>79</sup> Reporting to Mussolini Count Grandi stated:

“We are witnessing a political movement that has courageously raised the standard of Fascism, the wish to pursue a revolutionary path. This is beyond all doubt. And this

---

<sup>76</sup> D. Keogh, *Ireland and Europe 1919-1948* p. 91.

<sup>77</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* p. 53.

<sup>78</sup> Report of Signor Nicola Pascazio's mission in Ireland, February-March 1934, *L'Imperio Britannica*, P.14, as quoted in Ledeen, *Universal Fascism* (1972).

<sup>79</sup> D. Keogh, *Ireland and Europe 1919-48* p. 46.

is the road that the younger Irish generation wishes to follow in order to achieve a united nation more quickly.”<sup>80</sup>

O’Duffy left Dublin for Liverpool in December 1934, mis-informing the *Irish Press* that he was going on holiday to Paris.<sup>81</sup> Two days later, under the headline, ‘General O’Duffy at Secret Fascist Congress,’ the same newspaper detailed the activities of the Blueshirt leader at Montreux.<sup>82</sup> The *Irish Press* detailed the proceedings, but hinted that not all was above board about the conference. O’Duffy’s original statement that he was on his way to Paris for a vacation did not help his case.

Mussolini had set up the Montreux Conference in order to spread the fascist message and to boost his own prestige in the process. It was essentially a propaganda exercise. The Italian, Eugenio Coselschi, organized the conference. The conference admitted those organizations:

“...who have their spirit open to the principles of political, economic and social renovation, based on the concepts of the hierarchy of the State and the principle of collaboration between the classes.”<sup>83</sup>

The conference laid stress on the universal aims of fascism. Whilst respecting the autonomy of national groups, the conference also accepted Coselschi’s definition of the universal aspect of fascism:

“...the reconstitution of a State on new bases, of a unified, strong and disciplined State, the organization of labour, liberties contained within sane and honest limits: installation of order and justice, agreement between classes; co-ordinated and solid

---

<sup>80</sup> Dino Grandi to Mussolini, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1933, No.3020/1038 serie politici 1931-45, Irlanda, busta (box) 2 (1933) fasc. (file) ‘Rapporti Politici ASMAE’, as cited in Keogh D., *Ireland and Europe 1919-48*, p.46.

<sup>81</sup> *Irish Press*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1934.

<sup>82</sup> *Irish Press*, 17<sup>th</sup> December 1934, ‘O’Duffy at Secret Fascist Congress.’

<sup>83</sup> *Ottobre 1933*, as cited in M.A. Ledeen, *Universal Fascism* (New York, 1972), p. 116.

collaboration between producers...And so the 'supernational' idea harmonizes perfectly with the national idea."<sup>84</sup>

CAUR would only admit those organizations committed to national revolution, "a revolution inspired by a true mysticism and an elevated idea founded on corporativism."<sup>85</sup> Clearly for the Italian organizers of the conference, O'Duffy and his movement satisfied these criteria.

O'Duffy informed Irish journalists that the aim of the conference had been to discuss the corporate system, "as a means of promoting social justice and equality, and harmony between peoples,"<sup>86</sup> allowing each national group to share its views whilst encouraging each to follow its distinctive national path. *The Blueshirt* condemned the *Irish Press* for labelling the conference as both secret and fascist. The party paper pointed out that of the six sessions of the conference, all but one were open to the world's press.<sup>87</sup> On the issue of fascism, the *Irish Press* recorded that in his speech to the conference, O'Duffy had said that "the most that we can do at this meeting is to recognize the general principles of fascism."<sup>88</sup>

O'Duffy was later to say that the term 'fascist' only referred to the corporate state in Italy and that, except for the corporatists in Britain,<sup>89</sup> no-one else used this title.<sup>90</sup> Speaking at Creggs, County Galway in January 1935, O'Duffy remarked that Germany had not been represented at the conference at Montreux because Nazi policy was not compatible with the corporatist system.<sup>91</sup> In fact corporatist ideas were an important part of only some fascist party programmes, namely those of the fascist

---

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1934, 'Corporate System Discussed.'

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> *Irish Press*, 17<sup>th</sup> December 1934, 'General O'Duffy at Secret Fascist Congress.'

<sup>89</sup> By whom he meant the BUF.

<sup>90</sup> *Irish Press*, 29<sup>th</sup> December 1934, 'General O'Duffy: His Interview with *Il Duce*.'

<sup>91</sup> *Irish Press*, 7<sup>th</sup> January 1935, 'Montreux Conference.'



parties of Italy, Great Britain, Belgium, France, Norway, the Netherlands and Ireland.<sup>92</sup>

The other groups represented at the conference were the Austrian *Heimwehr*, the Belgian *Legion National Belge* and *Ligue Corporative du Travail*, the Danish *National Copset* and National Socialist Party, the French *Francistes*, the Greek National Socialists, the Norwegian *Nasjonal Samling*, the Dutch *Front Noir*, representatives from the Portuguese government of Doctor Salazar, the Romanian Iron Guard, the Swedish National Union of Youth, the Spanish *Falange*, the Swiss Fascist Federation and the Lithuanian Nationalist Party.<sup>93</sup>

O'Duffy did not wear his Blueshirt uniform at the Congress, and did not explain why. His speech to the assembled delegates began by briefly outlining the history of his organization in Ireland. He claimed that the movement had:

“...taken its present shape because it is based on the fundamental Christian principles of hierarchy as opposed to Socialistic or Communist principles.”<sup>94</sup>

The Blueshirts, he said, were not a movement rooted in the Irish Civil War, but had arisen “to prevent the Communists and her allies from terrorizing the civilian population.”<sup>95</sup> Nonetheless, he appealed to Britain to give freedom to the whole of Ireland, without which there never could be lasting peace between the two nations. The Blueshirts, he continued, were educating the people of Ireland in the principles of corporatism. But, he added, and in keeping with one of the themes of the conference, “that we must always reserve our right to adapt the system to an Irish mould.”<sup>96</sup> He cited the example of the corporatist organization of agriculture in Italy, a system which would not work in Ireland due to the overwhelming number of small farmers.

---

<sup>92</sup> O.E Shudekopf, *Revolutions of Our Time.Fascism.*(London, 1973) p.144

<sup>93</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* p.52.

<sup>94</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1934, ‘Corporate System Discussed.’

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

He concluded his speech with a tribute to Mussolini, particularly for respecting the rights of religion.<sup>97</sup>

The conference unanimously passed a resolution purporting to condemn racial persecution in all its forms. However, the resolution at the same time denounced certain groups of Jews "...who installed themselves as if on foreign territory, openly or occultly [sic] exercising an influence harmful to the material and moral interests of the nation which shelters them, thus constituting a State within a State, profiting by all benefits while refusing all duties."<sup>98</sup>

O'Duffy informed the conference that there was no Jewish problem in Ireland and that he could "not subscribe to the principles of persecution of any race."<sup>99</sup> *The Blueshirt* reported that General O'Duffy had "strongly opposed any resolution which would countenance any hostile action against Jews,"<sup>100</sup> but his agreement, by signature, to the above resolution belies this statement. However, anti-Semitism was not a key feature of all fascisms. Indeed, leaders such as Mussolini, Quisling and Mussert, with whom O'Duffy had close ideological links only adopted anti-Semitism at a late date largely in response to German ideological and political pressure.

The Montreux Conference concluded by setting up a committee (to be known as 'The Secretariat') to arrange future meetings and act as a co-ordinating committee for fascist propaganda and communication.<sup>101</sup> The Secretariat, also known as the Committee of Seven, was made up of the seven members who were to meet on a more regular basis than the full membership. O'Duffy was selected by the delegates as one of the Secretariat.

---

<sup>97</sup> This was O'Duffy's perception of Mussolini's attitude towards Catholicism. In reality, Mussolini had little time for religion and his Concordat with the Papacy was a tactical move, not one motivated by faith.

<sup>98</sup> *Irish Press*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 1934, 'Fascist Congress and Jews.'

<sup>99</sup> *Irish Press*, 29<sup>th</sup> December 1934, 'General O'Duffy: His Interview with *Il Duce*.'

<sup>100</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1934, 'Corporate System Discussed.'

<sup>101</sup> M. Ledeen, *Universal Fascism* p.123.



At the end of December 1934, after Montreux, O'Duffy went to Rome where he met with Mussolini and discussed such items as agriculture and the need for a nation's population to be physically fit and healthy.<sup>102</sup> The *Duce* invited him to return the following year. Whilst in Rome, O'Duffy also attended a meeting organized by the right-wing Catholic organization *Italia e fide* and was appointed to the recently created International Centre for Corporate Studies. Also in attendance at the meeting were Meyer, Fonjallez and Loutkie who had also been at Montreux.<sup>103</sup> This group represented a cleavage in those attending the Montreux Conference. *Italia e fide* was trying to maintain a strong Catholic influence over the developing corporatist movement in the hope of stifling the more statist element in favour of a more Catholic approach in line with the Papal social encyclicals.<sup>104</sup>

The Committee of Seven met for the first time in Paris on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1935, in order to discuss the issue of the position of labour in the corporate system. O'Duffy's colleagues on the Secretariat were: Eugene Coselschi (Italy), Dr F. Clausen (Denmark), Marcel Bocard (France), M. Mercouris (Greece), Colonel A. Fonjallos (Switzerland), and Vidkun Quisling of Norway. The Secretariat discussed recent Italian legislation, which had reduced the working week to 40 hours, without reducing wages, as a possible way of reducing unemployment. The Secretariat also called for increased contacts at an international level, and for the creation of a Congress of Workers, as class collaboration was seen as the solution to the economic crisis.<sup>105</sup> The four main resolutions passed by the meeting were:

<sup>102</sup> *Irish Press*, 29<sup>th</sup> December 1934, 'General O'Duffy: His Meeting with *Il Duce*.'

<sup>103</sup> M. Ledeen, *Universal Fascism* p.123.

<sup>104</sup> Leo XIII's *De Rerum Novarum*, (1891) and Pius XII's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). The encyclicals offered a critique of capitalist society and the need to deal with social issues, workers' rights and employers' responsibilities to avoid class warfare

<sup>105</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 9<sup>th</sup> February 1935.

1. Corporatist movements must work above all "...for peace, understanding and mutual goodwill amongst peoples, so that, by a reform of both existing outlooks and institutions, European unity might be attained...The Committee therefore decides to undertake a programme of work and propaganda to achieve, by any possible means, this European unity.
2. "The Committee urges youth to ...fight every sort of materialism, against every form of Capitalist egoism, against paganism in all its manifestations, to restore spiritual values, to keep alight the light of faith, the essence of nobility in life, the holiness of sacrifice- up onward, to protect all the virtues by which the human race is elevated.
3. "The Committee recommends all to consider a 40 hour week to lessen unemployment as Mussolini has done in Italy.
4. "The Committee, pledging itself to work for the moral and political organization of European life, affirms the supreme value of the spiritual life and the intellectual and rational liberty of the individual. It wishes to bring about harmony, not standardization, and it recognizes all currents of life and thought except that which annihilates spiritual individuality, and seeks to submerge the most sacred traditions of peoples and nations in an international materialism."<sup>106</sup>

The final, meeting of the Secretariat took place on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1935 in Amsterdam. One resolution called for all groups to work for peace and added:

"We condemn all materialist pretensions to dominance by any race over other races."<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 1<sup>st</sup> March 1935, 'Corporative Committee of Seven.'

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

The following day, O'Duffy, along with his colleagues Quisling, Bucard and Coselschi, attended a rally of Dutch Blackshirts, addressed by their leader Anton Mussert. At the rally, the crowd of fascists enthusiastically greeted O'Duffy with a prolonged outburst of applause, after which he signed autographs.<sup>108</sup>

CAUR did not last long once Count Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister, had received a damning report that included a scathing denunciation of the delegates. They were portrayed in the report as men of little consequence who were trying to elicit funds from the Italian Government for their own diversion and advancement.<sup>109</sup> O'Duffy's involvement with CAUR had put him firmly in the fascist camp and raised his international profile. In spite of the lack of influence of the conferences, they inflated O'Duffy's ego even more. He could now claim to be a player on the international political scene, a statesman in the making. O'Duffy's enthusiasm was fuelled by the conferences and he went ahead with the creation of a new political party to promote an idea, fascism, whose time, he believed, had come. He was creating his own fascist party on the model of continental examples. Over half of the European fascist parties were formed after 1933, including those of Norway, the Netherlands and Ireland.

O'Duffy was once again in Italy in September 1935, following a visit to Geneva. He returned to Ireland via Germany, where he visited a number of camps for young people and camps for Stormtroopers. On his return from Germany, he spoke to the press. He admitted that though he did not entirely approve of Hitler's policies, he believed that the media had misrepresented the German dictator.<sup>110</sup>

In spite of the geographical proximity, shared language, and recent common history, there appears to have been no contact between O'Duffy and Oswald

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> M. Ledeen, *Universal Fascism* pp. 124-6.

<sup>110</sup> *Irish Press*, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1935.



Mosley. The Republican journal, *An Phoblacht* hinted at Blueshirt links with Mosley in late 1934, without going into any detail.<sup>111</sup> In January 1934, the same journal had claimed that its London correspondent had learned of an alliance between Mosley and the Blueshirts, and that General Hickie<sup>112</sup> had gone to England to secure fascist funds for the Blueshirts.<sup>113</sup> It quoted an article in Mosley's *Fascist Week* which prophesied that there would soon be fascist governments in London, Belfast and Dublin.<sup>114</sup> *An Phoblacht* had also noted that the Norwegian fascist, Terje Ballsrud, visited O'Duffy after meeting with Mosley, hinting at some sort of connection. Undoubtedly, O'Duffy would have come into contact with Mosley at the Zurich Conference which they both attended in December 1934, but Mosley did not attend the CAUR conference at Montreux. It would appear that the Irish and British fascists kept to themselves. There is no record of joint meetings or cooperation. In spite of Mosley's earlier sympathy for the cause of Irish nationalism, and his opposition to the heavy-handed approach of the Black and Tans<sup>115</sup> after the Easter Rising in 1916, he was an avowed imperialist who wanted to maintain Ireland's dominion status. By 1935, O'Duffy had moved to an extreme republican position and therefore he was in direct opposition to the imperialist policies of Mosley who saw a continued role for Ireland within the British Empire.

As late as May 1937, the *Garda* were still reporting links between NCP members and international fascism. A *Garda* report on Kevin Patton of Raglona, Mullingar described him as a member of the NCP and an "ardent admirer of

---

<sup>111</sup> *An Phoblacht*, 25<sup>th</sup> August 1934, 'O'Duffy Wants to Wade in Blood.'

<sup>112</sup> Hickie was a former general in the Free State Army.

<sup>113</sup> *An Phoblacht*, 27<sup>th</sup> January 1934, 'Anglo-Fascist Alliance.'

<sup>114</sup> *The Fascist Week*, 29<sup>th</sup> December 1933, 'The Blueshirt Case.'

<sup>115</sup> The Black and Tans were a force recruited by the British to assist the Royal Irish Constabulary in dealing with the IRA. *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* (1998), p. 47.

General O'Duffy."<sup>116</sup> The *Garda* wrote this report in response to an article appearing in a Belgian journal, *La Griffé*, which contained an appeal to students from an organization called *Union Mondial d'Ordre Nouveau*. The police reported that Kevin Patton, who had been a local secretary for the NCP, was the movement's promoter in Ireland.<sup>117</sup> He did not appear to have any success in recruiting for the organization. The *Union's* political philosophy can be gauged from the avowed aims of the movement:

*"...pour lutter contre le marxisme et favoriser l'avenement d'un monde nouveau base sur la foi, la patrie, la famille et la profession."*<sup>118</sup>

### *SEEKING ALLIES*

In a surprise move in the spring of 1935, O'Duffy began to make overtures to his erstwhile enemies, the IRA. His proposal to make the 1916 Easter Proclamation<sup>119</sup> the basis of his party's national policy, coupled with his desire to unite nationalists under a common banner, may have inspired him to seek allies amongst the IRA. Recently, the IRA had split, losing many of its left-wing activists to the Republican Congress, a party which aimed to create a mass base to campaign for a socialist republic in Ireland.<sup>120</sup> The nationalist philosophy of both the IRA and the O'Duffy Blueshirts provided a common policy element. Both organizations found themselves the victims of government repression and coercion. O'Duffy hoped to use this as a means to bind the two forces. A police

---

<sup>116</sup> Garda Metropolitan Division Police Report on Kevin Patton, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1937, Jus8/470, NAI.

<sup>117</sup> Police Report from J.P. Walsh, 29 May 1937, Department of External Affairs, Jus8/470, NAI.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> The declaration of Irish independence and the creation of an Irish republic proclaimed by the Irish revolutionary, Patrick Pearse, on the steps of the Dublin General Post Office on Easter Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1916.

<sup>120</sup> Republican Congress had been created in part as a response to the perceived threat from the Blueshirts. It was short-lived, dissolving itself in 1935.

report described the initiative as an effort “to bring members of the new and old IRA and opponents of the Government into the Organization.”<sup>121</sup> *Garda* surveillance discovered that O’Duffy approached, via intermediaries,<sup>122</sup> Miss A. Nevin of Cashel, a long-standing supporter of the IRA. O’Duffy was under the impression that she had considerable influence in the local republican movement. His intention was to win her support for his new initiative, but since she refused to meet with him,<sup>123</sup> the initiative failed to get off the ground.

O’Duffy, now advocating his own brand of extreme republican nationalism, found himself alienated from the constitutionalists of Fine Gael and the militarist IRA. O’Duffy’s attempt to seek an alliance with the anti-democratic forces of republican extremists that he had spent years opposing never had any real chance of success. In the light of the IRA’s and Republican Congress’s intense physical and vocal opposition to Blueshirtism in all its manifestations, O’Duffy’s political naivety was never more in evidence than in this failed initiative.

In the light of his aggressive statements on the question of partition prior to his resignation from Fine Gael, it is also surprising to find O’Duffy proposing another co-operative initiative, this time with Job Stott’s<sup>124</sup> Ulster Fascists.<sup>125</sup> A meeting had been held at Wynn’s Hotel in Dublin on 19th February 1935 in order to set up a non-political organization to promote the voluntary reunification of Ireland

---

<sup>121</sup> Garda Report, J.J. Moore, Cahir, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1935, Proposed Change in the Constitution of the League of Youth, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>122</sup> These intermediaries were local Blueshirts, Dr John Hennessey of Golden and Patrick Nolan of Cashel. Nolan was the Vice-Director of Cashel District Division (O’Duffy Section).

<sup>123</sup> Report of the Superintendent of Cahir Garda to Chief Superintendent at Thurles, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>124</sup> Job Stott was an ex-RUC B-Special and director of the Ulster Centre of Fascist Studies (F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* p. 21.)

<sup>125</sup> Founded in the autumn of 1933, the Ulster Fascists were closely linked to the BUF. F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* pp. 20-21.



through the cultivation of constructive cross-border relations.<sup>126</sup> The organization was named ‘The 32 Club,’ a title symbolizing a united Ireland. This was not the first time that the idea had been aired. The Royal Irish Constabulary in the North had been monitoring an organization by that name, whose principle organizer was Captain The O’Donovan, since the end of 1934.<sup>127</sup>

The Wynn’s Hotel meeting passed the following resolutions:

- “1. That the meeting forms itself into a club having for its aim the reunion of Ireland.
2. That it be called ‘The 32 Club’ to symbolize the thirty-two counties of Ireland.
3. That it be the primary object of the club to cultivate through social, cultural, business and other contacts, friendly relations between Irishmen living North and South of the border.
4. That membership be given to all Irish men and women, irrespective of religious or political affiliations, who accept the object and rules of the Club.”<sup>128</sup>

The organizer of each branch would wear a silver badge and would be known as a ‘Pioneer’- a possible tribute to O’Duffy’s admiration for the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association.<sup>129</sup> Fearghal McGarry states that:

“...the most curious detail was the instruction that at each meeting ‘a chair shall be left vacant in a prominent position reserved for the personage who is to give embodiment to the idea of National unity.’ This ‘personage’ was not

---

<sup>126</sup> F. McGarry, ‘General O’Duffy, the National Corporate Party and the Irish Brigade,’ in Ed. J. Augusteijn, *Ireland in the 1930s* (Dublin, 1999).

<sup>127</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs Minute Sheet, 12<sup>th</sup> June 1935-The Blueshirts, HA/32/1/615, PRONI.

<sup>128</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1935, ‘Corporative Commission Meeting.’

<sup>129</sup> F. McGarry, ‘General O’Duffy, the National Corporate Party, and the Irish Brigade,’ in Ed. J. Augusteijn, *Ireland in the 1930s* p. 120.

identified but it seems likely that O'Duffy's ambitions had now risen from dictatorial to monarchical."<sup>130</sup>

There is a curious precedent set by D'Annunzio during his Fiume experiment. In his Carnaro Charter, which D'Annunzio drafted with De Ambris and which laid down the organization of a corporate order in the city republic of Fiume, was the declaration that the tenth corporation was to be left empty, "...dedicated to the unknown genius, to the appearance of the Very New Man (*Nuovissimo Homo*), to the ideal transfiguration of human industry and time."<sup>131</sup>

A meeting was arranged in Belfast at the Grand Hotel, on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 1935, presided over by Captain The O'Donovan,<sup>132</sup> with the purpose of setting up a branch of the 32 Club in the North, effecting an alliance between the Blueshirts and the Ulster Fascists. The motion to set up the branch, proposed by a Blueshirt named McKeaveney, and seconded by Job Stott of the Ulster Fascists, was, for some unknown reason, defeated by the counter-proposal of two Blueshirts, Brendan Kielty and Jack Hewitt. Three delegates abstained from voting. The final vote was four to three against setting up a branch in the North.<sup>133</sup> The Northern Ireland Special Branch report stated:

"From what can be ascertained, the meeting resolved itself into a huge farce, no one apparently taking the proceedings very seriously. McKeaveney is described as a 'mental case' and The O'Donovan may be described as falling within the same category. No attempts have been made to hold further meetings."<sup>134</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Quoted in Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* p. 65.

<sup>132</sup> 'The' being a title, not his Christian name.

<sup>133</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* p. 21.

<sup>134</sup> Inspector General's Office, RUC, to Secretary, Minister of Home Affairs, 12<sup>th</sup> June 1935, HA 32/1/615, PRONI.

The list of the objectives of the Club had changed in a significant way by the time they reached the Belfast meeting, which led the RUC to declare that the Club's principal aim was "apparently the fusion of North and South under an independent monarchy."<sup>135</sup> The following item had been added by the Blueshirts to the Club's aims:

"Realizing that the effect of the present political alignments is to emphasize these divisions and that no friendly or enduring basis can be found for these contacts unless there is common ground between them, the original members are of the opinion that this common ground can best be provided by a movement aiming at the restitution of an independent Irish Monarchy linked by dynastic ties to the British Commonwealth of Nations.

"They believe that an independent monarchy in this country would not only solve our political and religious differences but would, from the National aspect, raise our social and political status as people by giving a new emphasis to our millennial culture and historical traditions. Monarchy alone, as linked to Gaelic Ireland and evolved in modern Britain, can satisfy the dual aspirations of humanity for an arbitral paternal authority and democratic social forms.

"The original members hold that, as a mother country of the Commonwealth of Nations, Ireland's station should be equal in every respect to that of Great Britain-the other mother country. They believe, moreover, that the monarchical form of government is the only one that would adequately convey the value of this equality."<sup>136</sup>

Membership of the Club was to be open to:

---

<sup>135</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs- The Blueshirts, Inspector General's Office, Letter to the Minister of Home Affairs, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1935, HA/32/1/615, PRONI.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.



“...people of Irish nationality or affiliation regardless of political or religious attachment who are interested in promoting friendliness and cooperation between Irishmen living North and South of the border.”<sup>137</sup>

This membership detail recognized, and at the same time accepted, the religious and political differences of the two factions at the meeting. In spite of all these efforts, the meeting failed to win over enough delegates for a branch to be set up in Belfast. The differences between the nationalist philosophies of the two movements were too great.

The next issue of *The Blueshirt*<sup>138</sup> made no reference to the monarchy item in the 32 Club's agenda, and falsely claimed that a branch of the 32 Club had been set up in Belfast. The reason for the introduction of such a drastic move, especially in the light of O'Duffy's avowed republicanism, is difficult to explain. His need to widen his support base through an alliance with the Ulster Fascists may have prompted the move. Perhaps he had decided that Arthur Griffith's idea of a dual monarchy was a practical solution to the problem of Ireland's division, even though at the time it was often condemned as an unsuitable foreign import. Griffith himself had hoped that the Ulster Protestants could be won over by the creation of a dual-monarchy.<sup>139</sup> The fact that it was quickly abandoned would indicate it was a tactical move on O'Duffy's part, but it also reveals that he was prepared to be flexible if a strategic advantage could be gained from a situation.

It is not clear why the initiative failed. Neither side gave their reasons. There was a history of animosity between the two organizations. A probable cause is the fact that the brief of the Ulster Fascists was to maintain dominion status, which

---

<sup>137</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1935.

<sup>138</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1935.

<sup>139</sup> E. Rumpf, E and A.C. Hepburn, *Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Liverpool, 1977), p. 5.

went against the avowed republicanism of O’Duffy. The reference to the monarchy would have had little appeal for the republicans in the Blueshirt delegation. There was some common ground; both organizations were fierce opponents of communism and the Stormont administration,<sup>140</sup> but it was not enough to forge an effective alliance.

It had not been the first attempt at seeking an alliance between the two groups. The Ulster Fascists had been formed in 1933, with the aim of uniting North and South in an all-Ireland fascist dominion within the British Empire.<sup>141</sup> In August 1934, a deputation of twenty-six Ulster Fascists, acting independently of the party leadership, met with O’Duffy in Cork City with the express intention of seeking clarification of the Blueshirt policy on the North.<sup>142</sup> There had been rumours that O’Duffy had been planning to appoint a Commissioner for the North to set up branches of the Blueshirt movement in the six Northern counties,<sup>143</sup> in spite of the fact that his agent had told O’Duffy that there was no enthusiasm for the organization there. A meeting of the Executive Council of the Ulster Fascists met on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 1934, to discuss the issue.<sup>144</sup> The delegation that met with O’Duffy in Cork was concerned about whether the two organizations should merge. However, Job Stott had not authorized the deputation, and, in response to hearing about the mission, said:

“As we stand at present, our organization cannot have any compromises with the Blueshirts. They are not fascists, but merely an adjunct of a political party.”<sup>145</sup>

---

<sup>140</sup> Stormont was the seat of government of the Northern Ireland Unionist administration.

<sup>141</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 21.

<sup>142</sup> *The Derry Journal*, 7<sup>th</sup> September 1934, ‘O’Duffy’s New Recruits.’

<sup>143</sup> *The Derry Journal*, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1934.

<sup>144</sup> *Irish News*, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1934, ‘Deputation from Dublin.’

<sup>145</sup> *The Derry Journal*, 7<sup>th</sup> September 1934, ‘O’Duffy’s New Recruits.’

In the aftermath of the Cork meeting, Stott expelled about two hundred members from the Ulster Fascists. The cross-border initiative, an attempt by O'Duffy to ally himself with what he perceived as his ideological counterpart in the North, was a failed effort to seek a union of anti-Free State forces. That he failed to do so reveals that the ideological bond between the two movements was not as strong as their historical antipathy towards each other. By the time of their meeting in 1935 however, Stott was willing to concede that O'Duffy had moved on ideologically. He conceded that O'Duffy was now a fascist:

“The BLUESHIRT movement in the Free State is to a great extent FASCIST minded. From a FASCIST viewpoint ITS ONLY HOPE for the SALVATION of IRELAND is to remain WITHIN THE EMPIRE...A DOMINION OF IRELAND within the British Empire of FASCIST NATIONS would receive our full support.”<sup>146</sup>

As the leader of the Blueshirts in 1933, O'Duffy had been faced with the issue of whether to admit members of the British Fascisti into his organization. The British Fascisti had been in existence since 1924 and the Dublin branch, under the leadership of H.R. Ledbeater, met on a regular basis. The branch only had about twenty-five active members, but the *Garda* believed that there were about a thousand on the membership roll.<sup>147</sup> The members were described by the *Garda* as “being chiefly ex-officers of the British army and persons holding imperialist views.”<sup>148</sup> The pro-Nazi Fascisti held views directly at odds with the nationalism of the Blueshirts, though they did share a marked hostility towards communism. The British Fascisti were also virulently anti-Semitic, distributing the German publication *The Destroyers of International Goodwill* to Jewish candidates in local

<sup>146</sup> J. Stott, *A Brief Introduction to Fascism*, (Pamphlet, no date).

<sup>147</sup> *Garda Siochana* Report on the British Fascisti, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1933, D/Jus8/719, NAI.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*



elections.<sup>149</sup> The appearance of the Blueshirts on the Irish political scene had stimulated discussion amongst the British Fascisti, and Ledbeater encouraged members to attend Blueshirt meetings. Initially, there was no bar on members joining the movement.<sup>150</sup> Frank MacDonald, Officer Commanding IFS, British Fascisti, rescinded the decision at the next meeting, on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 1933, pending further instructions from headquarters. This decision was pre-empted by General O'Duffy the next day when he stated that members of the B.F. were not eligible for membership of the Blueshirts. Considering the avowed imperialism of the group and its attachment to the British monarchy, this decision of O'Duffy's is hardly surprising. The British Fascisti, in spite of their professed adherence to fascism, were basically conservative, anti-socialist, pro-British and unionist imperialists and sympathisers with no relevance to Irish politics in the thirties.

O'Duffy's opportunistic attempts to gather allies to bolster up his proposed new party were a complete failure. O'Duffy must have been aware that the Blueshirt rump he had carried with him was a precarious foundation for any new venture but, ever the optimist, and convinced of his own organizational skills, he decided to carry on regardless. He was over-confident when it came to assessing his own abilities and charisma. Unfortunately, his recent appearance on the international fascist scene had not only boosted his self-confidence, but had convinced him that fascism's future in Ireland was inevitable. When he did launch his new party, he put all his organizational skills to work. He was to be disappointed, though the NCP was not to mark the end of his political career.

---

<sup>149</sup> *Garda Siochana* Report on The British Fascisti, 29<sup>th</sup> June 1933, D/Jus8/719, NAI.

<sup>150</sup> *Garda Siochana* Report on the British Fascisti, 12 July 1933, D/Jus8/719, NAI.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE ORGANIZATION AND HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL CORPORATE PARTY.

### *THE FOUNDATION OF THE PARTY*

Bolstered by his active participation on the international fascist scene, but aware that he had failed to attract any new allies or significantly increase the number of his following, O'Duffy felt that by the summer of 1935 the time was right to launch his new political party. The next year would see O'Duffy struggling to create a viable alternative to the existing political organizations, and failing in the process. The organization that he created was hampered in its bid for power by the small number of active members. But, more significantly, O'Duffy failed to capture the imagination of the Irish public and the lack of media coverage of his dwindling movement did not serve to help matters. By the summer of 1936, O'Duffy had had enough and he was ready to move on and try his luck in a new venture. The party was unable to survive without O'Duffy's enthusiasm and organizational skills, and faded away during O'Duffy's absence in Spain.

O'Duffy decided to use the 1935 Annual Congress<sup>1</sup> of the League of Youth (O'Duffy Section) to launch his new party. In preparation, League branches and the National Executive, which had controlled the League since the split with Fine Gael, were encouraged to file motions for debate at the conference by the 1<sup>st</sup> June 1935. O'Duffy's overwhelming influence on policy can be gauged from an analysis of the motions put to the Congress. Of the 65 motions, O'Duffy submitted 24, and a further 11 came from the National Executive, which O'Duffy effectively controlled. Of these 35 motions, all but three were accepted.<sup>2</sup> The proposals that Congress rejected were

---

<sup>1</sup> In Gaelic: *Ard Fheis*.

<sup>2</sup> Notices of Motions to Congress, D/Jus8/296, NA1.

concerned with the naming of the party and the renaming of the League of Youth. The National Executive proposed calling the party 'The National Front' and O'Duffy proposed 'The National Association.' O'Duffy wanted the League of Youth to revert to its old name of the National Guard. Congress passed O'Duffy's motion to designate the rank-and-file as Volunteers, harking back to the military organization that had carried out the 1916 Easter Rising. Almost a third of the motions put to the Congress were concerned with minor organizational points, such as the style of the uniform, the marching song and the party flag.

The motions that O'Duffy put forward, and which Congress passed, were all concerned with fundamental policy issues, including 4 on labour policy, and 14 on agricultural policy.<sup>3</sup> O'Duffy had been prepared to accede to Congress on minor issues, but he clearly retained control over the movement's political direction. The outward show of democracy within the party masked the fact that it was, in common with fascist parties elsewhere, completely controlled by its leader, O'Duffy. After his experience with Fine Gael, he did not intend to share power with anyone.

In contrast to O'Duffy and the Executive, the local branches showed a marked disinterest in policy-making, and seemed to be more concerned with minor issues, such as the party marching song (Westmeath Division suggested 'Wrap the Green Flag' or 'A Nation Once Again'<sup>4</sup>), or the colour of the uniform tie (Killinick Company-Wexford Division<sup>5</sup>). This split between the party hierarchy and rank-and-file, with the former following a more ideological path, reflects a similar split in motivation in the earlier Blueshirt organizations, as Cronin's research has shown.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> *The Blueshirt*, June 15, 1935, 'Resolutions Passed By Congress.'

<sup>4</sup> *Notices of Motion to Congress*, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* pp. 126-133.



O'Duffy's control over the Congress agenda is quite evident. There were six motions of nomination for Director-General; all were for O'Duffy.<sup>7</sup> There were no other candidates. Before the Congress, in his appeal for funds for his new party, O'Duffy had produced a 12-point *Summary* of the proposed party's aims. Congress adopted this provisional document in its entirety. The Congress of the League of Youth<sup>8</sup> took place on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June 1935, in the Supper Room at the historic Mansion House.<sup>9</sup> *The Blueshirt* reported an attendance of 600 delegates,<sup>10</sup> and the *Irish Independent* 500,<sup>11</sup> but the police report gave a more conservative figure of 350.<sup>12</sup> The delegates came from all parts of the Irish Free State. West Cork constituency alone sent 60 delegates.<sup>13</sup> A photograph in the *Irish Independent* shows the arrival of delegates in their uniforms, posing to give a fascist salute to the camera.<sup>14</sup> Notably in attendance was Patrick Belton T.D., who took part in the discussion on agricultural policy. Belton, in spite of this early interest, never officially joined the party. Over the next year, he would find himself increasingly at odds with O'Duffy. The mother and sister of the first Blueshirt martyr, Hugh Reilly of Bandon,<sup>15</sup> attended along with the father of Patrick Kenny of Tipperary, the second martyr to the cause.<sup>16</sup> The Congress observed two minutes silence in their memory, and that of Michael Lynch of Cork, a third martyr to the Blueshirt cause.<sup>17</sup> In

---

<sup>7</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 15 June 1935, 'The Leader.'

<sup>8</sup> Gaelic: *Oig Eireann*.

<sup>9</sup> Built in 1710, the Mansion House is the official residence of the Lord Mayor of Dublin.

<sup>10</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 15 June 1935, citing *The Leader* on the election of O'Duffy to head the NCP.

<sup>11</sup> *Irish Independent*, 16 June 1935.

<sup>12</sup> S/Serg. Michael Farrell., Garda Siochana Report on League of Youth Congress, 16 June 1935, D/Jus8/307, NAI.

<sup>13</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 15 June 1935, 'Editorial-A Great Congress.'

<sup>14</sup> *Irish Independent*, 10 June 1935, photo of the Reception Committee on the front page.

<sup>15</sup> O'Reilly had been dragged from his home and brutally beaten by unknown assailants, dying two months later from his injuries. Manning, *The Blueshirts* p. 108.

<sup>16</sup> Patrick Kenny died in a fight with Fianna Fail and IRA supporters on 30 June 1934. Manning, *The Blueshirts*, p. 136.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Lynch had been shot by police on 13 August 1934 during the sale of cattle seized after the non-payment of land annuities. Seven others had been injured by the police. See M. Manning, *The Blueshirts* p. 136.

traditional Republican tradition, O'Duffy put great store by the invocation of the memory of martyrs, the blood of martyrs being the necessary sacrifice for the birth of Irish freedom.<sup>18</sup> This pseudo-Christian cult of death, martyrs and sacrifice<sup>19</sup> was an element in Irish nationalism and in Irish fascism, as I will examine in chapter six.

Congress rubber-stamped the election of a new Executive Committee that O'Duffy had proposed: Ex Captain Hughes, Dr Conway, Mr Gilleece, Gerald Sweetman, Tom Gunning, Ex-Comdt. D Hyde, Ex-Captain Giles, and Mr Hiney.<sup>20</sup>

General O'Duffy, as expected, dominated the proceedings at the *Ard Fheis*. On entering the room, theatrically preceded by standard-bearers, he received the Blueshirt salute, an exact imitation of that given to Mussolini by Italian Fascists. Dr Conway then spoke on the future policy of the organization and demanded a full and frank discussion before it was adopted by the party.

“He pointed out that the only persons entitled to vote in accordance with the Blueshirt constitution were properly elected delegates and that any other people present were not entitled to speak or vote on the motion before Congress. As this would mean that at least two-thirds of the persons present would be unable to participate in the debate or vote on the motion, a good deal of confusion arose around Dr Conway's proposal and resulted in a certain amount of disorder.”<sup>21</sup>

O'Duffy responded by postponing the vote until after the election for Director-General. O'Duffy was quickly re-elected unanimously as Director-General of the Blueshirts and then as leader of the National Corporate Party (*Cumann Corpruiteac Naisiunta*). He then proceeded to monopolize the Congress, threatening to resign

---

<sup>18</sup> See the writings and poetry of Patrick Pearse.

<sup>19</sup> R. Griffin, *Fascism* (Oxford, 1995), p.220.

<sup>20</sup> *Ard Fheis of League of Youth*, JUS8/307, NIA, *Special Branch Report 6 July 1935* by Denis O'Brien.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

unless Congress passed all his proposals.<sup>22</sup> The motions were passed in rapid succession. Congress realized that without O'Duffy there would be no movement and had no option but to submit to O'Duffy's. He was determined that there would be no democracy in his new party. It is also a further indication that personal loyalty to O'Duffy was the main motivation for many in the organization.

O'Duffy brought the meeting to a perfunctory close by saying he wished the delegates to prepare for the evening's dance. The *Garda* report of the Congress describes the meeting, as "little more than a farce"<sup>23</sup> and concluded that, "there would be little to fear from this Movement."<sup>24</sup> At the end of the conference, greetings were sent to Blueshirt prisoners detained in Arbour Hill and Mountjoy prisons, where they were being held for a range of offences connected with the land war, such as public order offences, sedition and damage to property. A motion followed, calling for the repeal of the Public Safety Act that was responsible for putting most of them behind bars. It had been the Cumann an nGaedheal government, enthusiastically backed by O'Duffy in his role as Chief of Police, that had introduced the Act in 1928 following the murder of minister Kevin O'Higgins<sup>25</sup> by the IRA. As *Taoiseach*, De Valera had briefly suspended the Act, but he had reintroduced it to help tackle the problem of increased lawlessness from the Blueshirts and the IRA.

The Congress had put O'Duffy and his policies firmly in control. He had set the agenda for the Congress and his supporters had allowed him to control the proceedings. Boosted by this success in ensuring that he had full control over the National Executive and policy, he rashly predicted in his congress speech that his new party would be in power in the very near future. Even though he had only just

---

<sup>22</sup> S/Sergt. Michael Farrell, Garda Siochana Report of League of Youth Ard Fheis, 16 June 1935, D/Jus 8/307, NAI.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> O'Higgins had been the Minister for Justice and External Affairs.



inaugurated his new party, O'Duffy immediately put it on an election footing by promising to contest the next election, though ultimately his party failed to do so. For O'Duffy the Congress was clearly a success. He had set up his new party and he had ensured that Congress had adopted his policies. His leadership was unquestioned. The problem was that the adulation of those around him had blinded O'Duffy to the fact of the marginalization of his movement and the irrelevance of his ideas to Ireland. He felt able to offer the electorate a radical policy alternative. It appeared from the enthusiasm of the delegates, and the high attendance, that he had the building blocks of a major new force in Irish politics. The next few months would see a drive on O'Duffy's part to consolidate his new party through branch organization, the creation of an election machine, and the promotion of his ideas through the party journal, public speeches and rallies.

#### *O'DUFFY'S KEYNOTE SPEECH AND THE NCP POLICY PLATFORM*

In his keynote speech, the *Ard Fheis* address, O'Duffy began by reviewing the work of the movement since the split with Fine Gael the year before. He stated that policy differences were the reasons for his resignation, and concluded that "it had become absolutely clear to me that if we continued any longer within the merger the Blueshirt cause would be lost," and therefore he had had no option but to resign.<sup>26</sup> He accused his former Fine Gael colleagues of seeking to use the Blueshirts "to hoist them back to power again,"<sup>27</sup> and there was probably a great deal of truth in this statement. He explained the lack of publicity and low profile of the movement since thereby saying that he wanted the reorganization to go ahead quietly. In reality, he had been out of the country for much of the time trying to carve out a new role for

---

<sup>26</sup> *The Nation*, 22 June 1935, 'The Year's Progress.'

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

himself. But he went on to justify his regular attendance at the Fascist conferences by stating: “I believe it is very necessary for a historic nation like ours to play its historic part in the life of Europe.”<sup>28</sup>

O’Duffy might have been a nationalist but he was not an isolationist. Men like Arthur Griffith, he argued, had adopted their ideas from abroad, and O’Duffy declared that the NCP owed much of its philosophy to men like Arthur Griffith.<sup>29</sup> The conferences that he had attended had indeed promoted corporatism, but he pledged that the corporatism of Ireland would be unlike that of any other nation. What bound corporatists from all countries together were “the principles of honour, self-sacrifice and friendship between all classes.”<sup>30</sup> In conclusion, he declared that he had been proud to represent Ireland and that he had made useful contacts.

O’Duffy moved on to launch his new organization. The centrepiece of NCP policy would be the advocacy of a corporate state that would equip the economy and nation for the modern age. The corporate system, adjusted to Irish requirements and staffed by nationalists who were patriots first and experts in their corporate/vocational field second, would control the economic and industrial life of the nation. An NCP government would quickly replace the outworn parliamentary system inherited from the British with a vocational government.

Vocational, not party interests, would be represented in the new parliament and cooperation between people who represented their occupations would replace the conflict of party rivalries. This syndicalist form of economic organization would thus ensure that the government would represent the interests of all Irish citizens. The new system would secure national unity within the Irish Free State as a prelude to the

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Arthur Griffith had looked to the Austro-Hungarian solution of a dual monarchy as a possible option for Ireland, before the Easter Rising. See chapter six.

<sup>30</sup> *The Nation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1935, ‘The year’s Progress.’

removal of the border with the North and the unification of the whole of Ireland. What he was advocating was an end to the class struggle through the corporatization of society and government, of collaboration between worker and owner where the strike and lockout would be outdated.

O'Duffy was quick to point out that the new system could only be achieved through the election of the NCP to government within the existing parliamentary system, but that once this mandate for change had been given by the electorate the corporate state would be inaugurated. Misjudging the political mood of the country, O'Duffy announced that there was already enough nationwide support to win one seat in every constituency<sup>31</sup> and that a year would be long enough to secure success for the movement and its programme. As soon as the party had a majority in the *Dail*, the NCP would call a new election within a year, this time on an occupational or vocational register, replacing "the present system of dictatorship by one party, one political clique."<sup>32</sup> He declared that government by party was obsolete. It was a product of the nineteenth century that had had its day. It had failed because not only was it an anachronism, but because it always placed party politics before the national interest.

There had been fierce opposition to the Blueshirts since their first appearance in 1932 and O'Duffy expressed that he was still concerned about the threat to free speech, especially from communists. However, he stated that he refused to be intimidated by threats from the left, by which he meant the IRA and Trades Unions who had orchestrated demonstrations against the Blueshirts. O'Duffy did not rule out an aggressive response to this perceived intimidation, but he concluded that "in the

---

<sup>31</sup> Ireland used the single transferable vote system for elections with multi-member constituencies.

<sup>32</sup> *The Nation*, 22 June 1935, 'The Year's Progress'.



interests of law and order it is best to leave such matters to the police.”<sup>33</sup> At this point in his speech, O’Duffy was at pains to show his commitment to the democratic process. It was a typical fascist ruse. He had been accused by Fianna Fail of aiming for a dictatorship because of his proposed March on Leinster House in 1933, but he declared that time had put the record straight on that issue. He promised: “We stand now, as we always stood, for majority rule, for one Government, one army, one police force- one authority.”<sup>34</sup> However, in the corporate state that he was offering there would only be one class- that of Irishman, and one duty- service to Ireland. There would indeed be one authority and no opposition.

O’Duffy made the Proclamation of Easter Week, 1916, the basis of the National Policy of the movement, the first of thirty-three resolutions passed by the meeting. O’Duffy accused Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, and the IRA of failing to follow through on the Republican ideals of the 1916 Proclamation. O’Duffy reminded his audience that he had supported the Treaty but pointed out that he had always:

“...regarded the Treaty as the thing Collins said it was: “Something which gives us freedom to achieve greater freedom.””<sup>35</sup>

Now was the time to carry things further. The Treaty was not an end in itself but merely a stepping-stone to further independence. He went on:

“When I joined the Volunteers, the Republic, as defined by the Proclamation of Easter Week, was my objective and the position has not changed.”<sup>36</sup>

To achieve this, the people needed to return to national unity. That restoration of national unity, which he falsely believed had existed at the time of the independence struggle, would be the aim of the National Policy, thereby healing the wounds caused

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

by the Irish Civil War. Closely linked to the issue of the republic was the Northern Ireland problem. For O'Duffy, the natural unity of Ireland as an island nation had been severed by the imposition, by Great Britain, of an unnatural border, causing the peoples of North and South to drift even further apart. He compared the irredentist problem to similar territorial problems elsewhere in Europe:

“Partition is a denial of the existence of the Irish nation. The North is to us what Alsace was to France, what the Saar was to Germany, and our Nationals in the part cut off constitute one third of the total population.”<sup>37</sup>

O'Duffy was brutally honest about his intentions and said that there would never be lasting peace with Britain while the border remained. He committed himself and his party to a republic outside the British Empire. He predicted that coercion would not be necessary, as the success of the corporate structure in regenerating the nation would win over the people in the North. By declaring a republic *de jure* for 32 counties and *de facto* for 26, the struggle to end British domination would, he believed, enter its final chapter. In his speech, O'Duffy had promised to win power by democratic means but he then promised to use this mandate from the electorate to create a nationalist republic of thirty-two counties run on corporatist lines that would end bring an end to the divisiveness caused by democratic parliamentary government and British imperialism. He would use the democratic process to come to power, and then destroy democracy.

The Unionist journal, *Notes from Ireland*, printed a partisan, yet surprisingly acute, analysis of the new party and its policies:

“In the midst of the visions of the Republic that was produced in 1916, the Republic that is praised and the Workers' Republic that is still in the lap of the gods, General

---

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

O'Duffy, of "sling-the-lead" fame, has now launched a completely new brand of Republic. It is to be a corporate Republic *de jure* for all Ireland, to be administered as a Republic *de facto* for the twenty-six counties. The General believes that party government has failed—a conclusion few will question. The General has announced that his supporters are at least as strong as they were before the split in the ranks of the Blueshirts and that as a party they intend to fight the next general election. His intention is to out-manoeuvre De Valera and secure the allegiance of the IRA. It is obvious that were England to concede a Republic in the morning, the patriots would at once start quarrelling about the quality of the Republic, and throw the blame on England for letting them have the wrong one."<sup>38</sup>

The keynote speech by O'Duffy laying down party policy was followed by a lively debate on the peripheral issue of the uniform. A number of motions put to Congress offered alternatives to the existing colour, for example, a change from blue (symbolizing St Patrick) to green (the colour of Irish nationalism). In the end, Congress decided to keep the blue shirt but to change the colour of the tie from black to green, and to replace the beret with the 1916 Volunteer hat. However, the uniform was again to be an issue before the year was out. It had been Ernest Blythe who had originally suggested the colour blue in 1932.<sup>39</sup> T. F. O'Higgins,<sup>40</sup> who had been the leader of the A.C.A. when the shirt was adopted, had wanted the colour to be grey. Mike Cronin believes that the choice of colour was very important:

---

<sup>38</sup> Published by the Irish Loyalist Imperial Foundation. Extract from *Notes From Ireland*, no.4 vol.32, November 1935. O/35/399/3, Public Records Office, Kew.

<sup>39</sup>M. Manning, *The Blueshirts* p.55.

<sup>40</sup> He was the second president of the A.C.A. and a Cumann na nGaedheal T.D.



“By choosing a colour linked so closely with Ireland’s patron saint, Blythe was attempting to awaken the nationalist past and incorporate into the movement a degree of historical mythology.”<sup>41</sup>

The National Policy and the corporatist policy dominated the discussions at the Congress, but agriculture was also a major item on the agenda. In line with existing Blueshirt policy, Congress called for no further collection of annuities and for:

“...an independent Commission to enquire into the distribution of the cost of the economic war.”<sup>42</sup>

The NCP believed that the government should offer compensation to farmers hit by the economic crisis. In a move to stem the flow of people from rural areas, the party proposed the expropriation, with compensation, and division of unproductive estates with an increase in tillage to create more employment on the land. Further support to small farmers would be offered through the de-rating of smallholdings and the guarantee of security of tenure, a policy remarkably similar to that of Fianna Fail.

It is clear that O’Duffy envisaged a strong role for government, with an increase in central planning, in order to put the nation on a firm economic footing. The party acknowledged that agriculture was the economic bedrock of the nation’s economy and that it should continue to be so. The party also seemed concerned to root as many people on the land as possible, giving them a stake in the nation and extending property ownership.<sup>43</sup> Rather than accepting the traditional safety valve of emigration as the solution to her economic and social problems, the NCP wanted to keep the young on the land, and believed that this could be done through the state regulation of the economy and central planning. Fianna Fail geared its policies to similar ends

---

<sup>41</sup>M. Cronin, M, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* p. 47.

<sup>42</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 15 June 1935.

<sup>43</sup> See chapter three for an in-depth analysis of NCP agricultural policy.

through the erection of tariffs and efforts that would change the focus of agriculture from pasture to tillage. Like Fianna Fail, the NCP wanted to root people in the land.

Because of agriculture's key economic role the most important corporation would be that of agriculture, but the professions and labour were also to be organized by the party into corporations. At the head of this corporate pyramid would be the Director-General (Resolution 18). The placing of O'Duffy at the head of the corporate organization owed more to fascist than Catholic theories of corporatism. It would lead to an increase in the power of the state and give enormous power to the leader of that state. At a grass roots level, the collective bargaining that would replace confrontation would make the nation more productive, and ensure unity in the national interest rather than confrontation in a sectional interest.

O'Duffy's party was presenting a unique package of policies to the Irish people that combined increased central planning, state control over much of the economy, and control over labour through official collective bargaining rather than ad hoc confrontations. However, the party was also offering a package of welfare provision that appeared to reflect its commitment to the principles of social justice outlined in the Papal encyclicals. It would also wean the worker away from any temptation to join socialist or communist parties in Ireland. The state would provide all those over 65 with a living pension. An NCP government would create a Minister for Housing. Rents on municipal housing would be reduced. A Minister to coordinate activities in the *Gaeltacht*<sup>44</sup> would help to place the Irish language on a firmer footing. The delegates recognized a need to provide social and leisure activities for the young, something that the Blueshirts had promoted as a recruitment tactic, and which was

---

<sup>44</sup> Those parts of Ireland where Irish was still spoken, particularly Waterford, Cork, Kerry, Galway, Mayo and Donegal.

one of their undoubted successes.<sup>45</sup> O'Duffy aimed to inspire a new generation of fascists who would represent the national community and embody the future of the nation.

This more activist role for the state was a radical move away from the cautious conservatism of the *Cumann na nGaedheal* and *Fine Gael* parties that O'Duffy had previously served. The NCP felt there was an urgent need for state involvement if Ireland was to face the challenges of a modern society and economy. The state would alleviate the hardships caused by centuries of British colonialism and a ruinous economic war; the state would have a clear role to play in economic development. The NCP was distancing itself from the cautious policies of *Cumann na nGaedheal* and *Fine Gael*.

The nationalist ethos of the party pervaded the policy decisions made at the Congress, from specific resolutions relating to the preservation and promotion of the Irish language and Gaelic culture (Resolutions 25, 26 and 27), to the constant evocation of the 'spirit of 1916' and the adoption of *The Nation* as the party journal's title.<sup>46</sup> Its promotion of the interests of the farmer and rural communities reflected a desire to reaffirm the importance of the land to Irishmen. Any serious contender for political office at the time had to play the nationalist green card. O'Duffy was claiming that not only was his party the inheritor of the mantle of Irish republicanism but aimed to push the nationalist vision of men like Pearse to its logical conclusion. He argued that the only way that the nationalist dream of a Gaelic Republic could be achieved was through the creation of a corporate republic. Other attempts to do so, such as De Valera's, were doomed to failure. O'Duffy offered to create the political conditions and structures so that the republican dream could be achieved within the

---

<sup>45</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, chapter 7.

<sup>46</sup> *The Nation* had been the title of the paper edited by Michael Davitt, 19<sup>th</sup> century Irish patriot and founder of the Land League.



framework of modern twentieth century political and economic culture. However, O'Duffy was mistakenly drawing on one particular strand of Irish nationalism and assuming that it was enough to inspire a new generation of nationalists.

### *THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PARTY AND MEMBERSHIP*

Shortly after the 1935 Congress, O'Duffy wrote to the local Blueshirt branches. Like a true fascist, he required each party member to take a pledge of allegiance to the new organization and to himself as the leader of the party. Party members were to be bound by an oath of loyalty not only to a political programme, but also to the man who had set that agenda. O'Duffy administered the oath to members of the HQ staff, and then it was administered hierarchically from the top down to Divisional Directors, Company Captains, and then to the rank and file, including Young Comrades (as junior members were now known). The pledge was obligatory and could be taken individually or collectively. The military-style oath went as follows:

“I do promise that I will serve my country to the best of my ability, that I will work under the direction of the National Executive and obey my superior officers, and that I will constantly endeavour by word and act to increase the strength and influence of the organization, and to maintain its integrity and promote its objects. I further promise that I will not become or remain a member of any secret society whatsoever.”<sup>47</sup>

The NCP was unique amongst Irish political parties of all persuasions in obligating members to take such an oath. It had no counterpart in any other groups except those of a para-military nature, such as the IRA. The oath is indicative of the militaristic nature of the new party. It was a further demonstration of O'Duffy's hostility to party

---

<sup>47</sup> N.C.P. Headquarters Circular no.4. D/Jus8/296, NAI.

politics. Once the NCP had created the corporate state, there would be no need for any political parties and the organization would act as a uniformed extra-parliamentary body. The party retained the structure and organization of the Blueshirts. The new party saw little need to waste too much energy on reorganizing the movement when its primary aim was to get rid of all political parties.

The party issued its constitution on the day of the Congress. It restricted membership of the party to Irish citizens who accepted the party programme. At a later date, the proviso that only those who professed the Christian faith (not specifically Roman Catholic) could be members was stated,<sup>48</sup> a criterion for membership that had been present in earlier Blueshirt constitutions. There was a strong equation between faith and nationality in Irish nationalism. During the independence struggle, the British were equated with Protestantism, and indeed, in the North it was religion that continued to be the badge of nationality. The ban on membership of un-named secret societies was qualified by adding that members were required to put the interests of the NCP first, unless those interests were religious.<sup>49</sup> One argument for this broader specification would be that given the strong stance by the Blueshirts on the North this would be more inclusive of Protestantism. It could also be interpreted as an anti-Semitic gesture, and an expression of pro-Nazism. O'Duffy himself had remarked on the fact at Montreux, where he had stated that only Christians were admitted to his organization and that Ireland did not have a Jewish problem.<sup>50</sup>

The reference in the oath to secret organizations could have been a reference to other nationalist groups but was more likely a reference to Freemasonry. This is nowhere

---

<sup>48</sup> NC.P. Headquarters Circular no.8 December, 1935, D/Jus8/296 NA1.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> *Irish Press*, 29 June 1934.

clearly stated, however. An opposition to Freemasonry was common to many fascist parties throughout Europe, particularly in France, Italy, Hungary and Roumania.

Whilst the Blueshirts had never been overtly anti-Semitic, there was certainly an under-current of anti-Semitism in Ireland at the time. This was especially evident in Catholic publications such as *Kingship of Christ* by Father Denis Fohey. Fohey's book, prefaced by John Charles McQuaid, the future Primate of Ireland, "depicted the Jew as being responsible for the corruption of western society and for the fomenting of world revolution."<sup>51</sup> In a later work, *The Mystical Body of Christ in the Modern World*, Fohey outlined the existence of a Jewish programme that aimed for the complete socialization of property, polygamy, and divorce. He cited the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*<sup>52</sup> in his publications.<sup>53</sup> Popular Catholic journals of the time, including *The Irish Catholic*, *The Catholic Bulletin*, *The Irish Mind*, and *The Irish Rosary* all carried anti-Semitic articles.

At the time of the appearance of the NCP, an anti-Semitic journal appeared in Dublin and the party reacted immediately, arguing strongly that anti-Semitism was unacceptable: "There is no justification to our mind for singling out Jews for persecution just because they are Jews."<sup>54</sup> The editorial, probably written by O'Duffy, and at least endorsed by him, went on to say:

"Every Christian must feel shocked at the savage persecution of men for their religious beliefs which is taking place in Germany today...there is a great danger to European peace in the Nazi policy. But there is an even greater danger to the human

---

51 D. Keogh, *Jews in Twentieth Century Ireland* p. 92 (Cork, 1998).

<sup>52</sup> A document created by the Tsar's secret police to foment anti-Semitism in Russia. It claimed to be the minutes of a secret meeting in Switzerland at which key Jewish leaders had plotted to take control of the world.

<sup>53</sup> D. Keogh, *Jews in Twentieth Century Ireland* p. 92.

<sup>54</sup> *The Nation*, 29 June 1935, 'Editorial.'



race in the intolerant and tyrannical persecution of a religion which Hitler stands over and encourages.”<sup>55</sup>

However, on the day of the 1935 Congress, *The Blueshirt* had published an item written by K.C.C. (identity unknown) titled ‘Ireland for the Irish.’<sup>56</sup> The article said that while party politicians wrangle:

“...Pharisees and aliens quietly take advantage to step in and gather the fruits of all our years of suffering and self-denial...Is the day never to come when we shall do as St. Patrick and Brian Boru did and drive the deadly and virulent snakes and foreigners from our midst...who are sucking away our blood and battering on the dissensions that are our curse?”<sup>57</sup>

The article went on to urge De Valera to turn over businesses to Irishmen and for a future Blueshirt government “to send back all the foreign exploiters who have come during the last 12 or 13 years back to the land or lands of their birth.”<sup>58</sup> It is a rabid and aggressive article, but its acceptance in the Blueshirt journal indicates that O’Duffy gave tacit acceptance to anti-Semites within his movement. However, Ireland’s small Jewish population meant there was little political mileage to be made from advocating anti-Semitism as party policy.

A year later, *The Nation*<sup>59</sup> printed three articles with anti-Semitic comments equating the Jews with Bolshevism. One article quoted O’Duffy as saying:

“Do you know who the leader of the League of Nations is? He is a Jew named Wallack Beer, who some time ago changed his name to Litvinov”[sic].<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 8 June 1935, ‘Ireland for the Irish.’

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> *The Nation*, July 1936, ‘From the News.’

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Referring to current events, the news section of *The Nation* referred to a “wealthy Jew and Freemason named Blum is now at the head of the Government of France.”<sup>61</sup>

In another news item, this time on Palestine, the reader was informed:

“The Arabs are being shot down as were the Irish Volunteers from 1916-21. The Jews are over-running the country and large cities like Tel-a viv [sic] populated exclusively by Jews, are quickly springing up (The Arabs have our complete sympathy).”<sup>62</sup>

By 1936, at the *Ard Fheis*, O’Duffy was referring to the spread of Jewish influence in the Free State:

“I understand that in many of our industries Jews and other foreigners have been given a dominating influence and that in many cases, particularly in the smaller factories, Trade Union conditions are not observed.”<sup>63</sup>

O’Duffy was trying to equate poor working conditions with Jewish management and ownership, a tactic which Mosley had used to mobilize the working class in the East End of London.<sup>64</sup> Mosley was able to do so because there was a heavy concentration of Jews in certain parts of London, and some provincial cities, such as Leeds. This was not the case in any city in Ireland. The 1936 Congress went on to pass the following motions:

“4. That we view with some concern the number of foreigners employed in key positions in industries where Irishmen are qualified to fill the posts.”

“7(a). To oppose alien control and influence in National affairs...”<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* ‘From the News.’

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* Palestine.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Mosley portrayed the Jews in the East End in two ways. Firstly, as exploitative businessmen who were paying low wages and aggravating the poor working conditions in the East End through lack of investment in their greed for profits. They were portrayed as potential competitors for scarce jobs who were prepared to accept lower wages, thus undercutting the rest of the workforce and lowering wages in general in the process. See R. Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley* (London, 1981) pp. 388-389.

<sup>65</sup> *The Nation*, July 1936.

The only large group of foreigners in Ireland were the British, who still had control over a large number of enterprises and a great deal of influence over the export market. It could also be a reference to the continued control over Northern Ireland's industry by the British or possibly a reference to the continued disproportionate influence of Ireland's Anglo-Irish Protestant minority.

O'Duffy did not make anti-Semitism a key feature of his movement. If O'Duffy needed an enemy on which to blame all his country's woes he need look no further than the British. His intense Anglophobia caused him to blame the backward state of the Irish nation on centuries of colonialism and the continued neo-colonialism of the British which had prevented the rejuvenation of the Irish spirit which alone could inspire Ireland's greatness. This enemy was also the traditional enemy of the Irish nationalist movement. O'Duffy pledged his movement to rid Ireland of the vestiges of British rule, including the parliamentary system, in order to lay the groundwork for Ireland's re-emergence as a cultural beacon for Catholic Europe.

O'Duffy justified the creation of his Irish Brigade, which went to Spain to fight for the Nationalists under Franco, by arguing that there was a racial affinity between the Irish and Spanish peoples. He claimed that they were both descended from 'Milesian' stock, a racial group that he claimed had originated several millennia ago in Egypt. Some of these Milesian warriors had migrated to Ireland from Spain before the birth of Christ. He concluded that "Spain and Ireland have been united through the centuries by the closest bonds of friendship, of faith, and of blood."<sup>66</sup> It tied the Irish to the continent, and specifically to Catholic nations. O'Duffy was never an isolationist and fully expected that a rejuvenated Ireland would have a key role to play in Europe as a leading Catholic nation.

---

<sup>66</sup>E. O'Duffy, *Crusade in Spain* (Brown and Nolan, 1938), p. 3.



The Director-General of the party was to be elected at the annual Congress. The party was to be controlled by the National Executive consisting of the Director-General, the Headquarters staff, Divisional Directors, and representatives of the vocational organizations for agriculture, labour etc. that the party intended to set up within the first year.<sup>67</sup> The basic organizational unit at local level, which was already in existence, was the company. These companies were now to function as party branches where the wearing of uniform was not compulsory. The process of changing the Blueshirts into a political party required little more than cosmetic changes. Fundamentally, the organization changed very little.

There are a number of similarities between the party and other fascist parties, particularly Mosley's British Union of Fascists. Both organizations made a distinction between those who wore the uniform and those who did not, but there was no commitment to wear the uniform on the part of the membership.<sup>68</sup> There was the implication of an active and a passive membership and both parties distinguished between uniformed and non-uniformed members. This implies that it was expected that there would be a vanguard, active core of members, the rest being financial contributors and voting fodder. Neither party had stringent membership criteria for new recruits. As a result, there was a high turnover of membership in both organizations. Both parties had a specific pledge of loyalty to the party that distinguished them from other parties in their respective countries. Ideologically there were many similarities between the two movements, not least in their enthusiasm for corporatism.

The party's organizational structure demonstrated this commitment to corporatism. The NCP proposed to create vocational organizations within the party, the first to be

---

<sup>67</sup> N.C.P. HQ Circular no.3; Constitution, 18 June 1935. D/Jus8/296.

<sup>68</sup> See *BUF Constitution*, 1936.

formed being agriculture. Two delegates from each company were to go to a Constituency Convention in order to appoint a Constituency Standing Committee for Agriculture, which was to have a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and other officers depending on the size of the constituency. This committee was to meet monthly and make policy recommendations to the National Council of Agriculture, the ex-officio Chairman of this body being the Director-General. The National Council was to meet quarterly, but the Chairman could also summon additional meetings if necessary. A similar organization to this was to be set up for labour and other vocational groups as soon as it was feasible to do so.

Within two months of its existence, the party was encouraging local branches to arrange a Divisional Conference to implement the decisions of Congress and to promote the party ready for the next general election. To help promote the launch, O'Duffy announced that he was prepared to attend two conventions a week if given sufficient notice. One of the main purposes of these conventions was to set up Constituency Standing Committees for Agriculture. A meeting of the National Executive had recently reorganized the Divisions to correspond with the new constituency boundaries.<sup>69</sup> The Executive, at its meeting on the 14 November 1935, decided that the Divisional boundaries were too large and their number was increased from thirty to thirty-seven. The selection of candidates to contest the election was to follow on from these Divisional Conventions.

At the same time, the National Executive was beginning to express its concern over the influence of other groups on individual members, including the New Land League. The NLL had been formed in Cork in 1935 as a non-party organization calling for the redistribution of land to smallholders and subsistence farmers as well

---

<sup>69</sup> N.C.P. Bulletin no.1, August 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

as landless labourers. The implication of this demand was that the government would be involved in the expropriation of land and its redistribution. The land would not be nationalized as, in line with their commitment to property ownership, it would be distributed to the landless, who would pay for it with a low-cost loan. Fine Gael quickly came to dominate the leaseholder movement. This caused O'Duffy's initial support to turn to outright opposition.<sup>70</sup> The Executive reinforced the stipulation that members of the NCP only take orders from party officers with the threat of expulsion for disobedience.

O'Duffy set up a central branch of the party, to meet at Pearse Street headquarters, the purpose of which was to advise the Director-General on finance, elections, propaganda, publications, current affairs and new legislation.<sup>71</sup> O'Duffy had officially opened the headquarters on the 19th February 1935 and named it the St Patrick's Social Club<sup>72</sup>. The building, adjacent to Trinity College and since demolished, was shared with the Victor X-Ray Company Ltd. from 1935 until 1937.<sup>73</sup> O'Duffy and the Divisional Directors were to recommend suitable members for the Central Branch. It meant a further strengthening of O'Duffy's control over the party machine. He stood at the apex of the pyramid organization of the party and controlled the policy-making National Executive. He would be the Chairman of the corporate organizations within the party and he was leader of the autonomous Blueshirt organization.

In the same month, the first General Election Circular appeared. The party wanted every constituency to have a Polling Place Committee in place by the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1936. The Circular required Committee members to be "young, energetic and

---

<sup>70</sup> Speech at Bandon by O'Duffy, reported in *The Nation* February 1936.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Director-General letter to District Directors, 13 February 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>73</sup> *Thom's Directory of Ireland*, (Dublin, 1936-39 editions)



loyal.”<sup>74</sup> The constituency was to appoint one person as Polling Place Director or ‘Keyman,’ whose purpose was to “direct and coordinate the work of the various sub-directors and to ensure the duties delegated to each is well done.”<sup>75</sup> Four Sub-Directors nominated by the Director were to assist him and were responsible for propaganda, organization, finance and transport. They were not required to be uniformed members, but preference was to go to those in uniform.<sup>76</sup>

O’Duffy and the National Executive had every intention, at this stage, of fighting the next General Election whenever it was announced and, as a result, O’Duffy wanted to set up his party’s election machine as quickly as possible. It was expected that the machine would be up and running before the next *Ard Fheis* in the summer of 1936. Some constituencies were quicker to organize than others, depending on the manpower available and the enthusiasm of the local party. However, the vast majority of constituencies did not have the manpower to organize an electoral organization. West Cork, the main exception, was prepared by March 1936,<sup>77</sup> even though a General Election was not expected for another year. In the West Cork constituency<sup>78</sup> the Deputy-Director of the NCP, Colonel Coughlan reported that:

“Our organization in West Cork is now a perfect machine, each district has its own farmers’ and labourers’ council to manage their own affairs. Every polling booth from Coachford to Castletownbere is manned. Every company captain, district director, and divisional director knows exactly what his duties are in case of an election, they know who are our supporters, who have cars and other transport to bring our supporters to the booths - in short, we are ready for a general election at a moment’s notice.”<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> N.C.P. General Election Circular no.1, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> *The Nation*, March 1936, ‘Election Machine.’

<sup>78</sup> The constituency was a Blueshirt stronghold.

<sup>79</sup> *The Nation*, March 1936, ‘Tribute to Released Prisoner. Leader in Cashel.’

O'Duffy, speaking at Bandon, Co. Cork, described the organization in West Cork as the most perfect election machine in all Ireland.<sup>80</sup> West Cork, he said, was the model for party organization. The largest constituency in the Free State, it contained 184 electoral divisions. It had always been a Blueshirt stronghold. The NCP split the constituency into four Divisions corresponding with the Council Electoral Areas. Each Division had its own Divisional staff under the direction of General Headquarters. Divisions were divided into three Districts and each District into eight or more Company areas, bringing the party down to a very local administrative area.<sup>81</sup> However, the membership of the party was unstable, the turnover of officers high, and the membership numbers small. The paper organization for a mass party was in place but the membership numbers failed to materialize.

Late in 1935, the National Executive made changes to membership, only acknowledging as members those whose names appeared on a National Roll kept at Pearse Street, and on the payment of an annual subscription of one shilling.<sup>82</sup> This low subscription implies that the party wanted to recruit a mass membership. This replaced the affiliation fee of two pounds for each Company. Unfortunately, this National Roll has been lost. Local branches were to maintain separate rolls for uniformed and non-uniformed members. Ordinary Members were those:

“...who support the movement, and whose names appear on the National Roll, but who for any reason are unable to carry out the orders and duties pertaining to uniformed members, or who might be victimized should they appear in uniform. They are not required to take the proscribed pledge.”<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> *The Nation*, April 1936, 'Election Machine.'

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Subscriptions were payable on the 1st of January.

<sup>83</sup> NCP HQ Circular no.8, December 1935 D/Jus8/296 NAI.

The National Corporate Party was never a numerically significant organization. It was created in June 1935 on the rump O'Duffy faction of the Blueshirts. At the time of the split with Fine Gael in August 1934, the Blueshirt movement had peaked with a membership of 47,923.<sup>84</sup> A rapid decline in membership of both the Fine Gael faction led by Ned Cronin and O'Duffy's smaller independent movement followed on from the split. Mike Cronin has shown in *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* that many of those who joined the Blueshirts were already members of Cumann na nGaedheal/Fine Gael or were entirely new to politics. With the split, former Blueshirts soon drifted back into the mainstream of Irish politics and abandoned corporatist ideas. According to Fine Gael party documents, by September 1935, the membership of Cronin's Blueshirts was down to a paltry 4,050.<sup>85</sup> The membership ledgers of the NCP are no longer available, and this makes accurate estimates of the size of O'Duffy's faction impossible to gauge. The NCP was never to contest an election and as a result, no statistics are available to calculate its broader, potential support. At the time of the split, *United Ireland* estimated that O'Duffy took no more than ten per cent of the movement with him,<sup>86</sup> which would have been around 4,800 members based on Blueshirt membership figures already quoted. *United Ireland* was the party paper of Fine Gael, however, and had a stake in playing down the strength of the O'Duffy faction. Many members, disillusioned with the split and the subsequent acrimonious wrangling between the factions, decided to leave rather than choose sides.

Both Cronin and O'Duffy canvassed branch loyalties and there were votes of support taken for both leaders at branch and county level. O'Duffy's *The Blueshirt* listed the support given by the various branches to O'Duffy on a weekly basis, taking

---

<sup>84</sup> P246713 (B) Blythe Papers UCD, August 1934. This figure does not include the membership figure for Co. Longford.

<sup>85</sup> Membership ledger of Ned Cronin, September 1935, cited in Cronin, Mike, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* p.204, note 22.

<sup>86</sup> *United Ireland*, 27 October 1934.



up much of the content of the journal in late 1934 (Appendix 3 gives an indication of the geographical concentration of those branches voting to stay loyal to O'Duffy).

The national press also showed an interest in the dispute, for example the *Irish Press*<sup>87</sup> reported O'Duffy's attendance at a conference in Wexford where 150 officers and district representatives voted unanimously to support O'Duffy as leader of the Blueshirts. At the same time, a weekly record of branches voting loyalty to either of the two factions in *The Blueshirt* revealed the serious divisiveness of the split. There were some very close votes; for example, 25-16 for O'Duffy, Glanworth Unit, Co. Cork,<sup>88</sup> Co Meath and Navan conference 25-20 for O'Duffy<sup>89</sup> and East Limerick, where it was an even 23-23 split between the two potential leaders.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the fact that the membership records are no longer available, details of the names and residence of some members can be gleaned from party sources, such as journals, circulars, bulletins, the national press and police reports. The Department of Justice has files relating to the movement that give some personal details about members attending meetings, including the annual Congress. *The Blueshirt* and *The Nation* list the appointment of officers, attendance at functions and reports of locally organized events, as do party bulletins and circulars. The regional and national press provide some additional information but press reports on NCP activities declined rapidly after the initial interest in O'Duffy's new venture had died down. From these sources, it is possible to assess where the movement had its strongest support base.

By the most conservative estimate, three hundred and fifty members attended the first Congress in June 1935, but only two hundred and fifty attended a year later, indicating a sharp decline in membership. Not all attendees were voting delegates,

---

<sup>87</sup> *Irish Press*, 21 November 1934, 'O'Duffy in Wexford.'

<sup>88</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 24 November 1934,

<sup>89</sup> *The Blueshirt* 3 November 1934.

<sup>90</sup> *The Blueshirt* 10 November 1934.

however. The delegates were local officers representing the county divisions, companies, and the central branch. However, it does indicate that there was a larger membership base than the party has been given credit for. The names of party officials appointed by O'Duffy that are available indicate that the party did have an active membership prepared to take on the many thankless tasks associated with the day to day running of a political organization. The difficulty for the historian lies with the fact that the names that are available are those of party officers only, and it is therefore impossible to assess the size of individual local branches. Party newspapers were apt to exaggerate the size of the movement. The historian needs to be wary of the evidence. As an example, in early 1935, O'Duffy had organizational problems with the Cork City branch of the Blueshirts. As a result, he removed all existing officers and replaced them with new ones selected by himself.<sup>91</sup> A *Garda* report of the Cork reorganization, commenting on the circular detailing the appointments concluded:

“The names of the 16 men proposed for the appointment to the organizing staff as enunciated in paragraph 5 of Circular command little or no following, and it has been ascertained that the majority of them failed to accept their appointments to the Organizing staff... Even when the officer personnel of the new Cork City Division is formed it is anticipated that the total membership will be very small.”<sup>92</sup>

The NCP was to have a high turnover of officer staff during its short life, as the membership details in the appendix reveal. This not only demonstrates the continued decline and fluidity in membership, but also the unwillingness of appointees to take on the posts assigned to them without prior consultation, a further example of O'Duffy's autocratic frame of mind, and dictatorial style of leadership.

---

<sup>91</sup> O'Duffy, East Cork City Division, circular issued 18 April 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>92</sup> Garda Report, Ard Cheannphort McCarthy, Cork City to the Commissioner, Garda Siochana, Dublin 16 May 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

There are reports of local meetings that give the attendance in vague terms. At other times, the reports only name the officers in attendance while the number of rank-and-file members present is ignored. The *Garda* only rarely attended local meetings but when they did, they recorded the number present; for example, Ferns, the 27<sup>th</sup> September 1936, 12 in attendance,<sup>93</sup> and Cashel, 18 members in attendance.<sup>94</sup> Large numbers were attracted to social events such as dances such the one held on New Years Eve, 1935 in Dublin.<sup>95</sup> Non-members and sympathisers attended these functions and annual events such as the Michael Collins commemoration ceremony at Beal na Blath and the ceremony to commemorate the martyrdom of Hugh O'Reilly.<sup>96</sup> In 1935, both factions of the Blueshirts held commemorative ceremonies at Beal na Blath on separate Sundays in August. *The Cork Examiner* described the Cronin event as "well-attended"<sup>97</sup> and reports that the following week around four thousand attended O'Duffy's tribute.<sup>98</sup> The party also held public meetings which attracted non-members. In a rural society with little organized entertainment any event, such as a party rally or speech, was a welcome distraction.

By plotting the names and location of named members on a map of Ireland (see Appendix, map1), it is possible to ascertain the geographical distribution of the party membership. A similar exercise with the recorded location of meetings produces a similar geographical distribution to the membership figures (see Appendix, map 2). The greatest concentrations of members were in the province of Munster (particularly

---

<sup>93</sup> Ard Cheannphort Lynch to Commissioner, Garda Siochana, Dublin ,2 October 1936, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>94</sup> Ard Cheannphort, Thurles to Commissioner Garda Siochana, Dublin, 22 June 1936, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>95</sup> *The Nation*, February 1936, 'Dublin Entertainment'.

<sup>96</sup> *The Nation*, February 1936 reported that on January 1936 the Hugh O'Reilly commemoration "was attended by upwards of 1,500 people. A procession of over 1000 members of the National Corporate Party...marched for Inishannon Bridge."

<sup>97</sup> *Cork Examiner* 12<sup>th</sup> August 1935, 'Beal na Blath.'

<sup>98</sup> *Cork Examiner*, 19<sup>th</sup> August 1935, 'Beal na Blath Commemoration.'



Cork and Tipperary), Dublin (understandably as the capital and largest population centre), and the northeast of the Free State bordering Northern Ireland. The large number of members in Monaghan who stayed loyal to O'Duffy is almost certainly due to the fact that O'Duffy was a Monaghan man. Neighbouring Cavan, to which Monaghan had close links, was also a NCP stronghold, and a border area to boot. Irish politics puts great store on the support for local men for political office, inspiring a great sense of loyalty to individuals. The party was particularly weak in Leinster, the province of Connaught, and Donegal (see Appendix on Relative Strength of the NCP By County). Whilst the party was to claim that its membership was nation-wide the evidence reveals that the spread of the organization was patchy and concentrated in a few small core areas.

A comparison with the work done by Fearghal McGarry and Mike Cronin on the membership of the earlier Blueshirts shows the similarity in distribution to NCP membership. McGarry was able to plot the geographical strength of the Blueshirt movement before the split. In August 1934, the greatest concentration of Blueshirts was to be found in Meath, Carlow, Kilkenny, Limerick and Cork, with significant numbers in Tipperary, Sligo and Dublin.<sup>99</sup> Those areas most affected by the Economic War produced the largest number of Blueshirts. There is also a correlation with electoral support for Cumann na nGaedheal and its successor, Fine Gael.<sup>100</sup>

Mike Cronin concludes from his own research that, "the majority of constant high level Blueshirt support did rest in areas where the average farm size was greatest,"<sup>101</sup> but that most Blueshirts, in spite of being labelled 'ranchers' by their left-wing opponents in the columns of *An Phoblacht*, did not own large farms (those over 60

---

<sup>99</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* p. 33. Map showing the distribution of Blueshirts by county, August 1934.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 117.

acres). However the sample size he uses for his survey is small, only 15, and there is a considerable margin of error in using such a small sample. The distribution of Blueshirts, as plotted by McGarry,<sup>102</sup> is similar to that of the NCP, and this is especially noticeable in Cork and Tipperary. This is supported by Cronin who claims that the Blueshirts were a rural movement that attracted members from a wide range of rural occupations.<sup>103</sup> In the week that the NCP was formed, *The Blueshirt* printed an article which claimed that there were 586 Blueshirts in 14 company areas in Connemara, County Galway.<sup>104</sup> Two reasons were given for publishing this constituency strength:

“First, it is the best reply to those who allege that the Blueshirts are a ranchers’ or big farmers’ movement. Secondly, Connemara is an area which was never pampered or spoon-fed by Headquarters, even during the existence of Fine Gael.

“We are proud to say that in the poorest districts in Ireland and in the Gaeltacht ours is the strongest national movement.”<sup>105</sup>

The article was trying to argue that, even in an area like Connemara, which was overwhelmingly associated with tillage and subsistence farming, the Blueshirt movement could count on widespread support. Connemara was part of Galway county, which in August 1935 only had a total of 2,457 members.<sup>106</sup> O’Duffy was keen to distance himself from being labelled as too closely connected with larger farmers, thus broadening his base and distancing himself from the conservatism of Fine Gael, and its predecessors. However, there is considerable doubt that his statistics were anywhere near accurate.

---

<sup>102</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish civil War*, p. 33.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* p.126.

<sup>104</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 8 June 1935, ‘Connemara.’

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, Table 5.2, p. 115. Blueshirt Membership Figures by County.

Following the split, branches voted their loyalty to Cronin or O'Duffy as leader of the movement. An analysis of the distribution of these branch votes (see Appendix-map 3) seems to indicate that O'Duffy's support within the movement remained geographically the same as that of the Blueshirts. No particular area voted *en masse* for one leader over another.

An analysis of Blueshirt membership figures reveals that in August 1934, 26% of members (12,385) were women, and that the vast majority of these were unmarried.<sup>107</sup> There has been no study made of the role of women in the Blueshirt movement. According to his survey of surviving members, Cronin found that most of the women joined the movement when a relative, usually a father or brother, did so.<sup>108</sup> They were nicknamed 'Blueblouses,' and had their own separate women's divisions.

Women continued to be involved with O'Duffy's rump faction and the NCP. Later they were given their own version of the new green uniform, a green blouse and black skirt.<sup>109</sup> *The Nation* provides evidence for the existence of NCP women's divisions in only three counties-Dublin (Dublin Townships, Dublin South, Dublin Northwest and Dublin Northeast), County Cork (Bandon, Templemartin, Ferns and Inishannon) and Limerick, though it is possible that women's organizations existed in other counties. In my sample of 337 NCP members, only 24, slightly over 7%, can be positively identified as female ( a similar figure to the female membership of Hitler's NSDAP<sup>110</sup>). This demonstrates a considerable decline in female membership since the split. There is little information about the activities of these women's units but they were involved in arrangements for social functions such as dances, picnics and

---

<sup>107</sup> League of Youth membership figures, P24671 (B) Blythe Papers, August 1934, U.C.D

<sup>108</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 126.

<sup>109</sup> HQ circular No.12, D/Jus 8/296, NAI.

<sup>110</sup> The NSDAP had a female membership that fluctuated between 6 and 8% cited in Renton, D., *This Rough Game. Fascism and Anti-Fascism* (Stroud, Glos., 2001), p. 39.



providing refreshments at branch meetings.<sup>111</sup> Given the overwhelming bias of fascism towards the masculine, and O'Duffy's long history of misogyny in his speeches, this is not surprising

The 1936 *Ard Fheis* addressed the issue of women in the movement, and the need to promote female recruitment. A motion was referred to the National Executive for consideration:

“7. That women and girls be encouraged to join the movement, and that a women's section be organized.”<sup>112</sup>

However, by this point, the active life of the party was almost over and the National Executive never discussed the issue.

Historians such as Cronin, Manning and McGarry, have portrayed the movement as stillborn and inactive but the party journal and press reports reveal a movement that was active in debating policies, holding lectures and public meetings, particularly on the corporate question and agricultural policy. Members were also involved in selling the party newspaper and organizing an electoral machine. Some branches provided more activities such as first aid and physical culture in Dublin South constituency branch, and a band at Carrickshock, Co. Kilkenny.

A glance at O'Duffy's itinerary for the year<sup>113</sup> indicates the active role he played in rallying his movement. He was involved in organizing the branches, setting up the corporate organizations within the party, rallying the faithful at party conferences and speaking on the corporate issue. He also produced a lot of the material published in the party journal which was a constant drain on his time. He was busy with his involvement with the international fascist movement as a member of CAUR. He

---

<sup>111</sup> The Dublin South (Ladies) Branch also offered a number of classes, including Irish language and keep-fit.

<sup>112</sup> *The Nation*, August 1936, 'Resolutions Passed By Congress.'

<sup>113</sup> See Appendix-O'Duffy's Itinerary 1935-6.

travelled the country but was also heavily involved in his work at Central Headquarters in Dublin. The job entailed a lot of travelling, but he was hampered in this by the party's lack of finance, and often by bad weather.

The National Executive felt sufficiently encouraged by membership figures, attendance at public meetings and rallies to predict that at the next election the party would be able to "secure one seat in each of 20 constituencies, two seats in one constituency, and no seat in 13 constituencies."<sup>114</sup> This was optimistic since the party had recently, but temporarily as it later turned out, ceased publication of its party newspaper, *The Nation*, due to the lack of new subscribers and advertisers. The members' subscriptions were not sufficient to keep the paper financially afloat and the party did not have enough funds to subsidize its continued publication.

A note from the editor in *The Nation* in July 1936, attached to an article on emigration, pointed out that over the last twelve months, half of the officers of the NCP had to be replaced due to emigration from Ireland to England and Scotland.<sup>115</sup> This would appear to indicate that the party tended to recruit from those groups likely to face unemployment and/or emigration. However, it could have been an excuse for the rapid turnover of officer staff caused by resignations from the party or a failure to take up appointments in the first place (as they had failed to do in Cork in early 1935).

The majority of the leading figures in the Blueshirt movement, men such as Blythe, Tierney, Hogan and O'Higgins, remained loyal to Fine Gael and its faction of the League of Youth under Ned Cronin. Few were to follow O'Duffy into a potential political wilderness. The few who did so were inspired by O'Duffy's radical, increasingly fascist, rhetoric or by personal loyalty to the man.

---

<sup>114</sup> N.C.P. Bulletin no.5, December 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>115</sup> *The Nation*, July, 1936, 'The 57,000 or a Nation's Strength.'

Thomas Gunning was born in rural Roscommon to an R.I.C.<sup>116</sup> man turned farmer. Gunning spent time in seminaries in Ireland and at Freiburg in Germany during the early thirties, witnessing the rise of Hitler and the Nazis, before deciding against a life in the priesthood. He returned to Ireland and turned his hand to journalism, editing the *Catholic Standard*. He quickly involved himself in the Blueshirt movement once it began to accept members who had not been in the armed forces. He travelled around the country making speeches to district and county gatherings.<sup>117</sup> In 1933, he became O'Duffy's personal secretary, a post he held until 1936. He was an admirer of O'Duffy and his extreme ideas, in particular backing his belligerent stance on the North. In 1934, he was described by Gomez Homen<sup>118</sup> as "an expert fascist, well versed in the doctrines and practices of corporatism,"<sup>109</sup> At the time of the split from Fine Gael, it was Gunning who prompted O'Duffy to carry on as leader of the Blueshirts, causing further division. An angry Ned Cronin accused Gunning of plotting to murder O'Duffy earlier in the year,<sup>119</sup> an accusation that he did not deny.<sup>120</sup> There had been some animosity between the two men. Whilst Cronin had been in jail in 1934, Gunning had taken on his position at League HQ, but on his release, Gunning lost his position.<sup>121</sup> In the light of this animosity, and lack of evidence, the truth of the accusation is difficult to substantiate.

Gunning followed O'Duffy out of Fine Gael and became General-Secretary of the NCP and editor of the party paper at a wage, paid from members' subscriptions, of £7 a week.<sup>122</sup> He was the only paid party functionary. Financial difficulties led to the

---

<sup>116</sup> Royal Irish Constabulary.

<sup>117</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 45.

<sup>118</sup> Gomez Homen, an Italian Fascist, visited Ireland in June and July of 1934. Cited in D. Keogh, *Ireland and Europe 1919-48*, p. 47.

<sup>119</sup> J.R. Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution, 1921-36* (Dublin, 1999), p. 368.

<sup>120</sup> Dillon to MacDermot, 25 September 1934, MacDermot Papers 1065/2/4, NAI.

<sup>121</sup> Regan, J.R. *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-36*, p. 368.

<sup>122</sup> Letter from O'Duffy to Divisional Directors, 7 August 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.



termination of his paid employment only two months after the NCP was set up.<sup>123</sup> As Gunning was unable to continue in the post in an unpaid capacity, he resigned. He continued his involvement with the party as a member of the National Executive and later joined the Irish Brigade in Spain where he became O'Duffy's *aide de camp* and held the honorary rank of Captain. He was responsible for the financial side of the Brigade but was "regarded as both profligate and irresponsible in his use of Brigade funds."<sup>124</sup> Later in the Spanish campaign, he split with O'Duffy. He did not return to Ireland but remained in Burgos as an advisor to the Nationalists.<sup>125</sup> He moved to Germany where he worked for Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda, helping to write William Joyce's<sup>126</sup> broadcasts.<sup>127</sup> He died of tuberculosis in Breslau in June 1940.<sup>128</sup>

Colonel Patrick Joseph Coughlan of Balineen, Co. Cork was O'Duffy's second in command. He had fought in the independence struggle and had been a member of the National Army on the pro-Treaty side in the Irish Civil War. He joined the A.C.A. soon after its formation and quickly became a key figure in Cork. He became Director of Organization for Fine Gael and County Director of the League of Youth.<sup>129</sup> He was a nationalist and an extremist.<sup>130</sup> He joined O'Duffy after the split and was appointed Deputy Director of the League of Youth, and later, the NCP. He wrote *The Truth, the Story of the Blueshirts*, describing the events that led to O'Duffy's resignation from Fine Gael. It also contained details of Blueshirt policies, and was evidence of Coughlan's extremism. During the short life of the party, his West Cork constituency

---

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> R.A. Stradling, , *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War* (Manchester 1999), p. 23.

<sup>125</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 38.

<sup>126</sup> William Joyce, Lord Haw-Haw, broadcast for the Nazis during the war. A former member of the BUF, he was executed for treason after the war.

<sup>128</sup> F. McGarry, *F. General O'Duffy and the Irish Brigade*, p. 123.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> P.J.Coughlan, *The Truth-The Story of the Blueshirts*, p. 3.

<sup>130</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 21-22.

was held up as the model for organizational efficiency by O'Duffy.<sup>131</sup> He often accompanied O'Duffy on his tours and attended was a member of the National Executive. He wrote an account of O'Duffy's speaking tour of West Cork, which was printed and sold through the party journal. Coughlan was involved in the recruitment of volunteers for the Irish Brigade, but did not go to Spain.<sup>132</sup>

Captain Liam D. Walsh replaced Tom Gunning as the General Secretary of the NCP, and became O'Duffy's private secretary once the party was disbanded. He had been a G2 (Irish Military Intelligence) officer in the 1930s.<sup>133</sup> He later became a police agent.<sup>134</sup> A long-time admirer of O'Duffy, he later wrote an unpublished, sycophantic account of the General's career, titled *General O'Duffy-His Life and Battle*.<sup>135</sup> When O'Duffy was in Spain, he claimed to have left Walsh in charge of funds only to find on his return that £2300 had vanished. O'Duffy had to meet debts incurred by Walsh "but nevertheless did not break friends with him and he succeeded in getting him a position at the Italian legation."<sup>136</sup> Walsh was very active in recruiting for the Brigade and in efforts to keep O'Duffy and his Brigade in the newspapers. He continued his association with O'Duffy, and was later involved in the creation of the pro-Nazi People's National Party, a clear indication of his extremist views.<sup>137</sup> He was in contact with prominent members of the *Fichte Bund*, a quasi-official German propaganda organization.<sup>138</sup> He wrote a series of propaganda articles which he sent to Germany, and was co-founder of the Irish Friends of Germany. He was interned in the

---

<sup>131</sup> *The Nation*, March 1936, 'Election Machine.'

<sup>132</sup> F. McGarry, *General O'Duffy, the N.C.P and the Irish Brigade*, p. 121.

<sup>133</sup> D. O'Drisceol, *Censorship in Ireland 1939-45*, (Cork, 1996), p. 76.

<sup>134</sup> Extract from Weekly Miscellaneous Reports, G2 Military Intelligence, w/e 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1940., G2/X/0253 Irish Friends of Germany, Military Archives, Dublin.

<sup>135</sup> MS. N.A.I.

<sup>136</sup> Extract from Weekly Misc. Reports, G2 Military Intelligence, w/e 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1940, G2/X/0253 Irish Friends of Germany, Military Archives, Dublin.

<sup>137</sup> R. Fisk, *In Time of War* (Andre Deutsch, 1983), pp. 374-5.

<sup>138</sup> D. O'Drisceol, *Censorship in Ireland, 1939-45*, p. 76.

Curragh later in the war for subversive activities.<sup>139</sup> He remained friendly with O'Duffy, until the latter's death. O'Duffy remembered him with a bequest in his will.

Little information is available about other key figures in the party. Dr. J.E. Conway, B.L. was Divisional Treasurer of the Dublin Division and sat on the National Executive. He was responsible for organizing a dinner in O'Duffy's honour. Louis O'Connell, a solicitor from Listowel, County Kerry, was the representative from Munster on the Standing Committee formed by O'Duffy. He was responsible for promoting the Social Credit ideas of Major C.H. Douglas in *The Nation*.

O'Duffy failed to attract any mainstream politicians away from the Fine Gael. He had failed to lead that party to victory in the local elections, a demonstration of his inability to inspire the Irish electorate. The result was that few were willing to follow him into another venture, but were prepared to trust to the politicians such as Cosgrave who had led the party to victory in the past. The party members, and Blueshirts, had heard his extremist views and were unwilling to endorse them by joining his new party. O'Duffy, the green *Duce*, had failed to win over a substantial number of his erstwhile followers, but it did not deter O'Duffy who felt that the shirted tradition should continue, and that an electoral victory would soon be won.

### *INTERNAL PARTY ISSUES*

The NCP, like many small organizations, became obsessed with minor internal and doctrinal wrangles and with the minutiae of organization, form, and regalia. It only came to life over two main contemporary issues, the economic war and the Abyssinian crisis, preferring instead to discuss the details of corporatism and social credit, and in doing so alienating even more members.

---

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.* p. 76.



The National Corporate Party decided to carry on the shirted tradition of the Blueshirts, with minor changes, in spite of the impending ban on the wearing of uniforms. The issue was discussed at the party's inaugural *Ard Fheis*. The party discarded the black beret and members were required, from early 1936 onwards, to go bareheaded or to wear the 1916 Volunteer hat.<sup>140</sup> The National Executive changed the colour of the tie from black to dark green.<sup>141</sup> At the same time, a new flag was adopted, a red St. Patrick's cross on a blue background with the initials of the party and a shamrock in green in the quarters of the cross.<sup>142</sup> It is of interest to note that the original uniform was very similar, in style and colour, to that worn by the British Fascisti who were active in Dublin in the thirties.<sup>143</sup> The party was obsessed with the liturgical trappings of the movement, a continental influence which O'Duffy tried to absorb into the Irish political tradition by stressing the connection with earlier uniformed movements such as the Volunteers.<sup>144</sup>

The National Executive met on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1935 to discuss changing the colour of the uniform. The party seemed to think that the issue was an important one. The adoption of a green uniform, the Volunteer hat, and the break with the blue shirt indicate a change of tack. The party was distancing itself from its links with Fine Gael, and reverting back to the ideas and symbolism of the 1916 Rising in order to challenge Fianna Fail for the mantle of republicanism. Delegates had raised the uniform issue at the 1935 *Ard Fheis*, but the overwhelming majority of members had come out in favour of retaining the colour blue. Captain Tom Hyde<sup>145</sup> spoke at the

---

<sup>140</sup> A soft, large-brimmed hat worn by some Volunteers in 1916.

<sup>141</sup> Headquarters Circular no.5, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> R. Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain, A history 1918-85* (Oxford, 1987), p. 34.

<sup>144</sup> For an analysis of fascism as a 'secular religion' see E. Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Boston, 1996).

<sup>145</sup> A long-standing member of the Blueshirts from Kerry. He later joined the Irish Brigade and fought in Spain, where he died fighting in support of Franco.

Congress, arguing that green was the national colour worn by patriots throughout history, but he failed to sway delegates.

In spite of the decision by Congress, the National Executive promoted a change of colour, but stated that it did not have the authority to do so. It was some time before the next Congress and they deemed the need for a decision as urgent. The Executive decided to canvass opinion by allowing companies and divisions to vote on the matter. The Executive intended to make a decision at the end of the year based on these ballots.<sup>146</sup> The issue of changing the uniform's colour was one of the few motions that had been put by the Executive that Congress had failed to carry. The decision to proceed with the change, based on a ballot that could easily have been tampered with, is a clear indication that the decisions of Congress were meaningless unless endorsed by O'Duffy and his Executive.

The reason that O'Duffy gave for the change was that:

“Instances were given where the action of those, who deserted from the movement at the time we left Fine Gael, were opposed to our ideals, and that in many cases the public were confused, and in some cases even the Press associated such conduct to our organization. It was considered that in the event of a General Election such confusion would still be more embarrassing. It was urged that the full benefits of our National Policy could not be reaped until the Green Shirt was adopted.”<sup>147</sup>

In marked contrast to the vote at Congress, the returns counted on 31 December 1935 showed that an “overwhelming majority of the companies and branches “favoured the change to a green shirt.<sup>148</sup> There is no accounting for the complete turnaround in opinion. O'Duffy chose the particular shade of green and the shirts were made available for purchase from May 1936 at a cost of six shillings. Uniformed

---

<sup>146</sup> Headquarters Circular, no.9, December 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Headquarters Circular no.14, May 1936 D/Jus8/296, NAI.

party members were to wear the green shirt with a tie of a darker shade of green.

O'Duffy wrote:

“All over the world green is, and ever shall be recognized as the symbol of the Emerald Isle. Make no mistake about it, this country shall always be known as Green Erin.”<sup>149</sup>

The change to green relates to O'Duffy's return to traditional Republican symbolism but, more pragmatically, it was a belated recognition of the fact that most Blueshirts had not followed him out of Fine Gael. Clashes between the two factions from late 1934 onwards were causing confusion. Interestingly, the party adopted the green shirt at the same time as they began to debate the Social Credit ideas of Major Douglas (see chapter 3). The members of the British Social Credit party wore a green shirt, though they were actively opposed to fascism.<sup>150</sup>

De Valera's proposal to ban the wearing of uniforms was still in legal limbo when this change took place. In 1934, the Wearing of Uniforms Bill had passed all its stages in the *Dail* but there was strong opposition in the Senate. The Senate voted against giving the bill a second reading. This provoked De Valera into proposing a bill the next day to abolish the Senate. Inevitably, the Senate rejected the bill but it would come into force anyhow after an 18-month moratorium, along with the Wearing of Uniforms Bill.<sup>151</sup> O'Duffy threw out a challenge to De Valera:

“We are determined to wear our green shirts despite any ban and despite any threat of persecution or victimization. Please God the green will survive all parties.”<sup>152</sup>

From now on, the NCP members were known as Greenshirts. O'Duffy's new party continued the shirted tradition begun with the Blueshirts. He felt that there was a need

---

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> They often appeared at anti-Mosley demonstrations in uniform.

<sup>151</sup> The Senate could only delay legislation. Manning, *The Blueshirts*, p. 126

<sup>152</sup> Headquarters Circular, no.14, May 1936, D/Jus8/296, NAI.



for a disciplined uniformed organization, alongside the party organization. The Greenshirts were necessary to continue to provide the symbolic pageantry that was the distinguishing mark of most fascist movements

At its inaugural conference, the NCP agreed to change the name of the party journal from *The Blueshirt* to *The Nation*. This change of name was in line with O'Duffy's stress on defining the party within the nationalist framework but it also had a fascist angle in equating the party with the nation. Thomas Davis, the poet and nationalist, had launched a newspaper in the nineteenth century, which he named *The Nation*. A number of other journals since had borne the name, that of the NCP being the latest. It implied a continuity, and extension, of the nationalist tradition.

The price of the paper was reduced to half that of *The Blueshirt*<sup>153</sup> in an attempt to bring in subscriptions. Propaganda and publicity were crucial to the success of the new party, and an increase in the circulation of the paper would be a step towards increasing the membership and winning people over to the party's radical agenda. Party members were encouraged to approach their local newsagents and suggest that they stock the party newspaper. Individual members were to encourage their newsagent by guaranteeing the sale of a certain number of copies. The party asked members to canvas potential advertisers who were encouraged to place advertisements at 2/6d per insertion. In return, the advertiser would be assured of Blueshirt support for their business.<sup>154</sup> As well as sales through newsagents, Young Comrades were to sell the paper at church gates after Mass on Sundays. The party sent potential new recruits copies of the paper free of charge for a trial period. Advertising revenue was crucial as the party hoped that the newspaper would be able

---

<sup>153</sup> Headquarters Circular no.1, August 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

to rely exclusively on this source of revenue for its continued existence after the initial launch. Unfortunately, this source of income failed to materialize.

The party initially expected that much of the content of the newspaper would come from the individual members, local branches and reports of meetings, conferences and reprinted speeches. Members were encouraged to write on a regular basis and eventually the Executive hoped to set up a panel of writers.<sup>155</sup> In the end, O'Duffy did much of the writing, or his lectures and speeches were printed verbatim. Most issues of the paper contained articles written in Irish, usually on the subject of Gaelic culture. This Gaelic language tokenism was common in many papers of the time.

The publication of the paper proved a heavy drain on the slender resources of the fledgling party. Regular advertisements were few and it had to rely “entirely for its funds on the voluntary subscriptions of the members, none of whom can afford to give large sums.”<sup>156</sup> Financial necessity led to the suspension of publication, with the hope that publication would be resumed “as the strength and influence of the movement developed.”<sup>157</sup> Files containing all 28 issues of its predecessor, *The Blueshirt*, plus all issues of *The Nation*, were available free of charge to all members, an indication of the large stock accumulated at headquarters which they now sought to shift. The NCP substituted the paper with a bulletin distributed on the first of every month. It was to be sent to every company, division and district, to all local newspaper editors, and to “prominent people interested in the Corporate movement. In this way, it [was] hoped to secure for the Organization a wide measure of propaganda.”<sup>158</sup> The National Executive asked local officers to send details of meetings to the local press as another way of promoting and building the organization,

---

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Headquarters Bulletin, no.1. August 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

and some newspapers, for example the *Cork Examiner*, regularly printed details of NCP local branch meetings. O'Duffy reminded the members:

“Knowledge is power, and a report in the local press will be a great source of strength to our movement.”<sup>159</sup>

At the December 1935 meeting of the National Executive, O'Duffy proposed the re-launch of the newspaper, starting the following month “providing sufficient sales and advertisements were forthcoming.”<sup>160</sup> Once again members were encouraged to take out a subscription, and O'Duffy, ever the optimist, predicted that before long “our paper [will have] the largest circulation of any weekly paper in Ireland.”<sup>161</sup> The newspaper was to have only six pages and cost 2d, and members were urged to prepare for the re-launch by again seeking subscribers and newsagents who were willing to stock copies.

The newspaper did not in fact re-appear until February 1936, but it was much more substantial than earlier envisaged, with sixteen A4-sized pages. This was increased to twenty pages with the next and subsequent editions. However, the paper failed to attract any advertisers, even NCP members with businesses to promote. This could indicate that the party attracted few businessmen in the first place or that those who did join the party were aware of the limited circulation of the paper and did not feel it was financially worth their while to advertise. The movement persistently failed to find wealthy backers. Supporters of the party were unwilling to put politics before economics when it came to advertising. The only items advertised were those connected with the party such as uniforms, calendars and pamphlets. Priced at 3d, the paper was available from an address in Middle Abbey Street, Dublin and from March from the Pearse Street Headquarters. The substantial format of the journal, the lack of

<sup>159</sup> Headquarters Bulletin no.1 , August 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>160</sup> Headquarters Bulletin no.5, December 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>161</sup> Headquarters Circular no. 7a, December 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.



advertisements, and the declining membership of the party make one question the source of funding for the paper when for months the party had been reduced to circulating badly copied bulletins and circulars. There are no records, however, of the print run of the journal to establish how many of each issue were printed. The party had changed its arrangements for membership funding. The revenues obtained in January and February, when annual subscriptions were due, could have been used to finance a re-launch of the paper.

There is always the possibility, in the light of O'Duffy's continued relationship with Mussolini and his championing of the war in Abyssinia, that overseas funding was made available to the Greenshirts. Mussolini certainly made financial contributions to other fascist groups in Europe. Between August 1933 and January 1934, the Italian government deposited £40,000 in various currencies in a number of BUF accounts, as letters between Dino Grandi and Mussolini attest.<sup>162</sup> Considering Count Grandi's enthusiasm for Irish fascism and his trips to Dublin,<sup>163</sup> the possibility of contributions by the Italians to support the NCP are not beyond the realms of possibility. There is, however, no direct evidence from *Garda* files open to the public. However, during the Spanish Civil War, Liam Walsh sought the help of the Italian consul in supporting O'Duffy, who had used up his personal fortune in financing the Irish Brigade. A letter from Lodi Fe to Count Ciano secured £350 for O'Duffy, which O'Duffy was to use to cover his personal expenses in Spain.<sup>164</sup>

As it was, the journal continued to be produced throughout the active life of the party, until August 1936. The paper was a mixture of local branch news, discussion of the party programme, and commentary on current affairs from a party perspective.

---

<sup>162</sup> As cited in N. Mosley, *Beyond the Pale* (London, 1983), pp. 174-5.

<sup>163</sup> Including his attendance at the 1936 NCP Ard Fheis.

<sup>164</sup> Lodi Fe to Ciano, 29 January 1937, cited in R. Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War* (Manchester, 1999), pp.112-113.

Members submitted articles and wrote letters but the content tended to be dull and repetitive, and the style, turgid.

The newspaper contributed to the liturgical element of the party by its re-printing of traditionalist nationalist songs. The Blueshirt movement, like many uniformed organizations realized the value of songs in rousing passions and uniting a mass of individuals into a coherent whole. Ian Stuart,<sup>165</sup> himself a figure on the post-WW II extreme right, said: “A pamphlet is read only once, but a song is learned by heart and repeated a thousand times.”<sup>166</sup> In the early years of the Blueshirts W.B. Yeats briefly involved himself with the movement and wrote marching songs to the tune of well-known songs.<sup>167</sup> The NCP featured revolutionary and nationalist songs in every issue of its paper, under the heading ‘Songs of Our Nation.’ They reflect the nationalism of the party. The songs are about an Ireland on its knees under British rule, the glory of the tricolour, violence, sacrifice and martyrdom. In ‘The Three Coloured Ribbon’<sup>168</sup> are the lines:

“I was true to my land love; I fought for her glory, And gave up my life for to make Ireland free.”<sup>169</sup>

‘The Jackets Green’ speaks of the death knell of British rule in Ireland:

“Yet grief shall come to our heartless foes, And their throne in the dust be seen, So Irish maids love none but those Who wear the jackets green.”<sup>170</sup>

O’Duffy, influenced by the songs and poems of the Irish Gaelic cultural renaissance of the turn of the century, recognized the value of such songs in inculcating the

---

<sup>165</sup> Ian Stuart was involved in the neo-Nazi skinhead movement, specifically producing and performing songs such as ‘Mother Europe’s Sons’ with his rock group, Skrewdriver.

<sup>166</sup> Ian Stuart, cited in R. Griffin, *Fascism* (Oxford, 1995), p. 363.

<sup>167</sup> M. Cronin *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 102.

<sup>168</sup> *The Nation*, April, 1936. ‘Songs of Our Nation,’

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *The Nation*, March 1936. ‘The Jackets Green’, ‘Songs of Our Nation.’

nationalist spirit and tried to equate his movement in the public eye with the ongoing nationalist tradition.

The split from Fine Gael and the wrangle during the following few months with Ned Cronin's faction, led to a rapid decline in the membership of both organizations, and a concomitant loss in funds. However, there were sufficient funds for O'Duffy to keep his rump faction going and to publish a newspaper. In January 1936, there was a change to individual funding which could indicate that the party could raise more money this way than by charging per company. It is more likely that the money per company was not forthcoming and drastic action was taken to secure income. Fund-raising events such as the traditional Irish standby of Sweepstakes on horseracing events such as the Grand National, newspaper sales, and individual donations provided additional funding. In December 1934, O'Duffy had launched an appeal for £10,000 to start the new party,<sup>171</sup> but it is very unlikely that he raised anywhere near that amount. O'Duffy's efforts to get his party up and running were seriously hampered by the lack of funds.

Before the party was officially launched in June 1935, O'Duffy asked Divisional Directors of the League of Youth to forward to party headquarters the names and addresses of potential subscribers of one pound or more<sup>172</sup> but the "response to this was poor."<sup>173</sup> He made the same appeal just after the Congress. This time, less optimistically, he asked for the name of subscribers who could pledge ten shillings or more. In August 1935, the party announced that a house-to-house collection would take place over three Sundays in September, which would require the involvement of all members. Collectors were to accept money from all, "...without distinction of

---

<sup>171</sup> Letter from O'Duffy 4 December 1934, D/Jus8286, NAI.

<sup>172</sup> Headquarters Circular no. 2 Finance 18 June 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*



class, creed or political belief.”<sup>174</sup> The party intended to use the collection of funds as an opportunity to get people interested in the party programme. In addition, collectors were to solicit regular subscriptions proportionate to the value of a man’s property. For example, a farmer with property valued at £10 would be asked to subscribe 2/6d, 20 acres- 5/- and 40 acres-10/-. The money was desperately needed with an election on the horizon. The same month, *The Nation* failed to appear and Thomas Gunning lost his job as editor and General-Secretary of the party at a weekly wage of £7. The Executive notified the Divisional Directors of this and they were reminded that Gunning had been the only paid party official. They were asked to remember that the motto of the movement was “Voluntary Public Service.”<sup>175</sup>

O’Duffy’s new party was never placed on a secure financial footing, and this not only affected the organizational capabilities of the movement, due to the lack of permanent paid staff, but also restricted the amount of publicity and propaganda that could be produced and distributed. This was especially important at a time when the national press were showing less and less interest in O’Duffy’s movement. There had been some initial interest in the press on the launch of the party based on O’Duffy’s high public profile in the past and the prominence of shirted movements throughout Europe. O’Duffy’s low key approach and the failure of the party to secure prominent members or a large following meant it was rarely to appear in the news. O’Duffy did not commit himself or his party to any news-grabbing activities which in turn ensured that the party appeared inconsequential to the newspaper-reading public. O’Duffy failed to find any wealthy backers for the party. The dwindling membership and concomitant decline in funding meant that even if he had the enthusiasm and the

---

<sup>174</sup> Headquarters bulletin no.1, August 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>175</sup> O’Duffy, letter to Divisional Directors, 7 August, 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

organizational skills, his party did not have the resources or the manpower to fight an effective campaign, something of which O'Duffy must have been increasingly aware.

### *NCP CAMPAIGNS*

It was the economic war with Great Britain following the withholding of the payment of land annuities by the Fianna Fail government of Eamon De Valera that had pushed many frustrated farmers, and their families, specifically those dependent for their income on the export market, into the ranks of the Blueshirts in the early nineteen-thirties. The resulting tariff war caused a significant drop in agricultural exports. Export values dropped from £36 million in 1931 to only £19 million in 1933.<sup>176</sup> The Blueshirts were quick to make the most of the farmers' anger with De Valera to recruit members. The dispute not only affected farmers but the entire rural economy of certain areas. The farmers, particularly those involved in the dairy industry, found themselves unable to pay their rates as a result of their loss of income, a policy which resulted in increased violence between the Blueshirts and government agencies. The Blueshirt Congress of 1934 had passed resolutions, against Fine Gael policy, calling on farmers not to pay the rates, precipitating O'Duffy's resignation as President of Fine Gael.

Whilst the violence associated with opposition to the economic war peaked in September and October 1934, it very quickly subsided after that, partly because the Blueshirt split had seriously hampered the movement. However, it was also due to the lack of support for the grievances of the larger farmers from the Fine Gael Executive, and from the general population who were benefiting from cheaper food. In January 1935 came the Coal-Corn Pact between Britain and the Free State, which increased

---

<sup>176</sup> M. Manning, *The Blueshirts*, p. 109.

the export of cattle to 150,000. It was the first step towards resolving the dispute. Further efforts were made at resolving the economic war with a number of trade agreements between the Free State and Britain. The result was an increase in quotas of Irish cattle and bacon going to Britain and a reduction in duties on both sides.<sup>177</sup> On February 17<sup>th</sup> 1936, further tariffs were removed with the signing of a new Irish Trade Pact between the two nations.<sup>178</sup> The beginning of the end of the economic war and the easing of the problems of tenant farmers with the Land Purchases (Guarantee Fund) Bill were serious blows to the movement. The Blueshirts had won the support of farmers when they were seen to be fighting for their rights against a seemingly hostile government. With one less issue to fight for it made the party appear even less relevant and of course, it ate away at its membership base.

O'Duffy was keen to make the tariff war a national issue not a party political one. He criticized Cumann na nGaedheal for the financial settlement it had made with the British in 1923 and for the poor leadership shown by Fianna Fail in the economic war<sup>179</sup> in which he claimed that farmers were used as "pawns in the political game."<sup>180</sup> The NCP pointed out that as a new party it was not responsible for the 1923 settlement or the economic war. The farmers were divided on an issue on which they should be united. Under the corporate system, the issue would be one over which the farmers, not party politicians, would have control.

Agrarian radicalism had been one of the distinguishing marks of the Blueshirt movement, something O'Duffy hoped would continue with the NCP. For example, members were encouraged to stencil slogans on walls opposing the economic war. At the 1935 *Ard Fheis* the following was made official party policy:

---

<sup>177</sup> T. Gray, *Ireland This Century* (London, 1994), p. 130.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Speech made by O'Duffy at Macroom 13 January 1936 reported in *The Nation*, February 1936.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*



“13. That Congress approves of making the economic war a national issue, removing it from the sphere of party politics and removing all possibility of English politicians playing one group of Irishmen against another. If a settlement cannot be reached, all sections of the community to bear their just share of the cost.

“14. That the following be items of our agricultural policy:-

- A. No further collection of annuities in any circumstances.
- B. Setting up of an independent Commission to inquire into the distribution of the cost of the economic war.
- C. Compensation for losses sustained by the farming community over and above those sustained by other sections of the country.”<sup>181</sup>

The resolutions were almost identical to those passed a year earlier at the League of Youth Congress of 1934, but times had changed. The policies reveal that the party was still representing a sectional interest, the larger farmers and grazers, and that these policies were becoming less and less relevant to the political agenda.

In 1935, the NCP began to focus on “an even greater injustice”, the problem of land leases and the party offered its support to the Leaseholders Movement.<sup>182</sup> The aim of the Leaseholders Movement was to:

“...urge the government to introduce legislation immediately enabling struggling leaseholders to buy out their businesses and residences and thus avoid any further exploitation by ground landlords.”<sup>183</sup>

The National Executive decided that, “support for the leaseholders movement should be included in the policy of the National Corporate Party.”<sup>184</sup>

---

<sup>181</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 15 June 1936.

<sup>182</sup> Correspondence issued by N.C.P., D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> Headquarters Bulletin no.5, December 1935, D/Jus8/296. NAI.

The party was clearly trying to seize on another land issue, the sort of problem that had inspired nationalists throughout Irish history. The party regarded the leaseholder system as a hangover from colonial days, when absentee landlords based in England took the rents out of the country. This was still happening to a minor extent, but the more important concern was that money was leaving the rural areas and going to the towns. As it was, it left the tenant at the mercy of the landlord who could charge what rent he wanted once the lease was up for renewal. O'Duffy argued that a tax on land values was no solution and that ground rents should be abolished absolutely. The party broadened the issue by including rents on urban properties<sup>185</sup> and Captain P. Hughes, a Dublin staff officer and member of the National Executive outlined a set of proposals, which were printed in *The Nation* for discussion:

“1. A Landlord and Tenant Act providing for the setting up of courts to enquire into and fix rents in cities and towns as has been done in the case of agricultural holdings.

2. That when rents are fixed by such Courts, leaseholders should be enabled by law to acquire the freehold interest in their premises or houses at ten years' purchase.

3. That ground rents be taxed or rated at 16/9d in the £ and that rates on house property be reduced to something like 10/- in the £ on poor law valuation.

4. That all land required for building purposes in the neighbourhood of cities and towns be acquired compulsorily at something near its agricultural value and that it be sold at the same price with any house erected thereon as freehold property and not leased as at present.

---

<sup>185</sup> *The Nation*, March 1936, 'Irish Leaseholders and Ground Rents.'

5. Any land which is acquired compulsorily should be taxed on its enhanced value for building purposes and not on its agricultural value as it is at present taxed.”<sup>186</sup>

The adoption of the problems of the leaseholders was a desperate bid to appeal to another section of the populace on an issue with which it felt it had some experience and empathy. It was an issue that failed, however, to inspire a surge in applications for membership of the floundering party.

Both Maurice Manning<sup>187</sup> and Fearghal McGarry<sup>188</sup> agree that the invasion of Abyssinia by the Italians on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1935, and the subsequent sanctions debate, was one of the few issues to prompt the NCP into activity during the party’s short life, until the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. The party, unsurprisingly, came down firmly on the side of Mussolini and castigated the League of Nations for implementing a policy of sanctions against Italy. O’Duffy was particularly angry at the all-party united stance on support for sanctions. In response, O’Duffy came out in wholehearted support for the Italians. Mussolini personally wrote to O’Duffy “...expressing on the one hand his surprise at the official attitude of the Saorstát towards his country, and on the other his profound appreciation of the brave stand taken by the National Corporate Party of Ireland on behalf of the Italian people.”<sup>189</sup>

Over the next few months, O’Duffy used the example of Italy, and the way it effectively coped with sanctions, to promote corporatism. For O’Duffy, the imposition of sanctions had served to galvanize the Italian working class behind the government, allowing the latter to “control the market in the collective interest,”<sup>190</sup> by which he meant increased government control of the economy in the national interest.

---

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> M. Manning, *The Blueshirts* p. 200.

<sup>188</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 23.

<sup>189</sup> *The Nation*, April 1936, ‘Italy and Ireland.’

<sup>190</sup> *The Nation*, March 1936, ‘Workers and Sanctions.’



**PAGES ARE MISSING IN ORIGINAL**

November 1935.<sup>199</sup> However, the party bulletin following the meeting did not mention it as an item that had come up for discussion.

*The Nation* was very keen to publicize information about Abyssinian society that showed it in an unfavourable light, as a way of justifying the Italian invasion and occupation. In April 1936, the paper reported that there were two million slaves in the country and that the Coptic clergy were the largest slaveholders. In May 1936, it printed what it claimed to be a passage from the Abyssinian mobilization order: “Married men may take their wives to carry food, cook, etc. and those without wives will take any women without husbands.”<sup>200</sup> O’Duffy was making an appeal to Irishmen to give their moral support to the liberating Roman Catholic Italians. Articles in *The Nation* argued that the Italians were invading Abyssinia in order to replace tribal barbarism with civilization. It was a clarion call to defeat the heathen that would be heard again as the Spanish Civil War got under way.

At its congress in 1936, the NCP passed resolutions supporting O’Duffy’s stand in opposing the sanctions imposed on Italy and ratified by the *Dail*. The Congress, furthermore, extended its greetings to the *Duce*, praising him for his “wonderful work for Italy’s regeneration, his work for Christianity, and his powerful influence for European peace.”<sup>201</sup> The Congress made it official party policy that should they achieve power then they would take Ireland out of the League of Nations. The party saw membership of the League as detrimental to the national interest and a waste of £17,000 of the state’s money.<sup>202</sup>

---

<sup>199</sup> O’Duffy, letter to John F. McCarthy, 29 October 1935, in response to latter’s request for information about fighting for the Italians, D/Jus8/296 NAI.

<sup>200</sup> *The Nation*, May 1936, ‘From the Abyssinian Mobilization Order.’

<sup>201</sup> *The Nation*, August 1936, ‘Telegram to the *Duce*’.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

## THE DEMISE OF THE PARTY

On 18<sup>th</sup> July 1936, the first day of the Spanish Civil War, the National Corporate Party held its Congress at Rathmines Town Hall, Dublin. Those entitled to attend included all members of the National Executive, Divisional, District and Company officers, and two delegates from each company or unit, elected by the rank and file, as well as the officers of the Farmers and Labour Councils of the party. In the previous month, O'Duffy had made a tour of County Cork in order to whip up enthusiasm for the forthcoming *Ard Fheis*. In his keynote speech at the Congress, O'Duffy claimed that he had attended 97 meetings and conferences since the last Congress, an average of two per week.<sup>203</sup>

O'Duffy had placed a great deal of stress on the importance of the Congress in re-launching the movement in time for the election:

“I believe that the National Corporate Party Congress this year will mark a turning point not only in our movement but in the whole future of this country. If it is an outstanding success, as please God it will be, nothing can stop our progress, and our policy will be triumphant even sooner than we had anticipated...When our members consider that the whole future of our Organization depends on our success on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 1936, I have no doubt that there will be a generous response to my call.”<sup>204</sup>

The Irish Special Branch attended the Congress but they were satisfied that “nothing of a revolutionary nature was proposed or discussed at the Convention.”<sup>205</sup> Buses, according to the same report, conveyed contingents of Greenshirts from the south of

---

<sup>203</sup> *Cork Examiner*, 20 July 1936.

<sup>204</sup> Headquarters Circular no.13, June 1936, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>205</sup> Special Branch Report from Michael J. Mansfield to Commissioner ‘C.S.’, 20 June 1936, D/Jus8/296, NAI.



the state, including Cork, Dungarvon, Waterford and Tipperary, and around 250 delegates in all attended,<sup>206</sup> significantly down on the previous year. The party, however, claimed an attendance of 650.<sup>207</sup> During the day Colonel Coughlan specifically offered a welcome to a contingent of a hundred delegates from West Cork, which he referred to as “the cradle of the movement,”<sup>208</sup> 61 from Cork City, and 40 from County Cavan.<sup>209</sup> If his figures were correct, then it would show that a large percentage, 80%, or 201 of the 250 delegates (as totalled in the *Garda* report), were from two counties, Cavan and Cork.

The Congress attracted little attention from the press, in spite of the massed appearance of the Greenshirts in uniform, though the *Irish Times* gave the Congress front-page coverage, including a photograph of the reception committee.<sup>210</sup> The paper reported that O’Duffy arrived over an hour into the Congress, preceded into the Assembly Room by a guard of honour, colour party, and an escort with Commandant O’Sullivan in charge. In the opening ceremony, a fascist salute to O’Duffy was followed by the sounding of the Last Post, two minutes silence in honour of dead comrades, reveille, a rallying song and the national anthem.<sup>211</sup> O’Duffy then proceeded to speak for an hour and twenty minutes. His speech did not cover any new ground. He continued to hammer away at the issues that had caused him to resign from Fine Gael, which was hardly new material for the delegates. He then went on to speak about taxation, the need for the farmers to redress their grievances and for the creation of a National Council of Agriculture. He took the opportunity to remind people of the party’s commitment to democracy: “We stand for law and order, for the

---

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> *The Nation*, August 1936, ‘Our Great Congress- Opening Ceremony.’

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> *The Irish Times*, 20 July 1936, photo of the Reception Committee on the front page.

<sup>211</sup> *The Nation*, August 1936, ‘Our Great Congress-Opening Ceremony.’

absolute supremacy of parliament-one Government, one Army and one police force.”<sup>212</sup> He failed to add that it would also be a one party state. He went on to attack Britain, invoking the traditional nationalist adage that England’s danger is Ireland’s opportunity:

“If we were in office we would say to Britain that we want back our lost province-our Alsace Lorraine. If Britain prefers to stand by a small and pampered minority...she cannot expect our friendship and our support. A hostile Ireland, a sullen Ireland, would be fatal to Britain in time of war. Our goodwill is essential and Britain will go far to secure it. We want nothing more, and nothing less, than our own, and every sod of this land is ours. In making this claim I believe we have the support of all creeds and classes at home and the respect of the world ahead.”<sup>213</sup>

The ‘pampered minority’ to which he referred were the Ulster Unionists. He went on to claim that if the corporate state had been set up in 1922, then partition would never have occurred. He remarked that an organization had been set up in the North pledged to the promotion of the corporatist system and which was also opposed to the Unionist Government. They were hostile to communism and saw the border as responsible for the lack of progress in Irish relations. Now O’Duffy was prepared to take advantage of the prospect of war, and Britain’s need for a supportive Ireland, to press Ireland’s irredentist claim to Ulster.

Following the Director-General’s speech, Dr. P. Cagney took the Chair and the unanimous re-election of O’Duffy as party leader took place. The nomination was proposed by Colonel Coughlan of Cork, O’Duffy’s second in command. There were no other nominations. The Director-General appointed the following as his Headquarters Staff:

---

<sup>212</sup> *Irish Times*, 19 July 1936, ‘Corporate Party Candidates.’

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

Deputy Director General-Colonel P.J. Coughlan of Cork.

Assistant Director-General-Comdt. Diarmuid O'Sullivan of Dublin.

General Secretary-Captain Liam Walsh of Dublin.

Trustees-Dr.V.S. Delaney of Longford, Dr. P. Cagney of Cork, John Dowdall of Roscommon and P.J. Lonergan of Monaghan.

Standing Committee- Ulster-Comdt T. Donnelly of Monaghan and Sean P. Martin of Cavan. Munster-Captain Tom Hyde of Cork and Mr L O'Connell of Kerry. Conaught-Col. P Farrelly of Leitrim and P.J. Gallagher of Sligo. Leinster-Pierce MacGorisk of Kildare and James Daly of Meath. Dublin City-Captain M.Sweetman.

Staff Officers-Don Reeves of Dublin, Sean B. Murphy of Cork, Colonel T. Carew of Tipperary, Captain P. Hughes of Dublin and Dr. J. Hennessy of Tipperary.<sup>214</sup>

These appointments reveal a number of points about the party leadership. O'Duffy was keen to make sure that the movement, in spite of its real strength in only certain a few counties, be perceived as a national movement by the electorate. Headquarters staff were appointed from all four provinces, with surprisingly few from the NCP heartland of County Cork. The staff, who would have formed the National Executive, were an unwieldy 22 in number, including O'Duffy, but due to the distances travelled, especially in winter, attendance would favour those Executive members living closer to the capital. Of these 22 members, t10 proudly displayed military titles and, no doubt, other members of the Executive were ex-army men. This continued preponderance of ex-army men is a reflection of the make-up of the membership, the origins of the Blueshirts/Greenshirts in the Army Comrades Association, and the male bias of the movement. Noticeably, there were no female members of the central staff, not even a token example to represent the Women's Divisions.

---

<sup>214</sup> *The Nation*, August 1936, 'Our Great Congress.'



The Congress then proceeded to welcome Major Hume Sleight, the leader of the Corporative movement in Scotland, and Mr T. Kennedy, the founder of the Social Credit movement in Ireland, both of whom addressed the meeting. A special welcome was then extended to delegates from Northern Ireland. Amongst the observers attending the Congress were Maurice Lodi Fe, the founder and organizer, and Count Eduardo Tomacelli the secretary, of the Italian community *Fascisti* in Dublin.<sup>215</sup> The Congress then went into committee, to which the press were not admitted.

The press were given the wording of a telegram sent, and signed by O'Duffy, to Mussolini:

“The National Corporate Party of Ireland in congress assembled greets *Signor* Mussolini. The Fascist Government has shaken the prestige of the old world which oppressed us, and we hope that Italy's action, already developed through her recent continental consolidations, will be understood in all its importance by the Irish people, not only as regards true and real peace in Europe, but also because it will help in the accomplishment of Irish national aims.”<sup>216</sup>

The main resolutions passed by the delegates were as follows:

- to substitute a national scheme of public works for the dole (The party resolution did not go into any detail)
- concern was expressed at the number of foreigners engaged in key positions in Irish industries when Irishmen were equally qualified to fill the posts.
- membership of the League of Nations was harmful to the Irish nation, the £17,000 given to its upkeep was a waste of money, and the Free State should resign its membership.

---

<sup>215</sup> *The Nation*, August 1936, 'Our Great Congress.'

<sup>216</sup> *Irish Times*, 19 July 1936, 'Corporate Party Candidates.'

- a munitions factory should be set up for the defence of the country<sup>217</sup>.
- that university representation, with their own T.D.s in the Dail, be restored.
- that the economic war should be removed from the sphere of party politics and be made a national issue.
- cessation of the collection of land annuities.
- the division of unproductive ranches and estates and the redistribution of land.
- increased tillage.
- the Director-General to arrange a tour of the United States to raise funds for the organization.<sup>218</sup>

Other resolutions passed during the six-hour conference were referred to the National Executive for consideration.<sup>219</sup> The party was marking time, with no major new policy initiatives. It did however, have a clear and defined programme to present to the electorate that was markedly different to that of the main parties but which adhered to the common thread of nationalism and links to the land that motivated all Irish political groups. The policy platform would result in major constitutional change and increased state involvement in the economy. That it failed to contest an election to gauge support for its policies was due to the emergence of an issue which had more appeal to O'Duffy the soldier than domestic policies-the Spanish Civil War.

The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War gave the NCP a much-needed fillip. The Greenshirts, and the Blueshirts, had always portrayed themselves as staunch anti-communists. The Spanish Civil War attracted a huge amount of attention in Ireland, partly due to biased press reports. The war was wrongly seen as a religious crusade by the Catholic right and by the left as a monumental struggle between fascism and

---

<sup>217</sup> The Irish Free State did not possess a munitions factory but relied on imports for all of its military needs.

<sup>218</sup> *The Nation*, August 1936, 'Resolutions Passed by Congress.'

<sup>219</sup> *Irish Times*, 19 July 1936, 'Corporate Party Candidates.'

democracy. The press regularly reported the atrocities committed by Spanish Republicans against members of the Church, often in lurid and salacious detail. The press whipped the public into a frenzy of indignation, and the Catholic Church used the opportunity to raise money for the Nationalist cause.

O'Duffy felt called upon to suggest, via letters to the press, the creation of an Irish Brigade to fight on the Nationalist side. Thousands responded to his call and he contacted the Nationalists to set out his proposal, travelling to Spain on 21 September 1936 where he met with Count de Arellano and Juan de la Cierva, who were to organize transportation for the Irish volunteers.<sup>220</sup> De Valera wanted the war to remain a Spanish domestic issue and made participation a punishable offence in line with the Non-Intervention Agreement. De Valera must also have been concerned that O'Duffy was now back in the national spotlight with the press and the Church on his side, and with the prospect of an armed force at his disposal. The imposition by the government of the Non-Intervention Agreement would ensure that there was little chance of O'Duffy finding himself at any one time, and any one place, with a large armed force fired up with Catholic zeal and anti-communist rhetoric that he might use to further his domestic agenda.

O'Duffy's former ally, Patrick Belton, began to organize the Irish Christian Front to raise money for aid and supplies for the Nationalists in Spain, but O'Duffy favoured a more direct, military approach. In August 1936, he set about recruiting the Irish Brigade to fight on the Nationalist side. He hurled himself into his new venture with great enthusiasm, spurred on by the adulatory publicity he began to receive and the prospect of appearing once again as a player on the international stage. For O'Duffy, his recruitment of an Irish Brigade was a response to the historic links between the

---

<sup>220</sup> PRO FO W12847/9549/41, as cited in McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p.26-7.



two nations, their common Catholic faith, and opposition to the perceived communist threat.<sup>221</sup> McGarry agrees that O'Duffy was as much inspired by his commitment to international fascism as by his Christian fervour,<sup>222</sup> recognising Franco as an ideological ally.

O'Duffy decided to suspend the political activities of the NCP so as "to maintain the non-political character of the brigade,"<sup>223</sup> yet he also claimed that the party was being suspended due to the "volume of work connected with the Crusade against Communism."<sup>224</sup> He used the annual Michael Collins Commemoration ceremony at Beal na Blath to announce: "We are going to Spain; we are going to bring an Irish Brigade..."<sup>225</sup> The event, held under the auspices of the NCP, attracted a "fairly large"<sup>226</sup> audience, many of whom wore uniform. O'Duffy also used the occasion to praise Mussolini and Hitler for opposing communism in their respective countries.

The NCP was already recruiting for the Brigade. The Cashel branch, for example, opened a recruiting office on 15 August 1936, two weeks before the Beal na Blath speech. This must have come about as a local initiative as O'Duffy was away on a pre-arranged holiday in Holland for ten days until the 19 August.<sup>227</sup> The NCP would act as a recruiting agent for the Irish Brigade throughout the next year, operating from their Pearse Street Headquarters, but also utilizing local branches as well.<sup>228</sup> Liam Walsh was particularly active in this, for example organizing a second recruitment drive in January 1937.<sup>229</sup> O'Duffy threw himself into organizing transportation,

---

<sup>221</sup>E. O'Duffy, *Crusade In Spain*, pp. 10-11, p. 153.

<sup>222</sup>F. McGarry, *O'Duffy, the National Corporate Party and the Irish Brigade*, p.126.

<sup>223</sup>E. O'Duffy, *Crusade In Spain*, p.60

<sup>224</sup>*Irish Independent*, 13 September 1936.

<sup>225</sup>*Cork Examiner*, 31 August 1936, 'O'Duffy at Beal na Blath.'

<sup>226</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup>*Cork Examiner*, 20 August 1936, 'General O'Duffy Returns to Dublin.'

<sup>228</sup>R. Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 23.

<sup>229</sup>*Ibid.* p. 84.

funding, and passports but he was beset by the problems posed by the need for secrecy and the hostility of De Valera's government towards any form of intervention.

O'Duffy purchased a thousand green shirts for his brigade, and as a result they went into battle wearing the uniform of the NCP. In an analysis of the political affiliation of volunteers for the Irish Brigade, Fearghal McGarry found that out of a sample of 61 soldiers, 27 were members of the NCP and another 22 were Blueshirts.<sup>230</sup> Blueshirts and Greenshirts also organized recruitment for the Brigade. The Brigade attracted recruits from Cronin's organization, as well as supporters of O'Duffy. O'Duffy wrote to the *Irish Independent*<sup>231</sup> to point out that his Brigade was non-partisan:

“We did not come here to further the interests of any political party, be it Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, Labour or the National Corporate Party.”

In the light of McGarry's research, this statement by O'Duffy is clearly untrue.

The Spanish adventure gave O'Duffy, who had found himself marginalized by domestic politics, the opportunity to lead an organization on the international front. However, the failure of the Irish Brigade is well documented.<sup>232</sup> The volunteers went to Spain in small groups, but the largest contingent of 700 men were left stranded on the quayside by a ship that failed to arrive and they had to disperse and return home. Out of 6,000 applicants, only 700 arrived in Spain, where they found they were ill-equipped for the task ahead.<sup>233</sup> By February 1937, after only a month of training, the Brigade was fired upon by a Nationalist *Bandera* from the Canary Islands who had not recognized the green uniform of the Irish Brigade. As a result, two Irishmen died, killed by soldiers on their own side. It was an inauspicious start. Poor diet, inadequate clothing, and a lack of training created major problems during the next few months

---

<sup>230</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 34.

<sup>231</sup> *Irish Independent*, 25 March 1937.

<sup>232</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*.

<sup>233</sup> E. O'Duffy, *Crusade in Spain*, p.153.

and morale plummeted. O'Duffy created difficulties by his behaviour, with his "long absences from the front, heavy drinking and ostentatious lifestyle."<sup>234</sup> He seemed to spend much of his time sight-seeing and socializing. Lacking funds after the decline of the Irish Christian Front, the Brigade's main source of finance, Lodi Fe procured funding of £350 from Rome,<sup>235</sup> the only verified instance of Mussolini supporting O'Duffy financially. When their six-month stint of duty was up, only nine men opted to stay on for a further period of duty.<sup>236</sup> The rest of the men returned on the ship 'Mozambique' which arrived back in Dublin on 21 June 1937.<sup>237</sup> The country was in the middle of an election campaign and the Brigade's return received poor press coverage. As he disembarked, a bad-tempered O'Duffy declared to the few waiting press that he had no intention of standing in any constituencies in the general election.<sup>238</sup> *The Irish Independent* reported that the Irish Brigade as such would play no part in the election, but O'Duffy remarked that it was:

"...possible that in a few constituencies Independent candidates might seek election who would advocate the principles and ideals of the Brigade, who wanted to lead the campaign against communism, and who would urge the acceptance of the form of Government advocated in the Papal Encyclicals, and the recognition of the Government of General Franco."<sup>239</sup>

An analysis of the results for the General Election of June 1937 reveals that no-one appears to have followed O'Duffy's suggestion.

---

<sup>234</sup> F. McGarry, *O'Duffy, The National Corporate Party, and the Irish Brigade*, p.138.

<sup>235</sup> See file on *Voluntari Irlandese per la Spagna*, in *Serie Politici 1931-35, Irlanda Busta N. 3 193, ASMAE, Roma*, as cited in D. Keogh, *Ireland and Europe 1919-1948* (Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1988), p.91.

<sup>236</sup> E. O'Duffy, *Crusade in Spain*, pp. 236-9.

<sup>237</sup> In spite of the fact that many more fought for the Nationalists than the Republicans in Spain, there are no memorials to the men or their mission. In contrast the members of the Connolly Column who fought on the Republican side have received much praise and commemoration since, including a memorial in Dublin unveiled in 1991 outside of Liberty Hall.

<sup>238</sup> *Irish Independent*, 22 June 1936.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*



The Mayor of Dublin held a reception for O'Duffy,<sup>240</sup> and he later received the Freedom of the City of Kilkenny.<sup>241</sup> However, the Brigade was not lauded as a success and was to be remembered by later generations more for its role in supporting fascism than in fighting for the Catholic faith.

O'Duffy did not revive the NCP. The Spanish adventure had left him disillusioned, and the response on his return was muted to say the least. There had been no attempt to keep the party going and field candidates in the upcoming general election, an illustration of how much the party depended on the stamina, enthusiasm and personal charisma of O'Duffy, but also how weak the organizational structure actually was. He did not have the enthusiasm to try to revive the party. His arrival in the middle of an election campaign meant it was too late for him to raise an electoral machine and candidates in time, and it could be years before he had another opportunity to stand in a general election. He retired, temporarily, from the political scene and did not even appear at Beal na Blath in 1937, attending instead a Requiem Mass at St. Joseph's Church, Dublin in memory of Collins and Griffith. He went to Glasnevin Cemetery afterwards to lay wreaths at their graves.<sup>242</sup> The Beal na Blath ceremony of 1937 was attended by uniformed Blueshirts and Greenshirts. However, this was to be the last occasion that they were to do so, but, like O'Duffy, many of those involved in the shirted movements of the thirties were to reappear as members of small right-wing groups that huddled on the Irish political fringe during the war years.

---

<sup>240</sup> The reception was attended by the Lord Mayor, Paddy Belton and Monsignor Walters of the CYMS.

<sup>241</sup> *Irish Press*, 30 September 1937. The person who had proposed the Freedom was P. Hayden, a supporter of O'Duffy. The Corporation was evenly divided on the issue, until two Labour Party members joined with Hayden to swing the vote. The ceremony went off peacefully but little public interest was shown.

<sup>242</sup> *Cork Examiner*, 30 August 1937, 'Requiem Mass for Michael Collins.'

## CHAPTER THREE: THE POLICIES AND IDEOLOGY OF THE NCP

### *INTRODUCTION*

The National Corporate Party did not emerge in a political or ideological vacuum. The party, and its policies, were the final manifestation of a programme that General O'Duffy had been developing throughout his short career in politics. There was a marked degree of continuity between the policies of the NCP and the Blueshirt organizations that had preceded its formation in 1935. The core idea embodied in the political philosophy of O'Duffy was his opposition to parliamentary democracy and its replacement with a strong corporate republic that would implement the nationalist ideals of the independence struggle. However, O'Duffy was to find that his political programme held little appeal to an electorate who wanted political stability, and who were content with the parliamentary system adapted from the British model. In 1934, O'Duffy had been the president of the Ireland's second largest political party, Fine Gael, but he became frustrated that the party was not wholeheartedly promoting his ideas. A year later, General O'Duffy found himself accountable to no-one but his dwindling following, a core of extremists who were as much out of touch with the realities of Irish politics as their leader.

As the leader of his own party, O'Duffy ensured that he was both in full command and that the party adopted his ideas wholesale. O'Duffy was not a politician; he had spent twelve years in public service but despised politics. Neither was O'Duffy an intellectual. He relied on others to provide him with the ideas and policies that his organizations then adopted. These ideas gave his movement a theoretical framework, which was not, however, always consistent. He took on board and adapted the ideas

of men like Hogan, Blythe and Tierney,<sup>1</sup> Irish advocates of corporatism, but he also relied on ideas gleaned from his many trips abroad (particularly to Mussolini's Italy). Like many fascists, O'Duffy formed his ideas from secondary sources.

As a nationalist, he was concerned that his party should appear to be a logical continuation of the traditions of Irish nationalism and republicanism. To this end, he was at great pains to stress that, whilst he might look abroad to fascist movements for political inspiration, Irish circumstances would colour any political movement or system based on foreign models. It found expression in the 'National Policy' of the party and O'Duffy's commitment to building a united corporate republic that would finally break the ties with Britain and would replace the liberal parliamentary democracy of the Irish Free State with a vocational political system.

O'Duffy presented a programme advocating the structures and trappings of fascism within the context of Irish nationalism. He presented this political blend as the solution to the divisions that had hampered Irish politics since the Civil War. This division, O'Duffy declared, had prevented Ireland's development into the dynamic post-independence republic envisaged by the likes of Griffith, Connolly<sup>2</sup> and Pearse. O'Duffy aimed to put Ireland's development back on track, claiming that:

"The policy of the Blueshirts is to bring about a complete change in the system of Government- a revolutionary change, if you like, but it will not be a bloody revolution..."<sup>3</sup>

The ideas that he had espoused as leader of Fine Gael had developed; they were increasingly militant and there was a greater degree of honesty in his speeches and

---

<sup>1</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>2</sup> Connolly, James (1868-1916) had been a leading socialist and trade union leader at the turn of the century, helping to form the Irish Labour Party. He commanded the Irish Citizens Army which took part in the 1916 Easter Rising.

<sup>3</sup> Lecture on the Corporate System delivered by O'Duffy at Dublin Headquarters on 19 February 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.



writings acknowledging his debt to fascism. Party journals and bulletins continued to stress the practical side of the party's policies, but apart from the continued opposition to the economic war, there was little to appeal to voters who were more concerned with bread and butter issues than with the radical constitutional and political ideas spouted by O'Duffy. Lacking a wide membership, and unable to inspire an unresponsive electorate with its ideological radicalism, O'Duffy's party never became a serious player in Irish politics.

### *PREPARATIONS*

In the period following the split from Fine Gael, O'Duffy had to do two things. First, he had to consolidate his hold over as much of the Blueshirt movement as possible. Second, he had to give his movement a defining identity to distinguish it from Fine Gael and Cronin's Blueshirt faction. The most important event of this transitional period for O'Duffy was the Mansion House meeting held on the 16<sup>th</sup> November 1934. This gathering of key League of Youth officers gave O'Duffy the opportunity to rally his followers in support of his core beliefs. It is worthwhile to quote the keynote speech of O'Duffy's in some detail as it incorporates many of those elements later presented in the NCP party platform. The agenda is a fascist one that would have given the Blueshirts a key role to play in O'Duffy's New Order in Ireland. O'Duffy, in the lecture he gave to the assembled Blueshirts, said:

“In my last lecture I stressed the point that the best leadership was service...Service is the essence of leadership; leadership is service. Let this sink in, and dwell upon it well, for in the new Irish state which we envisage you will each and every one of you be called upon to play the part of leaders. That is the function of the

Blueshirts - to lead the Nation out of its present difficulties, and to set up the only Christian system of Government which will work successfully in the modern world...

“I believe that our Country’s chief hope of national salvation lies in the increasing strength, manly resolve and maturing discipline of our movement. The young Blueshirt is the expression of the new Ireland. He must temper his enthusiasm with discipline; he must strengthen his body and his spirit; he must spurn danger and love daring; he must serve the Blueshirt cause with loyalty and carry out his duties cheerfully and with pleasure. In all ranks, we must have affectionate comradeship. This will not weaken discipline- on the contrary it will create a spirit of obedience which will lack rigidity...Our discipline is self-respect, combined with orderly, unselfish behaviour and a sense of responsibility to self and others. Believe and obey. Officers should inculcate sentiments of honour and duty in the rank and file...

“For the Blueshirts themselves the setting up of an Irish Corporative State will not mark the final achievement; it will indeed be no more than the beginning of our work. No public service which we can render now will be so great or so abiding as the service which we then undertake.

“We must lead the people always; nationally, socially and economically. We must clear up the economic mess and right the glaring social injustices of today by the corporative organization of Irish life; but before everything, we must give a national lead to our people. At present Irish nationality is a wilderness in which a dozen different prophets are howling so loudly and abusing each other so raucously that the listener is bewildered and wonders what performance is going on.

“Now what Ireland needs, and what I think only we can give it, is a sane and sincere national lead away from that wilderness. The first essential is national unity. We can only have that when the Corporative system is accepted. We shall put our national

programme to the people, and it is a National programme which even the most advanced Nationalist can find nothing to disturb him. We hold the Irish people to be both wise and good... We will consult them always before taking any vital step, and if they say 'Go out of the Commonwealth' we will go gladly, convinced that it is the right thing to do because it is their will, and we will be proud to serve in the front ranks of the Nation...

"But our main work will always be to inspire our people with a consciousness of the great destiny of Ireland as a Christian State, and to promote in the coming generations the spirit which sent and is still sending Irish Missionaries to the very ends of the earth.

"When the chaos of the dark ages broke over Europe, Irishmen saved Christianity even in Italy itself; and we should never forget that our proudest traditions are cultural and Christian. Chaos seems again to be about to spread all over the world; let us resolve that once again Ireland, the last outpost of Europe, will be ready to relive her historic past and stem the tide of Communism and materialism. By discipline and service we must perfect ourselves, and our Nation, so that should the call to battle come, Ireland will be ready to play a noble part...

"The most promising feature of our movement is the manner in which it has captured the imagination of the youth. It is on the youth we rely, and we must solicit and welcome their support. We must wean them from all political parties. We must show them the futility of party strife, the waste of time and energy involved, resulting only in putting brother against brother. We must educate them towards the acceptance of the Corporative Idea."<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Speech to the League of Youth by O'Duffy, Mansion House, Dublin, 16 November 1934, as quoted in R. Griffin, *Fascism* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 183-184.



This speech set out O'Duffy's platform, and represented the ideas to which he had been increasingly attracted over the last three years. His appeal to youth, his opposition to communism and materialism, and the need to create a strong corporate Ireland set him apart from the other parties, particularly in the extremist language that he now felt free to use. The Blueshirts would create a strong and united republic that would allow Ireland to play a new, dynamic role in Europe, which fascism would rescue from an encroaching dark age. The speech is significant as it was a rare occasion when he stressed that his movement aimed to put Christian values at the forefront of the political agenda. He portrayed his party as a Christian vocational movement, a political angle that was rarely promoted. It was a further example of fascism's flexibility and willingness to use whatever tool it needed to achieve power; in Catholic Ireland an appeal to religious values and culture was always pertinent.

After his resignation from the presidency of Fine Gael, O'Duffy realized that in spite of his declared hostility to party politics, the only way to achieve his policy aims was to form an organization to fight and win an election. In December 1934, he distributed a letter to members of the League of Youth appealing for funds to set up a new political party. He accompanied the letter with a summary of the policies of the new party. O'Duffy was setting the agenda for the new party. *The Summary of the Policy of the New Movement*<sup>5</sup> was avowedly nationalistic but contained little in the way of practical policies. Surprisingly, it paid little attention to the corporatist ideas that would dominate the NCP's political agenda, and the earlier focus on Christian vocationalism had vanished entirely. At this stage, he was anxious to win over as many supporters as possible with a display of his party's nationalist credentials. It was the document's intense nationalism, with its specific appeal to youth and its message

---

<sup>5</sup> Summary of the Policy of the New Movement, December 1934, D/Jus8/286, NAI.

that there was a need to “bring the State into harmony with the more personal elements of the National Will,”<sup>6</sup> that gives an indication of the fascist direction in which O’Duffy was moving.

The first article of the policy summary dealt with the issue that had alienated him from so many of his Fine Gael colleagues- the need for the immediate reunification of Ireland. The tone of the article is remarkably conciliatory, however, considering his controversial comments only five months previously when he appeared to advocate the invasion of the North by Free State forces (see Chapter One), though O’Duffy was consistent. In 1922, he had made his “Give Them Lead” speech where he proposed that the North should be seized by force by the Free State. In contrast, the stress in the policy outline was on reunification through reconciliation. This was to come about through a combined vote of all Irish people, both sides of the border. In the meantime, a public spirit was to be fostered on both sides of the border that would make the successful conclusion of this vote possible. The creation, by O’Duffy, of ‘The 32 Club’ was a step towards fostering this climate of reconciliation. Article one set out his nationalist, or green,<sup>7</sup> credentials and Article 3, which called for “the preservation of our National Rights and the observation of our international credentials,” further emphasized the nationalist cause that O’Duffy took to be one of the cornerstones of his new programme. It was an affirmation of the principles that motivated the nationalists in the 1916 Rising, which declared that the future of Ireland could only be decided by “the people...consistent with national honour and dignity.”<sup>8</sup> O’Duffy was opposed to the dominion status of the Free State which meant that Ireland was tied to the British Empire and denied her complete freedom. The reference to “National

---

<sup>6</sup> Letter from O’Duffy appealing for funds, D/Jus8/286, NAI.

<sup>7</sup> Green represented staunch nationalism in Ireland.

<sup>8</sup> Summary of the Policy of the New Movement, article 6, D/Jus8/286, NAI.

Rights” also hinted at Britain’s military presence on Irish soil in the North, but also the continued use, by the Royal Navy, of Irish ports as defined in the 1922 Treaty.

The policy document stated that the new party would oppose communism and uphold Christian principles in a patriotic state spearheaded by the “youth of action in a movement of constructive national action.”<sup>9</sup> The new state would be based on cooperation, not conflict. Fuelled by patriotism, voluntary public service for the common weal would replace the class conflicts and divisions which were, O’Duffy argued, sustained by the influence of communists. The Blueshirts had been formed partly in response to a perceived communist threat in 1932 (‘The Red Scare’), and it is clear that O’Duffy was still using the argument that this danger still existed. He was still concerned with the threat to freedom of speech,<sup>10</sup> particularly from Fianna Fail legislation such as the banning of uniforms and the imprisonment of men for sedition.

It is clear from the *Summary* that it would be the youth of Ireland, mobilized as Blueshirts, who would be at the forefront of the struggle to maintain the right of free speech. It has been argued, by men such as T.F. O’Higgins, that the Blueshirts were a free-speech movement who saw the IRA and Fianna Fail as hostile to freedom of opinion.<sup>11</sup> O’Duffy was concerned that the success of his ideas might be hampered, or destroyed, because of the continued opposition of Fianna Fail who were attacking the movement through legislation such as the Wearing of Uniforms Bill (1934).

Policy articles 2,5,6 and 7 concentrated on economic issues; the abolition of annuities and a negotiated end to the economic war with Great Britain, public works that were intended to tackle unemployment, and the reorganization of industry on corporate lines to put an end to industrial disputes. This is the only mention (Article 6)

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, Article 9.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, Article 10.

<sup>11</sup> *Patriots to a Man: the Blueshirts and their Time*, RTE broadcast, 11 January 2001, quoting T.F. O’Higgins.



of corporatism and refers only to the corporatization of industry, not of the state apparatus. The practical elements in the policy summary seem out of place in the plethora of nationalist rhetoric that dominates the document, and they hardly constitute a complete programme of economic reform or development. However, like many fascist programmes, it would allow O'Duffy to be flexible in marshalling any means or issues he felt would help in gaining power.

The document is far more concerned with the issue of national unity, whether between North and South or between employer and employee, than with practical solutions to the economic crisis that Ireland was facing as a result of the economic war. In 1934-5, economics was at the top of the political agenda in Ireland. O'Duffy's failure to present a detailed economic programme marginalized his movement simply because he failed to address the issues that were seen as important by the electorate. The few practical policies that were proposed, such as public works, were drowned in a flood of overblown nationalist rhetoric, pleas to duty, and the need to awaken a new spirit that would provide the panacea for Ireland's problems. It was a vague nationalist rallying cry rather than a detailed policy document.

The reality was that O'Duffy wrote the document to accompany his request for funds and it needed to have broad appeal. This could account for the lack of attention given to corporatism, a policy that would be so important to the party in the following year. Even the customary demands for an end to parliamentarianism that people had come to expect of O'Duffy were missing. The stress was on community and the nation, rather than the individual. Duty, rather than democracy, was the key element in the relationship of citizen to the nation. Much of the language is surprisingly temperate, focusing on the need for voluntary acceptance of his ideas within the current constitutional framework. At this rather vulnerable stage in his political

career, O'Duffy could not afford to be too radical, nor his programme too esoteric, as he was still trying to win over more Blueshirts from Cronin's camp. Whilst a fascist element can be perceived in this document, for example in the appeal to youth to resurrect Ireland, the bulk of the articles were broad enough in their appeal to win over those Blueshirts who might be more concerned with the economic war. Once he realized that he had failed to do so, he was at liberty to pursue a course that was more in keeping with the fascism that he was imbibing through his attendance at international fascist gatherings than with traditional Irish nationalism.

### *ANTI-COMMUNISM*

O'Duffy had always been vehemently opposed to communism and during his time as Commissioner of Police he had used his position to monitor communist activities in Ireland closely. 'The Red Scare' of 1931-2 was fomented by the Cumann na nGaedheal government in the run-up to the 1932 General Election.<sup>12</sup> The prospect of a Fianna Fail victory prompted the government to use scare tactics. They hoped to convince voters that a victory for de Valera would lead to the IRA and its left-wing agenda finding a home in government in alliance with Fianna Fail. This fear of communism, fuelled by the extremism of the Blueshirt response and the instability caused by the economic war, persisted throughout the Thirties, in spite of the lack of evidence for any increase in communist activity.

For O'Duffy, the communist scare was a useful rallying cry to win support for the National Guard, to justify the need for the adoption of corporatism as a bulwark against the threat from the left, and in order to claim that the movement was there to preserve Ireland's Catholic culture from atheistic communism. Cumann na nGaedheal

---

<sup>12</sup> J. Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution* (Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1999) p. 280.

fought the 1932 election largely on its own conservative record after a decade in government, but spiced up its campaign with attempts to link Fianna Fail with the left. O'Duffy, as Commissioner of Police, produced a memorandum for the *Taoiseach* in late 1932<sup>13</sup> whose purpose was to expose the spread of communism in the Free State, but which, in fact, failed to produce any real evidence to support this claim.

Communism had failed to take root on any significant scale. The memo examined the presence of communists in Ireland on a county-by-county basis and demonstrated that the communist presence was negligible in both size and significance. In total, the memo listed 280 persons, only 80 of whom, according to O'Duffy, could be definitely identified as communist activists or sympathizers.<sup>15</sup> The memo catalogued local communist activities, but these often turned out to be meetings of the unemployed or demonstrations with no discernable communist element. A Fianna Fail government report from 1936, in analysing the presence of communists in Ireland, concluded:

“There are no reliable figures available to compare the number of communists in 1931 and 1936. The police believe that at the present time there are not more than 250 openly avowed supporters of the Communist Party of Ireland in Dublin and a mere handful outside Dublin.”<sup>16</sup>

The communist threat did not exist. It was a fabrication. O'Duffy knew that there was no large-scale communist presence in Ireland. The Red Scare was used by Cumann na nGaedheal to mobilize a devout Catholic population into believing that their faith could be under threat should Fianna Fail win power. Fianna Fail's victory in the election demonstrates that the population were not taken in by these slurs. An inflated fear of communism fuelled the rise of the Blueshirts and remained a feature

---

<sup>13</sup> Memo on Communism and Kindred Organizations by General O'Duffy, 24 November 1932, Dept of Taoiseach Private Office Files, 97/9/73, NAI.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> *Communism*, 23 June 1936, Dept. of Taoiseach Private Office Files, 97/9/73, NAI.



of Blueshirt policy throughout the existence of the movement. Speaking at the CAUR conference in Montreux, O'Duffy boasted: "We have prevented communism and her allies from terrorizing the civilian population."<sup>17</sup>

The Army Comrades Association had taken no part in the 1932 election but under Dr.T.F.O'Higgins, T.D., this non-political stance changed. The movement declared its opposition to communism and criticized the efforts of the left to prevent free speech through their heckling and physical violence at the Cumann na nGaedheal hustings. This brought a sharp response from De Valera who said that there was no threat to free speech from communists and therefore no need for the Blueshirts.<sup>18</sup>

Mike Cronin has analysed the motivation for members joining the Blueshirts and has discovered that communism was not the principle motivation for joining. His research, based on interviews with surviving Blueshirts, reveals that:

"...members positively scorned the idea that they feared communism. They saw the communist threat as an attempt by the Blueshirt hierarchy and the Church to drum up support."<sup>19</sup>

This is further evidence of the dichotomy between the motivations of the leadership and the rank-and-file. The leadership had failed to understand the aims and aspirations of its followers. Such a strategic mistake had far reaching consequences for the potential for mass mobilization, a mistake that O'Duffy was to repeat in setting out his programme for the National Corporate Party.

Moderate socialists in Ireland and trade unionists viewed the rise of a shirted movement, in the light of events in other parts of Europe, with alarm. The result was that the two groups fanned the flames of each other's fears. The fact that communism had failed to take root was put down, by O'Duffy, to the presence of the Blueshirts.

---

<sup>17</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 22 December 1934, 'Leader at Montreux.'

<sup>18</sup> M. Manning, *The Blueshirts*, p. 30.

<sup>19</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 134.

The IRA was linked with communism by the Blueshirts, in spite of the fact that the creation by members of the IRA of Saor Eire, a left wing political party committed to abstentionism, had removed many of those on the left from the IRA. The loose use of the term 'communist', the frequent admonitions against communism and socialism from the pulpit, the discussion of Catholic social thought, and the European-wide fear of communism certainly kept the 'Red Scare' going in Ireland throughout the Thirties. O'Duffy justified his aggressive anti-communism based on these fears. It was an opportunistic response by O'Duffy to populist fears of 'godless communism.' But, in contrast to other countries such as Germany and France, O'Duffy had no real substantial communist force to oppose, making his movement's focus on opposing communism a political non-starter, particularly as Fianna Fail's period in power gave proof to the lie of Cumann na nGaedheal's 'Red Scare.'

O'Duffy's hostility towards communism did not abate on leaving Fine Gael. The Blueshirts argued that communism was atheistic and therefore opposed to Catholicism. Furthermore, communism did not respect the rights of the individual, not least the right to property. The NCP presented corporatism as the Catholic alternative. In the face of the communist threat, O'Duffy argued that there was an urgent need to reform capitalism in order to prevent the drift of dissatisfied workers into the arms of socialism. O'Duffy, sounding disarmingly like a classic liberal, stated:

"Communism is the negation of the right of property just as it is the negation of the liberty of the individual."<sup>20</sup>

*Labour in the Corporative State*, a lecture given by O'Duffy, gives the Blueshirt perspective on communism. In denying man his basic rights, the communist state needed to be controlling and so totalitarianism was inevitable. However, O'Duffy was

---

<sup>20</sup> *Labour in the Corporate State*, lecture by O'Duffy, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

not averse to dictatorship, in principle. O'Duffy had a clear conception of what he believed a communist state would entail:

“Every man has his rights and the communist deprives him of all his fundamental rights, making the State a monstrous idol and all men its slaves. The individual is allowed to use things but not own them-the State owns everything.”<sup>21</sup>

Communism, he argued, would lead to an all-encompassing totalitarian state:

“The Socialist way, the Communist way, is by means of Government control, by the employment of more and more officials, by winding miles of red tape round everybody and everything so that initiative is destroyed and individual freedom is ultimately lost.”<sup>22</sup>

O'Duffy argued that whereas all men had certain basic rights to property and to freedom, social inequality and hierarchy were part of natural law. He declared that “the fundamental error of Socialism and Communism is that the social inequality of men is not recognized, in theory at any rate.”<sup>23</sup>

The party used the example of the Catholic Church as the perfect representation of a hierarchical structure, and the party structure reflected this commitment to hierarchy:

“Our movement has taken its present shape because is based on the fundamental Christian principle of Hierarchy as opposed to Socialistic or Communistic principles.”<sup>24</sup>

Hitler and Mussolini also had great admiration for the Catholic Church as an organization, whilst rejecting its claim to leadership and authority based on scripture and history.

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> O'Duffy speech at Montreux, quoted in *The Blueshirt*, 22 December 1934.



O'Duffy was opposed to the class-based society of socialism, whilst appealing to the electorate on a platform that corporatism would introduce an element of social justice into the economic system. His platform of social justice was a ploy to win over workers to his belief in a united nation that had no time for class-based politics that only served to promote division and unrest.

A crisis was useful for the corporatists, whether real or not, and the Blueshirts claimed that they had created an organization to deal with the communist threat. A real fear of communism had been created in 1931-2 in the face of the resurgence of the IRA but De Valera's period in office and his eventual clamping down on the IRA meant that by the time of the creation of the NCP the fear of communism was no longer on the mainstream political agenda. However much O'Duffy wanted to keep the issue of communism alive as a motivating issue, in reality it was a dead letter. The NCP continued to decry the communist menace amongst its membership by articles in *The Nation* such as, 'The Aim of Soviet Russia'<sup>25</sup> and 'Time Marches On,'<sup>26</sup> both of which equated communism with atheism. For O'Duffy, opposition to communism was essentially ideological, as his speech at Montreux indicates, but he also saw the tactical advantage in keeping the 'Red Scare' on the political agenda.

The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and the atrocities committed against the Catholic Church by communists and anarchists which were reported by the Irish press, revived the fortunes of the NCP, however briefly, by providing real 'proof' of the dangers of communism. O'Duffy's movement had always portrayed itself as the party that was most vociferously opposed to communism. In Spain, O'Duffy had evidence that the spectre of communism was real. O'Duffy now appeared a prophet who had been crying out in the political wilderness but whose time had now come.

---

<sup>25</sup> *The Nation*, February 1936, 'The Aim of Soviet Russia.'

<sup>26</sup> *The Nation*, April 1936, 'Time Marches On.'

Anti-communism was once again back on the political agenda, and O'Duffy was able to capitalize on this. O'Duffy launched a new organization to raise an Irish Brigade to fight Bolshevism in Spain on a platform called 'The Irish Crusade Against Communism,' its title effectively linking religion and politics.<sup>27</sup> O'Duffy portrayed his new efforts as a Christian crusade against godless communism. But whilst his Catholicism and hostility to communism were the chief motivating factors for his support of Franco, they were not the only ones. Fearghal McGarry sees his involvement in Spain as the logical outcome of his participation in the international fascist scene. O'Duffy saw Franco as an ideological ally.<sup>28</sup> The Spanish Civil War provided the ideal opportunity to show his commitment to Catholicism and his active opposition to communism, but also to re-launch the NCP, which had been in decline since its creation a year before. Perhaps O'Duffy wanted to use the occasion to promote a form of fascism more in line with the clerico-fascism which was developing in some parts of Europe, such as Dolfuss's Austria, to re-launch his movement by stressing its allegiance to the Catholic faith. However, O'Duffy's involvement in Spain, and his absence from the domestic political scene, effectively sealed the fate of the NCP. The party lacked men of sufficient political calibre to keep it going or even to capitalize on O'Duffy's exploits in Spain. O'Duffy had taken many of the core activists with him to Spain. The few members who remained in Ireland found themselves isolated and unable to function as a viable political force without the central direction given to the movement by O'Duffy. There was effectively no party left for O'Duffy to revive on his return.

---

<sup>27</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 25.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 25-26.

### *THE CORPORATISM OF THE NATIONAL CORPORATE PARTY*

O'Duffy used the Blueshirt Congress of 1935 to launch his new party and to present the Blueshirts with a new platform of policies that he wanted them to rubber-stamp. The basis of the party platform was nationalism, vitalism, and the corporatist ideas that gave the party its name. O'Duffy tried to portray his party as non-political, by which he meant non-partisan. The aim of the new party was to do away with the divisiveness of party politics and to replace it with a system where political parties would be redundant. This non-partisan approach he called 'the Blueshirt ideal', that is, something which was "above party."<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Mussolini always preferred the term 'movement' to 'party' even after 1919. The new movement was to stand for the nation, rather than for any one political faction. O'Duffy had always claimed that he had initially joined the Blueshirts in a non-political capacity.

O'Duffy saw the Blueshirts as an organization that was:

"...directed to bringing the existing parliamentary system into closer harmony with political needs and the traditional outlook of the people, towards evoking patriotic enthusiasm and zeal for a self-disciplined voluntary public service while allowing a direct appeal to the electorate on our own policy should circumstances require it."<sup>30</sup>

O'Duffy now felt ready to make this appeal to the electorate with a programme built on ideas that the Blueshirts had been developing over the last three years. Even before the launch of the NCP, he had been aware that the only way that there was any chance of seeing corporatism adopted was through participation in the electoral process, but he continued to announce his reluctance to do so. In his appeal for funds to launch the party, he had stated that in order "to achieve this policy we find it necessary to contest

---

<sup>29</sup> *The Nation*, 22 June 1935, 'O'Duffy Reviews the Last Year.'

<sup>30</sup> Eoin O'Duffy, Mansion House speech delivered Dublin 6 November 1934, reported in Garda Síochána Report 6 November 1934 submitted by D.J. McGlain, Inspector, D/Jus8/296, NAI.



elections and undertake the functions of a political party.”<sup>31</sup> He scorned the current state of Irish politics as an un-natural process in which rival groups, whose main point of dispute seemed a constitutional one deriving from differences over the Treaty with Britain, tore the nation apart. He genuinely saw his movement as standing outside this political arena, reasoning that the Blueshirts were not interested in post-Treaty politics. The NCP claimed that it was to be an anti-party organization that somehow transcended the mire of post-Treaty politics. Its programme would state that the only solution to the divisive rivalry caused by post-Treaty politics was to get rid of the parliamentary system which had allowed this problem to arise in the first place.

He made a specific appeal to youth, who he believed had not been tainted by direct involvement in the Irish Civil War and its aftermath. Ireland’s youth, instead of harking back to the disputes of the post-Treaty years, was more forward-looking and more likely to embody what O’Duffy called “the National Will.”<sup>32</sup> O’Duffy’s generation had failed to carry through on the promises of the 1916 Rising. A new generation, educated through membership of the Blueshirts in the principles of the independence struggle, would forge a vanguard that would carry the rest of the population on a wave of nationalism to achieve a united Irish republic. The youth of Ireland, enrolled as Blueshirts, would have a decisive role to play in the reorganization of Irish political life and the creation of a corporate republic, playing the vanguard role in the promotion of the ideals of the new fascist republic. It would be their duty to spread this message to the rest of the population.

The key document outlining the ideas of O’Duffy as regards the position of youth was written early in 1935, before the NCP was launched, and titled *The Function of*

---

<sup>31</sup> Eoin O’Duffy, Letter appealing for funds accompanying Summary of Policy, 4 December 1934, D/Jus8/286, NAI.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

*the Blueshirts in a Corporative State.*<sup>33</sup> The document stated that the corporate state would give the Blueshirts the key role to play in the new republic. They would lead by their example of voluntary and disciplined, public service. O'Duffy's idea of discipline was:

“...that quality which makes a person responsive to orders; to subordinate his own ideas and opinions to those of his superiors, to fit himself into that part of the organization allotted to him.”<sup>34</sup>

It was to be discipline based on love for the nation in which all ranks would work together and the higher the rank, the greater the responsibility. He cited the supportive camaraderie of the 1916 Volunteers as the collaborative example to which all Blueshirts were to aspire. The Irish Civil War had come about, O'Duffy believed, with the breakdown of this camaraderie and its replacement with factional self-interest. The partisan approach of politicians had betrayed the republican dream. The adoption of the British parliamentary system, O'Duffy claimed, had created the conditions that gave rise to factionalism. The Blueshirts intended to solve the problem by themselves providing the example of an organization working for the public good where relationships were to be based on mutual respect.

The new state structure in which the Blueshirts would play such a crucial role was not an end in itself, however:

“For the Blueshirts themselves, the setting up of an Irish Corporative State will not mark the final achievement; it will indeed be no more than the beginning of our work. No public service which we can render now will be so great or so abiding as the service that we must then undertake.”<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Documents issued by League of Youth (O'Duffy Section), D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

The corporate state would create the national unity that was a prerequisite for the Blueshirts to be able to promote national identity and inculcate a new citizenship that would be distinctly Irish. However, throughout his speeches and publications there is little substance to the form this Irish identity would take.

The Blueshirts would have a para-military function in the new republic. The extent of the Blueshirt influence would be such as to give the movement a significant controlling and policing role as we can see from the list of duties envisaged by O'Duffy:

“Cooperation and coordination of all public services.

Cooperation with the police in maintaining law and order.

Guidance and control of youth movements.

Instruction in citizenship.

Protection of State and Public property- forests, fisheries, railways etc.

Duties on trams, Buses, Trains, and on public highways.

Duties in Ports, Docks, Post Offices, Banks etc.

The organization of all forms of sport and recreation for the physical and mental well-being of the people.

Generally Service to the Nation.”<sup>36</sup>

The Blueshirts would have a key role to play in the transition period leading to the creation of a corporate republic. As the above list clearly indicates, their role would be to combat strikes and lockouts, which might threaten law and order within the new state structure. In the event of a strike, the Blueshirts would be in a position to ensure that the disruption was kept to a minimum. The Blueshirts would be the muscle behind the corporate state, a political police force guaranteeing its continued

---

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*



functioning in the face of disruptive opposition. "Service to the Nation" meant service to the corporate idea and, in this light, the Blueshirts saw themselves as serving as a uniformed state auxiliary. O'Duffy had the precedent of the newly established Irish Free State co-opting the pro-Treaty faction of the IRA to form the national army in 1922, but his organization would have effectively created a totalitarian police state.

The key feature of the position of the Blueshirts in the new state would be their role as the nation's vanguard, embodying the spirit of national regeneration. This propagandist function would ensure that the myth of the revolution and the new state would be kept alive:

"I believe that our country's chief hope of national salvation lies in the increasing strength, manly resolve and maturing discipline of our movement... Now what Ireland needs, and what I think only we can give it, is a sane and sincere national lead, away from that wilderness [of party strife]... [The Blueshirts] will serve to promote the greatness of Ireland; they will endeavour to bring our country back to her crucial place as one of the foremost Nations in Christendom. They will wipe out the signs of the conquest... Our main work will always be to inspire our people with a consciousness with the great destiny of Ireland as a Christian state... Chaos seems again to be about to be spread all over the world; let us resolve that once again Ireland, the last outpost of Europe, will be ready to do her historic part and stem the tide of Communism..."<sup>37</sup>

This is a rare occasion when O'Duffy's policies seemed explicitly clerico-fascist in purpose.

Throughout his political career, O'Duffy faced frequent criticism for allegedly importing foreign political ideas into Ireland, but he countered this accusation by

---

<sup>37</sup> *The Function of the Blueshirts in a Corporate State*, lecture by O'Duffy, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

claiming that the Irish “were steeped in English political tradition and in English constitutional theories,”<sup>38</sup> and that they had “inherited a parliamentary system...from the despised Saxon,”<sup>39</sup> Oliver Cromwell.<sup>40</sup> The Gaelicization of Ireland would require the replacement of these English institutions and political culture. Whilst acknowledging his debt to continental models and thinkers, O’Duffy was at pains to stress that his ideas would be specifically adapted to Irish needs and circumstances:

“We are not going to take any scheme ready-made from abroad, but it is not a national crime to study schemes which have proved successful in other countries.”<sup>41</sup>

In this case, he was referring to Mussolini’s Italy as O’Duffy gave the rest of the lecture over to detailing the successes of Mussolini’s fascist state. Essentially, Mussolini’s myth of *Romanita* and O’Duffy’s myth of a Gaelic Ireland served the same purpose in uniting the population behind a myth and goal.

O’Duffy knew the importance of Catholicism to Irish national identity and politics and frequently referred to the similarities between Catholic social thought and NCP corporatism. In numerous speeches, he backed up his claims and arguments by referring back to the Papal encyclicals which had outlined Catholic social theory.<sup>42</sup> In his lecture on *Labour in the Corporate State*, he stated that the corporate state would provide for a mix of state-owned and private property, but that modest private ownership, its secure possession, and inheritance rights were the foundation of a secure Christian state. The new corporate republic would not be an egalitarian one, but one based on a few elementary Christian principles:

---

<sup>38</sup> Eoin O’Duffy, lecture delivered 9 February 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Eoin O’Duffy, lecture, ‘Labour in the Corporative State.’ D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Leo XIII, *De Rerum Novarum* (1891) and Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931)

“The greatest principle is that of order, which we call Hierarchy when it is applied to society, human or divine. In society some men are more equal than others, although as human beings they may all be equal.”<sup>43</sup>

The ordered, hierarchical nature of the corporate state would follow the “example of the most perfectly ordered society on the earth- the Catholic Church.”<sup>44</sup> In opposing communism and socialism, Ireland would be carrying on its historical tradition of leading Christendom, promoting Catholic principles, and fighting paganism in every sphere of national activity. The Blueshirts would be in the vanguard of the Christian corporate republic, promoting the spiritual, as well as the material, destiny of the nation. There is a startling similarity to the later pronouncements of General Franco. At a meeting in Hugginstown, Co. Kilkenny in July 1935, O’Duffy referred to papers read by Reverend Arthur Ryan of Belfast at the conference of the Irish Catholic Truth Society relating to private property. O’Duffy was pleased to announce that the policies of the NCP were in full accord with the views expressed in these lectures and with statements issued by Cardinal MacRory and the members of the hierarchy on the subject.<sup>45</sup>

O’Duffy argued that the parliamentary system was an anachronism that was totally unsuited to the demands of the twentieth century:

“Parliament is a human institution and that like all human institutions it has its spring, its time of growth, but that it has its autumn, its time of decay, and its winter, its time of departure, is at hand.”<sup>46</sup>

The corporate idea was central to the platform the NCP was offering to the electorate. However, the case for the replacement of the existing system had to be

---

<sup>43</sup> Eoin O’Duffy, lecture ‘Labour in the Corporative State,’ D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> *Cork Weekly Examiner*, 6 July 1935, ‘Blueshirt Policy.’

<sup>46</sup> Eoin O’Duffy, lecture 15 February 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.



argued first. The party also faced the problem that the adoption of corporatism elsewhere, for example in Italy, was linked to dictatorship. The NCP argued that a dictatorship already existed, the dictatorship of De Valera and Fianna Fail, which represented only a fraction of the population. The parliamentary system ensured the representation of only a small minority of electors who, once voted into power, had *carte blanche* to lord it over the rest of the Irish population. In contrast, the corporate state, because it involved all citizens and did not tolerate party factionalism, would be inherently more democratic as it would represent the entire nation. The elected representatives would represent every member of each vocational group. Whilst publicly O'Duffy claimed that a corporate state would not be a dictatorship, the structure advocated by the party in policy documents indicate that the hierarchical state with its pyramid structure led by a powerful executive would inevitably lead to a concentration of power. Ireland, said O'Duffy, appeared to be a democratic state, but in reality the trend of government was towards increasing the power of the Cabinet and *Taoiseach*:

“In those countries which have not yet adopted the Corporate policy, like England and Ireland, the party system of Government is leading to a dictatorship of the Cabinet, and those elected to Parliament have little or no say in national or economic affairs or in control of public expenditure.”<sup>47</sup>

O'Duffy declared that it was the party whip that kept those with a vested interest in control and in power. The result was that the will of the Executive was foisted upon the rest of the *Dail*, including the government's own party members:

“Every day the Government is saved whether in the right or wrong by the machined party vote- whether T.D.s agree with the party bosses or not they must swallow their

---

<sup>47</sup> O'Duffy lecture delivered 19 December 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

principles, submit to the party whip and walk like cows coming home one after another behind their leader into the Division lobby, otherwise they are promptly expelled from the party like Messrs. Belton, Morrissey and Anthony.”<sup>48</sup>

O’Duffy claimed that his party was exposing the sham whereby parliament posed as a democratic body, but was in reality a dictatorship of a party faction. The dictatorship of one faction was inevitably divisive, as one party could not represent the whole nation. Party government could never be truly democratic, whereas a corporate state representing all the workers in the nation, could:

“Under the present system, Governments are forced to put the interests of their Party before the interests of the Nation, and every issue ensuing is coloured and misrepresented in the interests of party politics.”<sup>49</sup>

Liberal democracy created its own corruption:

“Legislation is enacted to prop up the party in power and to cripple the opposition...and the main object of the opposition is to turn out the Government and to slight their efforts. The wants of small influential sections are disregarded in the interests of bigger sections which can influence more votes.”<sup>50</sup>

Having accused the existing system of being a dictatorship hiding behind a democratic façade, O’Duffy played down the authoritarian aspect of corporatism. Speaking at a Blueshirt conference in Millstreet, Co. Cork before the formation of the NCP, O’Duffy emphasized that “our object is to establish a Dail on democratic lines, elected by adult suffrage, as at present.”<sup>51</sup> As a party committed to coming to power by constitutional means, the NCP aimed to use the electoral process to secure a mandate:

---

<sup>48</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 15 June 1935. ‘Blueshirt Corporate Policy.’

<sup>49</sup> O’Duffy lecture, 15 December 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Irish Times*, 13 January 1935, ‘A Democratic Dail.’

“We want no powers beyond what the people freely give us in the ballot box when we appeal to the electorate on our policy. The Corporate State will be set up when the Irish people by a free vote in a free election ...so decide.”<sup>52</sup>

What the Blueshirts were actually stating was that while the path to corporatism in Ireland would not come via a coup or dictatorship, once the corporate republic was inaugurated there would be no constitutional means to reverse the mandate. The corporate state, once established, would remain, and parliamentary democracy would be a thing of the past.

The Blueshirts were faced with the dilemma that they were opposed to party politics but were condemned to enter the political fray as the only way to get their corporate and national policies adopted. The NCP was apologetic about having to assume this role:

“The National Corporate Party does not aspire to a dictatorship. It does not even aspire to lead the nation as an end in itself...it points out the only way to social justice and national happiness, confident that the good sense of the Irish people will triumph before long and that the establishment of the Irish Corporative State will mark the end of the miserable party system which we have endured under Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fail.”<sup>53</sup>

O’Duffy’s definition of dictatorship and totalitarianism was linked to his opposition to the party system. He was opposed to dictatorship by any party that represented a faction of the nation. A party representing the whole nation (such as, in O’Duffy’s opinion, the NCP) could not be dictatorial in his view. The corporate system would ensure that all Irishmen would have a voice and no one faction would be able to

---

<sup>52</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 1 June 1935, ‘Blueshirt Corporate Policy,’

<sup>53</sup> *The Nation*, 22 June 1935. ‘Editorial.’



oppress or dominate another. There would be no truly democratic elections, as the system would not allow parties to fight on different platforms.

O'Duffy was more than willing to accept dictatorship, provided certain conditions were met:

“The only dictator we will recognize will be the Irish people, and their need, not the need of any class or party, will be our first consideration.”<sup>54</sup>

Dictatorship by any one class or faction would be replaced by dictatorship of the Irish people, presumably with the NCP, and their uniformed auxiliaries, representing the ‘National Will’. Speaking frankly, O'Duffy said that providing it was in the interests of the Irish people as a nation, he had no problems with dictatorship:

“ I would much prefer to see Mr De Valera installed as a fully fledged dictator, with all the responsibility attached thereto, than a dictatorship of a group of political clubs and a sham Parliament playing with constitutionalism and democracy.”<sup>55</sup>

O'Duffy's conception of the corporative state was one that owed a great deal to his understanding and observation of the structure of Mussolini's fascist Italy and considerable space was given in *Blueshirt/Greenshirt* publications to describing its organization and successes. O'Duffy's corporatism, nationalist as well as fascist in its inspiration, tied his corporatist policy firmly to the party's National Policy. The first item in the National Policy, for example, stated that it was the intention of the NCP:

“...to secure a mandate from the people to alter the present party system of government which is dividing and disrupting our people in the interests of party factions, and to substitute thereafter a system whereby every interest in the country will be represented by its nominees in a vocational Government pledged to a

---

<sup>54</sup> *Garda Report Metropolitan Division submitted by J.McGlain, Insp. quoting General O'Duffy I/C 6.11.34, D/Jus8/296, NAI/*

<sup>55</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 15 June 1935, 'Blueshirt Corporative Policy.'

fulfilment of the principles of the 1916 Proclamation and the establishment of a regime of social justice for every class and section in an all-Ireland Corporate state.”<sup>56</sup>

Once elected to power, “a Republic *de jure* for 32 counties and *de facto* for 26”<sup>57</sup> would be declared by the NCP government. O’Duffy perceived his Gaelic corporate republic as the logical fulfilment of the desire of the leaders of the 1916 Rising for a united Irish nation where people put the national interest before personal interests.

The idea was also extended to O’Duffy’s attitude towards unregulated capitalism, which had also come under attack in the Papal encyclicals. Developing the ideas of Leo XIII’s *De Rerum Novarum*<sup>58</sup> and Pius XI’s *Quadragesimo Anno*,<sup>59</sup> O’Duffy argued that a “revolutionary reform of the existing capitalist system was long overdue,”<sup>60</sup> the stress here being on reform. Capitalism, argued O’Duffy, whilst providing many benefits to modern society, had left a large number in poverty. Capitalism that behaved in this uncaring way was an abuse of the right to private property. The Blueshirts hoped to: “...reform the abuses of private property, not to do away with it; to clip the wings of greedy capitalism and give the working man the chance to become a proprietor himself.”<sup>61</sup>

The unrestrained capitalist, working exclusively for himself and his own self-interest, did not seek to serve his fellow man but to control him and this resulted in the capitalist opposing widespread property ownership as this would serve to encourage the independence of the worker. Corporatism would change all this by giving the worker not only a share in the management of industry but also in the management of the country and its economy. This would prevent the workers from drifting into the

---

<sup>56</sup> National Policy of the NCP, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>57</sup> *Irish Independent*, 10 June 1935, quoting O’Duffy.

<sup>58</sup> D. O’Brien, D. and T.A.Shannon, (Eds), *Catholic Social Thought-The Documentary Heritage* (Orbis Books, Maryvale, 1995).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Labour in the Corporate State, lecture by O’Duffy, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

arms of socialism or communism by giving them the rights and fair wage that was their due, but also giving them a stake in the capitalist system.

The corporatist ideas of the NCP were presented in a number of lectures and journal articles that were aimed at the rank-and-file party member, who was encouraged to study and then promote these ideas. The proposals were expressed in a very accessible, un-intellectual manner that made them easy to digest. Considering that the party, naively, expected to be in power in the very near future (within a year of taking office) there was a distinct lack of the detailed paperwork that would have been needed to set in place the corporate state that the party envisaged. For example, there were no clearly set out documents covering the new, and potentially complex, voting procedures.

### *THE STRUCTURE OF THE CORPORATE STATE*

The National Corporate Party presented itself as a political organization whose aim was to get rid of the existing system of government through the democratic process, and replace it with a new political structure. The NCP, on achieving an electoral mandate to overturn the system, pledged to do so within a year of taking office. A new election, on a vocational register, would take place.<sup>62</sup> The creation of a corporate state would coincide with the declaration of a *de jure* republic for the 32 counties with a President elected by the people as a whole. Under the new system, social and economic factors would determine the choice of representatives in the legislature. The Blueshirts declared that economic expertise would replace political patronage and

---

<sup>62</sup> Eoin O'Duffy, 1935 Congress speech reported in *Irish Independent*, 10 June 1935.



place-seeking as the motive force in government.<sup>64</sup> The corporate structure envisaged by the party would seek to guide the economic life of the nation by:

“...interposing between the State and the individual, occupational or vocational self-governing corporations functioning under the guidance of a National Economic Council.”<sup>65</sup>

The NCP worked out a procedure for the implementation of its corporate programme to ensure that the transition was smooth, and the end results effective. *The Nation*, in its February 1936 edition, outlined this process, with the agricultural corporation given as the example:

Step one.

Adult suffrage. Every person on the electoral roll would be sent a new form on which to indicate their occupation and these would be collected by the police. For example, every farmer, agricultural worker, their wives and sons and daughters over 21, and “every person living by the land, including shopkeepers and artisans, in the small villages and towns, would be included in the agricultural register.”<sup>66</sup>

Step 2.

A General Election. This would take place within a year of the NCP taking office. All those on the agricultural register, for example, in each electoral division, would be allowed to attend a meeting announced by the Returning Officer. The business of the meeting would be to appoint delegates to represent the division at a constituency agricultural convention to select candidates for the *Dail*. In the selection of delegates the system of proportional representation would be adopted “so that all those classes

---

<sup>64</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 15 June 1935. ‘Blueshirt Corporative Policy.’

<sup>65</sup> Eoin O’Duffy lecture, 19 February 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>66</sup> *The Nation*, February 1936, ‘Democratic System of Government.’

engaged in agriculture will receive just representation.”<sup>67</sup> Each district would do the same.

### Step 3.

On a day fixed by the Returning officer, all delegates would meet to select their candidates for the General Election. In order to be nominated, the candidate's name had to appear on the register for that particular vocation. All persons on the register would be entitled to vote. However, it was hoped that as a rule agreement would be reached between the delegates so that an election would be unnecessary. An election would only occur if agreement could not be reached.

### Step 4.

Each constituency would act similarly and the elected members, who would still be referred to as T.D.s., would meet in Dublin as the National Council for that particular corporation, for example agriculture. They would then proceed to elect a chairman who would become the Minister for that vocation. The Council of T.D.s would have the power to appoint experts, but of course, only the elected T.D.s would be allowed to sit in the vocational *Dail*. Every constituency would have one member on the Council. Relevant legislation would be considered by the Council which it most concerned and the Minister for that vocation would bring the Bill to the *Dail*. The *Dail* would be allowed to reject the bill on only two counts: finance, or if the bill was deemed to be detrimental to the interests of another corporation.

There would be a coordinating National Council for Corporations to oversee all interests and advise the Minister for Finance as to the allocation of funds to the

---

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

various councils in proportion to their importance to the nation. A Minister would only hold office as long as he had the confidence of his own corporation.<sup>68</sup>

The population as a whole would directly elect the President of this new corporate republic. His task would be to appoint those ministers not representing a particular vocation, such as finance, external affairs, defence and justice, subject to *Dail* approval. His exact role, the extent of his powers, and his function as Head of State were left vague. However, his powers of appointment would give him a great deal of control over the government, especially in the key areas of finance and foreign affairs, even more so if the task of appointment to the coordinating National Council of Corporations was also part of his brief.

### *LABOUR IN THE CORPORATE STATE*

The NCP held the view that capitalism was the system that was most suited to the demands of a twentieth-century economy. However, the party leadership accepted that the position of the worker was weak due to the uncontrolled excesses of the capitalist system, which allowed for the exploitation of the workers. This in turn made the workers more susceptible to communist propaganda. The only solution to an increasingly desperate economic problem was to initiate a “revolutionary reform of the existing capitalist system” in order to provide for the prosperity and progress of the nation.<sup>69</sup> If capitalism had provided many benefits, it had also left a significant section of the population in need, with many living in urban and rural slums on starvation wages. The abuses of capitalism needed to be tackled, whilst continuing to recognize the right to private property as sacrosanct. The NCP presented a full

---

<sup>68</sup> *The Nation*, March 1936, ‘Fallacy of Party Government.’

<sup>69</sup> Eoin O’Duffy, lecture, *Labour in the Corporative State*, D/Jus8/296, NAI.



package of social reforms to tackle unemployment, poverty, both rural and urban, and low wages. In common with fascist parties throughout Europe, the NCP saw the necessity of appealing to the workers to win them over from socialism.

The rights of man, including the right to property, were not to impinge on the rights of others:

“...so consequently the individual must be considered less important than the Society to which he belongs, as the part is less important than the whole.”<sup>70</sup>

Capitalism, as it was constituted at the time, always put the individual, not the community first. The NCP tried to walk a fine line between acceptable state interference and the right to private property. The State was not to act in a totalitarian way as “the state has its own functions but it may not usurp what does not belong to it.”<sup>71</sup> It may “not interfere with the rights of the individual or individual interests. It may interfere only by way of supervision in the National Interest.”<sup>72</sup> The state may intervene to set down limits within which mankind’s right to property may be exercised but this was not seen as an attack on the institution of private property itself.

The NCP argued that one of the main duties of the state was to guarantee that enough was produced to ensure that the population was supplied with their basic needs. By giving the farmer full rights to the soil, that is ownership instead of renting, the party was sure that higher productivity would ensue because private ownership was seen as a great incentive to production. However, even here there could be a case, where full use was not made of the land, for state interference, that is “in cases where the farmer fails to promote the temporal prosperity of the community.”<sup>73</sup> The party’s policy was one way of tackling the urgent problem of rural poverty, in part caused by

---

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

poor management of land and the need to redistribute under-used or badly-managed land holdings, but it also was surprisingly similar to Fianna Fail's economic policy.

If modifications, rather than a complete overhaul of the system, were deemed necessary, then statesmen were needed to discover what modifications were needed to re-arrange the national economy so that production could be disciplined. O'Duffy saw the corporate system as the solution to the problem as it aimed to clip the wings of what he perceived to be the greedy aspect of capitalism, whilst giving the workman a chance to become a proprietor himself. O'Duffy believed that a careful examination of those systems in operation abroad would lead to the adaptation of one of those systems to Irish conditions. O'Duffy clearly saw the Italian model as the one to emulate. He praised it frequently in speeches and would often hold up the successes of the Italian system as evidence of its effectiveness.

O'Duffy's arguments for property rights, large scale private ownership, control of some aspects of production in the national interest and the idea of the just wage were all taken from the philosophy of Catholic social thought whilst the institutional remedy that he suggested was based on the Italian model. Pre-capitalist society, to which many Catholic social theorists harkened back, was based on small workshops with independent proprietors, but O'Duffy was well aware that this was impractical in the modern age of mass production. Whilst the mass scale of industry could not be changed, the corporatists at least wanted the workers to have basic rights and the ultimate aim, in theory, was to raise the status of the worker equal to that of the employer. The physical value of the worker was deemed to be equal to the financial investment of the capitalist and the issue of profit-sharing for workers was raised.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> Second lecture by O'Duffy on Labour in the Corporative State, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

In the corporate state, all workers would be members of a trade union or corporation, but the role of these organizations would be fundamentally changed, as basic workers' rights would already be guaranteed under the new system:

“They are returning to their mediaeval function-associations of men engaged in a particular form of honest toil, proud of themselves and working for the temporal, cultural and spiritual welfare of their members.”<sup>75</sup>

In catering for the spiritual and cultural welfare of their members, the unions would be reduced to being harmless adjuncts of the state. The corporate system would promote goodwill, not hostility, between capital and labour and give workers the opportunity to help decide conditions of work and labour. They would function more like mediaeval guilds than modern unions. The traditional functions of trade unions would be delegated to state-run organizations where employee and employer would sit as equals. As an example, *The Nation* described the functioning of the National Council of Printing in Italy, which had legislative powers to fix wages, hours and conditions of service, something he expected to introduce into Ireland. The National Council of Printing had representatives from all branches of the industry so that “labour and capital in every branch of the trade gets a fair and equal say in everything affecting that trade.”<sup>76</sup> In the corporate state, the workers in industry would have the same extensive rights to sick pay, pensions, holidays and social insurance benefits that civil servants already enjoyed in the Irish Free State.

Disputes might still arise, but these were to be dealt with through the Labour Courts with the result that, as in Italy, “such consideration is given to all legitimate claims of both workers and employers that strikes and lockouts are equally unnecessary.”<sup>77</sup> This easy and quick solution of industrial disputes was based on a very optimistic view of

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.



the new relations between employer and employee but cooperation for the national good was regarded as the defining mark of the new state:

“Justice and goodwill are the foundation of the corporative state. The national interest is above the individual interest and should not be left to any sectional interference.”<sup>78</sup>

The policy adopted by the NCP at its inaugural congress made provision for the reconstruction of industrial relations based on cooperation rather than on factionalism and conflict. Industrial disputes were to be settled by statutory corporations under a chairman who was expected to arbitrate disputes impartially, but always in the national interest. The corporate state would allow trade unions, but would transform them into organs of public authority working for the betterment of the national economy rather than representatives of sectional, particularistic interests. In exchange, a programme promising improved working conditions and new rights for the worker was on offer (ranging from a minimum wage topped up with a share of the company's profits, higher pay for night work, severance pay, unemployment insurance, and retraining for the unemployed). On paper, it was an impressive range of measures that would have guaranteed the worker a living wage and provision in time of need, but which would have left the unions with few of their usual functions. The unions would be reduced to being a part of the corporate machinery in a state where the power, independence, and militancy of the workers would be effectively destroyed. O'Duffy's new party had created a set of corporatist policies that were far more developed than those of Italian fascism, but which he had little hope of carrying through. His policies also reflect the modernizing element of fascism.

---

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

## *NATIONAL POLICY*

Eoin O'Duffy was one of the protégés of Michael Collins, who had signed the Treaty which had created the Irish Free State. Collins saw the Treaty, not as an end in itself, but rather as a step on the road to full self-determination for Ireland, leading finally to the republic that had been declared in Dublin in 1916.<sup>79</sup> The National Policy of the NCP committed the party to the principles of the 1916 Proclamation of the Republic, declaring that the Free State was now in a position to move further down the road towards the republic. Always a committed nationalist, O'Duffy pledged the party to working for a full republic of thirty-two counties.<sup>80</sup> The republic that he desired was that envisaged by the leaders of the 1916 Rising, and of the Irish Republican Brotherhood to which he had belonged. O'Duffy's continuous references to 1916 make this clear. He tied Irish regeneration to the revival of the republicanism of the 1916 rebels, and it became central to O'Duffy's programme.

O'Duffy held the idea that a national reawakening would lead to a transformation of Irish society and a renewal of Irish culture, but he believed that this would only be possible within the modern framework of a corporate organization of society. As a result, he had a very distinctive national programme that set him apart from other nationalists in the thirties. Liam Walsh<sup>81</sup> summed up O'Duffy's national agenda in his unpublished biography of O'Duffy:

“General O'Duffy did not study and advocate corporatism because it was a new-fangled, continental idea that generally mirrored fascism. He studied and advocated it because his mind turned back to the old Gaelic Ireland with its perfect system of laws which Irishmen respected and full observed, and which were not, as today, a mere technical contrivance argued by men in which people have little, if any, confidence.

---

<sup>79</sup> The Republican Proclamation became the fundamental document for republican hard-liners.

<sup>80</sup> Thirty two counties as opposed to the twenty six which comprised the IFS.

<sup>81</sup> Walsh was O'Duffy's private secretary.

He studied and advocated it because he believed that the Old Gaelic State was a remarkable achievement and that it would be impossible, even in the light of modern advancement, to find so complete a State Craft, or one so wise and so soundly based on the will of the people.”<sup>82</sup>

In his speech at the 1935 *Ard Fheis*, O’Duffy announced that once in power his government would “establish a Republic *de jure* for 32 counties and *de facto* for 26.”<sup>83</sup> In the same speech, he used strong language to register this commitment, the same kind of language that had alienated his erstwhile colleagues on the traditional conservative wing of Fine Gael:

“If we are sincere in striving for independence then we must be prepared to use every means at our disposal to achieve it and we must be free to take advantage of each and every opportunity which offers.”<sup>84</sup>

O’Duffy always made it clear that he supported the Treaty as a necessary evil and that he had never wavered in his commitment to the ideals of the 1916 Proclamation of the Republic. He described the Treaty as “an oasis on our journey to freedom where we could get a little refreshment to enable us to complete our journey.”<sup>85</sup> Whilst O’Duffy had voted in favour of the Treaty, he did so believing that it was not a final settlement.<sup>86</sup> He made this quite clear in his 1935 *Ard Fheis* speech:

“By 1918 the issue of the Republic was put before the Irish people at a general election. They decided overwhelmingly for a Republic, and ratified the declaration of 1916. Until that decision is reversed, it must be assumed that the Republic is the symbol of our independence.

---

<sup>82</sup> L. Walsh, *General Eoin O’Duffy-His Life and Battle*, Unpublished Manuscript, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, pp. 195-6.

<sup>83</sup> *The Irish Independent*, 10 June 1935, ‘General O’Duffy’s Party Decisions.’

<sup>84</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 15 June 1935, ‘1916 Declaration Basis of Policy.’

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Bulletin no.5*, December 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.



“It is clear that the national objective of youth today is the Republic, and it would be in our country’s best interests for all to recognize the fact now. An all-Ireland Free State will only attract a minority. The epithet ‘Free State’ is now regarded as an insult by our youth. Our army demands to be known as the ‘National’ rather than the ‘Free State’ Army, and our Cabinet ministers would not wish to be referred to as ‘His Majesty’s Ministers’ for that portion of the Empire called the Free State.”<sup>87</sup>

In adopting an uncompromising republican position, O’Duffy was emphasizing his party’s nationalist credentials, a *sine qua non* for any serious Irish political party in the thirties. Where he differed from other parties was his belief that a republic of thirty-two counties could only come about once a corporate Ireland was created.<sup>88</sup> It was this corporate framework that he hoped would encourage the Northern Unionists to re-unite with the south of the country. O’Duffy believed that had corporatism been on offer in 1922 then partition would never have taken place.<sup>89</sup> O’Duffy declared that it was necessary for him to be brutally honest about what his intentions were once his party was in power. However, the strong language of his speeches, whilst music to the ears of Irish nationalists was hardly likely to win over the Unionists of Northern Ireland, especially with his continued references to Papal mandates for his policies and his emphasis on Catholic culture and the Gaelicization of national life. However, the Northern Unionists were hardly his natural constituents.

In the intervening period between his resignation from Fine Gael and the formation of the NCP, O’Duffy appeared to have moderated his stance on the Northern issue. This was possibly because of his desire to win over the Ulster Fascists. It casts into doubt how genuine his commitment to republicanism was; for instance, he had been willing to include a commitment to monarchy in the programme of the 32 Club.

---

<sup>87</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 15 June 1935, ‘1916 Declaration Basis of Policy.’

<sup>88</sup> *Irish Times*, 19 July 1936, ‘Corporate Party Candidates.’

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

In the appeal for funds in late 1934, O'Duffy had said that his movement would encourage:

“...the promotion of the reunion of Ireland by peaceful means in an independent state, its attitude towards the British Commonwealth to be decided by the Irish people themselves by a free vote and consistent with the national honour and dignity; and the fostering North and South of the border of a public opinion which will make the unity of Ireland inevitable in our time.”<sup>90</sup>

O'Duffy believed that the only way forward was to be brutally honest about the intention of the NCP should they be elected to government in the near future:

“I think we should be honest with the North and tell them straight that our aim is a Republic for all Ireland. A Free State for all Ireland will not satisfy the aspiration of the Irish people, and if it were established tomorrow, the struggle for complete independence would continue. There will never be peace and agreement in the South except on the basis of a Republic, and if we want it for the South, then we want it for all Ireland. The North should not be deceived by this talk of a united Ireland within the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth can never be regarded as a basis for Irish unity.”<sup>91</sup>

O'Duffy tried to portray the Stormont administration of Northern Ireland as a tyrannical regime, an artificial creation imposed on the Irish people by the British. In spite of his accusations of dictatorship levelled against the Free State Government (chiefly for its introduction of the bill banning the wearing of uniforms but also its return to the Public Order Act to control its political opponents), he contrasted the freedom enjoyed in the South with the oppression of Catholics in the North:

---

<sup>90</sup> Summary of the Policy of the New Movement, December 1934, D/Jus8/286, NAI.

<sup>91</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 15 June 1935, '1916 Proclamation Basis of Policy.'

“Today largely through their sacrifice we here in the South enjoy a wide measure of freedom, while they are ground down beneath the heel of a ruthless tyranny<sup>92</sup>...Our Northern fellow-countrymen may expect from us equal justice and fair dealing that we have given their co-religionists<sup>93</sup> in the South.”<sup>94</sup>

O’Duffy regarded the border between North and South as a denial of the existence of the Irish nation. He believed that its existence seriously hampered the development of cordial relations with Britain:

“Let there be no mistake about it, the responsibility for partition rests on the shoulders of English party politicians. It was imposed by Britain, and is being maintained by British financial support. Without this the Six County Government would be bankrupt in six months.”<sup>95</sup>

O’Duffy believed firmly that relations with Britain could never be normalized until partition was ended. For O’Duffy, all opportunities to end partition should be grasped and the traditional nationalist battle cry still held true: “England’s difficulty is Ireland’s opportunity.”<sup>98</sup> He had always been prepared to take extreme measures to unify the state when it suited him:

“At the time [of the creation of the National Guard] it was reported that England was fortifying her outposts in the Six Counties and I said, “If this means war I shall probably be in it...”<sup>99</sup>

For O’Duffy, Ireland could never accept Britain’s role in upholding a brutal Protestant tyranny in the North by military force:

---

<sup>92</sup> He was referring to the oppression of Catholics in Northern Ireland by the Stormont Government and the R.U.C.

<sup>93</sup> He was referring to the Protestants.

<sup>94</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 1 May 1935, ‘Blueshirts in the Corporative State.’

<sup>95</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 15 June 1935. ‘Eoin O’Duffy *Ard Fheis* speech.’

<sup>98</sup> *The Irish Times*, 19 July 1936, ‘Corporate Party Candidates.’

<sup>99</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 15 June 1935, ‘1916 Proclamation Basis of Policy.’



“Let there be no mistake about it, the responsibility for partition rests on the shoulders of English party politicians. It was imposed by Britain, and is being maintained by British financial support...”<sup>100</sup>

As Hitler’s demands in Europe became more ambitious the likelihood of a European war became a very real prospect. If war did come, then Britain needed a friendly Ireland at its back. O’Duffy believed that the only way that this could be made possible was if the six Northern counties joined the Free State. Failure to do so would push Ireland into the arms of Britain’s enemies. O’Duffy’s pro-German stance during World War Two is evidence that his extremism was to be taken seriously. It is evidence of the eclecticism of the methods he was prepared to use to achieve unity.

Any Irish party hoping to have electoral appeal had to play the nationalist green card. For O’Duffy, nothing less than complete withdrawal of the British from the North was acceptable. This would be followed immediately by the declaration of an Irish republic with the capital in Dublin. In making the 1916 Declaration of a Republic the basis of his party’s National Policy, O’Duffy wanted to return to the pre-Civil War unity of Sinn Fein.<sup>101</sup> O’Duffy believed that the Treaty had been a transitional document, necessary in the context of the early twenties, but no longer relevant. What had angered O’Duffy during his time as President of Fine Gael was that the party had shown no interest in moving the Irish state further along the path to a republic, even though the time seemed opportune to do so. Nor did the Fianna Fail government show any interest either in putting pressure on the British to withdraw from the North or to declare a republic themselves, in spite of their claim to be the republican party in the *Dail*. In some ways, it placed the NCP closer to the IRA by way of its aggressive nationalism and irredentist posturing. This affinity with the IRA

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> See Chapter Six.

was a fact that O'Duffy was willing to acknowledge, especially as the leftist element had splintered off to form the short-lived political party, Saor Eire.<sup>102</sup>

O'Duffy saw the national problem, as well as the economic one, as being responsible for Ireland's lack of development since independence. De Valera, according to O'Duffy, refused to push the issue of reunification with the North. De Valera firmly believed that national reunification would be a natural development following on from his successful economic policies. Economic success in the Free State would attract Ulstermen back into the Irish fold. O'Duffy also castigated Fine Gael for its apathy and contentment with the status quo; that they were happy to remain part of the Commonwealth as 'West Britain.' In O'Duffy's estimation, it would ultimately lead to the demise of Fine Gael and the contest for the votes of the Irish electorate would be between his NCP and Fianna Fail, a contest that O'Duffy expected to win, because he believed that he held the republican higher ground.

With the formation of Cumann Poblachta na hEireann in March 1936, O'Duffy found himself faced with a new party with whose national policy he was broadly in agreement. The new party had declared:

"The Irish people will be invincible, as they were from 1918 to 1921, when they regain confidence and realize their strength, when they spurn compromise, expediency, and opportunism and stand unflinchingly for the Republic."<sup>103</sup>

The party, formed by members of the IRA, pledged themselves to fighting election both North and South of the border, though they were also committed to a policy of abstention from either parliament should they be elected.<sup>104</sup> Its formation was largely

---

<sup>102</sup> Saor Eire was banned in 1931.

<sup>103</sup> Cumann Poblachta na hEireann, *Manifesto, Constitution and Rules*, Coyle O'Donnell Papers Archives Dept, UCD P61/10(1), 4.

<sup>104</sup> T.P. Coogan, *The IRA* (Fontana Paperbacks, 1980), p. 115.

the work of Sean MacBride,<sup>105</sup> but few had a good word to say about the new party and enthusiasm was markedly absent. O'Duffy was banned from entering Northern Ireland (one of the objectives of the Blueshirts had been the abolition of the border and this was the reason given for the banning of the National Guard in the North under the *Civil Authorities (Special Powers Act)* on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1933. The ban extended to members of the organization, including O'Duffy, entering the North. (See chapter one)) and so he gave his electoral blessing to Cumann Poblachta na hEireann's proposal to stand there. Like his own party, its national policy was based on the 1916 Proclamation. Both parties proclaimed a policy of "social justice based on Christian principles."<sup>106</sup> However, the new party had not adopted corporatism as part of its electoral platform. Whilst O'Duffy was prepared to endorse the party in the North, he believed that only a corporatist state could effectively end partition. If the new party's policy objectives are examined, it is clear that there was a lot of common ground between the two parties, particularly republicanism, Anglophobia, Christian social ideas, and the restoration of the Gaelic language and Irish culture in a Gaelic state.<sup>107</sup> However, apart from O'Duffy's endorsement of the party for elections in the North, there appears to have been no cooperation between the two parties, mainly due to the enmity between the members of the parties left over from the IRA-Blueshirt conflict earlier in the decade. The party had a short life as it was quickly banned in the North as an unlawful organization.

As the President of Fine Gael, O'Duffy had found himself at odds with other key party members on the Ulster question. Freed from the constraints of his party office, O'Duffy aired his views openly. As an Ulsterman himself, from County Monaghan,

---

<sup>105</sup> Sean MacBride (1904-88) had been in the IRA since the War of Independence, and became its chief of staff in 1936, but left a year later after the enactment of the 1937 constitution which he felt met Republican demands (*Oxford Companion to Irish History*, p. 333).

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Richard English, *Radicals and the Republic* (Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 238.



he felt strongly about the issue of the border and the division of Ireland. He had been actively involved in the North during the War of Independence. In 1922, he had set up the Northern Military Council in order to protect the Catholic minority from Protestant violence and to try to prevent the Unionists of Stormont from consolidating their statelet.<sup>108</sup> Since then, his intemperate speeches advocating the use of armed force in the North had increasingly alienated him from the political mainstream, but as head of his own party he was free to vocalize his bellicose attitude towards the British and Northern Unionists.

O'Duffy would frequently claim that he had inherited the political mantle of his mentor, Michael Collins. He firmly placed his party and himself firmly in the tradition of Irish nationalists such as Emmett,<sup>109</sup> Griffith and Pearse. The NCP held an annual commemorative service at the grave of Hugh O'Reilly, the first Blueshirt martyr. O'Reilly had been a Blueshirt from Bandon, Co. Cork.<sup>110</sup> He had been dragged from his bed one night by unknown assailants and brutally beaten, dying from his injuries two months later on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1930. O'Duffy used the commemoration as an opportunity to rouse the party faithful and to stress the links and continuity with the party's Blueshirt past. Hugh O'Reilly had not died in vain, said O'Duffy, if the movement "remained steadfast during the year to come by the ideals for which he gave his young life."<sup>111</sup> The ceremony, which was to be held in early January each year, began the Blueshirt/Greenshirt liturgical year. It was an opportunity to look ahead to the coming months, and to listen to O'Duffy reminding his followers of the sacrifices already made for the republican ideal, with the hope that more personal sacrifices and victories would follow.

---

<sup>108</sup> Coogan, T.P., *Michael Collins* (London, 1990), pp. 343-344.

<sup>109</sup> Robert Emmet was one of the new leaders of Irish nationalism to emerge after the failed insurrection of 1798. He led an insurrection in 1803 in Dublin, was captured, and hanged.

<sup>110</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p.56

<sup>111</sup> *The Nation*, February 1936.

The party always referred to the Blueshirt dead as martyrs, and their families were wheeled out for the occasion. O'Duffy firmly believed that the republic could only come about through further blood sacrifice, in the tradition of Irish nationalists throughout the struggle for full independence. He saw his movement as the final expression of the nationalist surge towards a Gaelic republic. The O'Reilly commemoration provided the Director-General, acting as high-priest of Gaelic nationalism and republicanism, with the opportunity to urge his listeners to follow the example set by men like O'Reilly to ensure the eventual realization of a republic. The Greenshirts would provide the next, and final, generation of martyrs. The function of the rally is clear from the graveside oration O'Duffy gave on 12 January 1936:

“Hugh O'Reilly...gave his life's blood in the cause of his country...It is fitting that each New Year should be the Hugh O'Reilly anniversary, when we can renew our vows to be steadfast during the year to come by the ideals for which he gave his young life, to strengthen ourselves by the example he set, to emulate his noble qualities, and to resolve to carry on the work until our task is accomplished- a united and independent Corporate state established on Christian principles and free from Antrim to Cork...Let your motto be “faith and country,” and the cause for which the blood of Hugh O'Reilly reddened Cork soil, will, please God, be triumphant.”<sup>112</sup>

In a country where the historical failure of Irish nationalists to achieve independence had left a trail of blood and executions well into the twentieth century, O'Duffy firmly believed that the republic could not be achieved without further sacrifice:

---

<sup>112</sup> *The Nation*, March 1936, 'Tribute to Released Prisoner.'

“No movement in this country ever succeeded without sacrifices and our members were called upon to make sacrifices-some the supreme sacrifice.”<sup>113</sup>

The resurrection and renewal of Ireland could only come about through the spilling of blood. What this entailed in the field of politics in 1936 is hard to imagine, unless it meant a military seizure of power. The war in Spain would later provide the opportunity for his followers to show their commitment to O’Duffy’s ideals, even to the extent of losing their lives.

O’Duffy had first risen to prominence as a member of the Supreme Council of the IRB and as a member of the IRA. He lost no opportunity to praise those who had died for Ireland in the struggle for independence. The other main event in the NCP calendar, therefore, was the annual pilgrimage to Beal na Blath, the scene of the assassination of Michael Collins. He used the occasion to remind the party members of their martyred colleagues, Hugh O’Reilly of Inishannon and Paddy Kenny of Tipperary. The Michael Collins commemoration ceremony gave O’Duffy the opportunity to recall Michael Collins’ sacrifice as a heroic martyr and to link him with the NCP. A long line of nationalists reached back through Irish history, each one passing on the torch of rebellion and freedom to the next leader, always aiming at the ultimate goal of a free Gaelic republic. O’Duffy believed that Michael Collins had passed this torch on to him to run the last leg of the journey.

This invocation of the nationalist past was not confined to the Hugh O’Reilly and Michael Collins commemoration ceremonies, but was to be part of the education of young Greenshirts. A party member writing in *The Nation*, identifying him/herself only as C.B.D. (West Cork), recommended the following:

---

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

“What more interesting subject for discussion at the meeting places of our youth than a chapter from the glorious, soul-stirring story of Ireland- crushed to earth, carcass and ashes in one generation, yet again in arms battling for liberty in the next; her people swept by famine and fever in one generation, again ready to draw the sword in the long struggle for freedom in the next.”<sup>114</sup>

In an editorial in *The Blueshirt* the following appeared:

“Since 1924 our people have been divided into two hostile parties...the Civil war mentality must be eradicated. The man who can only think of the gun as a means of solving internal differences must be hauled out of Irish public life.

“The first item of Blueshirt policy declares for the complete and unfettered freedom of all Ireland. To obtain this even a gun, if all else fails, may be justly used. The second item of our policy is the eradication of internal bitterness and strife... We must forget all bitterness, cut out all hate, and strive to get the national front as solid once again as it was in 1918-21.

“We must renounce all party ties that owe their origin in the Civil War. We must turn to a party which does not deal in hatred and recrimination. All Irishmen must be free to do their duty, unhampered by the past. And there is only one way in which these can be solved and that is by the abandonment of the present spiteful and futile party system, and the unification of all national forces in a corporate state.”<sup>115</sup>

A leading light in the Gaelic Athletic Association (which promoted the playing of native Irish sports rather than British games), O’Duffy tied his movement to the promotion of Irish language and culture. He believed that only thus could the Irish nation be made a reality, distinguished by its unique Gaelic identity:

---

<sup>114</sup> *The Nation*, February 1936, ‘An Irish-Ireland Corporate State.’

<sup>115</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 6 July 1935, ‘Hatred in Irish Politics.’



“No language, no nation; and all Irish leaders and patriots, with the exception of O’Connell, have realized the importance of keeping alive the mother tongue if nationality is to survive.”<sup>116</sup>

As usual, O’Duffy used Irish patriots and Irish history to demonstrate his party’s commitment to the Irish nationalist cause. On the formation of the National Guard, he had stated that one of his main aims for the movement was the preservation and promotion of Irish language and culture. He proposed the creation of an organization run by the state, on the lines of Hitler’s *KdF* or Mussolini’s *Dopolavoro* organizations, to promote Irish culture and sports.<sup>117</sup>

He opposed the decision by De Valera’s government not to raise the school leaving age, on the grounds that an additional year in school would be invaluable in the promotion of the Irish language. Under British rule, the Gaelic League<sup>118</sup> had been at the forefront of the Irish language revival, but now the NCP claimed that it was the responsibility of government to promote the language via the educational system.<sup>119</sup>

O’Duffy was appalled at the lack of effort on the part of government since independence to restore to Ireland her ‘soul,’ by which he meant her “nationality, religion, language and culture.”<sup>120</sup> Writing in *The Nation*, O’Duffy reminded his readers that Pearse and the rebels of 1916 had not sacrificed their lives to make Ireland a “second edition of England.”<sup>121</sup> O’Duffy wanted to:

“...ensure that our culture and our civilization, as well as our social and economic system are Irish to the core.”<sup>122</sup>

---

<sup>116</sup> *The Nation*, April 1936, ‘Ignorance is Bliss.’

<sup>117</sup> *The Nation*, February 1936, ‘An Irish-Ireland Corporate State.’

<sup>118</sup> The Gaelic League founded in 1893 by Eoin MacNeill and others. It sought to revive Irish as a spoken language. League members were prominent in the 1916 rising.

<sup>119</sup> *The Nation*, April 1936, ‘Ignorance is Bliss.’

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

A nationalist, corporate state would break the cultural and economic hegemony of the British, which O'Duffy believed the parties had failed to tackle since independence. A free, united Ireland under a corporate system would prioritise the promotion of Irish language and culture. What O'Duffy ignored was the fact that a united Ireland would be very different from the Free State he had served since 1922. A united Ireland would contain a large minority whose language, culture and religion were not his own but those of the British he despised. The reality was that a united Ireland could not be a Gaelic Ireland. Unlike the IFS, a thirty-six county Irish Republic would contain a significant non-Catholic minority who would continue to look to Britain for its cultural and linguistic roots.

#### *SOCIAL CREDIT AND THE NCP*

New to the policies of the Blueshirt movement, in its manifestation as the NCP, was the discussion in the party journal and at Congress, of the monetary reform ideas of Major C.H. Douglas known as Social Credit. Douglas, a Scottish engineer and army officer born in 1879, developed his theory whilst working in the British aircraft industry during and after the Great War. He stated that the aircraft industry was in difficulties due to the fact that the industry was generating prices at a faster rate than incomes. Douglas believed that the crisis of capitalism was due to the lack of purchasing power in the population at large. This resulted in the boom and bust swings of contemporary capitalism. Douglas believed that this could be remedied through stimulating the circulation of the money supply by the payment of a national dividend to each adult, and by the strict control of the money supply by central government through a National Credit Office. The state, rather than the banks would

therefore have complete control of finance, and capitalism in the process would be saved from socialism and communism.

The NCP never adopted Social Credit as official policy, but discussion of the idea was given a great many column inches in *The Nation* and O'Duffy gave it his clear support. He wrote that the Social Credit movement had "aims and objects [which] have much in common with the financial policy of the National Corporate Party."<sup>123</sup> Speaking on the subject of Social Credit at a meeting in Listowel on 20 October 1935, O'Duffy admitted that he was not an expert on financial reform but he believed that it was a solution to the problem of under-consumption and that he hoped to discuss it with the Party Executive at a later date.<sup>124</sup>

A series of monthly articles appeared discussing all aspects of the subject, including its adoption abroad by parties and governments. Louis O'Connell, a Listowel solicitor and Divisional Director of the NCP wrote the articles. Mr R. Whaley, the Assistant Divisional Director of South Tipperary composed articles with a more critical stance. By May 1936, the party journal was devoting three whole pages of the paper to the issue of financial reform.

Mr T. Kennedy, the founder of the Social Credit movement in Ireland, addressed the 1936 NCP *Ard Fheis* and received a loud ovation in response. He said that through the banks, the English [sic] government still controlled the national life of Ireland. The conference went on to pass the following resolution:

"9. That it be an instruction to the National Executive to enquire into the principles of Social Credit as a basis for our financial and economic policy.

---

<sup>123</sup> NCP Bulletin, no.5, December 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

“10. That the present money system has failed to fulfil its purposes i.e. distribution of produce to the community, and that some means of distribution, such as the Social Credit plan should be adopted.”<sup>125</sup>

Once again, the party failed to commit itself wholeheartedly to the adoption of Social Credit as official policy, but it was further step towards its adoption as an alternative to other fiscal policies. Around this time, the BUF in Britain was adopting Social Credit as part of its policy. In Ireland, the issue was discussed across the political spectrum and in 1936, a short-lived and ineffectual, political party, the Irish Social Credit Party, was formed. A series of lectures held at the Red Bank Restaurant in Dublin's D'Olier Street led by Captain Neville H. Roberts and chaired by Mr. D. Walsh promoted the ideas of Major Douglas from June 1934 onwards.<sup>126</sup> However, the NCP saw no need for one more single-issue party to divide the electorate and argued that it was a policy issue that all political groups could debate and consider. Other parties discussed monetary reform and Fianna Fail enthusiasts set up the Financial Freedom Federation to promote Douglas' ideas.<sup>127</sup> At its 1935 *Ard Fheis*, Fianna Fail debated a motion in favour of an enquiry into the national control of credit and this was only narrowly defeated by 190 votes to 180.

*The Kerryman* was one of a small number of newspapers that endorsed the ideas of Major Douglas. O'Connell, writing in *The Nation* argued that the issue was largely ignored by the press as the papers were “controlled by those who have also heavy interests in the present banking system.”<sup>128</sup> In promoting the ideas of Major Douglas,

---

<sup>125</sup> *The Nation*, August 1936.

<sup>126</sup> *The New Age*, 7 June 1934, LSE Youth Movement Archive YMA/KK 191 (B).

<sup>127</sup> Financial Freedom Federation file, D/Jus8/341, NAI.

<sup>128</sup> *The Nation*, February, 1936, 'Social Credit.'



O'Connell recommended that Greenshirts should read booklets on monetary reform such as *A State in Fetters* and *The Fruits of Freedom*.<sup>129</sup>

The founder of Social Credit, Major Douglas, had made it clear that he was vehemently opposed to fascism. He was opposed to the *New English Weekly's* drift in that direction. Writing in this journal, he identified fascism as an evil ideology and went on to specifically name the BUF and the Blueshirts as examples of this.<sup>130</sup> A British Social Credit journal had commented on the Blueshirts back in 1933:

“During these last few days we have seen the start of a new movement of a Fascist nature in the Irish Free State. We refer of course to the Blueshirts. The Blueshirts work in the limelight provided by their backers and sponsors- the International Credit Monopolists...the Bankers' army.”<sup>131</sup>

One point to note is that at the time that the NCP was discussing these Social Credit ideas, the green shirt replaced the blue shirt as party uniform. The green shirt was, at the time, the party uniform of the Social Credit Party in Britain, where they were known as ‘The Greenshirts.’ O'Duffy's adoption of green however was not a ideological one connecting him to the social credit movement but an appeal to nationalist symbolism.

## AGRICULTURE IN THE CORPORATE STATE

The National Corporate Party was a farmers' party. Many of its members came from farming backgrounds and agriculture dominated the national economy. Agriculture had a central place in the new party's economic programme. It could not afford to do otherwise. The division of Ireland had deprived the IFS of its industrial

---

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> *New English Weekly*, 20 December 1934.

<sup>131</sup> *Keighley Greenshirt Review*, no.2 September 1933, LSE Youth Archive 1919-83 YMA/KK/176 (B).

base and Ireland's foreseeable economic future would therefore have to depend on agriculture. Where the NCP differed from other parties was its stress on a coordinated, directive approach to agriculture with a clear perception as to where this control would lead. It was party policy to develop agriculture with the express aim of ending emigration, increasing the population and providing the financial base for the future development of Irish industry for domestic use, not export. Agriculture was to remain the source of Ireland's foreign currency. To this end, it vehemently opposed the economic war with Britain, which it feared would do irreparable harm to Ireland's export trade. It also argued that the best way to develop agriculture was to put the decision-making process firmly in the hands of the farmers themselves, working through the corporate structure that would follow an NCP victory at the polls.

The Blueshirt movement had grown in numbers as the economic war with Britain hit harder. The NCP, aware that its opposition to this dispute was a major contributor to recruitment, gave a great deal of time to arguing for a speedy end to the dispute and the compensation of farmers who had borne the brunt of the financial costs of the dispute. The party saw it as a political issue that Fianna Fail had hijacked and they wanted it made a national cross-party issue. The party called for an independent commission to be set up to look into the economic costs of the war to ensure that the farmer was justly compensated, and that the country as a whole, not just those involved in agriculture, shared the cost of the protracted economic war.<sup>132</sup> The party vowed to represent the farmers and fight for their demands and promised that on attaining power the interests of the farming community would be paramount.<sup>133</sup>

The Blueshirts had often been accused by their enemies, particularly on the left, of being the party of 'the Ranchers' (those involved in the production of meat for export

---

<sup>132</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 15<sup>th</sup> June 1935, 'Resolutions Passed by Congress' Articles 14b and 14c.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, article 15.

rather than production for domestic consumption), and by implication pro-British, and there is some truth in this. The Blueshirts recognized that Irish development was dependent on the maintenance of high export levels. The infant state, already deprived of its Northern industrial base by the Treaty, needed to secure its economic infrastructure as part of its strategy of national survival. Economically, Ireland remained tied to the British market. The Blueshirts were prepared to accept the reality of this fact and work within it, but with a clear goal of using this dependency to national advantage. True, the Irish economy was dependent on the metropolitan British market, but this market was a secure one and even the Great Depression had little effect on Irish exports.

The Blueshirts recognized the importance to the national community of ‘the Ranchers’ and was prepared to work with them, in the national interest. Indeed, their programme of agricultural development in the national interest would favour the larger farmers. The party did advocate the breaking up of unproductive ranches and estates,<sup>134</sup> but the stress here was on ‘unproductive.’ The party wished to revise the existing system of Land Commission control and wished to see locally appointed, non-political committees set up in order to advise the Land Commission on the suitability of applicants for land.<sup>135</sup>

At the same time, the party wanted to encourage more people to stay on the land, thus reducing the need for emigration, and leading to a growth in population. To provide for this increased population, the party promoted increased tillage,<sup>136</sup> presumably on the land that would be provided by the release of property coming from unproductive estates. The party also recognized that the way to keep people in agriculture was to provide them security. To ensure this, the party hoped to amend

---

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, article 14e.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, article 21.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, article 14d.

the Land Act of 1933 to restore security of tenure,<sup>137</sup> to provide “insurance against unavoidable failure of harvest and potato crop,”<sup>138</sup> and to provide the opportunity for smallholders to buy their homes and land under easy credit terms.<sup>139</sup> The complete de-rating of smallholdings, and the partial de-rating of larger farms would also, it was hoped, give the farmer more financial security.<sup>140</sup>

These policies were designed to appeal to the farming community. The larger plan, to control agriculture to provide for national economic regeneration, was given less coverage but was central to the party’s economic policy. The party policy, agreed at the first party congress in June 1935 covered the policy in one article:

“9. Adoption of a planned system for agricultural development, to maintain agriculture as the basis of national life and to elevate conditions of those engaged therein.”<sup>141</sup>

Party documents outlining the corporate plan give pride of place to agriculture which the party envisaged as being the largest and most important of the corporations, principally because of the number of citizens involved in farming. However, O’Duffy’s corporatism was based on the ideas of Ernest Blythe which would put selection for the corporate bodies firmly in the hands of the Blueshirts, thus ensuring that it was their decision, not those of the farmers, that would initiate policies.

In O’Duffy’s speeches there is a great deal of time spent talking of workers’ conditions, strikes and lockouts but the fact of the matter was that the numbers engaged in industry were small compared to those engaged in agriculture and associated occupations. The corporate system would give control over the whole system to the farmers’ representatives, overwhelming the industry-related

---

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, article 14g.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, article 14i.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, article 23.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, article 14f.

<sup>141</sup> National Corporate Party Policy, Article 9, Jus8/296, NAI.



corporations. The agricultural corporation, representing the majority of the workforce, would in effect make the corporate chamber an agricultural chamber where the interests of the agricultural community would always be in a dominant position. The corporation was also expected to control agriculture to a much greater extent than Ireland was used to. National need, and not private profit, would guide production.

Ireland needed a firm economic base, and the NCP accepted that agriculture was the only industry capable of providing this. Ireland has no great natural resources other than her land and people and was heavily reliant on imports to provide for many of her needs. Whilst De Valera preached on about frugality, O'Duffy's party took an entirely different tack. The party wanted to provide for the needs of Irish people by building up domestic industry, where possible, to provide for national needs, as opposed to industrial development for export, whilst ensuring that Ireland had a healthy export economy, grounded in the supply of agricultural produce. This would tie Ireland firmly into the international economy and provide an increased standard of living for the rural population of the Free State.

In his 1935 *Ard Fheis* statement on the party's Labour Policy, O'Duffy declared that the party's aim was for industrial expansion and the protection of domestic industry. However, without the necessary purchasing power, such expansion would be worthless. O'Duffy therefore saw a need to increase the purchasing power of the workforce, which in Ireland meant principally the farmers.<sup>142</sup> The rational development of agriculture, through careful planning and coordination by the agricultural corporation, would create the purchasing power amongst the agricultural community, which in turn would fuel the development of industry for domestic consumption. This was the basis of NCP economic policy.

---

<sup>142</sup> *The Nation*, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1935, 'Director General's Statement on Labour Policy.'

The party's economic policy had marked similarities to that of pre-1921 Sinn Fein, but also to those of Fianna Fail, as well as to the protectionism of many capitalist, including fascist, economies in the thirties. Indeed, Regan, in *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, argues that it was Cumann na nGaedheal's failure to advocate a policy of protectionism that contributed to its failure to win elections during the thirties against Fianna Fail.

One rural community close to the heart of many nationalists was the Gaeltacht, comprising those areas where Irish was still the main spoken language. The N.C.P recognized the importance of these areas to the future restoration of Irish as a living language amongst the majority population. It was part of the mind-set of nationalists who envisaged the restoration of a rural Gaelic utopia. There is a parallel here with Salazar's Portugal, where the Portuguese dictator tried to rally support for his regime by combining his corporate ideas with an ideology that romanticized rural life, attachment to the land and loyalty to the church, particularly as represented by the local priest.

Little had been done since independence to stimulate the Gaeltacht areas which were amongst the most deprived parts of the new nation. The NCP responded by announcing that:

“...we must make sure that the people who are the custodians of our language and traditions are assured some means of decent livelihood.”<sup>143</sup>

O'Duffy ruled out doles as a solution to Gaeltacht poverty. As early as 1934, speaking at a rally in Clifden, he had suggested having Blueshirt uniforms made in the Gaeltacht to stimulate the local economy. Nothing, however, came of this suggestion. O'Duffy, as leader of the NCP, declared that the economic war with Britain had hit

---

<sup>143</sup> *The Nation*, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1935, 'The Gaeltacht Problem.'

the Gaeltacht particularly hard, but that the party's policies on de-rating and an end to the collection of annuities would be a big help. Other suggestions for reviving the Gaeltacht economy included developing the turf industry and encouraging the fishing industry by supplying the Gaelic-speaking enclaves with fishing boats at government expense. By putting the Gaeltacht on a secure economic footing, the party hoped to tackle the issue of language preservation in a practical way.

The 1936 *Ard Fheis* reiterated the usual Blueshirt/Greenshirt message about annuities, the division of unproductive estates and increased tillage, along with removing the economic war from the arena of party politics and making it a national issue. However, by this stage the party had failed to win widespread support from any section of the farming community (which was far from homogenous in its interests). O'Duffy was preaching to an increasingly uninterested audience who believed that it was Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, not the NCP, which had the real, and realizable, solutions to the problems of the farming community.

#### *THE 1936 ARD FHEIS OF THE NCP*

The 1936 *Ard Fheis* introduced very little that was new to party policy. The August 1936 edition of *The Nation* lists the motions that were passed by the last party congress. Many of the motions carried by the delegates confirmed the existing party platform adopted the previous year, for example the Labour Policy and Agricultural Policy. Any new items were of minor, topical importance, for example the Lough Foyle fishing dispute, the need to maintain by-ways, a National Scheme of Public Works, the development of aviation and deep-sea fishing, and the setting up of a

munitions factory. The party also adopted in its entirety the original National and Political Policy of the National Guard.<sup>144</sup>

The NCP also called for the restoration of university representation in the Dail, the establishment of a special Ministry for the Gaeltacht, the restoration of the referendum<sup>145</sup> and the enfranchisement of the *Garda Siochana*.<sup>146</sup>

From an organizational point of view, Congress clearly expected the party to have a long-term future. Congress passed a motion calling for each division and company to raise funds for Central Headquarters, whilst other fund-raising events were to raise money to be used locally as a General Election Fund. Congress decided to send O'Duffy to the USA to solicit funds and to organize the NCP amongst expatriate Irishmen. Other officers were to be sent to "centres in Britain with a large Irish population,"<sup>147</sup> with the intention of recruiting expatriates and fund-raising. This could have been a useful exercise given the disproportionate number of Irishmen who were attracted to Mosley's BUF.

In the light of the party's decision at Congress to encourage the establishment of women's units, it is interesting to note that the party completely neglected to discuss the role of women in the new society that their corporate policies would create. This is common to European fascism. Fascism was an overwhelmingly masculine movement which, as Stanley Payne states:

..made a perpetual fetish of the "virility" of their movement and its programme of militarization, stemming no doubt from the fascist concept of the militarization of politics and the need for constant struggle."<sup>148</sup>

---

Appendix-The National and Political Policy of the National Guard.  
 recourse to referendum had been abolished by the Cumann na nGaedheal government in 1928.  
*Gardai did not possess the right to vote in 1936.*  
*Journal of the NCP, August 1936, 'Resolutions Passed by Congress.'*  
 Payne, S, *Fascism, Comparison and Definition* (Madison, 1980), p. 12.



Women had been prominent numerically in the earlier Blueshirt movement, but as already noted, this support had declined considerably. No women sat on the National Executive of the party. Only one woman, Esther Meehan, was a regular contributor to the party journal, and even then she did not discuss women's issues. There was a lack of attention given to women's issues in what was a very masculine organization.

Women had the vote in Ireland, but apart from a brief burst of activity in the independence struggle, women had not played a major role in post-Treaty politics. Given the fact that women had the vote, it is surprising that O'Duffy did not realize the potential of this group to his bid for power. In Germany, women voters formed a significant portion of the Nazi electorate and contributed enormously to the success of the NSDAP, in spite of its anti-feminist policies and image (In the November 1932 German Reichstag elections, female and male votes for the Nazis were almost equal<sup>149</sup>). However, given the fact that very few women in Ireland were employed at this time, except for some in farming and a small number in manufacturing, they would have found their position in a corporate structure based on occupation tenuous at best, unless they were to be given a vote based on the family's main occupation. The NCP never made this clear.

Congress submitted other organizational items to the National Executive for further consideration. These included: the creation of youth and units, the appointment of a Director of Propaganda, the compiling of a roll of public speakers and a reduction in the size of the divisions. The party was trying to consolidate itself but O'Duffy was unable to create a mass organization like the earlier Blueshirts. By the summer of 1936, this was a party in serious decline. The 1936 *Ard Fheis* was just going through the motions. O'Duffy, who would have had the clearest overview of the situation was

---

<sup>149</sup> I.Kershaw, *Hitler 1889-1936* (London, 1998), p. 380.

quick to transfer his organizational skills into the recruitment of an Irish Brigade for Spain. O'Duffy would rather try his hand in a new venture than flounder around in the political wilderness at home with a party in decline and with an election in the near future which would only serve to confirm the party's declining fortunes.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE SOURCES OF IRISH CORPORATISM

### *INTRODUCTION*

The National Corporate Party presented the Irish people with a political programme that combined Irish republican nationalism with continentally-inspired corporatism. Corporatist ideas were not new to Ireland. Intellectuals, churchmen and social reformers had been discussing corporatist ideas for almost half a century, since the publication of Leo XIII's *De Rerum Novarum* in 1891. The Blueshirt movement was the first political group to adopt corporatism as a central article of policy. The ensuing merger with the Centre Party and Cumann na nGaedheal was dependent on this policy being adopted by the new Fine Gael coalition. Irish intellectuals such as Michael Tierney, James Hogan and Ernest Blythe who, through various journals and publications, were familiar with current trends in continental thought, were particularly anxious to put Catholic social ideas into practice. They therefore adapted corporatist ideas to suit Irish conditions and presented them to the public through Fine Gael and the Blueshirt movement.

General O'Duffy enthusiastically supported and promoted these ideas. Partly because he became convinced that Fine Gael did not share his enthusiasm, he set out to form his own party in which corporatism was one of the central elements. However, the statist corporatism he was now advocating had moved away from the Catholic corporatism of men like Tierney and Hogan and had developed on more fascist authoritarian lines. Corporatism was a radical policy initiative for Irish politics, but it was widely seen as a foreign import irrelevant for Ireland, and as such failed to win any enthusiasm from potential voters.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF CORPORATISM

According to Schmitter, there were four distinct types of corporatist thought by the turn of the twentieth century which he labelled Social-Christian (as exemplified by de Mun, Tour du Pin, and Joaquin Azpiroz), authoritarian-bureaucratic (as exemplified by Spann and Mussolini), a radical, bourgeois, solidarist tradition (as exemplified by Bourgeois and Gide), and a leftist, syndicalist line.<sup>1</sup> Corporatist ideas appeared in the wake of the fall of the *ancien régime* at the close of the eighteenth century. Initially it was essentially a Catholic riposte to Protestant liberalism.<sup>2</sup> The nineteenth century saw the rise of industrialism and capitalism and the emergence of theories of liberalism, individualism, and democracy. Corporatism was one response to this, but unlike Socialism, it did not oppose the capitalist system.

Corporatism opposed the atomistic theories of liberalism in favour of organic notions of the state, with the stress on the needs of the national community rather than the individual. The organic nature of society was to be expressed in political and economic arrangements that would create a consensual society. Early corporatists criticized liberalism for stripping property of its moral and social responsibilities, which they vowed to restore. Corporatists stressed the need for harmony, but they gave a moral role to the state, the basis of this morality being either religion or nationalism.<sup>3</sup>

Constantin Franz argued that corporatism was necessary to protect property but also to put a brake on the growing excesses of power in increasingly centralized nation states, an argument followed through by Catholic corporatist thinkers. Franz believed that corporations would give people a sense of belonging, replacing the mob with

---

<sup>1</sup> As noted in H.J. Wiarda, *Corporatism and Development-The Portuguese Experiment* (Boston, 1972), p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> P.J. Williamson, *Varieties of Corporatism*. Chapter 2.



community and encouraging the cooperation that capitalism was threatening to destroy.

In early nineteenth century Germany, men such as Friedrich Schlegel, Franz Von Bader and Adam Muller developed corporatist theories that stressed the organic nature of society.<sup>4</sup> Corporatist ideas really took off after 1850, in response to rapid industrialization throughout Western Europe and the emergence of the class struggle, which threatened to disrupt the unity of Europe's emerging nation states. Corporatists saw the need to restore harmony in the workplace, protect private property, and prevent the rise of an organized, socialist workforce.<sup>5</sup>

The form that the corporate state would take was varied. In France, La Tour du Pin argued for a strong monarchy and a bicameral system with one chamber representing taxpayers, and a Chamber of Estates to represent a variety of groups including churches and the liberal professions. He saw the need to protect the rights of workers in order to prevent social upheaval and he criticized the competition between capitalists for being wasteful.<sup>6</sup>

The twentieth century saw the application throughout Europe, in various forms and to various degrees, of corporatist ideas that had been developing since the French Revolution. Corporatists argued that there was a need for an interventionist state appropriate for a modern, industrial, capitalist economy that was equipped to deal with the problems that had come with rapid modernization. During World War One, there had been varying degrees in the increase in state intervention necessitated by the needs of a war economy and there were many who thought that this strategy was also

---

<sup>3</sup> Peter J. Williamson, *Corporatism in Perspective, An Introductory Guide to Corporatist Theory* (London, 1989), pp . 21-25.

<sup>4</sup> Carl Landauer, *Corporate State Ideologies*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Peter J. Williamson, *Varieties of Corporatism, Theory and Practice* , p. 39.

appropriate for a peacetime economy.<sup>7</sup> This prompted a number of nations, such as Italy, Portugal and Austria to experiment with a corporate political structure during the nineteen thirties and beyond. Corporatism was not a new mode of production, but a new form of representation based on vocation rather than geography, status or sectional interests. It was a distinct political system of interest mediation and economic intervention with various forms of functional representation. The aim was to abolish class conflict because the state would become the arbiter between employers and workers. Corporatism can manifest itself either as a distinct state form, or as a system that complements and co-exists alongside parliamentarianism. It was an explicit alternative to the pluralism and anarchism of the free market of liberal capitalism and the parliamentary democracy which developed alongside it. It was a form of economic planning and organization that was posited as a third way between Socialism and liberal capitalism.

Corporatists hoped to control capitalism in the national interest by curtailing the excesses and anarchy of the market place. Corporatists criticized the free-market system for being wasteful and divisive, and held it responsible for the rise in the militancy of the working class. However, in contrast to other political philosophies, such as Marxism, Corporatism is not concerned with distribution but with production, and aims to maximize national economic potential. The emergence of corporatist ideas in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries paralleled not only the development of capitalism, but also the growth of nationalism and the nation state. Corporatism was seen as a way of uniting different social classes to create a strong national body, whilst also ensuring that production is controlled in the national interest.

---

<sup>7</sup> Carl Landauer, *Corporate State Ideologies*, Berkeley Research Series, no.54, 1983, p. 61.

Corporatism shifts the role of the state from that of a supportive to a directive regulator of social and economic activities and organization: third-way collectivism. The directive state has five basic economic functions; price regulation, the regulation of production, the determination of wages and conditions of work, regulation of the professions and the administering of a social welfare programme.<sup>8</sup> Corporatism endeavours to prevent the occurrence of conflicts in the workplace and to promote harmony amongst competing interests, thus contributing to the restoration of the social bonds that liberalism and laissez-faire capitalism had ostensibly destroyed.<sup>9</sup> The implementation of corporatist ideas inevitably creates a stronger state, with a greater concentration and centralization of power and decision-making. Corporatism became associated with totalitarian and authoritarian regimes such as Mussolini's Italy, Salazar's Portugal and Franco's Spain, but this is only one form of corporatism, authoritarian corporatism. In these authoritarian systems, there were no effective checks to arbitrary power.

There are other forms of corporatism where the corporations support the democratic parliamentary system and act as intermediaries between the individual and the state, in theory reducing state power and supplementing participatory democracy. This was the structure advocated by Catholic social thinkers who opposed the growing power of the state, and who saw corporate bodies as adjuncts to the parliamentary system rather than its nemesis.

The corporatist political system emphasizes social community and the central place of higher moral principles transcending the individual or sectional interests of society's members or factions. The hierarchical corporatist state therefore conferred

---

<sup>8</sup> P.J. Williamson, *Varieties of Corporatism, Theory and Practice*, p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 55.

rights but also demanded duties.<sup>10</sup> This especially applied to the use of property. The right to property would cease to be an inalienable right but ownership would be provisional upon the performance of certain social duties.<sup>11</sup> Discipline, not liberty and rights, were inherent in this approach.

Underscoring the corporative ideology was the idea that class collaboration was not only possible, but desirable. It would promote the interests of all classes not any one faction. The pluralism of the free-market, *laissez-faire* system of nineteenth century capitalism had led to conflict between worker and owner as capitalists competed to lower prices, at the expense of the wages and conditions of the worker. Workers and owners had used the strike and lockout as bargaining tools, often at public and national expense and discomfort. The corporate state intended to make the use of strikes and lockouts illegal, with compulsory arbitration by neutral state parties to restore stability to society and the economy. However, corporatism is not egalitarian, but adheres strictly to the principles of hierarchy. A corporate state creates an unequal distribution of power that does not favour the workers. In a corporate state, the workforce would be required to surrender its economic muscle and accept its position in the social hierarchy, in exchange for material improvements.

Catholic theorists had stressed that workers not only had duties but certain social rights as well, including a just wage. This appeal to natural justice was not always echoed by authoritarian corporatists. They hoped that vocational solidarity would break the class solidarity of the working class.<sup>12</sup> The vocational groups were supposed to reflect the communitarian aspect of society, with a strong state in control that would reflect a single 'National Will,' which would keep the parts in harmony.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. pp. 45-6

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. pp. 45-6.

<sup>12</sup> P.J. Williamson, *Varieties of Corporatism, Theory and Practice*. Chapter 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Chapter 2.



Corporatism came to prominence at the same time as the growth in popularity of the anti-liberal ideas of men like Mosca, Pareto and Michels, with their belief in the hierarchical, organic nature of society and the elevation of group over individual rights and with a strong state which posited itself as the moral leader.<sup>14</sup> The state combined the hierarchical and communitarian aspects of society and state in a harmonious unity for the common good.

### *CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT*

The Roman Catholic Church made its own specific contribution to corporatist theory in a response to the social dislocation caused by the rapid industrialization of nineteenth century society. The reformist ideas of the Church, as exemplified in the social encyclicals *De Rerum Novarum* (1891), issued by Leo XIII, and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), issued by Pius XI, offered an alternative to Socialism and unregulated capitalism. The encyclicals were based on the ideas of several key Catholic thinkers, but also built on traditional Catholic ideas about hierarchy, property and the family.

The nineteenth century saw a number of key figures in the Catholic Church proposing solutions to the problems of society within the framework of Catholic theology. Industrialism had failed to abolish poverty as early eighteenth century thinkers thought it would. Industrialization had created new problems such as unemployment, urban slums and a breakdown in the extended family. The depression of 1873-96 was a major stimulus to corporatist ideas. Senior Catholic figures such as Cardinal James Gibbons in the United States, Cardinal Manning in Britain and Archbishop Walsh of Dublin raised the issue of the problems caused by the rapid

---

<sup>14</sup> H.J. Wiarda, *Corporatism and Development, The Portuguese Experiment*, p. 69.

modernization of agriculture and industry and the need for action to alleviate distress caused by massive social dislocation.

The Catholic Church believed that it had the moral right and duty to respond to the social question. The *Risorgimento* in Italy had already weakened the Papacy's temporal power and the Church could not risk a further dilution in its influence by failing to respond to the problems that seemed to beset modern industrial society. The social and economic upheavals created problems with moral implications, which the Church felt duty-bound to address, especially when others were proposing solutions that clashed with Catholic teaching. Many in the church saw the trends as irreversible and believed that the Church would have to adapt. Even before the great social encyclical, *De Rerum Novarum*, the Papacy had skirted around social issues in an attempt to show that the Church was relevant to the modern era in its willingness to face up to the problems of a capitalist industrial world. It sought to portray itself and its teachings as an anchor of moral stability in a time of rapid change. In 1888, Leo XIII's encyclical *Libertas* reiterated Catholic ideas about human liberty within the context of traditional Catholic views on marriage, the family and state, and it touched on the rights and duties of management and labour. It accepted democracy as a legitimate form of government that was compatible with Catholic teaching. This encyclical, along with *Immortale Dei* paved the way for *De Rerum Novarum* in 1891 by portraying the Church as responsive to modern developments, thus imbuing the Church with a new relevance.

Leo XIII's social encyclical, *De Rerum Novarum* set down guidelines for the solution of the problem of human relations named the "social question." Issued on May 15<sup>th</sup> 1891, the encyclical was a broad social charter that owed a great deal to the emergent Catholic social movement. Leo XIII laid down a set of principles governing

the rights and duties of workers and employers and, importantly, the state. His arguments and solutions were based on the concept of natural law, which stressed the dignity of the individual and the right to private property. The right to private property was made distinct from its use. This prohibited the abuse of the right to property through its misuse. Owners have a duty to use property in the right way. This had important repercussions for the treatment of the worker. Leo XIII emphasized that the dignity of man precluded him from being treated as a commodity. *De Rerum Novarum* stated:

“It is shameful and inhuman to use men as things for gain and to put no more value on them than what they are worth in muscle and energy.”<sup>15</sup>

The right to private property rested on man’s independence, his self-control, his self-direction and his right to found and maintain a family. The encyclical declared that poverty was detrimental to the family and this prompted the need for social justice. The state could promote social justice by protecting private property, regulating work conditions, ensuring a just wage, and by encouraging the widespread distribution of property. Workers had a right to protect themselves and their families and were therefore entitled to organize in order to oppose exploitation and the abuse of private property.

*De Rerum Novarum* was a response to the problems of industrialization and capitalism but it was also a response to the growth of Socialism and communism. Leo XIII recognised the need to improve the lot of the working class but believed that liberalism and Socialism were not the answer as they were incompatible with Catholic teaching on individualism and property. He saw the need for the state to have a more interventionist role in order to protect private property and also to regulate work

---

<sup>15</sup> Leo XIII, *De Rerum Novarum*, para.20.

conditions, but also saw the benefits of voluntary associations that promoted these ends. For Leo XIII, Socialism violated the principles of private property, personal initiative and natural inequality. However, he also recognized that capitalism was also an abuse of private property when it enslaves the worker. The language used in the encyclical to denounce unbridled capitalism is often stronger than that used to denounce Socialism.

The solution to the problem, similar to that of the Distributists, was to ensure widespread property ownership. The encyclical said:

“The law, therefore, should favour ownership, and its policy should be to induce as many as possible of the people to become owners...Men always work more harder and more readily when they work on that which belongs to them...”<sup>16</sup>

It was a reformist, not a revolutionary, programme, but it did commit the Church to defending the rights of workers. Where it differed from the other critiques of capitalism was the derivation of its central social values from Catholic theology, which in turn gave it a very paternalistic edge. It marked a significant development for the Catholic Church, indicating its willingness to face the challenges of the modern world and its acceptance of the important role that the state would have to play in the coming century. It shifted the stance of the Church in favour of the poor and exploited and justified the intervention of the Church in social and economic matters. It encouraged Catholics to involve themselves in the trade union movement, particularly in the United States.

The Church believed that it had to take a temporal role as well as a spiritual one, and saw itself in the forefront of a crusade to support the rights of the working class whilst preventing him from falling into the errors of Socialism, with its perceived

---

<sup>16</sup> Leo XIII, *De Rerum Novarum*, para. 4.



anti-Christian values. However, its approach had limited appeal to those societies that were predominantly non-Catholic.

Forty years to the day after the publication of *De Rerum Novarum*, Pius XI published *Quadragesimo Anno* (On Reconstructing the Social Order), which built on the social ideas of Leo XIII and developed the ideas of corporatism as a structural answer to capitalist dislocation. Pius XI advocated the need to change the structure of society for the common good through the creation of reformist vocational bodies. He was inspired by the negative problems of the class struggle, destructive competition, and the growing concentration of state power (and in some respects the document is a critique of Mussolini's brand of corporatism and his authoritarian state), and the positive example of the mediaeval guild system.

Pius XI made frequent references to *De Rerum Novarum* in his encyclical, extending and developing Leo XIII's ideas. The church issued the document with the Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression still fresh in the minds of people. The document began with a critique of capitalism that defended it as a valid economic system but condemned its abuses whose root cause was identified as unlimited and unregulated competition. This had led to repression, bankruptcy, depression and monopolies. Competition had a positive aspect in that it stimulated effort and led to efficiency. The document envisaged a greater role for the state that would in effect create a social market economy and certainly, his call for reform did focus on the state. The state would supervise healthy competition whilst preventing the rise of monopolies. Pius XI wanted to put the moral element back into the economic system, through the principle of 'just distribution,' declaring

"Each class, then, must receive its due share, and the distribution of goods must be brought into conformity with the demands of the common good and social justice, for

every sincere observer is conscious that the vast differences of wealth...constitute a grave evil in modern society.”<sup>17</sup>

The document reminded Catholics that the right to private property was distinct from its use and incurred duties as well as rights. This required the property owner not only to consider his own advantage but the good of society. The need to control competition, to ensure workers’ rights and to end the conflict between labour and capital meant that the state would have a much greater role to play in the economy and in the field of social legislation. Pius XI also feared authoritarianism and state oppression and argued that the best way to prevent this was to delegate as much authority as possible to a local, accountable level. This delegation of power to intermediaries such as corporations was the cornerstone of the corporate society that he envisaged. He referred to mediaeval guilds as models of Christian social order.<sup>18</sup> What he advocated was a corporative society in contrast to the sort of corporate state that Mussolini was creating.

Pius XI intended society to set up industry councils representing management and unions where the two could collaborate for the common good. There would be a hierarchy of organizations leading up to a national economic council. These industry councils would be semi-public bodies with legal rights to enforce rules in the areas of efficiency and production. The syndicates that he envisaged would be voluntary associations to maintain the rights of workers and employers and they would have the exclusive right to settle labour problems.<sup>19</sup> The resulting structure would create unity of purpose between labour and management. He saw the primary duty of the state to

---

<sup>17</sup> Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, (1931) in Ed. AC Pegis, *The Wisdom of Catholicism* (London, 1962), p. 739.

<sup>18</sup> Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), *Ibid.* p. 747.

<sup>19</sup> Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) *Ibid.* p. 748.

“abolish conflict between classes with divergent interests, and thus foster and promote harmony between the various ranks of society.”<sup>20</sup>

The social philosophy of the church was a new departure, but it had an enormous influence across Catholic countries in the pre-war years. Corporatist ideas based on the Papal encyclical were adopted in Portugal and Austria, and to some extent in Spain. Political groups advocating the Popes’ ideas included the *Cagoule* in France, the Belgian *Rexist*s, the Irish Blueshirts and Fine Gael, the *Falanga* of Poland, the League of National Christian Defence in Romania, and Ljotic’s radical unitary *Zbar* movement in Yugoslavia.<sup>21</sup> Academics, the clergy and lay study circles discussed the encyclicals. Various organizations, such as *Muintir na Tire* in Ireland, promoted the ideas in practical ways. Political leaders such as Dolfuss in Austria and Salazar in Portugal justified their authoritarian corporatism by reference to the social encyclicals. However, their greatest importance lies in the fact that the Catholic Church saw that it could not stand on the sidelines and neglect the temporal for the spiritual. The encyclicals gave the green light to greater state involvement in the economy and social issues, which prompted several Catholic states, including Ireland to reassess their policies in the light of the Papal instructions.

The rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century pushed social and economic issues onto the sidelines, but with increased industrialization and the organization of labour, social questions gained more prominence. There had been strong clerical involvement in the issue of land rights but none with the urban poor or the issue of trade unions.<sup>22</sup> The clergy responded to *De Rerum Novarum* and to the ideas of Distributism, particularly at the influential training college for the clergy at Maynooth

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 745.

<sup>21</sup> Mike Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 87.

<sup>22</sup> Dermot Keogh and Finin O’Driscoll, ‘Ireland’ in Tom Buchanan and Martin Conway, Ed. *Political Catholicism in Europe 1918-65* (Oxford, 1996).

where a number of papers and treatises on the social question were produced. The group at Maynooth was led by Walter MacDonald, assisted by Dr Peter Coffey and Dr Wiliam Moran (in his pamphlet *Social Reconstruction in an Irish State* he argued that the capitalist system was unworkable and that a new political order was necessary). However, the ideas were discussed only by a minority of radical clerics, men such as Father Coyne and Reverend Myles Roanan, the majority of clergy being isolated in rural areas. The hierarchy did not share these radical ideas. From 1912 onwards, the influential Jesuit publication *Studies* promoted the discussion of Catholic social ideas. The Jesuit *Irish Messenger* published a series of 28 titles in its Social Action Series by 1918, the most prolific writer being Father Lambert McKennan (1870-1956).<sup>23</sup>

A number of groups made their appearance in the first decades of the twentieth century to discuss and promote Catholic social thought in Ireland. The Catholic National Society was set up in 1926 as a form of Catholic Action. The group only accepted University College students as members but it did provide a specifically Catholic angle to the discussion of political and economic issues. A more widespread grassroots organization formed the same year was *An Rioghacht*. It was the creation of Reverend Cahill. *An Rioghacht* (The League of the Kingship of Christ) was set up following Pius XI's encyclical *Quas Primas* to promote social principles and social action.<sup>24</sup> The organization particularly emphasized the need for strong Church involvement in education. In principle, it advocated as strong influence for the Church in government, a confessional state where the nation's morals would particularly come under Church direction and control. The movement grew further with the publication of *Quadragesimo Anno*. Reverend Cahill published *The Framework of a*

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



*Christian State* in 1932 arguing the case for a corporate political system.<sup>25</sup>

Interestingly, Eamon De Valera was known to have attended some meetings of *An Rioghacht* but was wary of continental models of Catholic Action. The Catholic Young Men's Society, founded in 1928 in Dublin, played a crucial role in raising the intensity of the debate through its study weeks which attracted influential people.

The publication in 1931 of *Quadragesimo Anno* stimulated further discussion of social ideas in the Catholic press. Particularly influential were magazines such as *Catholic Mind*, *Catholic Monthly*, *Irish Monthly*, *Hibernia*, *Studies*, and *Outlook*. The concern over associating corporatism too closely with the fascism of Mussolini led to the widespread adoption of the term 'vocationalism' as an alternative.

Father John Hayes set up the organization *Muintir na Tire* (People of the Land) only a week before the Pope's encyclical was published in 1931.<sup>26</sup> Hayes had originally envisaged it as an agricultural economic cooperative but the study weekends to discuss social thought became very influential, attracting large numbers of people. Ireland was a rural society and many believed that vocationalism supported their conservative way of life, linking prosperity to the land. In Ireland, the hierarchy initially showed little interest in vocationalism and its promotion was a grass-roots phenomenon. The hierarchy was quite late in adding its support to vocationalism. The proposals of Catholic corporatists were too radical for the church hierarchy, conservative politicians, and the Irish Civil Service who were concerned that radical changes to Irish social life would damage the infant state and undermine their power. Whilst both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael politicians discussed corporatist ideas, their adoption was piecemeal, half-hearted and incomplete. Whilst respecting Pius XI's encyclical, traditional politicians put nationalism and economics ahead of social

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

change and so any acceptance of Catholic social ideas tended to be opportunistic, tokenistic and temporary. Mainstream politicians and civil servants were also reluctant to embrace corporatism from fear of a resulting diminution of their powers.<sup>27</sup>

### *THE LIFE AND CORPORATIST IDEAS OF MICHAEL TIERNEY*

Michael Tierney was an influential politician, academic, and political theorist in Ireland throughout the nineteen twenties and thirties. He was also a major promoter of corporatist ideas, introducing them into the Irish political mainstream, though his conception of corporatism was not always compatible with that of O'Duffy. He was Professor of Greek at University College, Dublin,<sup>28</sup> an Irish speaker, and a contributor to academic journals such as *Studies*. He was the son-in-law of Eoin MacNeill, leader of the Irish Volunteers and Cumann na nGaedheal Education Minister from 1922 to 1925. He had supported the Treaty in the aftermath of the independence struggle and finally won a seat for the pro-Treaty Cumann na nGaedheal Party in County Mayo<sup>29</sup>, in the far west of Ireland, a seat he held until 1932. Tierney was active in Cumann na nGaedheal in the twenties, particularly on committees concerned with economic policies.

He was an early member of the Army Comrades Association and, along with Blythe, encouraged O'Duffy to become the leader. Tierney suggested the name 'Fine Gael' for the new coalition between his party, the Centre Party and the Blueshirts.<sup>30</sup> The

---

<sup>25</sup> Rev. Cahill, *The Framework of A Christian State* (Dublin, 1932).

<sup>26</sup> Terence Brown, *Ireland- a Social and Cultural History 1922-79* ( Glasgow, 1981), p. 160.

<sup>27</sup> See article by J. Lee, 'Aspects of Corporatist Thought in Ireland' in A. Cosgrove (ed.), *Studies in Irish History Presented to R. Dudley Edwards*.

<sup>28</sup> M. Manning, *The Blueshirts*, p. 93.

<sup>29</sup> J.M. Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936*, p. 222.

<sup>30</sup> M. Manning, *The Blueshirts*, p. 93.

name had first been used at the Irish Race Convention in 1923.<sup>31</sup> Tierney supported O'Duffy as President for Fine Gael, believing that he would provide the vigorous leadership needed to offer a credible opposition to Fianna Fail.<sup>32</sup> He helped to draw up the Fine Gael constitution, where prominence was given to the corporatist ideas he had been expounding. He had previously worked on the constitution of Cumann na nGaedheal.

As a politician in the new Fine Gael party, though without a seat in the Dail, his initial support for O'Duffy soon turned to disillusionment when he realized that the path that O'Duffy was taking was not the constitutional route he would prefer to follow. Tierney was more concerned with economic, social and political issues than the nationalist and constitutional issues with which O'Duffy became more concerned. Tierney continued his association with Fine Gael, and although he was never to hold a Dail seat again, he became a member of the Senate. His advocacy of corporatism led to his appointment by De Valera to the Government Commission on Vocational Organization.<sup>33</sup> The Commission's advocacy of a corporatist state, however, came to nothing.<sup>34</sup>

Professor Tierney came to corporatism through a study of Catholic social thought, and through an analysis of continental systems of corporatism, particularly those of Portugal and Austria. He wrote extensively on the subject<sup>35</sup> and, as a key figure in Fine Gael, he was largely responsible for formulating the party's corporate policy. Disillusioned with the poor development of the Irish Free State both economically and politically, he came to the conclusion that it was the political structure inherited from the British that had mired politicians in discussing nationalist and constitutional issues

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 98.

<sup>33</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish politics*, p. 88.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

instead of the economic and social issues that he believed should be at the top of the political agenda. Tierney believed that the political structure of the Irish Free State failed to reflect the organic nature of Irish society and the need to involve the whole population in the democratic process. The solution he advocated was based on supplementing, but not replacing, the parliamentary system with syndicates based on a modernization of the mediaeval guild system. He intended his system to reflect the social thought of papal encyclicals and provide an Irish Catholic solution to the real issues of the day. He studded his writings with references to continental corporate systems, reassuring his readers that a study of these models did not mean the adoption of authoritarian government in Ireland. O'Duffy, as leader of Fine Gael, vigorously propagated Tierney's corporatist ideas. However, O'Duffy soon moved on to advocate his own of corporatism that owed more to authoritarian models than to Catholic social thought.

Tierney had played an important role in the politics of the infant Free State but by the early nineteen-thirties he had become disillusioned with the political development of the nation. He believed that too much attention had been paid to constitutional and national issues and not enough to economic issues. One of the root causes of this, he believed, was the liberal-democratic political framework inherited from the British which he felt was not suitable for either Ireland or modern economic life. Whilst he did not want to alter radically the constitution,<sup>36</sup> he concluded that the political structure needed to be changed in order to provide a forum for the discussion of economic issues. The solution that he offered was the addition of a corporate structure to the existing parliamentary one.

---

<sup>35</sup> In scholarly journals such as *Studies*, and in Fine Gael publications such as *United Ireland*.

<sup>36</sup> Notes for lecture by Michael Tierney to YIA on 'The Corporate State', LA30/349, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD Archives.



Ireland's parliamentary infrastructure was, Tierney argued, unsuitable for dealing with crucial economic decision-making, and he wanted to create a political structure specifically to deal with social and economic issues:

“We must try to get economics divorced from party politics and to have economic questions decided on their merits by people who know something about them, or have some real interest in them apart from the inspiration of political factionalism.”<sup>37</sup>

He described the parliamentary system as un-Irish, an inheritance, like republicanism, from Cromwell.<sup>38</sup> He did so in order to challenge those who might accuse him of looking abroad for political ideas. By adding a vocational element to the political structure, Tierney expected a diminution in the role of parliament. But this would not be a threat to democracy as the state would then be organized all the way down, with ordinary citizens having a much greater role to play in the political process, and in the shaping of social and economic policy.<sup>39</sup>

Tierney outlined the structure that he envisaged:

“At the base we will have the national network of vocational groups bringing together employer and worker, abolishing class distinctions and ensuring the fullest realization of social equality. At the top we will have the machinery by which these vocational groups will gradually take over into proper and popular control many of the functions now being carried out by unqualified or ill-organized bodies or persons.”<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Speech of Professor Tierney to YIA 13.7.34.No title ,LA30/349, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD Archives.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Tierney was concerned at the growing power of parliament,<sup>41</sup> which was described by him as “a battleground for personalities which has risen above all constitutional constraints.”<sup>42</sup> The electoral system of proportional representation had only served to exacerbate party rivalries and had encouraged the proliferation of minor parties often representing sectional interests, and divisive politics.<sup>43</sup> He also opposed the current voting system because it was “beset by frauds, primitive mechanisms of voting, propaganda and physical violence...[and it was] a mathematical extravaganza.”<sup>44</sup>

At the heart of his argument for change was the idea that the rapid development of capitalism, which in itself had created massive social and economic problems, had left behind the liberal democratic system that had risen with it in the nineteenth century. The political system had given capitalism a free rein and this had proved a complete failure. Manning, summarizing Tierney’s critique of capitalism, says that for Tierney, individualistic capitalism had led to:

“...the partial and unequal organization of Labour; the lack of any real organization of productive forces, except for individual and profit-making purposes; the fact that the country had only an elementary system of law to regulate relations between employer and worker, or between both and public; the fact that great inequalities still existed-and this he saw as the chief source of the ‘current endemic unrest’; the fact that a Christian society still had all the ‘social sub-divisions and snobberies that were the hallmark of Victorian capitalism in its hey-day.’”<sup>45</sup>

The development of capitalism had altered the nature of society. As Tierney said: “The course of material development has for good or ill rendered every modern state a

---

<sup>41</sup> ‘Critique’ by Michael Tierney of John Horgan’s ‘The Problems of Government’, in *Studies* 22:1933 Dublin.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> M. Manning, *The Blueshirts* p. 220.

structurally-related whole.”<sup>46</sup> This had created a need for the state to play a greater role in the management of the nation’s economy to ensure that the whole nation benefits from this material progress.<sup>47</sup> This role was too much for parliament on its own, as constituted at the time. In defining this increased role for the state, Tierney stressed that individual rights were still sacrosanct. The structure he proposed would take a middle course between excessive individualism and communism:

“...and consists in a recognition of the fact that while the individual and family are prior to the State and possess natural rights independent of any concessions on the part of the nation, yet man is a social being, even property has social obligations, the community has rights and obligations which have been neglected in the era of expanding capitalism.”<sup>48</sup>

What unbridled capitalism and liberal democracy had ignored, said Tierney, was the organic nature of society, which should involve all citizens in the political process. The existing parliamentary system allowed for only limited participation by the majority of Irish citizens, but a corporate structure would encourage each citizen to “pronounce on issues within his competence.”<sup>49</sup> In recognizing the organic nature of society, man recognizes the dignity of all work, and the value of all citizens. By organizing society on vocational lines, with a diminution of the role of parliament, each person, as part of the economic whole, would enjoy greater equality. Man would play his part through his economic contribution rather than because of a sectional political interest. Tierney believed that this organic unity had been all but destroyed over the last two centuries. The result had been the emergence of an all-powerful state

---

<sup>46</sup> Report on the party’s plans to initiate a corporative or guild system through the medium of vocational or economic councils by M. Tierney, LA30/350, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD Archives.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> *United Ireland*, 31 March 1934, ‘Nothing Revolutionary in the Corporative System- Syndical System Explained’, M. Tierney.

leaving the individual to stand in increasing isolation.<sup>50</sup> Tierney wanted to reaffirm the importance of the organic nature of society, and wanted the political and economic structure of Ireland to reflect this. He recognized that:

“...the individual is in society and that society is an organic whole, and that therefore in the general interest the whole body of production must be treated from the national point of view.”<sup>51</sup>

Tierney claimed that Ireland in the thirties was faced with the challenge of bringing about a state of equilibrium between the freedom of private enterprise and the complicated requirements of the social organism.<sup>52</sup> In advocating a more planned economy, he was keen to avoid the excesses of increased state interference. The solution to this lay in the corporate principle of subsidiary function, *concordia ordinum* (harmony of order), with its stress on decision-making at the lowest level possible.<sup>53</sup> The integration of vocational organizations into the political system would give it the organic dimension that it had previously lacked. It would take power out of the hands of self-seeking committees of politicians and factional parties and place it back with the citizens.<sup>54</sup>

Tierney was advocating the need to reform the political structure in order to cope with the needs and demands of the twentieth century. In doing so, he claimed that it was Pius XI's encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, that was the leading inspiration for his ideas and he urged all politicians, regardless of party affiliation, to study the

---

<sup>50</sup> M. Tierney, 'Quadragesimo Anno', LA30/349, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD Archives.

<sup>51</sup> M. Tierney, 'Report on the party's plans to initiate a corporative or guild system through the medium of vocational or economic councils'. LA30/350, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD Archive.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> *United Ireland*, 31<sup>st</sup> March 1934, 'Nothing Revolutionary in the Corporate System-Syndical System Explained', Michael Tierney.

<sup>54</sup> Speech by Michael Tierney to YIA, No title, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1934, LA30/349, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD Archives.



document and come up with an appropriate programme for Ireland's needs.<sup>55</sup> Tierney recognized that the Pope's social programme would be carried out in different ways in different countries, and believed that it was the basis for Mussolini's Italian system.<sup>56</sup> Tierney saw it as the Christian answer to the crisis of capitalism, and as the answer to the 'Bolshevik heresy.'<sup>57</sup> The corporate system was, he said:

"...in essence traditional, Christian, hierarchical while offering its freest scope to personality and seeking to create in action a regime in which all citizens shall enjoy equal dignity in work, in well-being and in suffering."<sup>58</sup>

The existing state machinery, with the increased responsibilities that it had taken upon itself, was inconsistent with the Pope's ideas.<sup>59</sup> He believed that the drift towards parliamentary totalitarianism could only be prevented by the addition of a vocational structure that would take power from parliament, particularly over economic and social issues, and put the decision-making into the hands of the producers.

Tierney boasted that corporatist ideas were being discussed and adopted across Europe, but reassured the Irish that Ireland would not come to corporatism by the same path as Italy, nor needed it be associated with fascism, dictatorship or totalitarianism.<sup>60</sup> He saw the value of analysing the system as it operated in other countries, especially where circumstances were similar to those in Ireland. However, whereas the situation might be similar, and here he cited Italy before the rise of Mussolini,<sup>61</sup> it was not identical. He was sure that the Italian way, via dictatorship,

---

<sup>55</sup> Notes for lecture by Michael Tierney to YIA on 'The Corporate State', LA30/349, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD Archives.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Speech of Michael Tierney to the YIA, No title, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1934, LA30/349, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD Archives.

<sup>59</sup> M. Tierney, 'Ireland and the Reform of Democracy', *Studies* 23; September 1934, Dublin.

<sup>60</sup> Notes for Lecture by Michael Tierney to YIA on 'The Corporate State', LA30/349, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD Archives.

<sup>61</sup> Notes for speech tot YIA , 13<sup>th</sup> March 1934, LA30/349, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD archives.

would not be the Irish way.<sup>62</sup> There would be no constitutional overhaul, as in Italy, and no revolution.<sup>63</sup> Whereas Mussolini's corporatism was an Italian response to Italian circumstances, Ireland would come to corporatism through the constitutional process. The corporatist idea was not the monopoly of one country and was not tied up with totalitarianism or fascism.

Tierney referred to corporatism as "the guild system brought up to date,"<sup>64</sup> which would reform capitalism by directing it to social ends whilst maintaining private enterprise.<sup>65</sup> The corporate system, like the mediaeval guilds, would have as its ideal:

"...the harmony of differentiated function in Society, which has always been the dominant ideal in sound Christian, and indeed pre-Christian, political philosophy."<sup>66</sup>

Corporatism, therefore, upholds the Christian idea of hierarchy, whilst respecting all individuals as workers. The hierarchic state of the Middle Ages had developed into one where egoism, anarchy and individualism were now in control. Unless something was done, argued Tierney, totalitarianism would be the only way to cope with such anarchy.<sup>67</sup> In advocating corporatism, Tierney claimed that the Irish system of government would be "based rather on Catholic philosophical principles than on the relics of the nineteenth century parliamentary radicalism."<sup>68</sup>

Tierney describes the vocational system as one whose:

"...central ideas are 'autonomy and equality', but it preserves and enables the principles of subordination and discipline upon which the whole structure of State and

---

<sup>62</sup> M. Tierney, 'Nothing Revolutionary in the Corporative System-Syndical System Explained' *United Ireland*, 31<sup>st</sup> March 1934.

<sup>63</sup> M. Tierney, 'Representative Democracy only basis of Irish Government,' *United Ireland*, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1934.

<sup>64</sup> Notes for Lecture by Michael Tierney to YIA on 'The Corporate State' 1934-35, LA30/349, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD archives.

<sup>65</sup> M. Tierney, 'Report on the party's plans to initiate a corporate or guild system through the medium of vocational councils' LA30/350, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD Archives.

<sup>66</sup> Notes for Speech of Professor Tierney to YIA, No title, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1934, LA30/349, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD, Archives.

<sup>67</sup> M. Tierney, 'Ireland and the Corporative State,' *United Ireland*, 16 December 1933.

Society are built.”<sup>69</sup> Because it stressed, as its core ideas, the principles of autonomy and equality, Tierney argued that it therefore “cannot be identified with any transient regime of political dictatorship or nationalist egotism...”<sup>70</sup>

Tierney wanted to modify the political apparatus, not radically alter it. Initially, he envisaged the creation of a corporation in two sections, employers and employed.<sup>71</sup> Once a certain percentage of workers in a trade or occupation had given their support to the syndicate, legal recognition would go to that body, which would then come under state supervision, within statutory limits.<sup>72</sup> The syndicate would have the right to speak for all members of that occupation. To avoid division, there would only be one syndicate for each occupation. The local branches would be supervised by a national corporation whose decisions would be binding on all the branches. A central body would supervise all the different corporations leading eventually to the creation of a Ministry of Corporations.<sup>73</sup>

At a later stage, Tierney envisaged that the Senate would be vocationally organized with the corporations as the electoral body, thus giving the corporations a place in parliament without affecting the part played in representation by universal suffrage.<sup>74</sup>

Tierney said that the two-fold structure would ensure that:

“at the base we will have the national network of vocational groups, bringing together employer and worker, abolishing class distinctions and ensuring the fullest realization of social equality.

---

<sup>68</sup> M. Tierney, ‘Ireland and the Reform of Democracy’, *Studies*: 23, September 1934 (Dublin).

<sup>69</sup> Notes for speech of Professor Tierney to YIA, No Title, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1934, , LA30/349, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD Archives.

<sup>70</sup> M. Tierney, ‘Fine Gael to Adopt Pope’s Social Programme’, *United Ireland*, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1934.

<sup>71</sup> M. Tierney, ‘Report on the party’s plans to initiate a corporate or guild system through the medium of vocational or economic councils’, LA30/350, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD Archives.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> M. Tierney, Notes for Speech to YIA, No Title, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1934, LA30/349, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD Archives.

“At the top we will have the machinery by which these vocational groups will gradually take over into proper and popular control many of the functions now being badly carried out by unqualified or ill-organized bodies or persons.”<sup>75</sup>

In setting up the Senate as a corporative chamber, Tierney envisaged that it would be more than just a consultative body.<sup>76</sup> He wanted a vocational Senate to have the right to initiate and control legislation affecting the economic life of Ireland, thereby separating economics from party politics. It would also have the advantage of having economic matters decided by experts and those involved in the occupation or industry concerned. It would allow farmers, businessmen and workers to defend their own interests, safe from government interference.<sup>77</sup> It would mean parliament giving up its control over a number of key policy areas.

As well as having an economic role, the corporations would also be involved in offering “assistance and education of a professional and national character.”<sup>78</sup> Tierney hoped that this would give workers a sense of responsibility. In giving greater dignity to the worker, the vocational system would put him on the same footing as the management, giving him the same social rights and duties:

“The corporative economy ensures the solidarity of the various factions of production in the general interest.”<sup>79</sup>

Optimistically, Tierney expected the abolition of class and social divisions “by giving every kind of work a recognized and legally protected status.”<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> M. Tierney, ‘Representative Democracy as the Basis for Government’, *United Ireland*, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1934.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> M. Tierney, ‘Report on party’s plans to initiate a corporative or guild system through the medium of vocational or economic councils’, LA30/350, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD Archives.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Speech of Professor Tierney to YIA, No Title, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1934, LA30/349, Michael Tierney Papers, UCD Archives.



Tierney's corporatism was a conservative attempt to deal with the economic problems that beset Ireland in the nineteen-thirties. He wanted a greater role for experts in economic decision-making, a reduction in union power, and a greater concentration on economic and social issues rather than nationalist and constitutional ones. His ideas for developing a second chamber on vocational lines would be discussed, during the nineteen thirties, across the political spectrum. For many, Tierney's vocational ideas, based largely on the Papal encyclicals were the acceptable face of corporatism, particularly amongst the conservatives who dominated Fine Gael. The party adopted a vocational programme as official party policy, but enthusiasm for the idea soon waned when Fine Gael politicians realized that it was not a vote-winner. Corporatism was too closely associated with fascism and authoritarianism in the public's mind to find widespread acceptance.

#### *THE CORPORATISM OF JAMES HOGAN*

James Hogan supplemented the work of Tierney on corporatism with his occasional contributions to the Fine Gael party journal. Neither Tierney nor Hogan were simply 'constitutionalists' but were ambiguous in their views on the relative merits of liberal democracy and fascism.<sup>81</sup> The admiration of Tierney, Hogan and other Treatyites for authoritarianism-which mirrors similar responses by elites when challenged in other countries, for example the Republicans in Spain- followed on from rejection by the electorate in two elections. Hogan was heavily influenced, like Tierney, by the Papal social encyclicals, to which was added a virulent hatred, and fear of communism. He was not a career politician and never held elected office. Hogan was Professor of

---

<sup>81</sup> See Bew et al, *The Dynamics of Irish Politics*.

History at University College, Cork.<sup>82</sup> He had fought in the Irish Civil War, had supported the Treaty and joined Cumann na nGaedheal. On its formation, Hogan joined the Army Comrades Association and was an active member of the Blueshirts throughout its many manifestations. He was also a Vice-President of the Fine Gael/United Ireland Party.<sup>83</sup> He was one of the intellectuals responsible for introducing corporatist ideas into the A.C.A. and into Fine Gael.<sup>84</sup> Hogan was a conservative, and a constitutionalist who, alarmed at the way that O'Duffy seemed to be taking Fine Gael, felt compelled to resign from Fine Gael in late 1934. His resignation began the process which led to O'Duffy's own resignation soon after. Once O'Duffy had left, Hogan rejoined Fine Gael and the League of Youth.<sup>85</sup>

Hogan was heavily motivated by his fears of communism, and the development, by degrees, of Socialism in the Free State. He believed that there was a need to provide a Christian response that would satisfy the needs of the workers, and save them from atheistic communism. Throughout his writings this need to combat communism was ever present. It was an approach that held great appeal for O'Duffy, who had himself been involved, as Chief of Police, in monitoring communism. Hogan claimed to have discovered a major effort by communists to undermine the state and his work helped to fuel the Red Scare in the run-up to the 1932 General Election. He later wrote *Could Ireland Become Communist? The Facts of the Case* in 1935.<sup>86</sup> It chronicled the rise of communism internationally and, also, domestically, with the emergence of the I.R.A. splinter party, Saor Eire.<sup>87</sup> The book catalogued the dangers that he believed communism posed, though the book did not go into any detail of how the state could

---

<sup>82</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 91.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> M. Manning, *The Blueshirts*, p. 75.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. pp. 186-191.

<sup>86</sup> J. Hogan, *Could Ireland Become Communist? The Facts of the Case*. (Dublin, 1935).

<sup>87</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 93.

tackle the communist threat. He reserved the solution to the communist problem to his writings in *United Ireland*.

Hogan was concerned that Socialism was creeping into Irish political culture and that state Socialism along Soviet lines, what he termed ‘Statism,’ was a real threat to Irish democracy.<sup>88</sup> He argued that the faults of capitalism, which needed to be addressed, had caused serious class divisions, which in turn, had led to conflict and unrest.<sup>89</sup> An increase in distrust and mutual antagonism between employer and worker could only lead to class war, which socialists and trade unionists were only too happy to encourage to further their sectional ends. He saw the threat of communism as something on the near horizon, and urged politicians to face up to the challenge immediately.<sup>90</sup>

There was a sense of urgency in his writings. Hogan, in *Could Ireland Become Communist?* clearly stated that there was no room in Catholic Ireland for Socialism, in any way, shape or form:

“Because we are apt to think of ourselves as very different from the people of other countries we are inclined to imagine that it is possible for us to reconcile what in their case we are prepared to admit as irreconcilable. Rather than abandon some cherished hope or give up some pet theory, there will be people to say: ‘We will show in Ireland it is possible to be a Socialist without ceasing to be a Catholic.’ The present Pope in his great and profoundly meditated Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, has summed up and answered that question in the following words: ‘If, like all errors, Socialism contains a certain element of truth, it is nevertheless founded upon a doctrine of human society peculiarly its own, which is truly opposed to true Christianity.

“Religious Socialism”, “Christian Socialism”, are expressions implying a

---

<sup>88</sup> J. Hogan, ‘A Safe Alternative to ‘Statism,’’ *United Ireland*, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1934.

contradiction in terms. No one can be at the same time a sincere Catholic and a true Socialist.”<sup>91</sup>

In order to be able to challenge communism effectively, workers and employers would need to be organized, and capitalism would need to be supervised. In effect, a restructuring of society was needed. However, the move towards a new, organic corporate structure, which was what Hogan was advocating as a Christian bulwark against the threat from the left, could not come about through increasing state power. This would only play into the hands of those he termed the ‘Statists.’ Moreover, setting up the corporate structure from the top down, as in totalitarian states, was alien to the Catholic concept of society.<sup>92</sup> Hogan’s form of corporatism would lead to the devolution of power, not an increase in state control.<sup>93</sup> Like Tierney, Hogan argued that corporatism had nothing to do with authoritarianism or totalitarianism, but that it followed a middle course between individualism and communism, thus reconciling the conflicting claims of collective and individual life. This would provide Ireland with the unity, peace and stability that it so desperately needed. Hogan claimed:

“The truth of the matter is the corporate form of society is not wedded to any particular form of government, whether by kingship, democracy or oligarchy.”<sup>94</sup>

Hogan was opposed to both individualism and communism, which he believed erred against Catholic teaching.<sup>95</sup> The corporative system would avoid “the competitive anarchy of capitalism and the slavery of bureaucratic communism.”<sup>96</sup> Corporatism would reflect the organic nature of society, recognizing that the individual in society,

---

<sup>89</sup> James Hogan, ‘University Support for Corporative Policy’, *United Ireland*, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1934.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> James Hogan, cited by M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 93, from Hogan, J., *Could Ireland Become Communist?* (Dublin, 1935), p. 137.

<sup>92</sup> James Hogan, ‘Production to be Brought Under Discipline. A New structure of Society. Devolution of Power.’ *United Ireland*, 26<sup>th</sup> May 1934.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Quoted by M. Manning, *The Blueshirts*, p. 227, from *United Ireland*, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1934.

<sup>95</sup> James Hogan, ‘The Need for Vocational Organizations’, *United Ireland*, 4<sup>th</sup> October 1933.



could only fulfil his full potential as a participant in society, which should be treated by politicians as an organic whole. For Hogan, corporatism represented “the civil equivalent of Christian theology,”<sup>97</sup> with universal validity, hence its acceptance across Europe. Hogan summarized his approach to corporatism:

“We mean by a Corporative Society, a society in which the family, the occupational group, the State, each having its own sphere of influence and creativity, would nevertheless be organically linked to each other by the fact that all would tend to the same social ends, namely, the highest possible development of the individual within society.”<sup>98</sup>

This did not imply “the corporatizing of the entire life of the nation”<sup>99</sup> as the Christian corporatist state clearly, for Hogan, distinguished between factional state politics and social-economic politics.<sup>100</sup> The corporate state, on the contrary, “develops the individual and harmonizes”<sup>101</sup> it with higher interests, but never absorbs it. Unlike bureaucratic Socialism the corporate state would “stress the creative note of personality in the service of society as opposed to the soulless and impersonal collectivism of Socialism,”<sup>102</sup> which denies the rights of individuals and society. By eliminating conflict and promoting unity by ensuring the “solidarity of the various factions of production in the general interest,”<sup>103</sup> the corporatist state would also be able to fulfil the nationalist idea of unity. Hogan was wary of Irish nationalism. He said that in Ireland, as elsewhere, “an idolatrous nationalism is only too often a cloak for the ugly reality of class war.”<sup>104</sup> By overcoming the antithesis of capital and

---

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> James Hogan, ‘University Support for Corporativism’, *United Ireland*, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1934.

<sup>98</sup> James Hogan, *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> James Hogan, ‘A Safe Alternative to ‘Statism.’’ *United Ireland*, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1934.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> James Hogan, ‘The Need for Vocational Corporations’, *United Ireland*, 4<sup>th</sup> October 1934.

<sup>103</sup> James Hogan, ‘The Formation of Economic Corporations’, *United Ireland*, 21<sup>st</sup> October 1933.

<sup>104</sup> Hogan quoted by M. Manning, *The Blueshirts*, p. 226, from *United Ireland* 19<sup>th</sup> May 1934.

labour, by raising the nation above the divisions of class, the national ideal could be realized, rescuing the nation at the same time from nationalist ‘Statists’<sup>105</sup>, such as Saor Eire, and their allies (that is, De Valera, the IRA, and the trade union movement).

Hogan and Tierney had very similar ideas, but Hogan went into more detail in describing the corporate structure he envisaged. In both, the corporations would be the basis of a planned economy.<sup>106</sup> Hogan saw the corporatization of economic life as a natural development of economic activity, if it was to be directed to a “rational, just, profitable end.”<sup>107</sup> The rapid economic development of the industrial revolution and beyond had made modern states a structurally inter-related whole,<sup>108</sup> and it was therefore necessary for the state to coordinate economic activity so that the whole nation would benefit.

Like Tierney, he envisaged that there would be two separate organizations for workers and employers to begin with, to avoid any initial difficulties. They would be united in a federation under a joint supervisory council with equal representation. Any disagreements between the two subsidiary organizations would go to a labour court, which would have the power to make binding decisions.<sup>109</sup> The role of the corporations would be to maintain just and fixed prices and wages, regulate apprenticeships, uphold quality, promote mutual aid, and make provisions for holidays and insurance.<sup>110</sup> It was expected that the coordination of production at a national level would lead to wage and price stability and significantly reduce unemployment. Hogan stated that a corporation would require a certain percentage of

---

<sup>105</sup> James Hogan, ‘The Formation of Economic Corporation,’ *United Ireland*, October 21<sup>st</sup> 1934.

<sup>106</sup> James Hogan, ‘University Support for Corporative Policy,’ *United Ireland*, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1934.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> James Hogan, ‘The Need for Vocational Corporations,’ *United Ireland*, 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1934.

<sup>109</sup> James Hogan, ‘Production to be Brought Under Discipline,’ *United Ireland*, 26<sup>th</sup> May 1934.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

the workforce in a particular trade to join before it was legally recognized, but suggested a low figure of only twenty per cent.<sup>111</sup> There would only be one legally recognized corporation for each category. Once legally recognized, the corporations would come under state supervision, but he expected them to function democratically. However, in cases of mal-administration, or breaches of the law, the state would have the authority to intervene.<sup>112</sup> These local corporations would in turn come under a National Economic Council for that trade, occupation or industry.<sup>113</sup>

The corporate structure would assist parliament, but would “relieve parliament of a multitude of matters which it was never designed to transact.”<sup>114</sup> The second house, suggested Hogan, might be developed into a corporative, or economic, parliament.<sup>115</sup> Corporatism would serve the task of healing the breach between economics and politics caused by the political divisions associated with parliamentarianism.<sup>116</sup> Hogan predicted that a Department of State would be necessary to supervise the corporations.<sup>117</sup> Hogan recognized that the powers of the corporations and their relationship to a vocational senate would have to be discussed at some length. Personally, Hogan believed that the vocational councils “should have the power to draft a Bill and have it brought before Parliament, and Parliament could refer a Bill to them for report.”<sup>118</sup> The root argument, for Hogan, was that the technical, vocational councils that he envisaged were more suitable, and competent, than Parliament to deal with social and economic matters.

---

<sup>111</sup> James Hogan, ‘The Formation of Economic Corporations’, *United Ireland*, 21<sup>st</sup> October 1934.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> James Hogan, ‘A Safe Alternative to ‘ Statism.’’ *United Ireland*, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1934.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> James Hogan, ‘The Need for Vocational Corporations’, *United Ireland*, 4<sup>th</sup> October 1934.

<sup>117</sup> James Hogan, ‘The Formation of Economic Corporations’, *United Ireland*, 21<sup>st</sup> October 1933.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

This functional, or economic democracy, with its expected wealth of expertise and skill, would complete the democratic process in Ireland, put a much needed brake on the bureaucratisation of politics, and lead to the devolution of power. Its regulation of the economy would “introduce a degree of regulation to ensure an equilibrium between the freedom of private enterprise and the complicated requirements of the social system.”<sup>119</sup> It would restore to the community those rights and obligations that had been neglected with the rise of unfettered capitalism,<sup>120</sup> by tempering the spontaneity of private enterprise for social ends.<sup>121</sup> The multiplicity and division of powers implied in a mixed economy would correct the excesses of increased state control and unbridled capitalism.<sup>122</sup> However, for Hogan the most important result of adopting corporatism would be to heal the class divisions that threatened to lead to class war and the rise of Socialism and communism. For Hogan, it was the urgency of the communist threat that necessitated the immediate addition of vocational bodies to the government structure.

### *FINE GAEL AND CORPORATISM*

For a short time, from 1933 to 1935, the second largest political party in Ireland adopted corporatism as a central plank of its policy platform in order to improve its chances of winning power.<sup>123</sup> These vocational ideas were introduced into the Fine Gael alliance by intellectuals associated with the Blueshirts, who had been advocating corporatism since July 1933.<sup>124</sup> The intellectuals, principally Tierney and Hogan, had enormous influence, especially considering the small corpus of work these men

---

<sup>119</sup> James Hogan, ‘The Need for Vocational Corporation’s, *United Ireland*, 4<sup>th</sup> October 1933.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> James Hogan, ‘A Safe Alternative to ‘Statism.’’ *United Ireland*, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1934.

<sup>123</sup> M. Cronin, ‘Putting New Wine into Old Bottles,’ *European History Quarterly*, 27:1, January 1987, p.96.



produced.<sup>125</sup> Whilst there was strong support from the intellectuals in the party for these ideas, they failed to win widespread support from the grass-roots membership who found the ideas foreign and irrelevant. The intellectuals looked to Europe and specifically Catholic thinkers for their inspiration. Once O'Duffy had left the alliance, the party quickly reverted to policies that were almost indistinguishable from those of the earlier Cumann na nGaedheal party.

The Blueshirt constitution that was adopted shortly after O'Duffy took over as leader in July 1933 contained a clause advocating the adoption of vocationalism and the creation of a corporate state structure.<sup>126</sup> O'Duffy made it a precondition of Blueshirt membership of the Fine Gael alliance that the new party would adopt corporatism as official party policy.<sup>127</sup> The foundation of Fine Gael sparked off a great deal of interest in corporatist ideas and their possible application to Irish politics. The committee set up to draw up the new party's constitution was under the chairmanship of Michael Tierney. James Hogan also sat on the same policy committee. It was an attempt by a number of intellectuals within the party to give Fine Gael the ideological base that its predecessor, Cumann an nGaedheal, clearly lacked. Drawing their inspiration largely from the Papal encyclicals, they were trying to put their stamp on the new organization, and at the same time establish the role of the Blueshirts within the new organization. For the Blueshirts "it was a way to integrate the movement in the state machine" as a uniformed state auxiliary.<sup>128</sup> This was not officially stated in the new party constitution but it was taken as a given by Blueshirts entering the new coalition.<sup>129</sup>

---

<sup>124</sup> J.M. Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936*, (Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1999) p. 337.

<sup>125</sup> M. Cronin, 'Putting New Wine into Old Bottles,' p. 96.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, p.337.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, p.352.

<sup>128</sup> J.Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-36*, p.352.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. p353.

The Fine Gael party politicians and the party journal, *United Ireland*, promoted corporatist ideas, though some Fine Gael leaders such as Blythe, FitzGerald, O'Duffy and O'Higgins were more vocal than others in its advocacy.<sup>130</sup> Articles advocating corporatism appeared on a weekly basis in the Fine Gael party newspaper, and were devoted to promoting corporatism, commenting on its progress abroad, and detailing how it could be implemented in Ireland. The titles of some of the articles are worth perusing as an indication of their general content and as an indication of Fine Gael's policy direction:

'The need for vocational corporations-limitations of Parliamentary Democracy. Antithesis of Socialism.'<sup>131</sup>

'The formation of economic corporations. A uniform pattern not desirable. Industrial Courts with final jurisdiction needed.'<sup>132</sup>

'The need for economic corporations-abolition of class conflict-Popular confidence in the State-Failure of laissez-faire.'<sup>133</sup>

'Vocational groups-Fine Gael's policy in harmony with Papal Encyclical. Pope condemns individualism.'<sup>134</sup>

'Production to be brought under discipline-A new structure of society. Devolution of power.'<sup>135</sup>

'Editorial-Corporative system and labour.'<sup>136</sup>

'The brave, new Ireland of tomorrow. What an Irish Corporative System might mean. Humanizing national economic life.'<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> M.Manning, *The Blueshirts*, p.230.

<sup>131</sup> *United Ireland*, 'The Need for Vocational Corporations', 4<sup>th</sup> October 1933.

<sup>132</sup> *United Ireland*, 'The formation of economic corporations', 21<sup>st</sup> October 1933.

<sup>133</sup> *United Ireland*, 'The need for economic corporations', 6<sup>th</sup> January 1934.

<sup>134</sup> *United Ireland*, 'Vocational groups', 10<sup>th</sup> March 1934.

<sup>135</sup> *United Ireland*, 'Production to be brought under discipline', 26<sup>th</sup> May 1934.

<sup>136</sup> *United Ireland*, 'Editorial', 30<sup>th</sup> June 1934.

<sup>137</sup> *United Ireland*, 'The Brave New Ireland of Tomorrow', 1<sup>st</sup> September 1934.

‘ Machinery and Spirit in the Corporate State. Effecting the transformation of political activity. Greater harmony and happiness.’<sup>138</sup>

‘ To end bitter party strife. The political outlook formed during the Civil War. New alignments under Corporate System.’<sup>139</sup>

‘ An Irish corporate system, Catholic principles the essential element of foundation. Importance of the Pope’s encyclical.’<sup>140</sup>

‘ P.R. and ‘Corporative system.’ The possibilities of non-party Government. Dictatorship unnecessary.’<sup>141</sup>

Blueshirt publications gave even greater space to promoting Fine Gael’s corporatist ideas, and the national press devoted considerable column inches to the subject in response to Fine Gael’s policy stance. This included giving considerable space to reporting the speeches of Fine Gael politicians on the subject.

The policy committee on the party constitution, which reported to the National Executive of Fine Gael in November 1934, initially adopted a clause that committed the party to a corporate political structure, without going into detail concerning its organization or implementation.<sup>142</sup> The party declared that they would adopt as part of their policy:

“...the planning of our national economic life with a view to increased industrialized efficiency and harmony by the organization of industrial corporations with statutory powers, assisted by industrial courts and functioning under the guidance of a national economic council.”<sup>143</sup>

<sup>138</sup> *United Ireland*, ‘Machinery and Spirit of the Corporative State’, 15<sup>th</sup> September 1934.

<sup>139</sup> *United Ireland*, ‘To End Bitter Party Strife’, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1934.

<sup>140</sup> *United Ireland*, , 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1934. ‘An Irish Corporative System’

<sup>141</sup> *United Ireland*, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1935. PR. and ‘Corporative System,’

<sup>142</sup> J.M. Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936*, p. 352.

<sup>143</sup> As cited in K. Mullarkey, ‘Ireland, the Pope and Vocationalism,’ p.111, Ed. Joost Augusteijn, *Ireland in the 1930s* (Four Courts Press: Dublin, 1999).

It was the speech by General O'Duffy at the party *Ard Fheis* in February 1934 that gave substance to the ideas. The party published the speech as "An Outline of the Political, Social and Economic Policy of Fine Gael (United Ireland)." The speech was shot through with references to the underlying vocational ideas of men like Tierney and Hogan. It meant a sea-change for the party coalition, committing them to a whole new political agenda that would "turn its back on the philosophy of individualism and State intervention and follow instead a philosophy of complete involvement and representation for all in society, most specifically in their respective sphere of economic interest."<sup>144</sup> The speech detailed the specific working of the vocational system, which O'Duffy called a "Christian Social Programme."<sup>145</sup> The programme, based largely on the ideas of the Papal encyclicals clearly looked to the continent for its inspiration. Placing their corporatism in a European context, *United Ireland* declared:

"We are Europeans and obviously continental philosophies will affect us here. Fascism and Bolshevism are in a conflict we cannot avoid, and we will have to embrace one of the two, but as Irishmen there cannot be any doubt about what our choice will be."<sup>146</sup>

O'Duffy reiterated his commitment to corporatism in his speech to the Blueshirt Congress in August 1934. In reviewing the corporatist policy of Fine Gael, O'Duffy proudly claimed that it was this idea that:

"...we brought with us as our chief contribution to the policy of the united organization, and which was unanimously accepted and which is now the chief plank in the policy of Fine Gael for the rehabilitation of Ireland."<sup>147</sup>

---

<sup>144</sup> M.Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p.82.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, p.82.

<sup>146</sup> *United Ireland*, 3 February 1934, 'The New Democracy'.

<sup>147</sup> O'Duffy quoted in M. Manning, *The Blueshirts*, p. 141.



Following the party *Ard Fheis* in February 1934, O'Duffy toured the country promoting the party's corporatism. He made two key speeches, one at Kildare on 25<sup>th</sup> February and one at Sligo on 11<sup>th</sup> March, which Fine Gael published in its policy series.<sup>148</sup> These two publications summarize the corporatist ideas of Fine Gael.

In his 1934 *Ard Fheis* speech, O'Duffy put corporatism at the very centre of Fine Gael's programme. The party called for the restructuring of Irish society along corporate lines. He presented the new policy as a distinctly Irish system, opposed to the individualism and state interventionism inherited from Britain, and promoted by De Valera and Fianna Fail.<sup>149</sup> The system was sold as Ireland's alternative to communism, in line with Papal social thought, with the aim of uniting Irishmen and women in a system that would guarantee liberty and make them able to "serve the actual needs and fill the actual economic conditions of Irish life."<sup>150</sup> O'Duffy claimed to be championing the cause of the workers, declaring in a speech at Sligo on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1934 that he had "an appreciation of the position of the working man,"<sup>151</sup> and claimed that the Blueshirts themselves were a "workingmen's association,"<sup>152</sup> whose members were "farmer's sons and labourers, many of them unemployed."<sup>153</sup>

The *Ard Fheis* speech reflected Tierney's corporatist ideas to the letter. Workers' and employers' associations would combine in a Federation which would elect members to a National Economic Council. Strikes and lockouts would be made illegal. Any disputes between the associations would be dealt with by an impartial Industrial Court whose decisions would be binding on all parties. The speech

---

<sup>148</sup> E. O'Duffy, *The Labour Policy of Fine Gael*, (Fine Gael Policy Series, no.2: Dublin, 1934).

<sup>149</sup> E. O'Duffy, *An Outline of the Political, Social and Economic Policy of Fine Gael*, (Fine Gael Policy Series no.1: Dublin, 1934).

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>151</sup> Quoted in E. Broderick, 'The Corporate Policy of Fine Gael,' in *Irish Historical Studies*; 29 May 1994.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

predicted the withering away of political parties, as they would be a meaningless encumbrance to the new arrangement. The corporations would work out policies which the *Dail*, representing the ‘National Interest,’ would pass.<sup>154</sup> Fine Gael put agriculture at the centre of Ireland’s economic development, and the source of Ireland’s wealth, and recognized that, as a result of its key economic role, the agricultural corporation would be the most powerful.<sup>155</sup>

As Cronin describes it: “The Christian Social Programme, as O’Duffy called it, was a completely new departure for Irish politics.”<sup>156</sup> As a new policy, the party was careful to put it into a context likely to appeal to a traditional, rural, nationalist and Catholic electorate. O’Duffy said:

“If you read my Kildare speech, in so far as it dealt with labour policy, you will see that what we are about to do is to establish on lines suited to Irish needs and conditions the kind of vocational organizations which the present pope has recommended as necessary to stand between the individual and the state machinery.”<sup>157</sup>

The stress in Fine Gael’s corporatism was on reforming capitalism by instituting some form of planning to economic life and protecting the worker from the excesses of capitalism and the threat from extremist alternatives, thus “...it will save us from communism and bring order out of chaos...it will preserve private property.”<sup>158</sup>

O’Duffy could not let go of the bogey of communism, even though since the Red Scare of 1932 there had been no discernable increase in communist activity in Ireland. In response to accusations of fascism from the left, O’Duffy and Fine Gael were at pains to deny that corporatism meant totalitarianism, though O’Duffy did not flinch

---

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 83.

<sup>157</sup> O’Duffy speech at Sligo, 11<sup>th</sup> March 1934, *The Labour policy of Fine Gael*.

from admitting that Mussolini's corporatist organization was the model that the party looked to for inspiration. At Kildare, O'Duffy had admitted that the Fine Gael "corporate system [was] modelled roughly on that which is giving good results in Italy."<sup>159</sup> The policy, O'Duffy argued, was based on foreign examples but adapted to Irish needs.<sup>160</sup> The party journal, however, was not averse to publishing book titles for readers to build up their knowledge of corporatism. *United Ireland* suggested that readers might like to consult *The Universal Aspects of Fascism* by W.J.S. Barnes, *The Italian Corporate State* by F.Pitigliani, *The Economic Foundations of Fascism* by A. Einzig, and *The Working of a Corporative State* by H.E Good and M. Currey.<sup>161</sup>

Fine Gael was not advocating a statist form of corporatism, thus reflecting the ideas of Hogan. The system it was offering the electorate, whilst radical, focused on the fact that it was partly autonomous and partly under state regulation. Fine Gael claimed that its societal form of corporatism would reduce the role of the state, though it is difficult how to see how this was possible given the economic history of the Free State to that point. State interference had been minimal, in comparison to what the party was now advocating. For O'Duffy, the programme he was promoting as leader of Fine Gael was the corporatist minimum. He was not an intellectual himself, and relied on others to provide the theories and policies he was to advocate. It would not be long before he found the corporatist minimum of Fine Gael was not radical enough and that statist corporatism was, for him, the answer to Ireland's ills.

Fine Gael's adoption of corporatism elicited a hostile response from other political groups. Earlier, its adoption as Blueshirt policy caused Senator Thomas Johnson of the Labour Party to announce:

---

<sup>158</sup> O'Duffy speech at Kildare 25<sup>th</sup> February 1934, *The Labour Policy of Fine Gael*.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> O'Duffy speech at Sligo, 11<sup>th</sup> March 1934, *The Labour Policy of Fine Gael*.

<sup>161</sup> *United Ireland*, 15 September 1934, 'Books on the Corporative System-Educating Public Opinion.'

“We had a number of declarations...all deliberately I think...to spread the idea abroad that the National Guard under the leadership of General O’Duffy was a new Fascist organization, a new Hitlerite organization, with Irish associations.”<sup>162</sup>

The Irish labour Party and Irish TUC distributed a pamphlet, *A Manifesto Against Fascism*, to the public outside Connolly railway station in May 1934. The document stated that the pronouncements on labour by members of Fine Gael “constitute a grave danger to the free existence of trade unions as well as pointing to the overthrow of democratic government.”<sup>163</sup> They declared that the aim of the corporate state was:

“To replace Trade Unions, puppet organizations will be established with constitutions and rules drafted by the Government, who will appoint the officers and control their policy...Here is the graveyard of civil liberty.”<sup>164</sup>

In its fourth *Annual Report*, the Labour Party devoted considerable space to what it termed “The Menace of Fascism.”<sup>165</sup> The report stressed the seeming ambivalence of the Blueshirts and Fine Gael as to the source of their ideas, sometimes admitting, sometimes denying, that the main source of their corporatism was continental fascism.<sup>166</sup> The Labour Party highlighted the position of the corporatists when it came to the unemployed, denying the man his dole, the determination of wages by the state, and an end to the strike power. The document also warns that the adoption of the Blueshirt/Fine Gael programme would lead to a “...Fascist state from which individual liberty and representative government will have disappeared.”<sup>167</sup>

---

<sup>162</sup> Senator Thomas Johnson, Seanad Eireann Debates. xvii, 1165, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1933. National Archives of Ireland,

<sup>163</sup> *Manifesto issued jointly by the Administrative Council of the Irish Labour Party and the National Executive of the Irish TUC, May 6<sup>th</sup> 1934.*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> *Report of the Administrative Council of the Irish labour Party for the Year 1933-34.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*



In the light of the opposition to the new policy of Fine Gael, the key question is how deep was the new party's commitment to corporatist ideas? The party felt the need for a clear ideological identity, which the vocational ideas of Tierney and others seemed to provide. The corporatist ideas attracted a few new members to the party and to the Blueshirt movement, but failed to have a large-scale effect on recruitment, as evidenced by the declining number of party branches after the adoption of a corporatist programme.<sup>168</sup> It is clear that the adoption of corporatist ideas was the work of a core group of enthusiasts and intellectuals who had entered the coalition on the proviso that their vocational ideas become official policy. Traditional conservatives in the party such as Cosgrave gave lip service to the ideas, but little more. After the departure of O'Duffy, even the Blueshirts under Cronin gradually let the corporatist ideas slip away, though continuing to advocate corporatism for a short time after it was dropped as Fine Gael policy at the party *Ard Fheis* on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1935.<sup>169</sup> This in itself is indicative of the tensions and splits within the Fine Gael coalition on an ideological level. Its speedy abandonment by Fine Gael reveals that the ideas failed to win large-scale support amongst rank and file members, or in Ireland as a whole. For most members of the party the issue was an academic one that had little relevance for them. Frank MacDermott, who had united his Centre Party with the Blueshirts and Cumann na nGaedheal, had never promoted corporatism, and on the exit of O'Duffy he criticized Fine Gael, which he was soon to leave, for adopting corporatist ideas which he called "flirting with fascism."<sup>170</sup> O'Duffy, once he had resigned from the party, was scathing in his attacks on Fine Gael, not least for their lukewarm advocacy of corporatism, which he believed they did not take

---

<sup>168</sup> M.Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 104.

<sup>169</sup> J.M.Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936*, p. 370.

<sup>170</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 8<sup>th</sup> December 1934, 'Editorial.'

seriously.<sup>171</sup> *The Blueshirt* published an article on Fine Gael's luke-warm attitude to the subject, declaring that Fine Gael politicians had paid little heed to the corporate policy of the party:

“The policy did not advance. It was stifled by minor policies, but these are hardly more important than the nation's welfare in defeating anarchism and communism.”<sup>172</sup>

The departure of O'Duffy, and the end to vocational policies by the party, meant that Fine Gael “retreated back into the ideological void of Cumann na nGaedheal.”<sup>173</sup>

The corporatism of Fine Gael had not inspired the electorate to return a Fine Gael government, and with the departure of the Blueshirt faction and its enthusiasm for the idea, Fine Gael reverted to a more traditional conservative political platform. The lack of any new ideas, and the stigma of its flirtation with corporatism, which increasingly was equated with European-wide totalitarianism, would condemn Fine Gael to years in the political wilderness. This leads to a discussion of the corporatist ideas of Ernest Blythe, who had little influence on Fine Gael, but enormous influence on O'Duffy in advocating a statist form of corporatism.

#### *THE CORPORATIST PROGRAMME OF ERNEST BLYTHE*

Ernest Blythe took the corporatist ideas of Tierney and Hogan and created his own policies and programmes, schemes and frameworks. A leading light in the Blueshirt movement from its earliest days, Blythe came to believe that the corporatization of Ireland and would depend on the Blueshirts for its implementation. O'Duffy came to adopt Blythe's corporatist ideas over those of Tierney and Hogan, and when he

---

<sup>171</sup> Manning, *The Blueshirts*, p. 230.

<sup>172</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 20<sup>th</sup> October 1934, 'The Blueshirts and the Corporative System.'

<sup>173</sup> A. Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936*, p. 370.

created his own political organization independent of Fine Gael, it was Blythe's ideas that formed the bedrock of NCP policy, even though Blythe himself remained within Fine Gael. Blythe had taken the ideas of the party's corporatist intellectuals and added a political dimension of his own. He turned these ideas into a detailed plan for the new corporate structure which he came to believe would largely replace the existing parliamentary structure. It would depend on the Blueshirts being given, and maintaining, a key role in Irish political life. Speaking at Newbliss, Co. Monaghan, on June 29<sup>th</sup> 1934, Blythe stated that the Blueshirts were not just a temporary part of the Fine Gael election machine, but that once the party was elected to government they would be as much a part of the State as the Civic Guards or the National Army. In carrying out the corporate policy of O'Duffy, they would change the country just as much as Sinn Fein had after 1918.<sup>174</sup>

Blythe, as a key figure in the new Fine Gael coalition, devoted much of his time, as a career politician, to articulating the ideas of others into practical party programmes. He was able to take the ideas and then adapt them. He had accepted corporatism as Blueshirt policy and enthusiastically promoted it as the practical implementation of the Papal social encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*. Gradually, his corporatism moved in a more authoritarian, statist direction that distanced himself, and O'Duffy, from men such as Tierney and Hogan. It was a direction that could be perceived as fascist. A number of key documents written by Blythe reveal this drift in direction. They are: 'The Heads of Policy'<sup>175</sup>, outlining Fine Gael's political programme, 'Preliminary Notes on Planned Economics',<sup>176</sup> a 'Memo on Vocational Corporations',<sup>177</sup> Notes on

---

<sup>174</sup> *Irish Times*, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1934.

<sup>175</sup> Ernest Blythe, *Heads of Policy*, Ernest Blythe Papers P/24/677, UCD Archives.

<sup>176</sup> Ernest Blythe, *Preliminary Notes on Planned Economics*, Ernest Blythe Papers, P/24/678, UCD Archives.

<sup>177</sup> Ernest Blythe, *Memo on Vocational Corporations*, Ernest Blythe Papers, P/24/679, UCD Archives.

the Idea of Vocational Corporations as Recognized by the Present Pope,'<sup>178</sup> and 'An Agricultural Corporation.'<sup>179</sup> Together, the documents outline a plan for the corporatization of Irish political life that Fine Gael would reject, but which was enthusiastically taken up by O'Duffy, his Blueshirt faction and later, his National Corporate Party.

The development of capitalism and the piecemeal interference by the state to remedy injustices and alleviate problems was for Blythe, as for many corporatists, the starting point of his argument for the need for corporatism. He argued that there was a need for an economic plan, under the supervision of corporatist organizations, to overcome the chaos into which capitalism was developing. In his 'Preliminary Notes on Planned Economics,'<sup>180</sup> he argued the case for a planned economy in which agriculture, which he described as an industry, would play the central role. He saw "the vital necessity of a comprehensive economic plan embracing all forms of economic activity..."<sup>181</sup> He was realistic enough to recognize that Ireland, as a small nation, could not compete internationally when it came to industry. He hoped that the industrial base he envisaged, built on the foundation of agriculture, would offer "the complete supply of the needs of the home market,"<sup>182</sup> though this in itself was tied up with the purchasing power of the agricultural sector. The need for a regulated price for agricultural produce was given as one of the reasons for the need for a planned economy. A planned economy would also move agriculture away from subsistence farming to production for the national good, a policy bound to appeal to larger and medium-sized farmers than to the smallholders of the west of Ireland, thus appealing

---

<sup>178</sup> Ernest Blythe, *Notes on the Idea of Vocational Corporations as Recognized by the 'Present Pope,'* Ernest Blythe Papers, P/24/681, UCD Archives.

<sup>179</sup> Ernest Blythe, *An Agricultural Corporation*, Ernest Blythe Papers, P/24680 (b), UCD Archives.

<sup>180</sup> Ernest Blythe, *Preliminary Notes on Planned Economics*, Ernest Blythe Papers P/24/678, UCD Archives.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*



to the traditional voters of the Fine Gael coalition. Such a policy could only be achieved through central economic planning, which would also require strict supervision and control of imports. The long-term effects of such a policy would be to consolidate agriculture as the major source of Ireland's wealth in order to lay the foundations for industrial production for domestic use rather than export. It was this autarkic strain in Blythe's thought that led him to stress the need for the state "to produce as much of our annual requirements as is economically possible."<sup>183</sup>

Central to the planned economy were the vocational councils that the party proposed "for the purpose of organizing more intelligently and harmoniously the industrial life of the country."<sup>184</sup> Blythe enthusiastically advocated the creation of a corporate structure to take on some of the burdens of an increasingly complex economic system:

"The object of the Vocational Corporations contemplated in the policy memorandum will be to provide a means whereby the Government or a Department of State may ascertain the views of a particular industry taken as a whole. They will also serve to provide conciliation machinery between employers and employed. The Vocational Corporations ought in operation to lead to greater efficiency in industry by settling in a reasonable and considered way many things that are now left unsettled or even decided in a more or less haphazard way."<sup>185</sup>

The Memo on Vocational Corporations articulated the ideas of Tierney and Hogan in a practical programme, and their ideas run through the entire document. The development of the vocational system was to be gradual and flexible, initially with sections for employer and employed, organized on vertical lines with all members of

---

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ernest Blythe, *Heads of Policy*, Ernest Blythe Papers, P/24/677, UCD Archives.

<sup>185</sup> Ernest Blythe, *Memo on Vocational Corporations*, Ernest Blythe Papers P/24/679, UCD Archives.

the same industry, irrespective of trade, in one corporation.<sup>186</sup> National corporations would include all sectors of the industry and reflect the geographical distribution of the trade.<sup>187</sup> Government-appointed consultants representing the public would attend meetings of the National Council of the Corporations, advising and tending information.<sup>188</sup> The Government would consult the corporations when relevant legislation arose, whilst the corporation itself might prepare legislation for Government debate.<sup>189</sup> Corporations would deal with matters of pay, conditions of work and insurance and a judicial body would settle disputes arising between workers and management.<sup>190</sup> Blythe, like Tierney and Hogan was advocating a form of corporatism very much in line with the Papal encyclicals, with their stress on corporations as adjuncts to the state. Blythe was moving on however, and this document was his baseline. In future Blythe was to move away from this corporatist minimum and fall more in line with the corporatism of Mussolini.

In 'Notes on the Idea of Vocational Corporations as Recommended by the Present Pope',<sup>191</sup> Blythe continued to elaborate on the Tierney-Hogan corporate line. He stressed the urgent need to develop the Vatican's social programme in order to prevent the "soul-destroying absolutism of communism"<sup>192</sup> taking root in Ireland. He continued to stress the need for flexibility and gradualness, but he had also moved on in his ideas. He began to stress that the National Corporations would be more representative of the workforce than parliamentary government and to this end, all

---

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ernest Blythe, *Notes on the Idea of Vocational Corporations as Recommended by the 'Present Pope'*, Ernest Blythe Papers P/24/681, UCD Archives.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

workers would have to join a vocational body. He spoke of an end to party politics as the new structure:

“...would do away with the necessity for the formation of political parties representing particular classes of economic interests. Once the corporations were established it would in fact become necessary that the parliament should represent, in all cases, the ‘National Interest.’ Of course, the establishment of the corporations would relieve parliament of many functions.”<sup>193</sup>

Parliament’s role would significantly change under this form of corporatism, acting as little more than a sounding board of a vaguely defined national interest, and reduced to a ratifying chamber. In a speech at Middleton, County Cork, Blythe referred to the parliamentary system as “kangaroo democracy.”<sup>194</sup> The shift was clear. Blythe was advocating that the role of the corporations would be less supportive and more directive. He envisaged a corporative structure where the corporations would have the key role and where an end to the party political process was encouraged.

‘An Agricultural Corporation’<sup>195</sup> not only gave a detailed outline of the implementation of corporatism and its specific structure, but significantly gave the Blueshirts the key role in ensuring its continued success. Cronin noted this change of emphasis:

“This document demonstrates that Blythe is applying his intellectual ideas in a different way to Tierney and the others...Blythe was the most committed Blueshirt of all the intellectuals and it is possible to argue, the intellectual steering most closely to fascism. Blythe’s thinking, and the use of the Blueshirts, goes far beyond an Irish

---

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Blythe speaking at Middleton Co. Cork, quoted in *Republican Congress*, 2 June 1934, ‘What Fascism Means.’

<sup>195</sup> Ernest Blythe, *An Agricultural Corporation*, Ernest Blythe Papers, P/24/680 (b), UCD Archives.

adaptation of *Quadragesimo Anno*. Blythe is using the encyclical as a basis for ideas that will lead to Blueshirt control of all spheres of life.”<sup>196</sup>

‘An Agricultural Corporation’<sup>197</sup> is Blythe’s detailed plan for a vocational system, using agriculture as the main example. The tone of the document is more prescriptive than his previous expositions of the corporate idea, and he stressed a central role for the National Guard from the very first paragraph:

“1) It is doubtful if any guild or corporation which would be a valuable addition to the Governmental and economic machinery of the state could be established and run without the cooperation of a voluntary disciplined public service organization like the National Guard again become non-political.”<sup>198</sup>

The corporatism he was now advocating was built on a pyramid structure, beginning at the parish level and extending through district council, county councils and constituency councils to the national level. Blythe believed that such an electoral structure would ensure that:

“...no farmer could reach the national council unless he was a man in whom a great number of his fellow farmers had confidence...no an can each the top without satisfying the selecting authorities (who would reflect the community as a whole) that he had the broad moderate patriotic public-spirited outlook necessary to deal with all problems not of the farmers merely but all Irishmen.”<sup>199</sup>

The Blueshirts were to be involved in the electoral process at every stage. He argued that the selection of candidates could not be left to the whim of the vocational electorate. The involvement of the National Guard would ensure that only “successful

---

<sup>196</sup> M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 97.

<sup>197</sup> Ernest Blythe, *An Agricultural Corporation*, Ernest Blythe Papers, P/24/680 (b), UCD Archives.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.



and industrious farmers living by the land”<sup>200</sup> would win office, and that those farmers selected toed the Blueshirt line. Selection began at a parish meeting, but attendance was not open to all members of corporations. The parish council meeting would be attended only by:

“...the most industrious, most hard honest and most patriotic of the farmers of the parish [who] would be summoned by the appropriate officer of the National Guard. The number summoned might be anything from a tenth to a quarter of the farmers of the parish”<sup>201</sup>, irrespective of the size of their farms.

Even at this low level in the pyramidal electoral process, there was no real democracy. The National Guard had the job of selecting a minority of electors at their own personal whim, rejecting “the very old, those who had an ill-reputation, the windbags, the notoriously lazy, the drunkards, those who for any reason were notoriously bad farmers.”<sup>202</sup> Blythe’s scheme did state that in selecting the parish electors the National Guard officer would consult an informal committee of representatives from the parish, but the role of this body was purely advisory. At the parish meeting panels of candidates would be chosen to represent the different types of farm in the parish, for example, poultry, pig farmers and graziers.

The next stage in the process was intended to be the parish Panelmen’s meeting at which a National Guard Officer would select one person from each panel to represent the parish at the district council. It was expected that the officer would not choose anyone against whom strong feelings were registered. Clearly, at this level, and throughout the process, the involvement of the farmers was consultative rather than elective. Because selection at the parish level, the lowest level in the pyramid process,

---

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

was under the control of the National Guard, the NCP would effectively control the whole election system, ensuring Blueshirt supporters were elected at every level.

The district council level of selection would be attended by those chosen at parish level from the panels selected by the National Guard officer. Once again, the District council elections were “attended by a National Guard Officer of higher rank than the officer deputed to deal with parish meetings.”<sup>203</sup> It was this higher-ranking officer who “would choose from each panel a member to represent the district on the council for the county.”<sup>204</sup> This was subject to approval from National Guard headquarters, placing control firmly in the hands of the National Guard central command structure, and ultimately, the Director-General.

The county council of the Agricultural Corporation would consist of these district delegates as well as representatives of ancillary industries, chosen again by a member of the National Guard from panels which represented associated industries such as the creameries, veterinary surgeons and agricultural merchants. These county councils were to meet regularly and carry out the functions of the former county council agricultural committee. They would also discuss any bills relating to agriculture that were to be introduced in the *Dail*. A paid, part-time secretary would “furnish the Government with reports of the committee’s views on all such legislative proposals.”<sup>205</sup>

The National Council of the Agricultural Corporation, formed from representatives from the counties, would meet monthly. Each county would send from three to five representatives from the county panels to represent all types of agriculture and ancillary trades and industries. The National Council would elect a Chairman who would act as Minister for Agriculture. The National Council would take on the

---

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

committee stage reading of all pertinent bills. The council also would have the power to draft bills and send them to the *Dail*. On the receipt of the bill by the Clerk of the *Dail*, it would be deemed to have had its first reading. The Agricultural Corporation would elect two members of the *Dail*.<sup>206</sup>

A less wieldy body of twenty members would form a Standing Committee that would meet on a fortnightly basis. Its main task would be to enquire into any agriculture-related business before the *Dail* and provide “a statement of its views of the effect on agriculture of every piece of ordinary legislation.”<sup>207</sup>

All the councils at every level were to be elected for four years, and each was to meet on a monthly basis to discuss agricultural issues and pass on their views to a higher level in the pyramid structure. Blythe intended that the system would ensure that farmers’ views were taken into account when their interests were at stake or their expertise was required for the national good.

Blythe had moved a long way from his earlier corporatist ideas based on *Quadragesimo Anno*. In Blythe’s policy document ‘An Agricultural Corporation,’ he was advocating Blueshirt control over the electoral apparatus that would create the vocational councils. His scheme did not guarantee full involvement by everyone in an occupation, only a small minority that Blueshirt officers felt were suitable, and amenable to Blueshirt policy. The system made some allowance for consultation, but this was in an advisory capacity. The pyramid structure, with one level electing a higher level, but with Blueshirt control at the base, ensured that the democratic process was ham-strung from the start. It allowed for totalitarian control by the Blueshirts acting on instructions from Headquarters. The hierarchical command of the

---

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

National Guard ensured that control was ultimately exercised by the Director-General. The system did not do away with politics as Blythe predicted, only with competitive politics, replacing them with a totalitarian solution that would allow for only one political programme, that of the Blueshirts.

Blythe was aware that many opponents would interpret his proposals as fascist and he was correct. He said: "This may be attacked as undemocratic and fascist but it is necessary."<sup>208</sup> Gomez Homen had reported to Mussolini that Blythe was well-read in the primary sources of fascism and was more than willing to lead Ireland in a corporatist direction.<sup>209</sup> It is a fascist form of corporatism that is most in evidence in this document. O'Duffy found these ideas very attractive and adopted them after his split with Fine Gael, and as the cornerstone of his new party's election programme. Blythe, choosing to remain within Fine Gael, found that the party hierarchy rejected his extremist ideas and within a short while jettisoned its experiment with corporatism. Blythe, meanwhile, kept to his extremist views and proceeded to propagate and expound upon them as a leading theoretician within Ailtiri na hAiseirighe.

## *CONCLUSION*

Corporatist ideas were seriously discussed, and implemented, particularly in Catholic countries such as Austria, Portugal, Italy and Ireland, whilst fascism made them even more popular in the inter-war period. The crisis of capitalism, evidenced in the Depression, led politicians and intellectuals to consider the need for radical solutions to reform a system which clearly was not working. Countries such as Italy,

---

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.



Austria and Portugal all adopted variations of corporatism, but nowhere was a complete system put in place. The models to which corporatists in other countries looked for inspiration were incomplete structures. Any economic success that arose in these countries came in spite of corporatism, not because of it. As the thirties progressed, corporatism became tainted by its association with fascism and its earlier appeal was rapidly subsumed under the barrage of negative propaganda associated with repressive regimes.

Irish Catholics seized upon corporatism as an expression of Ireland's religious identity, marking Ireland out as different from Britain, and the institutions and political culture it had bequeathed to Ireland. Cumann na nGaedheal had suffered a severe blow in defeat in two elections and appeared to be suffering an identity crisis. The rapid rise of the Blueshirt movement in 1932-33, and its connection with the former governing party of the Free State, provided Cumann na nGaedheal/Fine Gael with an answer to its problem of recruitment and identity. The prospect of having a young, committed and organized ally, coupled with the Blueshirt movement's precarious legal position, led to the union of Cumann na nGaedheal with the Blueshirts and the Centre Party under the proviso that the new party adopt corporatism as its central plank. The need for a new policy led to a flurry of activity amongst corporatist idealists in the new coalition to come up with a programme that would win the party electoral success, with vocational ideas at the forefront of the party's new identity.

The first year of the party's existence was dominated by the Blueshirts in the coalition, with their leader at the helm as party president. The commitment of the other members of the coalition to these new ideas was at best lukewarm, and though

---

<sup>209</sup> Keogh, D., *Ireland and Europe 1919-48* (Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1988).

the party journal gave space to their promotion there is a distinct lack of enthusiasm in speeches made by former members of Cumann na nGaedheal in support of the ideas, something of which O'Duffy was increasingly aware. O'Duffy's own corporatist ideas were also developing on different lines from even his Blueshirt colleagues, and were combined with an increasingly vocal admiration for fascism. O'Duffy came to accept the ideas of Ernest Blythe as a more radical alternative to the papal-inspired ideas of Tierney and Hogan and an acrimonious split with Fine Gael became inevitable. Though the party and Cronin's followers promoted corporatism for a time the policies were soon dropped, leaving O'Duffy's miniscule National Corporate Party as the only Irish party promoting corporatist ideas. His failure to inspire more than a handful of followers is an indication of the increasing indifference to vocationalism/corporatism amongst a population who had found that they had little desire to follow the route of many other Catholic countries in Europe who had found that the adoption of corporatism meant a significant curtailment of freedom.

## CHAPTER FIVE: FASCISM AND CORPORATISM IN IRISH POLITICS AFTER THE GREENSHIRTS

### *INTRODUCTION*

General O'Duffy failed to revive the National Corporate Party after his return from Spain in 1937, but this was not the end of his involvement in Irish politics, nor the end of the political ideas that he espoused. Over the next ten years, several organizations advocating corporatism appeared on the Irish political scene. Whilst membership of the groups was small, they were significant in providing a home for former Blueshirts and Greenshirts and fascist/authoritarian ideas. One of the groups, the Irish Christian Front, had a brief but important role in Irish politics, but the others were shadowy organizations with small memberships, short lives, and little influence. One political movement, Ailtiri na hAiseirighe (Architects of Resurrection), was significant in being the only one of these political formations to win elections, albeit at a local level. The importance in studying these ephemeral groups is that it allows us to analyse the ideas of men such as O'Duffy, Blythe and their followers in the light of their later political careers. Men like O'Duffy and Blythe had been key figures in the twenties and thirties, and their ideas had found a place in the political mainstream, as their prominence in the second largest party, *Fine Gael* indicates.

What will become clear in this chapter is that the ideas that men like O'Duffy, Gunning, Belton, McCabe and Blythe had begun to articulate in the Blueshirt period, amidst accusations of fascism (which they were at pains to deny), were their genuine political beliefs. Most of the political groups examined in this chapter were blatantly pro-fascist, anti-democratic and totalitarian in intent and went completely against the grain of Irish political culture as it had developed since independence.

The Emergency<sup>1</sup> in Ireland that followed the outbreak of the Second World War resulted in strict censorship, surveillance, and the restriction of those political groups that the government perceived as a potential security risk. The monitoring of these groups by Military Intelligence (G2), government agencies concerned with censorship, and the Special Branch provide a rich source of material for the historian, but conversely, stricter censorship meant that the same political groups were severely restricted in their ability to publicize, recruit and develop. The material does reveal that there was some crossover in membership, and that these same people were often former colleagues of O'Duffy's in the various Blueshirt and Greenshirt organizations. They also showed a similar ideological interest in extreme nationalism, corporatism, authoritarianism and fascism. This chapter will look at the history, membership and ideology of these organizations. They were the direct ideological descendents of O'Duffy's organizations, but they had even less political influence than their forebears and, with the exception Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, they had even shorter lives.

### *IRISH CHRISTIAN FRONT*

The Spanish Civil War, which broke out on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1936, the same day that the National Corporate Party held its last congress, had a great effect on the Irish people. Ireland had close historical ties with Spain. The outbreak of civil war in Spain, after years of political instability during the Second Republic, and even before, was the culmination of a growing, and irreparable rift between the defenders of the republic and its opponents. Particularly poignant for the Irish, as co-religionists, was the increased hostility of the Spanish left to the Catholic Church, which had been dis-established in Spain in 1931. The Nationalists, led by Franco, were able to pose as the

---

<sup>1</sup> The term "the Emergency" was used in Ireland to refer to the years of WW 2. Ireland was neutral throughout the war.



defenders of the Church, a response which coloured the loyalties of many Irishmen. The most high-profile response in Ireland in support of the Nationalists came from O'Duffy, whose Irish Brigade went out to fight for Franco, and the Irish Christian Front led by Patrick Belton, and formed in August 1936. However, the ICF was manipulated by its Dublin leadership to propagate a political agenda that was unsupported by the membership, leading to its eventual demise.

The newspapers in Ireland, particularly the *Irish Independent*, devoted a great many column inches to describing the war in Spain. The newspapers encouraged the identification of Irish interests with those of Franco, who was portrayed as the defender of Christian values against the atheistic Republicans. To many Catholics in Ireland "Franco was a Christian crusader rescuing Spain from Communist revolution."<sup>2</sup> The church hierarchy came out strongly in support of the Spanish Church. Cardinal MacRory, the Primate of all Ireland, speaking to pilgrims in Drogheda said:

"There is no room any longer for any doubt as to the issues at stake in the Spanish conflict. It is not a question of the Army against the people, nor the Army plus the aristocracy and the Church against Labour. Not at all. It is a question of whether Spain will remain as she has been for so long, a Christian and Catholic land, or a Bolshevist and anti-God one."<sup>3</sup>

The support for Franco was channelled into the creation of a new group calling itself the Irish Christian Front (a title which mirrored that of the Popular Front in Spain), which had its first meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1936 at the Mansion House, Dublin. The creation of the movement had been announced by Alexander McCabe on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1936, though it was Patrick Belton who was the prime mover behind the

---

<sup>2</sup> J.H. Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1980), p. 90.

<sup>3</sup> S. Cronin, *Frank Ryan*, P. 79.

organization.<sup>4</sup> The organization's leadership made it clear that the ICF was not exclusively concerned with the Spanish Civil War, but aimed "to initiate and coordinate anti-communist activity in the Free State."<sup>5</sup> It initially claimed to be non-party political, and it also claimed to be non-sectarian, in order to secure a wide membership. The manifesto of the ICF said:

"The ICF is a national movement not drawn from any political party, but we invite adherents of all political parties who subscribe to its objectives to join."<sup>6</sup>

It appeared to most to be a broad-based pressure group whose main purpose was to offer support to the Spanish Nationalists and the Church through large-scale demonstrations and fund raising, with the expectation that the government of De Valera would eventually be pressurized into recognizing Franco as the Head of State in Spain. It also provided an opportunity for Belton to reunite the forces of the Irish right in opposition to De Valera.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to O'Duffy, Belton believed that the best way to help Spain was with humanitarian aid. He was to tell the *Irish Press*: "I do not agree with the wisdom of Irishmen going out to Spain."<sup>8</sup>

The ICF Standing Committee created in August 1936 consisted of Patrick Belton (President), Dr James P. Brennan (Vice-President)<sup>9</sup>, Aileen O'Brien (Organizing Secretary)<sup>10</sup>, Alexander McCabe (Secretary) and Liam Breen.<sup>11</sup> General O'Duffy was not involved as at this point Belton had developed a personal antipathy towards O'Duffy. He did not approve of his Irish Brigade initiative, though he did not condemn it outright. The leadership was un-elected. There were no criteria for

---

<sup>4</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 109.

<sup>5</sup> R.A. Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War*, (Manchester, 1999), p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* p. 110.

<sup>7</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 112.

<sup>8</sup> *Irish Press*, 26 November 1936.

<sup>9</sup> Brennan was Dublin City Coroner and an executive member of Cumann na Poblacht na hEireann.

<sup>10</sup> Aileen O'Brien was prominent in the Catholic group, *Pro Deo*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 111.

membership and little control from the Dublin leadership over the branches that spontaneously appeared all over the country. In September 1936, when the ICF decided to form branches, the *Irish Independent* reported five thousand applications for membership.

The first rally of the ICF attracted fifteen thousand people.<sup>12</sup> The ICF used the rally to publicize its aims, portraying the war in Spain as a holy war against Godless Communism. Even at this early stage, the wider political agenda of the movement was made clear when Liam Breen, speaking at the rally, referred to the need for the Free State to adopt corporatism. The leadership in Dublin had a political agenda very different from that of the membership in the provinces who saw the ICF primarily as a way of highlighting the needs of the Church in Spain, and as a vehicle for fundraising. This dichotomy of interests was to cause problems later on. The movement soon dropped the pretence of being non-political when in September 1936, De Valera was urged to terminate trade relations with Republican Spain.<sup>13</sup> De Valera's government had decided that non-intervention was the best policy. On August 25<sup>th</sup> 1936, the Government Information Bureau issued the following statement:

“The policy of non-intervention has been adopted in the conviction that it is in the interests of Spain itself and...which will best serve the cause of European peace...the Government of *Saorstát Éireann* in common with the Irish people and the Christian world are profoundly shocked by the events that have taken place in Spain.”<sup>14</sup>

Patrick Belton was later to claim that “the sympathies of the Fianna Fail party are entirely with the Red Government in Spain.”<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> *Irish Independent*, 31<sup>st</sup> August 1936. Headline, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 116-117.

<sup>14</sup> Cited in J. Canavan, *Irish Political and Press Reaction to European Events 1935-1939*, PhD. 1972.

<sup>15</sup> Dail Debates, Vol.65, Col 745, 3 Feb 1936-12 March 1937, NAI.

September and October 1936 saw a rapid growth in membership. The ICF was particularly strong in Leinster.<sup>16</sup> A number of mass rallies and provincial meetings followed where listeners were told of atrocities committed against the Church, nuns and religious brothers. At the rallies, participants would demonstrate their support by raising their arms over their heads in the shape of a cross and cry out “Long Live Christ the King.”<sup>17</sup> Present on the platforms would be local dignitaries, politicians (usually from Fine Gael), the Press, and significantly, local priests who often functioned as officials in local branches. The ICF continued to gain momentum during October and November with a demonstration at Waterford attracting twelve thousand and one in Dublin on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1936, attracting forty thousand.<sup>18</sup>

From its inception, the leadership of the ICF had had a wider political agenda than advocacy of support for the Nationalists and the Church in Spain. The leadership used the mass rallies, to which people came to demonstrate their support for Franco, to try to promote their own agenda. For example, at a Galway ICF meeting on November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1936, was persuaded to “...pledge the ICF to bringing about an economic system based on the Papal Encyclicals.”<sup>19</sup>

Corporatism and anti-communism were also on the agenda at a meeting in Cork in September 1936, attended by 40,000 supporters.<sup>20</sup> Belton called for currency control and the management of credit to tackle the problems of unemployment and poverty.<sup>21</sup> At some rallies the international agenda was widened when speakers expressed support for Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. In December 1936, at Drogheda, Father O’Connell argued that “Italy and Germany today would be communist but for

---

<sup>16</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p.117.

<sup>17</sup> C. Foley, *Legion of the Rearguard*, (Pluto Press, London, 1992), p. 161.

<sup>18</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 122.

<sup>19</sup> R.A. Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 35.

<sup>20</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 119.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p.122.



Mussolini and Hitler...<sup>22</sup> whilst Desmond Bell of the ICF supported Hitler for setting up concentration camps to control the communists.<sup>23</sup> Belton himself had said:

“When our organization’s work is complete we will make Ireland a very hot spot for any communist to live in...if it is necessary to be a fascist to defend Christianity then I am a fascist and so are my colleagues.”<sup>24</sup>

Belton was an anti-Semite, and told Cardinal MacRory:

“The Jews have a stranglehold here and present arrivals mainly consist of those expelled from European countries for their communist activities. They have an international organization and they control money. They did their job well in Spain and can do here if not checkmated.”<sup>25</sup>

The leadership was hampered by the weak organizational structure of the ICF, which meant that the mass movement could not easily be manipulated by the leadership in Dublin. Whilst sympathizing with their co-religionists in Spain, the members of the ICF had no sympathy with Belton’s wider agenda or the prospect of the ICF developing into a militant clerical Catholic party. Some expressed concern at Belton’s authoritarian leadership. In spite of initial enthusiasm, senior politicians and the senior hierarchy of the Irish Catholic Church were not supporting the ICF either.

Fearghal McGarry argues that the central ideological strain amongst the membership, as distinct from Belton and his coterie, was Catholic Action, a movement which had arisen in the nineteenth century as an apostleship of the laity to disseminate Catholic principles in public life and to help the poor through Catholic social teaching.<sup>26</sup> This is a rather benign view of the movement. The ICF was becoming more like the Spanish CEDA than any social action movement. The

<sup>22</sup> *The Worker*, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1936.

<sup>23</sup> *Irish Times*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1936.

<sup>24</sup> *Irish Independent*, 12<sup>th</sup> October 1936.

<sup>25</sup> Letter Belton to MacRory as quoted in F. McGarry, *Ireland and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 128.

<sup>26</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 114-115.

movement was not a monolithic one but was represented through such organizations as *An Riogacht*, the Central Catholic Library and the Catholic Young Men's Association. Some envisaged that the ICF would develop as a coordinating body for these groups.<sup>27</sup>

The ICF was successful in raising over £30,000,<sup>28</sup> which mainly went to provide the Spanish Nationalists with medical supplies. In contrast, its success as a political force was limited. Local councils, public bodies and organizations, including trade unions, were asked to introduce the Clonmel Resolution, which advocated breaking relations with the Spanish Republic and the recognition of the Franco regime as the legitimate government of Spain. Its failure became evident when the *Dail* passed the Spanish Civil war (Non-Intervention) Bill on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1937, which declared it illegal for any Irish citizen to participate in the Spanish Civil war.

A number of councils did pass the Clonmel Resolution, the resolution usually being introduced by a member of Fine Gael. In fact, the movement was often portrayed as a front for Fine Gael, particularly by the pro-De Valera *Irish Press*. The latter went even further, calling the ICF a Blueshirt organization, particularly when the ICF began to discuss the economic war and the threat from the republican left.<sup>29</sup> There were a significant number of Blueshirts in the ICF, but the disputes with O'Duffy and the distancing from Fine Gael belie this accusation.

Belton, in a speech at the Mansion House following a visit to Spain to supervise the distribution of money raised, presented a new manifesto for the ICF which failed even to mention Spain but instead concentrated on anti-communism, social policies and a need to change the Irish political system.<sup>30</sup> By this point, only Breen and Belton were

---

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p.115.

<sup>28</sup> J. Bowyer Bell, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil war' in *Studia Hibernica*, No. 9; 1963, Dublin.

<sup>29</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 127.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p. 127.

left of the original organizing committee. The 85 delegates at the ICF Convention held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1937 at the Ormond Hotel Dublin were deeply divided. Liam De Roiste protested against Belton's overtly political stance. A delegation from Drogheda opposed Belton for chairperson. T.P. Clarke of Drogheda said:

“Some members are putting politics before Catholicism and are doing more harm to the movement than many communists. It is very hard to convince many people that the movement is non-political, when some heads of the movement are politicians.”<sup>31</sup>

The movement began to rapidly disintegrate, in spite of the potential for mass mobilization on religious and nationalist lines. Most branches quietly dissolved after the convention, though it was to limp on over the summer, finally disbanding in October 1937. Belton himself had resigned from the presidency of the ICF in August, having also lost his *Dail* seat in the general election, where his campaign on anti-communism, support for the farmers, and rabid anti-Semitism failed to hold enough appeal, the voters instead preferring the Labour Party candidate, G.C.McGowan. The 1937 election itself demonstrated that the electorate were not really concerned about international issues when compared with the domestic economic agenda.

McGarry criticizes the ICF for embodying many negative aspects of the Free State including the invention of communist conspiracies, demand for increased censorship, sectarian and anti-Semitic undertones and obsession with sexual morality, whilst further demonstrating the irrelevance of corporatist ideas to the majority of Irishmen.<sup>32</sup> The ICF meant different things to the leadership and the membership, the former finding themselves unable to motivate the mass following into pursuing a more radical, far-sweeping political agenda. However, the ideas that were still being advocated by men such as Belton were to be promoted again over the next decade.

---

<sup>31</sup> Quoting T.P. Clarke, in M. O'Riordan, *The Connolly Column* (Dublin, 1979), p. 99.

<sup>32</sup> F. McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* p. 235.

*IRISH FRIENDS OF GERMANY/ CUMANN NAISIUNTA*

General O'Duffy forged links with the German Embassy in Dublin and maintained contact with them throughout the late thirties and early forties.<sup>33</sup> In 1938, the *Abwehr*, German Military Intelligence, asked Oscar Phaus, founder of the German Bund to establish links with the IRA. Landing in Ireland on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1939, he made contact with O'Duffy, presuming that he would be able to arrange a meeting with the leaders of the IRA. Phaus was eventually to do so, but without O'Duffy's help.<sup>34</sup> It would appear that it was O'Duffy's secretary, Liam Walsh, who was eventually to set up a meeting between Maurice Twomey, an IRA activist, and Phaus.<sup>35</sup>

O'Duffy was moving in a pro-German direction and involved himself in the formation of an organization that initially called itself 'The Irish Friends of Germany.' This was an anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi fringe group that anticipated an early and successful invasion of Britain by the Germans in the not too distant future. It came under strict surveillance from Irish Military Intelligence from April 1940, and continued to be closely monitored.<sup>36</sup> The group, which soon changed its name to the more patriotic-sounding National Club/*Cumann Naisiunta*, was a small group of Nazi sympathisers who met on a regular basis in Dublin, and which from the outset contained a number of former Blueshirts and Greenshirts in its membership.

A meeting of twenty-five people, including O'Duffy, met at Liam Walsh's house at 42, Highfield Park, Dublin on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1940,<sup>37</sup> and this was followed by the first official meeting of the Irish Friends of Germany at Wynn's Hotel, Dublin, a venue

---

<sup>33</sup> E. Stephan *Spies in Ireland*, (Dublin, 1963), p. 232.

<sup>34</sup> T.P. Coogan, *The IRA*, (Glasgow, 1980), p. 273.

<sup>35</sup> R. Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 76.

<sup>36</sup> Weekly Misc. Report DMD, w/e 15 April 1940, G2/X/0253, Irish Friends of Germany, G2 Archives, Rathmines Barracks.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*



that had always been a favourite of O'Duffy's. Also in attendance were Liam Walsh, Alexander McCabe<sup>38</sup> and James Burke. In procuring a room for their meeting, the group registered as the IFG, but the Detective Branch observers were unable to ascertain the full size of the group as a launch meeting of the New Republican Party was taking place at the same time in the hotel.<sup>39</sup> Other meetings of the IFG took place at Walsh's home and at Dublin restaurants, such as the Savoy Restaurant and the Swiss Chalet.

The IFG continued to recruit but changed its name to the National Club<sup>40</sup> after the German invasion of the Low Countries. The regular meetings, held on the second Friday of every month, were to be "directed to social events, musical interludes, talks on current, cultural and travel topics and other interesting features."<sup>41</sup> The real purpose of the meetings can be gauged from a lecture on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 1940, when 45-50 people, including 18 women, met at the Red Bank Restaurant in D'Olier Street<sup>42</sup> to hear George Griffin, an ex-Blueshirt, speak on the subject of "The Jewish Stranglehold on Ireland."<sup>43</sup> Griffin mentioned many Jews by name and went on to advocate that "...we should never pass a Jew on the street without openly insulting him."<sup>44</sup> The meeting was chaired by Alex McCabe, another former Blueshirt and ex-Cumann na nGaedheal T.D.,<sup>45</sup> who in addressing the meeting denied that the movement was a fifth column, but that a German victory would result in the complete

---

<sup>38</sup> McCabe had been a key figure in the formation of the ICF.

<sup>39</sup> Detective Branch, Garda Siochana Report, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1940, IFG, M.J.Wymes, G2/X/0253, IFG, G2 Archives.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from T.A. O'Gorman and L. Walsh, Cumann Naisiunta, G2/X/0253, IFG, G2 Archives.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> The Red Bank Restaurant had been the regular meeting place, before the war, of Adolph Mahr's German Association. Mahr had been a leading Nazi official in Dublin, and also the Director of the Irish National Museum. The German Association would often invite sympathetic Irishmen to these dinners, where the table was ceremoniously draped in a swastika flag. Fisk, R., *In Time of War*, p.289.

<sup>43</sup> Report from P. de Beantaligh to Lt.V de Valera, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1940, G2/X/0253, IFG, G2 Archives.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Alexander McCabe had been a Sinn Fein T.D. and then Cumann na nGaedheal T.D. (1918-24). He had been Secretary of the ICF Standing Committee.

independence of the thirty-two counties of Ireland.<sup>46</sup> Special Branch reported that the meeting was attended by “ex-Blueshirts, ex-members of the ICF as well as Republicans”<sup>47</sup> but that General O’Duffy had telephoned to say that he would be unable to attend.<sup>48</sup>

A later report on the IFG named several key figures of the group in the Dublin and Wicklow area, including Francis Stuart, who was later to broadcast pro-Axis propaganda from Germany, and Kevin Cahill (“connected with the Blueshirt movement, and later the Irish Brigade for the Civil War in Spain in cooperation with General O’Duffy”<sup>49</sup>). At a meeting on 26 June 1940 at the Swiss Chalet Restaurant, Dublin, where there was an attendance of twenty-four, “when asked who were the founders of the organization, Griffin replied General O’Duffy, Liam Walsh, Seamus Burke and O’Callaghan, a Civil Servant.”<sup>50</sup> The first three in Griffin’s list had attended the initial meeting at Wynn’s Hotel on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1940. An analysis of the people who attended the meetings, and whose names we know, reveals little, other than the fact that a fifth of them were women and a fifth had a doctorate to their name.<sup>51</sup> There is no record in the G2 Military Intelligence files that Ernest Blythe was involved in the group but in the Blythe Papers, held by University College Dublin, there is a typewritten document written by Blythe headed *An Cumann Naisiunta*, that was written in the forties, and listed the objectives and programme of the named group.<sup>52</sup> It is not known if Blythe was planning on offering this programme to the group, or if it was an outline proposal for a movement that he intended to set up himself, or if it

---

<sup>46</sup> Report from P. de Beantaligh to Lt V de Valera, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1940, G2/X/0253, IFG, G2 Archives.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Chief Sup. Office Report, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1940, List of IFG or National Club resident in Dublin and Wicklow Division, G2/X/0253, IFG, G2 Archives.

<sup>50</sup> Weekly Misc. Report, DMD, w/e 8 July 1940, Section D ‘Aliens’ G2/X/0253, IFG, G2 Archives.

<sup>51</sup> See Appendix –Persons Connected with the IFG.

<sup>52</sup> *An Cumann Naisiunta*, Ernest Blythe, Blythe Papers, P24/977, UCD Archives, Dublin.

was the actual programme of the movement. The National Club/*Cumann Naisiunta*, as the IFG was now known, produced a policy document which the Intelligence Service was able to view, but was unable to copy. On the basis of his memory, an agent's report summarized the aims of the organization as follows:

“1. Control of Finance.

“2. All property of aliens to be confiscated without any compensation.

“3. That all persons who took up residence here since 1916 to be expelled from the country.

“4. All charity to be discontinued and work found for all unemployed persons.

“5. The training of the Youth of the Country.”<sup>53</sup>

The group therefore had distinct political aims, rather than the cultural ones they had originally claimed. They wished to make the country exclusively Irish and focused on the youth of the nation as the key to the nation's future success.

There are some points of similarity between the Blythe document and that viewed by Military Intelligence, notably the stress on youth, ending the dole and increasing the state's control of finance. However, what is significantly missing is the racism of the programme as cited by the G2 Intelligence officer. The Blythe document has much in common with the policies of *Ailtiri na hAiseirighe*, with whom Blythe was involved during the forties, but with a greater stress on culture.

Following his initial enthusiasm, O'Duffy appears to have taken a back seat in the organization. There is no record of his attending any of the later meetings, though he continued his association with the group. He was still anticipating a German victory. In a meeting with Maurice O'Connor on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1940, O'Duffy told him that he had not had time to organize a pro-German political party, but that he wanted O'Connor to

---

<sup>53</sup> P7a/220, Intelligence file, Agent's report, 1st July 1940, Mulcahy Papers, UCD Archives.



organize people in the anticipation of German success in the war.<sup>54</sup> This would imply that O'Duffy expected to be involved in a puppet pro-German government in the near future. Asked to a meeting the following month, O'Duffy declined, telling O'Connor that "he would prefer not to attend in case his presence might bring them under notice." He said, however, that he would give all the help he could, and that he would send two trusted men to the meeting, one of whom would be "Colum Kerry, who is connected with Kerry's advertising agency."<sup>55</sup> Maurice O'Connor would maintain his links to the extreme right, meeting with Griffin, who had set himself up as leader of the People's National Party, in January 1941.

The organization gradually petered out, the only flare of interest on the part of the intelligence network being the attendance of three Free State soldiers at a meeting held in October 1940.<sup>56</sup> The National Club's place was taken by a new political party, the People's National Party, which was even more overtly pro-Nazi.

O'Duffy continued to hope for a German victory and proposed the creation of an Irish Division to fight for Germany on the Eastern Front against the Soviet Union, much as he had done against the Republicans in Spain.<sup>57</sup> He suggested to German Embassy officials that the Nazi government should provide him with a plane to fly to Berlin to discuss the formation of an Irish Volunteer Legion, but this offer was not taken seriously by the Nazis.<sup>58</sup> Even after the failure of his pro-Nationalist escapade in Spain, O'Duffy still felt he had a role to play in the international fight against communism.

---

<sup>54</sup> Garda Siochana Detective Branch Report, 26<sup>th</sup> July 1940, re: Cumann Naisiunta or IFG, G2/X/0253, IFG, G2 Archives.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> G2 Branch Dept. of Defence letter to Carroll, 19 October 1940, G2/X/0253, IFG, G2 Archives.

<sup>57</sup> E. Stephan, *Spies in Ireland*, (Dublin, 1963), p. 232.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 232.



## THE PEOPLE'S NATIONAL PARTY

The demise of the IFG/NC was followed by the creation of an openly pro-German political group calling itself the People's National Party. The party was created by George Griffin at a time when the National Club had virtually ceased to exist.<sup>59</sup> Griffin founded the party in the summer of 1940. In August 1940, the *Nationalist and Leinster Times* received a memorandum from "the PNP for proper national planning"<sup>60</sup> which stated: "For eighteen years we have seen a country in decay become prey to British and Jewish Financial and Economic penetration," and then proceeded to present its solution in its draft policy of aims.<sup>61</sup> The party's policy was clear from the start. A police report quoted Mrs Griffin as saying that "the party is purely Nazi in outlook" and that they wanted to overthrow the government.<sup>62</sup>

George Griffin, who had been active in the Irish Friends of Germany, now headed his own small fringe party, which spurned democracy and set out to overthrow the government. Griffin set himself up as the un-elected President of the new party with a support committee consisting of a Vice-President (G.Sinclair), Treasurer (F.Dillon), Secretary (Father T. Fahy), two trustees( Father Fahy and C.Crowley), and eight other ex-officio committee members (Joe Andrews, R. Burgess, F. Corrigan, C. O'Leary, H. O'Neill, J.J. Byrne, P.Byrne, and J.Graham). The size of the Executive is no indication of the size of the movement. To all intents and purposes, the Executive was the party. A Detective Branch report concluded that:

---

<sup>59</sup> Organizational Weekly Misc. Report, DMD, w/e 12 August 1940, G2/B/O453, PNP, G2 Files, Military Archives, Rathmines.

<sup>60</sup> *National and Leinster Times*, 17 August 1940, 'A New Party.'

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Organizational Weekly Misc. Reports, DMD, w/e/ 12 August 1940, G2/B/0453, G2 Files, Military Archives.

“...although the names given are supposed to be those of directly elected officers and committee, no meeting of subscribers or what might be termed nominal members has, so far as is known, been called...[The officers] function only on a paper basis.”<sup>63</sup>

Recruitment to the party was unsuccessful, in spite of some publicity in the press. Griffin had optimistically expected to see the spread of a network of branches, beginning with a launch in Carlow.<sup>64</sup> He saw the two teenage party members, O’Leary (aged 17 ½ ) and Graham (aged 15 ½ ) as the nucleus of a “Youth Movement on the lines of the Hitler Youth Movement.”<sup>65</sup> At the party meeting on 20 November 1940, the police summary reports that “Griffin referred to General O’Duffy, and said he would not invite him into his party, but he would consider taking in J.J. Walsh,” a former Cumann na nGaedheal politician.”<sup>66</sup> This is the only reference to General O’Duffy in papers on the movement, which would belie Fearghal McGarry’s claims that O’Duffy was actively involved with the party.<sup>67</sup>

The party was never on a firm financial footing, and only had one pound in funds in November 1940.<sup>68</sup> Mrs Griffin had earlier claimed that:

“Maurice O’Connor of *Cumann Naisiunta* was receiving support from Germany, financial and otherwise, but that her husband was dependent solely on support from within the country.”<sup>69</sup>

The PNP focused on County Carlow to launch the party. The local paper was prepared to give some space to making the movement known, printing its programme

<sup>63</sup> Detective Branch Report, 19 November 1940, Activities of George Griffin, G2/B/0453, The PNP, G2 Files, Rathmines.

<sup>64</sup> Detective Branch Report, 23 November 1940, Activities of George Griffin, G2/B/0453, The PNP, G2 Files, Military Archives.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> McGarry, F., *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 47: “His only political activity following his return from Spain was with the secretive pro-Nazi People’s National Party during WW II.”

<sup>68</sup> Weekly Misc. Reports, 18 November 1940, Section D- Aliens, Meeting of the Executive Committee of the PNP held on 18 November 1940, G2/B/0453, The PNP, G2 Files, Rathmines.

<sup>69</sup> Organization Weekly Misc Reports, DMD, w/e 12 August 1940, G2/B/045, The PNP, G2 Files, Rathmines.

in full and reporting on a meeting held in early December 1940. The meeting was held under the auspices of a group calling itself the National Monetary Reform Association, which claimed to be unaffiliated to any political party.<sup>70</sup> The organization stood for:

“1. Establishment of a Christian Social Order.

“2. Control and issue of money to be invested in the people’s Government.

“3. That as the present Judeo-Masonic system of world finance is inimicable to the tradition of a Christian state, make pledge to work for its abolition.”<sup>71</sup>

The main speakers at the meeting, Mr Dorley of Nurney and ex-T.D. Seamus Lennon, were followed by Edgar Corrigan<sup>72</sup> and George Griffin, both of the PNP, who used the occasion to launch the new party. The local paper reported that Corrigan said that: “[The] PNP came to the people with a policy of national, social and economic planning. They were not just another party encouraged by the party-system of so-called democracy or by job-hunting politicians.”<sup>73</sup>

Griffin stated that the “only way to national freedom was through the economic and financial freedom which a new social order would offer.”<sup>74</sup>

The party continued to meet occasionally at 3, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin, where the party’s headquarters were located.<sup>75</sup> The meetings grew less frequent with the passing of time, until by May 1941 the party existed in name only. As Special Branch reported:

---

<sup>70</sup> *National and Leinster Times*, 7 December 1940, ‘The People’s Sovereignty: The Power of Money.’

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Corrigan had been arrested the previous week and expelled from Northern Ireland. Weekly Misc Reports w/e 4 December 1940, G2/B/0453, The PNP, G2 Files, Rathmines.

<sup>73</sup> *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 7 December 1940, ‘The People’s Sovereignty: The Power of Money.’

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> PNP Letter-headed notepaper, G2/B0453, The PNP, G2 Files, Rathmines.

“I beg to report that in so far as is known, the party is practically liquidated. No activities have recently come to notice and although Griffin still resorts to Abbey Street, he has no following and is shunned by those who associated with him.”<sup>76</sup>

Special Branch believed that this decline was due to Griffin’s “dictatorial attitude” with the result that “he has now little or no support and is not believed to be making any headway in the formation of a party.”<sup>77</sup>

The PNP produced two editions of its journal, *Penapa* (the name combines the initial two letters of each word in the party’s title), which was sold on the streets. The two issues were published in December 1940 and January 1941 and apparently sold well.<sup>78</sup> The journal was overtly anti-Semitic. The January 1941 edition had a crude anti-Semitic cartoon on the cover, very much in the style of Julius Streicher’s *Der Sturmer*, which implied that Jews were in control of Irish banks and finance. The paper included a number of anti-Semitic articles such as ‘The Jewish Nation and Freemasonry.’<sup>79</sup> Ireland’s restrictive censorship laws led to the seizure of eight thousand copies of the second edition from the printers in Drogheda and from the party’s Dublin headquarters.<sup>80</sup> The print run of the journal was large at ten thousand copies for the first edition,<sup>81</sup> which raises the question of who was funding the printing in the light of the party’s recent precarious financial position. There is no indication in G2 Military Intelligence files of any foreign or domestic large-scale donations, so it must be assumed that the money came from domestic sources.

The party was openly pro-Nazi. At a meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1940, attended by Griffin and six other party members, Griffin commenced proceedings by saying that:

---

<sup>76</sup> Special Branch Report from MJ Wymes, 27 May 1941, G2/B/0453, The PNP, G2 Files, Rathmines.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Weekly Misc. Report, DMD, w/e 16 December 1940, G2/B/0453, The PNP, G2 Files, Rathmines.

<sup>79</sup> *Penapa*, January 1941, ‘The Jewish Nation and Freemasonry.’ National Library, Dublin.

<sup>80</sup> MA OCC 2/47 *Penapa*, Coyne to Insp Reynolds, 16 June 1941, and other correspondence, reports etc. Dec 1940-June 1941, cited in Fisk, R., *In Time of War*, p. 375.

<sup>81</sup> Letter from JM Stanley of the *Drogheda Argus*, G2/B/0453, The PNP, G2 Files, Rathmines.



“...the twelve point programme of the PNP was taken directly from the twenty-five originally expounded by *Herr* Hitler, and were those he considered most suitable for the needs of the country. He said the party’s first aim would be to spread National Socialist ideas, and that coming second was the Jewish problem which was all-important as their anti-Jewish teachings were likely to bring them support from certain sections of the people who might otherwise look unfavourably upon them.”<sup>82</sup>

This anti-Semitism was a key feature of the party and it served to attract interest; Richard Collins of Cork wrote to Griffin offering his services as a local agent of the party “with a specific interest in the furtherance of anti-Jewish feeling in Cork.”<sup>83</sup> The 12-point programme, produced in full as an appendix, reveals the party’s virulent hostility to aliens in Ireland as half of the articles specifically relate to ‘non-citizens.’

The party’s policy package had much in common with that of O’Duffy’s earlier National Corporate Party, including corporatism, national planning and the reunification of Ireland, whilst laying a much greater stress on the need for an exclusivist Irish-Ireland that was anti-alien, and specifically anti-Jewish. The party, however, failed to secure any real following and had no impact nationally or locally. The existence of the party reveals the existence of a core of Nazi enthusiast, a potential fifth column and Quisling-style government in waiting. It was also a direct descendent of the IFG, and the NCP. The evidence disproves McGarry’s assertion that O’Duffy was involved in the PNP and also clears up the confusion presented by Donal O Drisceol in *Censorship in Ireland 1939-45*. O Drisceol combines the IFG and PNP into one organization, whereas in reality they were two separate and distinct groups, though with some overlap in membership and common policy elements.

---

<sup>82</sup> Detective Branch report, 22 November 1940, *Activities of George Griffin*, G2/B/0453, The PNP, G2 File, Rathmines

<sup>83</sup> Memo, 4 January 1941, G2/B/0453, The PNP, G2 Files, Rathmines.

## *AILTIRI NA hAISEIRIGHE-A BRIEF HISTORY*

As the People's National Party faded into political oblivion, another right-wing, authoritarian and corporatist political party appeared on the Irish political scene. The new party, Ailtiri na hAiseirighe (*The Architects of Resurrection*), was the creation of Gerald Cunningham, an extreme nationalist who created his own far-right political party to campaign for the restoration of a culturally distinct Gaelic republic based on Irish cultural nationalism, Catholicism, corporatism and outright authoritarianism. Unlike all the other groups mentioned in this chapter, Ailtiri na hAiseirighe fought elections at national and local levels, winning local council seats. It had a longer life than the other groups, continuing into the nineteen-fifties, although declining to fight elections after 1948. There was some continuity with the other organizations discussed in this thesis. Ernest Blythe, for example, was a leading theoretician of the new party, developing the corporatist ideas he had propounded as a leading Blueshirt. The party promoted a similar programme of fascist policies to that advocated by O'Duffy's NCP in the mid-thirties, notably its opposition to liberal democracy, party politics and communism. Ailtiri always described itself as a movement, not a party. Its promotion of cultural nationalism, and its penchant for publicity, gave it a higher profile than its small membership would normally merit. Its policies were far too extreme for most Irishmen, and it failed to win widespread electoral success. The emergence of Clann na Poblachta,<sup>84</sup> combined with a politically inexperienced, young membership base led to Ailtiri's rapid demise in the late forties.

---

<sup>84</sup> Clann na Poblachta, founded by Republicans in 1946 was a radical party that had some success at the polls, joining in the inter-party government after 1948.

Ailtiri na hAiseirighe first appeared in October 1942.<sup>85</sup> Gerald Cunningham set up the party with its headquarters initially at 27, South Frederick Street, Dublin,<sup>86</sup> where around thirty to forty people met on Thursdays on a weekly basis. Cunningham (who also went under the Gaelicised versions of his name of Seamus Cunningham and O'Cuinnegain) first came to the attention of the intelligence services in September 1940, when he was reported as a person interested in the activities of the Irish Friends of Germany.<sup>87</sup> In that same month, he founded an organization called *Craobh* which affiliated to the Gaelic League<sup>88</sup> and committed itself to the Irish language revival. When it disaffiliated, it changed its name to *Glun na Buaidhe*. Cunningham left the organization in order to form Ailtiri as he wanted to avoid politicising the language organization, *Craobh*, which continued to function separately.<sup>89</sup> The police report on his language classes states that it was Cunningham's intention to use the classes to give lectures, in Irish, on Germany, and to use the classes to set up an Irish version of the Hitler Youth Movement.<sup>90</sup> A police report describes Cunningham as "a fervent Catholic who attends daily Mass, [who] has become a political fanatic believing that the policy of Dictator is the only one for Ireland."<sup>91</sup> Cunningham was born in the north of Ireland, but moved south to the Free State in order to take up a post as a

---

<sup>85</sup> Garda Siochana Report, 16 October 1942, Report on Ailtiri, G2/X/1320, Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, G2 Files, Rathmines.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Garda Siochana, Report on O'Cuinnegain, 11 November 1942, G2/X/1320, Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, G2 Files, Rathmines.

<sup>88</sup> The principal organization for the promotion of Irish language and culture, the Gaelic League was founded in 1893.

<sup>89</sup> Report on Ailtiri na hAiseirighe. Ailtiri, Glun na Buaidhe, no date, G2/X/1320, G2 Files, Rathmines.

<sup>90</sup> Garda Siochana, Report on O'Cuinneagain, 11 November 1942, G2/X/1320, Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, G2 Files, Rathmines.

<sup>91</sup> Garda Siochana Report, 16 October 1942, Report on Ailtiri, G2/X/1320, Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, G2 Files, Rathmines.

minor executive in the Department of Defence, a post he resigned in 1932 in order to devote his time to learning Irish in the *Gaeltacht*.<sup>92</sup>

Cunningham, like Blythe, was an Ulsterman who found that after independence he was politically severed from his home in the North. Similarly, the Nazi Party attracted a disproportionate number born outside Germany into its leadership ranks; men such as Hess (born in Alexandria), Rosenberg (born in Tallin), and of course Hitler himself, who was Austrian, compensated for their suspect birthright by becoming extreme nationalists. Blythe (an Ulster Protestant) and Cunningham both adopted extremist positions regarding the Irish language and the need to reinforce national identity.

In spite of its opposition to the idea of parliamentary democracy, Ailtiri contested local and national elections. In 1943 it fielded four candidates in the General Election and secured the following first preference votes: Cork Borough, 1019 (Sean O Duibhgail), Dublin North-West, 607 (Gearoid Cunningham), Waterford, 926 (Tomas O Dochartaigh) and Louth, 585 (Eoin O Coighligh).<sup>93</sup> The following year another General Election was held, and this time the party fielded seven candidates, all of whom lost their deposits. The total of 5,805 first preference votes were distributed as follows: Cork Borough, 674 (Sean O Dubhghaill), Dublin North-West, 705 (Gearoid O Cuinneagain), Dublin County, 607 (Oisin O Droighneain), Louth, 795 (Eoin O Coighligh), Roscommon, 1217 (Joseph O'Kelly), Tipperary, 1072 (Tomas O Dochartaigh) and Waterford, 739 (Liam Walsh).<sup>94</sup> Liam Walsh had been O'Duffy's secretary and one of the founders of the IFG/NC. During the early part of the war, when he was in the employ of the Italian Legation and in contact with the German

---

<sup>92</sup> Election Pamphlet for Gearoid O'Cuinneagain, G2/X/1320, Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, G2 Files, Rathmines.

<sup>93</sup> *Parliamentary election Results in Ireland*, ed. by BM. Walker (Royal Irish Academy: Dublin, 1992).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*



*Fichte Bund*,<sup>95</sup> he had sent a number of propaganda articles to Germany and was interned in the Curragh Prison for short while for subversive activities.<sup>96</sup> In 1948 the party managed to field only one candidate, William Hargada, who stood in Sligo and only managed to secure 323 votes.<sup>97</sup> In this election, many of the supporters of the party changed their allegiance to Clann na Poblachta. Ailtiri fought local elections and in 1945 put forward 105 candidates. Ailtiri managed to win two seats out of twelve on the Drogheda Municipal Council (where its six candidates polled an impressive 2,636 first preference votes).<sup>98</sup>

The party had members across the country, whilst its headquarters were in Dublin, initially at South Frederick Street and later, from 1945 onwards, at Harcourt Street. The membership was young, a police report describing the organization as having “a preponderance of enthusiastic youth who have little or no experience of politics, and as a consequence have no political predilections.”<sup>99</sup> No membership lists are available but a G2 Military Intelligence report from 1942 assessed the strength of the movement as between thirty and forty members in the Dublin area.<sup>100</sup> Details of attendance at the party’s annual conference give an idea of where concentrations of party members were located. The 1946 party conference was attended by delegates from Dublin, Cork, Louth, Roscommon, Waterford, Tipperary, Sligo, and Longford,<sup>101</sup> and the party Executive included a representative from each of the four historical provinces of Ireland.<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> The *Fichte Bund* was a quasi-official German propaganda organization.

<sup>96</sup> D. O’Drisceol, *Censorship in Ireland 1939-45* (Cork, 1996), p. 76.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> *Irish Press*, 5 June 1945, ‘Election Results.’

<sup>99</sup> Craobhe na hAiseirighe, Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, Glun na Buaidhe, no date, G2/X/1320, Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, G2 Files, Rathmines.

<sup>100</sup> G2 Report on Ailtiri, 16 October 1942, G2/X/1320, Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, G2 Files, Military Archives, Rathmines.

<sup>101</sup> *Irish Independent*, 7 December 1946, ‘Plans of Ailtiri na hAiseirighe.’

<sup>102</sup> *Irish Independent*, 5 December 1947, ‘Annual Convention of Ailtiri na hAiseirighe.’

The party's finances were always a problem. The police investigated the party's source of revenue in 1943, and concluded:

“...our enquiries and investigations have produced no evidence whatever that this organization is being financed by anything but National sources. An appeal for a £100,000 fighting fund yielded £800.”<sup>103</sup>

A later report stated that “revenue seems mainly to be derived from subscriptions, sale of pamphlets, and social functions.”<sup>104</sup> The party charged five shillings a year subscription, reduced to one shilling for the unemployed, but also asked for a weekly collection to be held by every branch. There was also an annual collection, seventy-five per cent of which was to be forwarded to the National Finance Officer and the remainder was to go to the Divisional Area Finance Officer.<sup>105</sup> The party also printed large numbers of copies of its journal and other publications, which all sold well, often into the thousands. In 1946, the party journal, *Ailtiri* boasted a circulation of ten thousand copies.<sup>106</sup>

*Ailtiri na hAiseirighe* was organized, on paper at least, across the whole of Ireland, north and south. Each county counted as a divisional area. Dublin (*Atha Cliath*), Belfast (*Beal Feirste*), Cork (*Corcaigh*), and *Doire Chomlmcille* were divisions additional to these. Each division had an officer responsible for the area (*An t-Ard-Cheannasaidhe*), who was directly responsible to the party leader (*Ceannaire*). The party leader was responsible for appointing the Executive (*Ard-Fhuireann*) comprising the Secretary, Finance Officer, Propaganda Officer and Organizer. By 1947, the Executive was much larger with thirteen members, and included representatives from all four provinces. The divisions were further subdivided into

<sup>103</sup> Garda Siochana 1513/43 P.Carroll to Officer in Charge G2 Re: *Ailtiri na hAiseirighe*, G2/X/1320, *Ailtiri na hAiseirighe*, G2 Files, Rathmines.

<sup>104</sup> Notes on *Ailtiri na hAiseirighe*, 12 March 1945, G2/X/1320, G2 FILES, Rathmines.

<sup>105</sup> *For National Government and Action*, *Ailtiri na hAiseirighe*, ref Ir.94109, NLI, Dublin.

<sup>106</sup> *Irish Independent*, 9 December 1946, ‘Plans of *Ailtiri na hAiseirighe*.’

districts, which corresponded to the local government election areas, and in rural districts to the parish areas.<sup>107</sup>

There were two classes of membership, as there had been in the NCP, active and ordinary. Every member, on payment of their five shillings subscription, was required to wear the emblem of the organization, which consisted of a large lower case 'e,' standing for Eire, entwined with the Christian cross. Every active member was required to become fluent in Irish within two years of joining. Ordinary members were given five years to achieve fluency.<sup>108</sup> The only other demand was that officers were required to attend the annual conference. A Military Intelligence report from August 1944 reported rumours that the party was due to create an armed body within the movement, but this did not occur.<sup>109</sup>

Apart from fielding candidates in the elections and putting out considerable amounts of printed materials, the party indulged in a number of symbolic gestures which gave it much needed publicity. During Easter Week, 1946, the 1916 Proclamation was read by Aindrias O Scolaidhe, in Irish, on the steps of the GPO, followed by a parade to Arbour Hill Barracks.<sup>110</sup> In January 1946, the party had sent a telegram to the President of the UNO demanding England's evacuation of the North and recognition of the 1919 *Dail Eireann* Declaration of Independence.<sup>111</sup> Two years earlier, in 1944, the party asked local authorities and public bodies to pass a resolution calling for a national plebiscite on the question of partition. A number of public bodies passed such a resolution.<sup>112</sup> The IFG had used a similar tactic to promote its

---

<sup>107</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, *For National Government and Action*, Ir.94100, NLI, Dublin.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Memo, 21 August 1944 quoting Captain M.Crotely, G2/X/1320, G2 Files, Military Archives, Rathmines.

<sup>110</sup> *Irish Press*, 29 April 1946, 'Ailtiri Honours Easter Week.'

<sup>111</sup> *Irish Independent*, 12 January 1946.

<sup>112</sup> Notes on Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, G2/X/1320, Aitiri na hAiseirighe, G2 Files, Rathmines.



Clonmel Resolution to pressure De Valera's Government into recognizing the Nationalists as the legitimate government of Spain.

By 1947, the party was in rapid decline. The collapse of the fascist powers isolated the party politically. The emergence of a new republican party under Sean MacBride, Clann na Poblachta (Children of the Republic), with its platform of "radical republicanism and social and economic reform"<sup>113</sup> led to the defection of many of Ailtiri na hAiseirighe's membership.<sup>114</sup> Clann na Poblachta, "with its rousing speeches and torchlight processions,"<sup>115</sup> combined with its statement that it intended to "give practical effect rather than lip service" to the Social Encyclicals of the Popes<sup>116</sup> pulled in former members of Ailtiri na hAiseirighe. The wounded party struggled on, however, and continued to publish *Ailtiri* into the fifties, but it had long since ceased to be an active political force.

#### *THE POLITICAL PROGRAMME OF AILTIRI NA hAISEIRIGHE*

Ailtiri na hAiseirighe presented a programme to the Irish electorate that was unashamedly extreme, arguing for totalitarianism in place of parliamentary democracy at a time when Europe was engaged in a bitter war between the forces of democracy and authoritarianism. The party was extremely nationalistic and believed that the only way to create a uniquely Irish-speaking Gaelic state was through the creation of an interventionist, authoritarian government under a strong dictator who would create a Christian corporatist state that would be forced into becoming Gaelic and Irish-speaking. It was a clerico-fascist programme designed to appeal to a

---

<sup>113</sup> J.A. Murphy, 'The Irish Party System 1938-51', in *Ireland in the War Years and After 1939-1951*, ed. by Kevin B. Nowlan and T. Desmond Williams (Dublin, 1969), p. 157.

<sup>114</sup> Clann na Poblachta appealed to Republicans and former Blueshirts with its message of ending the bitterness of post-Civil War politics.

<sup>115</sup> D.G. Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, (London, 1982), p. 358.

<sup>116</sup> *Irish Independent*, 24 January 1948.



devoutly Catholic population. After centuries of repressive anti-Gaelic British rule, this was deemed the only alternative to a parliamentary democratic system that had failed to restore a Gaelic Ireland, thus failing the martyrs of the 1916 Rising. The party produced copious amounts of literature to promote its cause, and its stress on politics as a way of restoring the Irish way of life gave it a cultural appeal that kept it in the limelight longer than its small membership would normally merit.

The party presented its ideas within the framework of a critique of modern Irish society, particularly its culture and politics. It was this stress on Irish culture, and particularly language, that gave the movement its distinctive motif. The party grew out of the Irish language movement. The Free State's adoption of Irish as the national language alongside English had failed to ensure the language's growth and use in everyday life. Ailtiri believed that the adoption of Irish as the sole national language, and its use as the vernacular of everyday life was essential if Ireland was to become completely independent of Britain. One pamphlet urged that every word of Irish spoken would help "to drive English and the Godless modernistic culture for which it stands out of Ireland once and for all."<sup>117</sup> The imposition, by an authoritarian state, of Gaelic as the spoken language would therefore isolate Ireland from those foreign influences which had undermined Irish culture in the first place.

Ailtiri associated Britain with liberalism and atheism.<sup>118</sup> Blythe, one of the leading theoreticians and writers for the movement, described liberalism as a godless creed: "with its law of the jungle code of economics and social 'justice,' economic disorganization, scarcity and plenty, vast armies of unemployed, millions for war, nothing for bread and economic production."<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> *Ni Dhubhlaine*, 1942, p.6. Ailtiri pamphlet quoted in Gallagher, M., *Irish Political Parties*, p. 108.

<sup>118</sup> E. Blythe, *The New Order in the New Ireland*, (Dublin, 1942), NLI Ir. 32341.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

Ailtiri expected that the end of the Second World War would also see the end of liberalism which had already been severely crippled after the First World War. Ailtiri claimed that the economic and political dislocation caused by the war was too great for liberal economics to cope with, and therefore the death knell of liberal economics had been sounded. The scale of the problem caused by the war would require a drastic solution. Ailtiri offered as its solution, “ordered governmental control of production and Christian cooperation,”<sup>120</sup> and the immediate replacement of parliamentary democracy which was so intimately connected with economic liberalism.

Ailtiri na hAiseirighe wanted to overhaul the economic, cultural and political structure of Ireland and modernize the state, making Ireland a role model for others to imitate. In Ailtiri na hAiseirighe’s 16-point programme, the first article pronounced that :

“[The] answer to communism is ‘actualised Christianity.’ Restoration of national freedom and language will afford the necessary foundation for world service, because only then can we fulfil adequately our modern international mission.”<sup>121</sup>

Ailtiri na hAiseirighe envisaged that Ireland had a mission to act as a model for the successful application of Christian corporatism, but that this could only be achieved with the reunification of Ireland and the complete isolation of the people from the cultural, political and economic influence of Britain. This isolation from Britain was to be achieved through the enforced Gaelicization of Irish life, politics and culture and the elimination of foreign influences to as great an extent as possible. This would require the creation of a political system that recognized the principle of strong leadership, which the party claimed was one of the characteristics of the historic

---

<sup>120</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, *The New Order in the New Ireland*, (Dublin, 1942), NLI, Ir32341.

<sup>121</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, *The New Order in the New Ireland*, (Dublin, 1942), Ir. 32341, NLI.

Gaelic state.<sup>122</sup> The party did not go into a great deal of detail about how such a marked change would come about, but ambitiously stated that:

“All must give up speaking English. This can be done in five years with films, newspapers, radio etc. Bold decisive action is needed, now, before it is too late.”<sup>123</sup>

But, before Gaelicization took place, complete independence from Britain was a political necessity. This would then be followed by “the fostering and strengthening of national morale through the restoration of the national language and the protection and promotion of Irish culture.”<sup>124</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe recognized the value of modern propaganda methods and intended to make full use of them.<sup>125</sup>

Language was seen by the party as important in not only shielding Ireland from the perceived pernicious influence of Britain, but also in isolating Ireland from what the party saw as the inherent atheism of modern culture. Ailtiri wanted to replace it with a culture based on Catholic values and teachings. The party stated:

“The importance of the national language as a shield against materialism and atheistic cultural influences is obvious. We shall be most Christian when we are most Gaelic, as in the past, for then we shall be nearer to capturing the spirit of Colmcille.”<sup>126</sup>

The authoritarian state envisaged by Cunningham would exert complete control over the media. The ultimate vision was of a united Irish state where all spoke Irish as a first language, read Irish literature and newspapers, listened to Irish radio broadcasts and watched Irish films, all wholesomely presented and deeply imbued with a Catholic and Gaelic ethos, as defined by the party. The extremism of these ideas, a form of cultural authoritarianism, attracted a group of enthusiasts who saw

---

<sup>122</sup> E. Blythe, *Governmental Plan for the New Ireland*, Blythe Papers P/24/969, UCD Archives.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, *For National Government and Action*, (no date), Ir94109, NLI.

<sup>125</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, *The New Order in the New Ireland*, (Dublin, 1942), Ir.32341, NLI.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. Colmcille was a saint from Ireland's mediaeval golden age.

themselves as the vanguard of a new Gaelic revival. They viewed their mission as the promotion of a messianic message, a crusade to restore Catholic Ireland to its glorious heritage, thereby rescuing it from the defilement of British godless materialism.

Catholicism, particularly its social angle, was central to its programme, and every party document stressed the importance of creating a state where the ideals of Christianity would flourish. Strict censorship, aided by the fact that publications in Gaelic would eventually replace all other language publications, would protect the population from ideas that were inimical to Christianity, but also presumably that were not in agreement with Ailtiri policies. In the field of economics, the imposition of corporatism would replace laissez-faire liberalism with Christian cooperation. In adopting the ideas of the Papal Encyclicals, Ailtiri hoped to ensure that society was “reorganized on a Christian vocational basis.”<sup>127</sup> This creation of a model Christian state was presented by the party as a prerequisite for Ireland’s new role in the world. Ireland would demonstrate the “re-presentation realistically to the modern world in a modern way of what is Christianity.”<sup>128</sup> Christianity would be presented to the world as a practical creed for the twentieth century. Ailtiri hoped to create “in Ireland the most modern and progressive world state, but all along rigidly in accordance with Christian principles of social and economic justice.”<sup>129</sup> Ailtiri proposed that the creation of a reinvigorated, overtly Christian state would give Ireland a cultural role in the twentieth century that would be as important as Greece had had in classical times. Ireland, as “the gateway to Europe and landing stage for America”<sup>130</sup> had the advantage of geographical location from which to launch its Christian message to the world. The party’s over-optimistic vision can also be gauged from the following

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> G. O Cuinneagain, *Ireland's Twentieth Century Destiny*, Blythe Papers P/24/974, UCD Archives.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.



statement, when Cunningham stated that Ireland could, “in cooperation with Divine Providence...settle the affairs of the universe for another two thousand years.”<sup>131</sup>

Central to the party’s political platform was the promotion of Catholic corporatist ideas. The party, unlike other right-wing groups, such as the NCP and the PNP, insisted that the source of its corporatist ideas was exclusively Catholic, and owed nothing to fascist states such as Mussolini’s Italy. The most frequently cited model was Salazar’s quasi-corporatist *Estado Novo* in Portugal. Ailtiri argued that Christian corporatism, which was frequently referred to as ‘Functional Democracy,’<sup>132</sup> was “the complete answer to the tyranny of modern atheistic statism,”<sup>133</sup> which would ensure that “human liberty and human dignity will be protected and safeguarded whilst...the efficiency of economic and political administration is guaranteed.”<sup>134</sup>

Ailtiri na hAiseirighe stressed that corporatism was being promoted as the only way to introduce Christian principles into the social and economic life of the nation. The party, in spite of its intense nationalism, looked abroad for inspiration and the party’s publications had nothing but praise for “the modernization of the mediaeval guild system being so successfully re-introduced into Portuguese life by Salazar.”<sup>135</sup> The party had its own distinct vision of how the Irish corporate state would be structured and, largely under the guiding hand of Ernest Blythe, set out its own scheme of corporate organization in order to realize the ultimate aims of the party:

---

<sup>131</sup> G.O Cuinneagain as quoted in M. Gallagher, *Irish Political Parties*, p. 108.

<sup>132</sup> The term ‘Functional democracy’ was used by Blythe, for example in *Governmental Plan for the New Ireland*, Blythe Papers, P/24/969, UCD Archives.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe publication as cited in M. Gallagher, *Political Parties in the Republic of Ireland*, p. 108.

“Ailtiri na hAiseirighe will replace this absurd outmoded system with Christian Corporatism-Functional Democracy in a modern Gaelic State for thirty-two County Ireland.”<sup>136</sup>

The usual arguments for corporatism were put forward by the party; increased involvement by all the community in national politics,<sup>137</sup> the welfare of the nation, to preserve the sanctity of private property “consonant with the welfare of the community,”<sup>138</sup> and the embodiment of Christian principles in national economic life.”<sup>139</sup>

Aitiri was not afraid to align itself on the side of authoritarianism and even totalitarianism. The party argued that authoritarian government under a strong national leader was the key feature of Gaelic government, and that in modern terms this meant government by a single national party.<sup>140</sup> The party wanted “the Head of State to be the supreme authority during his seven years of office.”<sup>141</sup> The new party would combine “the will of the people [with] the true welfare of the people.”<sup>142</sup> Central to the idea of loyalty to the state would be “loyalty to a leader’s fidelity to the noblest ideas, faithfulness to death...true Celtic characteristics.”<sup>143</sup> Party documents often frequently expressed the ideas of authoritarianism and loyalty to a leader as representing the Gaelic tradition, without recognizing that the tradition to which they referred was a pre-Mediaeval one and that political life had moved on since then.

The difficult task ahead, said Ailtiri, would require a strong government under a firm leader:

---

<sup>136</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, *Governmental Plan for the New Ireland*, Blythe Papers, P/24/939, UCD Archives.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> G. O Cuinneagain, *Ireland’s Twentieth Century Destiny*, Blythe papers, P/24/971, UCD Archives.

<sup>139</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, *For National Government and Action*, pamphlet, no date, Ir 94109, NLI.

<sup>140</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, *Governmental Plan for the New Ireland*, Blythe Papers, P/24/939, UCD Archives.

<sup>141</sup> G.O Cuinneagain, *Ireland’s Twentieth Century Destiny*, Blythe Papers, P/24/971, UCD Archives.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

“If we are in earnest in demanding that our national independence and territorial integrity be recognized, that a progressive financial, social, economic and Gaelic policy be implemented forthwith, we must be logical and practical and put in power a government that will be strong enough to resist dictation from any quarter whatsoever.”<sup>144</sup>

Ailtiri’s Gaelicization policy was coupled with a marked hostility to alien influences on Irish society. Ailtiri’s policy and programme contained two closely linked statements:

“12. Measures to be taken for race preservation through the prohibition of emigration and the introduction of a scheme of State marriage grants and family allowances.

“15. The elimination of the controlling influence of aliens and Freemasons and the expropriation of ground landlords.”<sup>145</sup>

Hostility to Freemasonry, and other secretive organizations, had been evident in the Blueshirt and Greenshirt constitutions. Fascists and extreme nationalists worldwide objected to the secrecy of the Freemasons, but also to its adherence to the principle of universal brotherhood and its Deist philosophy. Ailtiri asked:

“How an Irish Government can tolerate the existence of this anti-national, anti-Christian secret society for twenty-four hours is as mysterious as the ramifications of masonry itself.”<sup>146</sup>

The party envisaged a complete overhaul of the system of government. A National Council of a hundred deputies would be created, fifty of whom would be elected by vocational bodies, and thirty-five nominated by the National Party. These deputies

---

<sup>144</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, *The New Order in the New Ireland*, (Dublin, 1942), Ir.32341, NLI.

<sup>145</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, *For National Government and Action*, pamphlet, IR.94109, NLI.

<sup>146</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, *The New Order in the New Ireland*, (Dublin, 1942), Ir. 32341, NLI.

would sit for six years.<sup>147</sup> These eight-five deputies would elect the Head of State who would "...nominate an additional fifteen Deputies from amongst men of outstanding merit not otherwise selected and thus its independence of all parties and vested interests would be emphasized, and the National Council made truly representative of the nation, irrespective of political or economic affiliations."<sup>148</sup>

The role of the National Council would be "to discuss all legislation and national affairs generally but voting will only take place on the occasion of the election of a *Ceannaire Stait*."<sup>149</sup> The deputies would also have the authority "to remove a head a State should this be necessary for a grave cause by a 66% vote."<sup>150</sup>

The county councils as they existed at the time were to be abolished and replaced by four provincial assemblies.<sup>151</sup> These would be elected triennially on a vocational electoral roll. Each province would have a Provincial Governor (*Ceann Aiseidhe*), appointed by the Head of State to be the Chief Executive officer in that province.<sup>152</sup> This would ensure that there would be no regional power base to oppose the central government. The party hoped that the creation of these provincial assemblies would offer a solution to the partition problem as well helping to ensure economic efficiency and administrative modernization.<sup>153</sup> The Assembly for Ulster, however, would be for all nine historic counties of Ulster, not just those under the Stormont administration. This would guarantee a Catholic voting majority in the province. The seat of the Ulster Assembly would be at "Dun Geanainn, the seat of the O'Neill," not in

---

<sup>147</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, *Governmental Plan for the New Ireland*, P/24/939, Blythe Papers, UCD Archives.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, *For National Government and Action*, Ir. 94109, NLI.

<sup>150</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, *Governmental Plan for the New Ireland*, Blythe Papers, P/24/969, UCD Archives.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.



Belfast.<sup>154</sup> This governmental reorganization was then extended to the local level, with new parish councils elected solely by the heads of families.<sup>155</sup> The whole system of government envisaged in this plan was very centralized with real power resting firmly in Dublin and concentrated in the hands of the Head of State. There would only be one national party, which would allow controlled internal debate, but once a decision had been made it would be binding on all members:

“In place of a multiplicity of petty bickering party organizations, a single national party, membership of which will be open to all patriotic Irish citizens who are willing to undertake systematic, unpaid public service.”<sup>156</sup>

A national vanguard of committed youth would be the key to the implementation of Ailtiri’s programme. This youthful vanguard, personally loyal to the party leader, disciplined and Gaelic in inspiration, would establish the state that the 1916 Easter rebels had fought and died for, replacing “talk, promises, procrastination and betrayal”<sup>157</sup> with action. A national youth movement would organize the youth of the nation. Cunningham’s intention was that “our youth will be the salt and salvation of the new Ireland, the real creators of the *Aiseirighe* era.”<sup>158</sup> Ailtiri would create a young, militant vanguard force who would replace the “tired and flabby politicians”<sup>159</sup> who had ruled the Free State. For Ailtiri, this “Young Ireland [was] the history of Ireland that is to be.”<sup>160</sup>

Ailtiri’s plans were for a complete overhaul of the Free State constitution, but the party also presented a package of social and economic reforms that it hoped would serve to modernize Ireland. The party sought root and branch reforms across the

---

<sup>154</sup> G. O Cuinneagain, *Ireland’s Twentieth Century Destiny*, pamphlet, NLI.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> *An Phaimpleid Malba*, Blythe Papers, P/24/970, UCD Archives.

<sup>157</sup> G. O Cuinneagain, *Ireland’s Twentieth Century Destiny*, Blythe Papers, P/24/974, UCD Archives.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

legislative, economic and social spectrums and offered the Irish electorate a unique and radical alternative to the other parties. Ailtiri came into existence after the Depression, but the problems caused by the economic downturn and the economic war with Britain were still vivid in the eyes of the people of Ireland. Moreover, Ireland was still troubled by the problems of overpopulation and underemployment. Central to the programme of Ailtiri was an end to economic migration and the only way they saw to do this was to create more employment at home. The party proposed a massive programme of public works. It called for the erection of a hundred thousand new homes, the electrification of the railway system, the construction of a modernized road infrastructure, a national drainage scheme, the development of harbours, canals, and airports, shipping construction, the development of the turf industry as a solution to the fuel problem, and the exploitation of the nation's mineral wealth.<sup>161</sup> This enormous scheme of public work would have required massive funding and an unprecedented involvement by the government in the economy of the state. It was ambitious but it clearly aimed at creating a modern Irish state that could take its place in the family of modern European nations.

Ailtiri's programme was over-ambitious and unrealistic and its programme of an interventionist state committed to control and nationalization "for the true welfare of the people"<sup>162</sup> was hardly likely to appeal to a largely rural, conservative electorate. Ireland had seen little real economic development since independence. It was still economically backward, heavily reliant on an agricultural system tied to one market (Britain), and lacked a modern infrastructure. Ailtiri tied its demands for a Gaelic republic to a massive programme of modernization. Unfortunately, Ireland did not possess the industrial base or natural resources to fund the party's programme. It was

---

<sup>161</sup> Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, *For National Government and Action*, pamphlet, Ir. 94109, NLI.

<sup>162</sup> M. Gallagher, *Political Parties in the Republic of Ireland*, p. 109.

a scheme that was consistently rejected by the voters throughout the 1940s. The population might, and did, show some interest in, and indeed enthusiasm for, the party's commitment to Irish language and culture but it remained unconvinced by its political or economic programme. Ultimately, Ailtiri na hAiseirighe served the Irish language well through its tireless and high profile campaigns for increased use of the language. However, it was unable to appeal to an electorate with its authoritarian political programme at a time when totalitarianism had been seen to be the cause of so much misery elsewhere in Europe where it had been tried, tested and found wanting.

The extremist organizations that emerged during the war years owed much of their membership and ideas to O'Duffy and his movement, but they tended to be more radical and more open in their commitment to extremist policies than the Blueshirts and Greenshirts had been. None of the movements were very large, consisting mainly of fascist fellow travellers. Much of the policy content of the movements was imitative, and they clearly showed a greater debt to Nazism than to Italian fascism. O'Duffy and Blythe continued to be involved peripherally but Irish politics had moved on and a new leadership began to emerge that coalesced around O'Cuinneagain and his extreme nationalist party. The small size of these movements demonstrates that the support for fascism was weak, though they could have provided Ireland with a fifth column of Axis collaborators in the event of a German invasion of Ireland. It was Ailtiri that owed the greatest debt to O'Duffy and the Greenshirts. The other groups were continental imitations that had no place in the political tradition of Irish nationalism.

## CHAPTER SIX-THE CLAIM BY O'DUFFY TO ROOT IRISH FASCISM IN THE INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE

### *INTRODUCTION*

In the Greenshirts, Ireland had its own home-grown fascist movement that O'Duffy claimed was rooted in Irish history and political culture. Fascism was a European-wide ideology that only appeared after the First World War, but the ideas that were later synthesized to create fascist ideology and practice were present in European culture and politics long before then. This was the case in Ireland as in the rest of Europe. Fascism was an international phenomenon, and its focus on nationalism ensured that every country had its own particular form of fascism dependent on national character, history and politics, though they all owed a heavy debt to Italian Fascism and German Nazism. Fascism's opportunism and anti-intellectualism and its stress on action rather than ideas make defining generic fascism very difficult. O'Duffy was insistent that Ireland would take its own path to fascism, whilst acknowledging his debt to men like Mussolini. In this chapter, I shall explore the roots of Irish fascism and try to define what was particular about O'Duffy's 'green fascism.'

Ireland's long struggle for independence was led by a diverse group of men and women whose different political beliefs crystallized around Irish nationalism which would lead to the establishment of an independent state. After 1922, Ireland took the constitutional path of democracy though the insurrectionary tradition remained a powerful political influence. O'Duffy was able to pick out certain elements of the melange of ideas that had been aired and promoted during the independence struggle, promote them within a fascist organizational framework, and present the NCP as the logical development of these ideas.



### *THE GREENSHIRTS AS A FASCIST MOVEMENT*

Payne acknowledges the difficulty of defining fascism because it often stressed action over ideology, and was a very pragmatic movement in practice. But fascism was more than this. It was also an ideology with a focus on creating a new ethos and an organic and united national state based on the principles of duty and hierarchy.<sup>1</sup> All of these features are in evidence in the Greenshirts, a movement which placed great stress on youth and action to achieve national rebirth and regeneration, and where violence was hailed as the motive force of Irish history.<sup>2</sup> The action style of fascism was reflected in the extremism of its opposition to liberal democracy and socialism<sup>3</sup> and its military-style organization, using the liturgical trappings of a theatrical style of politics in an attempt to inspire and to mobilize the population.<sup>4</sup> O'Duffy imitated continental fascism, selectively adapting it to fit his nationalist vision, focusing his energies on destroying liberal parliamentarianism and parading corporatist ideas as the panacea for what he perceived as the failure of Irish governments to carry through the ideals of the Irish revolution.

Historians who have examined the Blueshirts are in agreement that it was not a fascist organization, though in its early days it had the potential to develop into a fascist movement as its extra-parliamentary, corporatist and aggressive style seemed to indicate. However, the drift in a fascist direction came to a halt with the absorption of the movement into the conservative Fine Gael alliance, which was able to effectively neuter the growing fascist element in the movement, as would happen

---

<sup>1</sup>S.G. Payne, *Fascism- Comparison and Definition* (Madison, 1980), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Z. Sternhell, in *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 7-8, recognized fascism's focus on vitalism and violence, and the exaltation of force as the motivating force of history and a necessary expression of national unity against any threat, external or internal.

<sup>3</sup>S.G. Payne, *Fascism-Comparison and Definition* (1980), p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. p. 11.

elsewhere in Europe. The subject has been discussed in some detail by Mike Cronin<sup>5</sup> and Maurice Manning.<sup>6</sup>

The Blueshirts contained a fascist element amongst the leadership but the rank and file members was more concerned with issues related to the Civil War and domestic politics (particularly the economic war) than with promoting a comprehensive fascist agenda. Whilst the Blueshirts possessed some fascist traits<sup>7</sup> they were not opposed to democracy as such, nor did they advocate a dictatorship.<sup>8</sup> The absorption into Fine Gael, and the inability of the few genuine fascists in the coalition to transform the new party, resulted in the Blueshirt split of 1934 and the emergence over the next year of Ireland's fascist party, the NCP.

Inspired by his participation in the international fascist scene, and embittered by his experience in the Fine Gael coalition, O'Duffy created a fascist party, though like most fascist parties it never used that label.<sup>9</sup> Stanley Payne defines generic fascism as identifiable by a common set of negatives (anti-liberalism, anti-communism and anti-conservatism),<sup>10</sup> a new style and organization and a new orientation in political culture,<sup>11</sup> which would place the Greenshirts within this political grouping.

O'Duffy's Greenshirts adopted a "vague *Weltanschauung* (world view) rather than...an intellectual dialectic,"<sup>12</sup> and presented to the Irish people a programme that reflected this. The party was anti-liberal, anti-democratic, anti-parliamentary and anti-British but it was more than this. The party aimed to win power through the electoral process and then destroy the liberal-democratic parliamentary system that O'Duffy closely

---

<sup>5</sup>M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, pp. 38-68.

<sup>6</sup>M. Manning, *The Blueshirts*, pp. 232-244.

<sup>7</sup> These fascist elements include nationalism, a commitment to corporatism, the liturgical element and a strong commitment to youth.

<sup>8</sup>M. Manning, *The Blueshirts*, pp. 243-244.

<sup>9</sup>S. Payne, *Fascism, Comparison and Definition*, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>12</sup>A. Cassels, 'Janus: The Two Faces of Fascism,' in H.A. Turner (ed), *Reappraisals of Fascism* (New York, 1975), pp. 69-70.

associated with continuing British hegemony. The NCP, more than any other fascist movement in Europe, committed itself to corporatism as its core policy, offering a clear alternative that would have transformed the Irish political structure and political culture. A central idea in fascism was the idea of a 'national revolution.'<sup>13</sup> There is still no consensus about whether fascism was revolutionary or reactionary in nature and the Greenshirt movement provides a further example of a movement beset by these contradictions.

The party owed a major debt to Italian fascism. Ledeen notes that after the Montreux conference in 1935, O'Duffy went to Rome along with Meyer, Loutkie, and Fonjallez, "ultramontanist members of the International,"<sup>14</sup> who specifically looked to Italy for a lead. On numerous occasions, O'Duffy praised Mussolini in speeches and in print. Like Mussolini's Italy, O'Duffy portrayed Ireland as an organic community and emphasized the need for national rebirth after centuries of decline. This also had much in common with the Belgian fascist Degrelle's concept of *Le Pays Reel*, which in turn owed much to Maurras' idea of an organic nation. This rebirth would involve the nation in a spiritual revolution against the materialism and cultural hegemony of alien forces that were a threat to the organic community.

The NCP, unlike the Blueshirt movement, was a political party that aimed to have a wide enough appeal to win power through the ballot box and O'Duffy set up an organizational structure to achieve this aim. Membership was open to all who supported the party's aims but leadership remained firmly in the hands of the uniformed vanguard section, the Greenshirts.<sup>15</sup> Like other fascist movements, it was populist in seeking to activate the whole nation whilst being elitist in that the popular

---

<sup>13</sup> Zeev Sternhall discusses the idea of the 'national revolution' in detail in *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* (Princeton, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> M.A.Ledeen, *Universal Fascism* (New York, 1987), p. 128

<sup>15</sup> Special Branch Report, 8June 1935, D/Jus8/296, NAI.



will was presumed to be embodied in a cadre of uniformed activists.<sup>16</sup> The existence of this military wing is demonstrative of the party's commitment to a new kind of militarised, masculine politics that stressed strength, vitality, action and aggression.

In common with most other fascist movements, the party was organized hierarchically with a strong leadership focus on O'Duffy. The uniformed Greenshirts were required to take a pledge of loyalty to the party and its leadership. As an authoritarian fascist party, the NCP hoped to replace pluralist politics with a hierarchical one-party state with O'Duffy as its leader. Whilst hardly a charismatic leader, O'Duffy was a popular, and well-known, national figure. He had a loyal personal following and a long history of service to the nation. He always took centre stage and there was an attempt to develop a leadership cult around him, as demonstrated by his reception at party meetings with the cry '*Hoch O'Duffy.*' His agenda was adopted wholesale at party conferences and O'Duffy always appeared as the central figure at rallies and ceremonies. The party depended on O'Duffy for its focus and drive, and with O'Duffy out of the country in 1936-7, the party folded, unable to function without his leadership and motivation.

The party stood on an avowed platform of creating a new political culture and a new political system to go with it. The replacement of the pluralism of the parliamentary system with a corporate political structure under a strong president would put an end to party politics, whilst ensuring a central role for the Greenshirts in the new monolithic corporate republic as a uniformed state auxiliary, thus integrating party and state. Political unity would replace the divisiveness of party politics. The NCP intended to ban all political parties but the mobilization of society would be

---

<sup>16</sup> R. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, p. 37.



guaranteed by participation in the corporate structure by the population at all levels.<sup>17</sup>

The party was populist in intent but elitist in practice.<sup>18</sup>

O'Duffy frequently spoke of the need for the nation to make sacrifices on the road to national greatness and aimed to use the state apparatus and control of the economy to mobilize the population and to force through the changes he believed were necessary. O'Duffy wanted a dictatorship of the Irish people, whose 'National Will' would be embodied in the Greenshirt movement. He personally stated that he had no problems with Ireland becoming a dictatorship,<sup>19</sup> providing that he was the dictator.

National unity was essential for O'Duffy, and he proposed a radical social programme to ensure that the workers were won over to the nation state, and not sidetracked by class politics. This social element was common to most fascist movements, the twist being that it was socialism based on the nation and not on divisive class interests. In the independence struggle, many nationalists had been wary of class politics side-tracking the pure nationalist struggle, though others such as Connolly looked to independence as a way of inaugurating a socialist Ireland. The NCP presented a full programme of social security benefits, welfare and unemployment legislation in order to create a society that was not divided by economic disadvantage and privilege, and to seduce the workers from socialism. O'Duffy believed that an interventionist state would bind together the citizens of Ireland, ensuring their loyalty by tackling the social question. This led to a stress on community rather than the individual, positing the idea of organic community rather than liberal individualism where rights were less important than duty. The new fascist

---

<sup>17</sup> Documents issued by L of Y (O'Duffy Section), D/Jus 8/296, NAI.

<sup>18</sup> R. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> *The Blueshirt*, 15 June 1935, 'Blueshirt Corporate Policy.'

man would be grounded in what Sternhell refers to as “organic solidarity.”<sup>20</sup> The policies and publications of the Greenshirts continually stressed the interests of the community over the rights of the individual, and vilified anything that threatened the unity of the community. Irish fascism, like all fascisms, was “fundamentally a conception of life, a total conception of national, political, social and economic life.”<sup>21</sup>

The social measures that the NCP proposed were intended to put an end to class politics and to stamp out any tendencies to the divisiveness of socialism, where class rather than nation was paramount. Like many after the Great War, the Greenshirts came to believe that “the motor of history is not Class but Nation.”<sup>22</sup> O’Duffy’s continued his promotion of the idea of a ‘Red Menace’ in Ireland, making clear his fascist party’s commitment to anti-communism. He intended to use it to mobilize support for his party, the most hostile of Irish parties to communism. However, as Stradling notes, “anti-Communism...became a highly convenient vehicle for his political career”<sup>23</sup> much as for Senator McCarthy in fifties America. Like most fascist parties, the NCP made the struggle against communism one of the central aims of the movement. O’Duffy objected to communism on ideological grounds particularly its internationalism, its opposition to hierarchy<sup>24</sup> and its stress on economic determinism. Pragmatically, the party’s vehement opposition to communism was intended to appeal to a devoutly Catholic population, but it failed to strike a chord.

O’Duffy wanted to control the economy in the national interest. The state would mobilize the country’s economic potential to modernize the Irish nation and create a sound economic base, with a larger industrial sector, to ensure the nation’s economic

---

<sup>20</sup>Z. Sternhell, ‘Fascist Ideology,’ in Walter Laquer, Ed., *Fascism, a Reader’s Guide* (Harmondsworth, 1979), p. 371.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. p. 354.

<sup>22</sup>Z. Sternhell, *La Droite Revolutionnaire 1885-1914, Les Origines Francaises Du Fascisme*, p. 411.

<sup>23</sup>R. Stradling (1995), *Franco’s Irish Volunteers*, p2.

<sup>24</sup>Labour in the Corporate State, Lecture by O’Duffy, D/Jus8/296, NAI.

as well as political independence from Britain. The policy had much in common with Arthur Griffith's Sinn Fein programme. Sternhell's statement that fascism aimed to "root the national economy in the nation's soil,"<sup>25</sup> is particularly relevant to the Greenshirts whose economic policy was based on the control of the Irish agricultural economy in order to develop Ireland's weak industrial infrastructure. The state would become an agent of modernization. O'Duffy wanted to control free market capitalism to create a "new communal or reciprocal productive relationship."<sup>26</sup> Whilst NCP policy documents were thin on detailed plans and policies, the structure of the Irish corporate republic reflected fascism's obsession with planning and direction.

Griffin's analysis and definition of fascism gives a central place to the importance of what he termed 'palingenetic myth.'<sup>27</sup> Fascism promotes the idea of a revolutionary utopia whilst trying to achieve power, which provides an outlet for the idealism and sacrifice of its supporters. At the core of fascist ideology is the myth which unites and mobilizes, promising a transformation of a decadent society in crisis into a dynamic utopia that combines nostalgia for a romanticized past with a modernizing vision of the future.<sup>28</sup> As Griffin argues: "The basic drive of a fascist regime is to create a strong state as the protector of a national community immune from the 'anarchic' forces of dissent so that its distinctive vulture can flower once more."<sup>29</sup>

This palingenetic ultra-nationalism is evident in O'Duffy's movement. The concept of "a national rebirth to be brought about by finding a 'Third Way' between liberalism/capitalism and communism/socialism"<sup>30</sup> was central to O'Duffy's programme. He claimed that the Free State had failed to realize the ideals for which

---

<sup>25</sup>Z. Sternhell, *Fascist Ideology*, p. 374.

<sup>26</sup>S. Payne, *Fascism, Comparison and Definition*, p. 10.

<sup>27</sup>R. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, p.26

<sup>28</sup>Ibid. pp. 31-33

<sup>29</sup>Ibid. p.48.

<sup>30</sup>R. Griffin, *International Fascism: Theories, Causes and the New Consensus*, p. 238.



he claimed the rebels of 1916 had died. He pictured Ireland as being in a state of crisis. He did not create a new myth but developed an existing one. His aim was the creation of a united, Gaelic, 32-county republic, a nation that would be a cultural beacon fully independent, politically and economically, from Britain. The creation of a republic was central to his programme and he claimed to have inherited the nationalist mantle of Pearse, Collins and Griffith. At Beal na Blath in 1937, O'Duffy reminded his followers that Michael Collins "had left behind a message for the Irish people that should he fall, Eoin O'Duffy would carry on."<sup>31</sup> He argued that the party politicians had abandoned the ideals of the 1916 revolution in pursuit of self-interest. They had failed to carry through on those ideals or diluted them. However, in reality the political ideals of the 1916 revolutionaries were as disparate as they were vague. O'Duffy's speeches were full of nationalist rhetoric and the promise of a golden age based on the ideals of his nationalist predecessors. He took these ideals and presented them in the context of 1930's politics. Obviously, the world had moved on since the Easter Rising, and for O'Duffy fascism was best suited to carry the nation on to the Republic. Liberal democracy had failed and action, organization and the mobilization of the entire nation was O'Duffy's fascist alternative. His speeches were full of calls for sacrifice, including the ultimate sacrifice of blood and the need for a national cleansing through violence against those who had held Ireland back.<sup>32</sup>

This call to arms was accompanied by the constant use of nationalist symbolism, and O'Duffy stressed the need for ceremony, liturgy and the adulation of martyrs, imitating the trappings of continental fascism. This was in evidence from the launch of the party at the *Ard Fheis* in 1935 where so many of the motions were concerned with the symbolism of the movement. The later change of uniform colour to Irish

---

<sup>31</sup> Speech by Eoin O'Duffy at Beal na Blath, 30 August 1936, cited in R. Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War* (Manchester, 1999), p. 32.

<sup>32</sup> *The Nation*, March 1936, 'Tribute to Released Prisoner.'



green, the return to the uniform hat of 1916, the shamrock flag, and the title of the party journal were all attempts to hijack national symbols in the fascist cause. The uniform, marching songs and graveside orations owed much to continental fascism, but also to Irish nationalism which had witnessed the rapid, though temporary, militarization of society from 1912 onwards. His attempt to re-militarise Irish politics, an increasingly anachronistic approach by the thirties, led to a stress on youth and masculinity,<sup>33</sup> to action and vitalism than to detailed programmes. The Greenshirts were never responsible for the levels of violence associated with the Blueshirts but this was principally due to the small size of the movement. It would eventually lead to O'Duffy organizing the Irish Brigade. The Spanish Civil war would provide an opportunity to give his followers a taste of warfare that Irish society had not seen since the Irish Civil War.<sup>34</sup> War was the ultimate masculine experience, a form of political activity that shaped character.<sup>35</sup> The evidence for the irrational in Irish fascism comes from O'Duffy rhetoric of struggle, war, blood sacrifice and the need to root the nation in the soil to preserve Irish culture. The Iron Guard of Romania similarly combined agrarian radicalism with a tradition of romantic nationalism<sup>36</sup> and added an element of religious mysticism,<sup>37</sup> whilst the liturgical element owed much to Nazi and Italian Fascist examples. For both Romanian and Irish fascists, nationality was embodied in the people and soil, and for both movements national imperialism mainly constituted the expulsion of foreigners and foreign interests rather than territorial expansion.<sup>38</sup> The Iron Guard also utilized religion as a propaganda tool in

---

<sup>33</sup> Females were 26% of Blueshirt membership, but this had declined to only 7% of Greenshirts. See chapter 4 of this thesis, p.83.

<sup>34</sup> It would also allow O'Duffy to support an ideological ally, Franco.

<sup>35</sup> M. Neocleous, *Fascism* (Buckingham, 1997), p. 17.

<sup>36</sup> P. Hayes, *Fascism* (London, 1973), p. 55.

<sup>37</sup> B. Vargo, 'Fascism in Eastern Europe,' in W. Lacquer, *Fascism, a Reader's Guide*, (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 277.

<sup>38</sup> *Ideology of Romanian Fascism*, p. 4. Retrieved October 2003 from:

order to win over a devout, and superstitious, Orthodox population. Frequent use was made of prayers, chants and religious processions, whilst it was claimed that Christianity was an essential part of Romanian fascist ideology because it was considered responsible for the continuity of the Romanian people.<sup>39</sup> O'Duffy followed in the footsteps of Irish nationalists in recognising the Catholic faith as an essential part of the Irish identity, where 90% of the population were Catholics, and practicing Catholics at that,<sup>40</sup> and including a religious element in the liturgical trappings and propaganda of the Greenshirts.

The NCP was a fascist party of action, of deeds not words. Therefore, we find that ideological content, practical programmes and concrete policies were distinctly lacking in a movement that stressed the need to exploit every situation to achieve the party's aims, rather than rely on detailed policies and paperwork. It was this focus on action that would help to mould the new fascist man providing the mobilized vanguard which would inspire the nation into embracing the new fascist era and focus and direct the 'National Will.' The Greenshirts would be at the top of a hierarchical system that would radicalise, politicise and mobilize the population. They were to form a new elite whose destiny would be to replace the tired old men of the independence struggle and Civil War and those who had failed to carry through on their promises and vision. O'Duffy would ensure that his new party would be an autonomous movement with its own social base in the youth of the nation. O'Duffy, like "Degrelle, like the Italian Futurists and Jose Antonio in Spain, knew how to build on the conflict of generations."<sup>41</sup>

This idealism, and the need to isolate the party from the divisiveness of Treaty politics, led to the idealization of youth so evident in most fascist movements. This

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p.5

<sup>40</sup> R. Stradling, 'Franco's Irish Volunteers' p2.

<sup>41</sup> H.R. Kedward, *Fascism in Western Europe 1900-45* (Glasgow, 1969), p. 97.

was not only reflected in the number of young people attracted to fascism throughout Europe, but also in the youthfulness of the party leadership. O'Duffy himself was only forty when he became leader of the Blueshirts, and forty-four when he founded the NCP. Many other fascist leaders, such as Degrelle, Mussolini, and indeed Hitler himself became party leaders at a comparatively young age.<sup>42</sup>

O'Duffy distanced himself on several occasions at this time from the biological fascism of Hitler's Nazism.<sup>43</sup> However, his party journal produced a number of anti-Semitic articles, and later, during the war, O'Duffy was to come down firmly on the side of Hitler, as did his colleagues Walsh and Gunning, embracing Nazi racism and anti-Semitism. O'Duffy was not just a cultural or chauvinistic nationalist. His nationalism was imbued with racism, and the idea of a superior Irish 'race' was central to his political vision. Lacking any significant national minority, O'Duffy focused on Ireland's traditional enemy, Britain, and on the politicians in Ireland who had worked so closely to ensure that Ireland was still politically and economically tied to Britain. He vilified Britain at any opportunity and racial slurs, vulgar stereotypes and falsifications were part of O'Duffy's rhetoric when describing Britain's continued influence on his country, just as Maurras vilified external enemies, principally Britain and Germany at every opportunity.<sup>44</sup> The irredentist problem of Northern Ireland was also used to mobilize support, and he was not averse to using extremely aggressive language, including threats of military action towards the British in the North, to rouse his supporters.

O'Duffy's militant nationalism was an inclusive one that did not take account of the economic, cultural, political and national identity of the Northern Protestants. He was

---

<sup>42</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the background of fascist leaders see ed. S.E. Larsen, B. Hangtvet, and JP Mykelbust et al, *Who Were the Fascists; Social Roots of European Fascism* (Bergen, 1980).

<sup>43</sup> *The Nation*, 29 June, 1935, 'Editorial.'

<sup>44</sup> E. Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism* (New York, 1969), pp. 175-6



a practicing Catholic and he used Catholicism as an identifying badge of Irishness. However, his was not a clerico-fascism that envisaged a significant political role for the Catholic Church in the new state on the lines of Croatian Ustashism. He used Catholicism pragmatically, as he used anti-communism, to attract a religious population to his fascist programme. He did not, in his speeches or policy documents, envision the positive cooperation between clericalism and fascism that presupposes a clergy more or less identical with the fascist element<sup>45</sup> and clerical support for the Greenshirt movement was distinctly lacking. O'Duffy's corporatism owed more to Mussolini than to the Vatican's social encyclicals, though he led people to believe that his party's programme was in line with the Catholic Church's social programme.

O'Duffy wanted to create a strong national state that would be able to achieve full and complete independence from Britain. As a small nation, Ireland could never hope to be a major world power or imperialist nation. O'Duffy hoped that fascism would create the conditions with which to create a nation of cultural importance. O'Duffy envisaged that Ireland's small size would be out of proportion to its eventual cultural significance.<sup>46</sup> For O'Duffy, the liberal democratic state had failed Irish cultural nationalism, and only an authoritarian directive state could force through the policies needed to rescue Ireland. Like fascists across Europe, O'Duffy was convinced that strong personal leadership was essential for the implementation of the drastic programme he envisaged. O'Duffy believed that he was the leader that Ireland needed, and that he could restore the Gaelic nation which would be an inspiration to the rest of Europe. By this time, however, for most people in Ireland, fascism meant oppression and violence (and much of O'Duffy's aggressive rhetoric only served to support this idea), and Ireland was not a country ready to return to that path.

---

<sup>45</sup> G. Whitlock, *What is Clero-Fascism?* Retrieved October 2003 from:  
<http://home:earthlink.net/~velid/cf/wicf.html>

<sup>46</sup> E. O'Duffy, *Lecture on Corporative System*, D/Jus/8/296, NAI.



Independent Ireland was well on its way on the road to modernisation in spite of its weak economic base, and the polarities in its politics was very different from the rest of Europe, which allowed large-scale fascist parties to emerge.

### *O'DUFFY'S ATTEMPT TO ROOT IRISH FASCISM IN THE INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE*

Modern Irish nationalism bound together people who held a wide range of conflicting views on the nature and structure of the future Irish state. It rose as an anti-colonial movement within a liberal democracy. Organizations such as Sinn Fein exploited Anglophobia and resentment for propaganda purposes. There was no single Irish historical political tradition, but a complex interplay of ideas that nationalists promoted. O'Duffy claimed that post-independence Ireland was bitterly divided, though as Regan argues, a particular consensus had in fact emerged in Irish politics<sup>47</sup> that was "Conservative, Catholic and homogenous"<sup>48</sup> Irish fascism failed because his programme was at odds with this political consensus.

O'Duffy was not alone in reaching back to the independence struggle for its myths and source of legitimacy. Politicians and intellectuals needed to create the "imagined community"<sup>49</sup> of the new nation. Kiberd argues that the politicians of the Free State were not successful because nationalists did not have a clear enough image of what an independent Ireland would be like.<sup>50</sup> As Berresford Ellis notes, "Successive 26-county governments [and political parties] from 1921 to date, have claimed an inheritance from the national struggle for independence, and appeals have been made to the spirit

---

<sup>47</sup> J.M Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-36*, Chapter 16.

<sup>48</sup> T.J. White, Nationalism and Liberalism in the Irish Context. *Eire-Ireland. Journal of Irish Studies* p.5

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p.3

<sup>50</sup> D. Kiberd, 'Modern Ireland: Postcolonial or European?' in S. Murray, *Not On Any Map: Essays on Postcoloniality and Cultural Nationalism* (Exeter, 1997).

of every uprising from 1798 to 1916.”<sup>51</sup> The emergent Free State reflected the values of the revolutionaries, creating what O’Brien terms “holy Catholic nationalism.”<sup>52</sup>

Violence was seen by some of the 1916 insurrectionists as essential in confirming Ireland’s identity, arguing that independence could only be won through struggle, not bestowed on the Irish by the British. The collective liberation of the Irish people was tied in with an almost mystical belief in the value of sacrifice, martyrdom and violence. However, this was a minority view until 1916. The Great War had served to radicalise Irish politics which had been drifting in a stable constitutional direction for the previous forty years, and in which the Irish Parliamentary Party, not Sinn Fein, the IRB nor the Gaelic League, had the key role. The IPP was the “backbone of the new Irish Catholic political establishment” who, along with most Irish men and women, were satisfied with the imminence of Home Rule.<sup>53</sup> Ireland, as an integral part of the United Kingdom had shared in its growth and modernisation, to the extent that Lee claims that Ireland between 1848 and 1918 had showed the most rapid progress towards modernisation of any country in Europe.<sup>54</sup> There had been a cultural explosion at the end of the Nineteenth century; the small number of active cultural nationalists however were disproportionate in the influence they managed to wield. However, they were a minority movement who were eclipsed by the appeal to the electorate of IPP pragmatism.<sup>55</sup>

The 1916 insurrection changed the face of Irish politics; “it was a gesture spawning myths of considerable power.”<sup>56</sup> The Proclamation of 1916, which O’Duffy was later to adopt as the central plank of his national policy, was a “simplistic version of

---

<sup>51</sup> P. Berresford Ellis (1989) ‘Revisionism in Irish Historical Writing’ p.2

<sup>52</sup> C.C. O’Brien, *God Land; Reflections on Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1988)

<sup>53</sup> R.V. Comerford, *The Fenians in Context*, p.248.

<sup>54</sup> J. Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918*, (1973), p.168

<sup>55</sup> F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, p.260.

<sup>56</sup> R. English, *Radicals in the Republic. Socialist Republicanism in the IFS 1925-37*. p.2

Ireland's past and present...mutilated for contemporary propaganda purposes."<sup>57</sup> It was the propaganda of a clique who were claiming to act in the national interest, perceiving the Irish as a united nation, and binding and committing the disparate band of insurrectionists, nationalist and socialist, to a vague programme that ignored the realities of contemporary Ireland, and which vilified Britain as Ireland's historical oppressor. The ideologically unsophisticated Volunteers, whose numbers were swelled by the imposition of conscription, were inspired by opposition to the English as Ireland's oppressor, which in turn justified their insurrectionary response.<sup>58</sup> For most Volunteers it was not cultural nationalism that inspired them to fight, but the long historical oppression of the Irish by the British over centuries (particularly demonstrated in the struggle over the land issue) and the history of resistance to this rule.<sup>59</sup> There was less a positive image of what Irishness was, than a negative attitude to the British. Republicans were at great pains to argue strongly for a distinct Gaelic Irish nation, an indication of the lack of widespread acceptance of such an identity. "In reality, Volunteers themselves rarely claimed that it was its distinct cultural and social order that gave Ireland its right to independence."<sup>60</sup> A significant number were socialists, followers of Connolly, who in allying themselves with the IRB nationalists effectively neutered Irish socialism for years. These socialists defined their nationalism "by particular, material, socio-economic conflicts and relations" based on the image of the British as class oppressors, rather than the spiritual nationalism of nationalist mythology.<sup>61</sup> But anti-capitalist class conflict was not the main cause of the 1916 revolution, though there were significant socio-economic dynamics that

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. pp. 4-5

<sup>58</sup> J. Auguseiteijn, 'Motivation; Why Did they Fight For Ireland. The Motivation of Volunteers in the Revolution.' p.104

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p.109-114.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 103

<sup>61</sup> R. English *Radicals and the Republic. Socialist Republicanism in the Irish Free State 1925-37* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1994), p.10.

contributed to the radicalisation of Irish politics.<sup>62</sup> Significantly, O'Duffy, and many others, failed to acknowledge the key role played by socialists in the independence struggle.

A decade later, O'Duffy returned to the myths of the independence struggle for the source of his ideals. He wanted to lead a political party that, in his view, would "recapture that all-embracing transcendental position occupied by the Sinn Fein movement of 1918-21."<sup>63</sup> What he failed to acknowledge was that "it was a phenomenon peculiar to the circumstances, not some magical ideology that could be bottled and kept for use in future elections."<sup>64</sup> By this time, he had been strongly influenced by the fascism of Mussolini. He took the ideals of the earlier nationalists and blended them in a new synthesis with corporatist ideas. To this new synthesis, O'Duffy added the trappings of fascism. De Valera was promoting his own nationalist vision, but within a liberal democratic framework as opposed to O'Duffy's corporate state; de Valera "conceptualised the ideal Irish society as rural, athletic, agrarian ascetic, religious family-centred if not communal and (many would argue) sexist."<sup>65</sup> The people of Ireland wholeheartedly rejected O'Duffy's option, its methods and programme. The early part of this chapter identified the fascist nature of the Greenshirt movement. The rest of this chapter will take different aspects of O'Duffy's programme and trace their development from the earlier independence struggle.

---

<sup>62</sup> R. English, 'Socialist Republicanism in Independent Ireland 1922-49' in M. Cronin and J. Regan (eds), *Ireland: The Politics of Independence, 1922-49* (London, 2000) pp. 88-89

<sup>63</sup> B. Feeney, *Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 2002) p. 91.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* p.91

<sup>65</sup> T.J. White, *Nationalism vs Liberalism in the Irish Context, Eire-Ireland*, p.6



## THE GAELIC REPUBLIC

The Gaelic Revival of the late nineteenth century led by men such as Eoin MacNeill,<sup>66</sup> Douglas Hyde<sup>67</sup> and David Moran<sup>68</sup> argued the case for a distinct Irish identity. The Free State adopted the Gaelic revival as state policy, particularly in the education system and support for the Gaeltacht. In the 1930s, O'Duffy was to claim that the two major parties had failed to follow through on the Gaelic Ireland idea that encapsulated a republic and cultural nationalism. He claimed that only an authoritarian state would have the power to carry these through to completion, including the restoration of the communitarian aspect of Gaelic culture through the creation of a corporate system. However, it is important to stress that the utopian myths were just that, myths, and that their value was as propaganda and as legitimising agents. Regan argues that Gaelic and Catholic idealism, coupled with romantic nationalist assumptions served to bind together Irish nationalists, thereby transcending the class backgrounds of the rebels.<sup>69</sup>

The Gaelic Revival brought together neo-traditionalists, reformists and assimilationists<sup>70</sup> in a movement that was "committed to conservative, atavistic and even racialist principles."<sup>71</sup> Each group had a different focus but the two main strands of the movement were linguistic (proposing the reconstruction of a populist rural Gaelic civilization based on customs and language) and literary (stressing the reality of Ireland as an Anglo-Irish nation, they focused on the use of the English language and literature infused with the legends and ideas of the Gaelic peasant). The two

---

<sup>66</sup>Eoin MacNeill was a journalist and nationalist who later became C in C of the Irish Volunteers and later Minister for Education in 1925.

<sup>67</sup> Douglas Hyde was an academic who became President of the Gaelic league in 1893, and was later a member of the Senate and first president of Ireland. (1938-45).

<sup>68</sup> D.P. Moran founded the *Leader* in 1900, which became a focus for nationalist sentiment. He was active in the Gaelic League.

<sup>69</sup> R. English, 'Socialist Republicanism in Independent Ireland 1922-49,' p.88

<sup>70</sup> J. Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* (London, 1987), p. 117.

<sup>71</sup> S.F. Moran, *The Politics of Redemption* (Washington, 1994), p. 54.

separate visions came together in the Gaelic Revival. Hyde, Moran and MacNeill led the former group, central to whose mission was the re-establishment of Gaelic as the vernacular of the Irish people. They hoped that a revitalized Ireland would act as cultural world leader.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, there were major divisions between these individuals, particularly Hyde and Moran. Hyde, for example, derived his inspiration from “Anglo-Irish, rather than Gaelic concepts of Ireland.”<sup>73</sup> Hyde was unable to distinguish between Anglicisation and modernization, and the need to adopt new cultural norms for a modern society. It is important to stress too that it was a cultural not a political movement. For the Gaelic League “language revival came before politics”<sup>74</sup> and whilst the IRB gradually infiltrated the movement it could never be seen as “a nursery of revolutionaries.”<sup>75</sup>

W.B. Yeats, as the most important representative of the Anglo-Irish vision, saw the peasant as the custodian of national culture in contrast to the urban culture of the British. He sought the “resurrection of the spirit that would launch a new renaissance of the Irish people.”<sup>76</sup> Yeats foresaw the emergence of a New Man, purified by his rejection of British materialist culture and a return to rural peasant values and an almost mystical attachment to the soil and the community. His extreme approach with its stress on peasantism and ruralism was distinctly anti-modern. Yeats was a member of a number of mystical occult groups and adopted the evolutionary metaphysics of these groups, using them to create a vision of Ireland’s degeneration and her renaissance with the artist and poet playing a messianic role in articulating the myths of Irish greatness and heroism, particularly as exemplified by heroes such as the legendary Cuchulainn. Yeats saw in Irish myth a correspondence with his occult

---

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 125-6.

<sup>73</sup> J. Lee, *The Modernization of Irish Society 1848-1918*. p.138

<sup>74</sup> R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, p.450.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* p.450.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32.

findings and he came to see Ireland as a holy land, “a repository of primal knowledge.”<sup>77</sup> Both Irish and German nationalist revivals of the nineteenth century were heavily influenced by occult groups, particularly the theosophical movement and its offshoots, which fostered a belief in messianism.<sup>78</sup> Yeats’ anachronistic nationalism contrasted strongly with that Connolly and particularly Pearse who, as “modernizers, created the past in the image of the future...[ with Pearse using the sagas] as weapons to achieve his goal of modernization without anglicisation”<sup>79</sup>

The Gaelic cultural revival of the late nineteenth century was integral to the search for national identity. What began as an intellectual movement amongst poets and academics led to the creation of cultural organizations such as the Gaelic League (to promote the learning of the Irish language) and the Gaelic Athletic Association (to encourage the playing of Irish sports). Nevertheless, the organizations did not have mass membership though they did have an influence disproportionate to their size.<sup>80</sup> The revivalists sought to rescue the Irish people from British domination by promoting the indigenous Gaelic culture and by looking for models from the past. In some ways the movement was conservative and anti-modern.<sup>81</sup> In the process, the revivalists posited the Irish ‘race’ and its culture in contrast and superior to other cultures, specifically that of the English.<sup>82</sup> Foster argues that “the emotions focused by cultural revivalism around the turn of the century were fundamentally sectarian and even racist,”<sup>83</sup> though this racism was historical and literary rather than based on scientific or biological claims such as Nazi racism. In defining the superiority of Irish ‘race’ and culture, they posited the idea of a Golden Age which existed prior to the

---

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p. 131.

<sup>78</sup> W.I. Thompson, *The Imagination of an Insurrection* (New York, 1967), p. 52.

<sup>79</sup> J. Lee, *The Modernization of Irish Society 1848-1918*, p.141.

<sup>80</sup> F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, p.247

<sup>81</sup> J.F. Moran, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption* (Washington D.C., 1994) pp. 53-54.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p.58.

<sup>83</sup> R. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, p.453



arrival of the English and their culture. The conception of a Golden Age was wrapped in the vagaries of myth and legend and in reality would not stand up to close historical scrutiny. Nor was the threat from British culture as relevant as the Irish-Irelanders claimed. As Lee points out, "Ireland was no more anglicised in 1892 than in 1848... The transformation of the tenurial system, the euthanasia of the aristocracy, marked a major victory for native values-all the more remarkable in that these values were themselves transmuted through the centuries. The native mind responded to the English challenge not by clinging blindly to old concepts but by creating new 'native' values which it then compelled the conqueror to recognise as 'immemorial tradition'..."<sup>84</sup> Historical reality was less important than the perception of a rich and cultured past and the need to return to the core values of that culture to save Ireland from the materialist modernism of the English. The revivalists saw themselves as missionaries rescuing a fallen peasantry from the corruption of the English, returning them to their pure, authentic Gaelic soul. They presented themselves as religious crusaders, for example producing pamphlets such as D. Figgis's *Sinn Fein Catechism*, whilst a separatist priest wrote *The Faith and Morals of Sinn Fein*.<sup>85</sup> Post-1917 Sinn Fein came to hold dear several sacred texts including the 1916 Easter Proclamation, the Dail Republican Declaration of 1921 and the 1921 Election Manifesto.<sup>86</sup> The intellectuals cast themselves as a new cultural elite which was able to articulate the myths and re-present them to the masses in the hope of using the population for their political ends. However, being mostly middle-class intellectuals, these revivalists "were not in harmony with the peasant soul but with an image of it."<sup>87</sup> The Rising, moreover, served to isolate those Catholic intellectuals, largely recruited from

---

<sup>84</sup> J. Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918*, pp. 139-140

<sup>85</sup> M. Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 216.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* p. 246.

<sup>87</sup> M. Goldring, *Pleasant the Scholar's Life* (London, 1993), p. 69.



University College Dublin, who had seen the IPP as the way to power and who would find themselves isolated in the new radicalised nationalist post-1916 Ireland, despairing of its fanaticism and provincialism.<sup>88</sup>

Ireland's high literacy rate and a large newspaper circulation allowed the ideas of the intellectuals to filter down to the general population. It gave dignity to the Irish and their culture. Nationalism became a spiritual force that created a national consciousness supposedly rooted in a mythical Gaelic past. The Land League in the nineteenth century had "pioneered on a mass basis a technique destined to become indispensable in nationalist agitation, the appeal to spurious historic rights."<sup>89</sup> In particular, nationalists perceived the western Irish peasantry as the guardians of Gaelic culture, mainly due to their ability to speak Irish. For these cultural nationalists, the Irish-Irelanders, political independence alone could not create an Irish nation. Ireland would have to be reborn as a culture as well as a political entity, and this synthesis alone, effected by the masses, could revitalize Ireland. The rapid decline in the number of Irish speakers and the growing influence of English culture created a sense of urgency that required the issue to be addressed sooner rather than later.<sup>90</sup> In an important article in *The New Ireland Review* written in 1899, D.P. Moran made it clear that, though men like Emmet and Tone might have been the harbingers of independence, it was in the peasantry that Ireland's salvation lay:

"We are proud of Grattan, Flood, Tone and Emmet and all the rest who dreamt and worked for an independent country, even though they had no concept of an Irish nation; but it is necessary that they be put in their place, and that is not at the top as

---

<sup>88</sup> S. Paseta, 'Ireland's Last Home Rule Generation: the Decline of Constitutional Nationalism in Ireland 1916-30' in M. Cronin and J. Regan (eds), *Ireland; The Politics of Independence 1922-49* (London, 2000), p.20

<sup>89</sup> J. Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918*, p.95

<sup>90</sup> D. McCartney, 'Hyde, D.P. Moran and Irish Ireland' in F.X. Martin ed. *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising* (London, 1967), p. 46.

the only beacon lights to subsequent generations. The foundation of Ireland is the Gael, and the Gael must be the element that absorbs it.”<sup>91</sup>

The cultural revival provided the myth that supported, but did not drive, the political movement for independence; it was a myth that posited an Irish ideal specifically against a very negative perception of the value of English culture, which was criticized as being alien, materialistic, rationalistic and modernistic. The cultural revival provided the inspirational language for future revolutionaries but, as Foster argues, it is important not to over-stress these cultural developments.<sup>92</sup> It supported the nationalist attempt to undermine British rule, through the creation of a negative view of the English, and in many ways it was a negative nationalism, not a thought-out notion of what an Irish-Ireland should be like.<sup>93</sup> Most of the unsophisticated Volunteers fighting for independence had little idea about what specifically constituted ‘Irishness’ and this lack of a positive self-image was to affect the development of post-independence Ireland.<sup>94</sup>

The mystical poet W.B. Yeats in particular promoted the idea of an innocent, peasant-based culture imbued with lofty spiritual values as against the mass vulgarised society of the modern scientific state embodied in his portrayal of Britain.<sup>95</sup> Eoin MacNeill also believed that the Gaelic revival would stem the modern tide: “As a Catholic, I also believe that the Irish revival will do more than any other secular effort to keep Ireland free from the secularising tendencies of other

---

<sup>91</sup> D.P. Moran, ‘The Pale and the Gael,’ *New Ireland Review*, June 1899.

<sup>92</sup> R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, p.456

<sup>93</sup> J. Augusteijn, *Motivation: Why Did They Fight For Ireland? The Motivation of Volunteers in the Revolution*, p.115.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* p.115.

<sup>95</sup> J. Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* (London, 1987), p. 132.

countries.”<sup>96</sup> Myth seemed to take on a more important role than the reasoned republicanism of the United Irishmen for men like Pearse.

Ireland found itself as part of the European-wide revolt against reason and the positivist ideas of progress and logic.<sup>97</sup> With independence, the new IFS was rich in integrative resources in this repository of myths and legends derived from the nineteenth century revival.<sup>98</sup> These were augmented with new myths and heroes drawn from the Easter Rebellion. However, like the Fenian rebellion, the 1916 rebellion became “invested in popular perception and in generations of historiography with a quasi-mystical aura which distorts understanding.”<sup>99</sup> However, these myths were to play a formative role in defining the character of the modern Irish nation state (Gaelic revivalism became state policy). Nevertheless, nation-building came to take priority over cultural matters. Bureaucracy and the mundane won out over idealism. Fianna Fail in office found itself forced into the same bind, whilst making continued use of nationalist myth and symbolism to legitimise itself. O’Duffy, similarly, realised the value in myth in creating a strong nation state, as Mussolini and Hitler had already done in their respective nations, regardless of historical accuracy and fact.

The Gaelic Revival stressed the continuity of Irish identity but saw the need for the rural periphery, its values and myths, to re-conquer the urban centre, arguing that the former encapsulated pure Gaelic values whilst the later embraced corrupt English culture. Ancient Ireland was romanticized as a classless, harmonious society in which any foreign influences were seen as destructive.<sup>100</sup> In effect, it also posited traditional conservative rural values against alien, urban trends. The Gaelic revival however was

---

<sup>96</sup> Letter from Eoin MacNeill to Father Coventry, 1910, MacNeill Papers, UCD, cited in M. Tierney, *Eoin MacNeill* (Oxford, 1980), p. 105.

<sup>97</sup> S.F. Moran, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption*, p. 179.

<sup>98</sup> T. Brown, *Ireland, a Social and Cultural History 1922-79* (Glasgow, 1981), p. 80.

<sup>99</sup> R.V. Comerford, *The Fenians in context. Irish Politics and Society 1848-62*. p.223

<sup>100</sup> M. Goldring, *Pleasant the Scholar’s Life* (London, 1993), p. 29.



not simply a response to modernisation but also a device used by modernizers to legitimise their image of the future.<sup>101</sup> As Lee points out, the modernisers created the past in their own image and were not simply reactionaries evoking a distant Celtic past.<sup>102</sup>

O'Duffy himself was very aware of the accusations levelled at him that he was importing fascism, a continental and alien political philosophy. O'Duffy responded by wrapping his movement in Irish nationalist symbolism, evoking the names of Irish patriots, and rooting his philosophy in the ideas of the Gaelic Revival. O'Duffy's party advocated the communitarianism of the Revival, in which the mystical idea of an organic racial community rooted in the land was stressed. For O'Duffy, as for the Gaelic nationalists, the Irish nation would be one where culture, territory and state coincided and hence it was exclusivist, refusing to acknowledge the separate identity, for example, of the Northern Protestants, though unlike Maurras in France, O'Duffy never saw the Northern Protestants as an internal enemy. For O'Duffy, as for the cultural nationalists, Ireland could only be Gaelic and Catholic, but in rejecting British culture, they were also ignoring centuries of cultural history.

The Gaelic revival was a response by the emerging Catholic intelligentsia to a culture and political system in which they had been unable to effectively compete. This new class created a cultural alternative, and this was Gaelic cultural nationalism; "it was a *sine qua non* that they should accept and uphold the Catholic rural-oriented and property-conscious values of the dominant social ideal."<sup>103</sup> O'Duffy, in the thirties used cultural nationalism in a similar way to rouse support for a political movement whose practical policies were remarkably few but which was intent on creating a new Greenshirt elite from the youth of the nation who were untainted by

---

<sup>101</sup> See J. Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society, 1848-1918*, pp.140-148.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.* p.141

<sup>103</sup> R.V.Comerford, *The Fenians in Context. Irish Politics and Society 1848-82*.p.249.



the bitterness of divisions opened up by the Civil War.<sup>104</sup> In contrast to conservative right-wing movements such as the *Action Francaise*, the Greenshirts envisaged the development of a new elite rather than a dependency on traditional elites.

The myth of a Golden Age and the resurrection of Gaelic Ireland was added to the republican tradition handed down from Wolfe Tone. The 1916 Rising and the subsequent struggle for independence only served to heighten the almost hysterical worship of the concept of the Republic. However, the reality was that the republican ideals of the united Irishmen had all but vanished in the cultural nationalist vision of a pre-conquest utopia, what Pattenon calls “a cooperative *gemeinschaft*.”<sup>105</sup> After 1916, Sinn Fein preached the need for the Republic without expounding on republican sentiments. O’Duffy was to take exactly the same approach. He argued that declaring Ireland a republic was central to his party’s political platform, but then he subsequently ignored the ideals of men like Tone, actively criticizing parliamentarianism and democracy. For O’Duffy, the Republic simply meant Ireland without allegiance to the Crown. He completely abandoned the ideals of Irish republicanism whilst holding to the symbolism of the Republic. Irish fascism examined the disparate strands of the Irish nationalist tradition, and rejected the ideals of the republican element which in themselves had emerged with the French revolution. Like other fascist movements, the Greenshirts rejected this republican tradition, with its emphasis on reason, tolerance, progress and self determination.<sup>106</sup> The Greenshirt movement was unique amongst nationalists in taking the nationalist tradition and isolating and rejecting a key element, republicanism, and promoting the romantic, organic nationalism of men like Pearse and Yeats. For O’Duffy, Ireland needed to look to its own myths and culture to inspire a national revival.

---

<sup>104</sup> J. Prager, pp. 40-41.

<sup>105</sup> H. Pattenon, *The Politics of Illusion* (London, 1989), p. 17.

<sup>106</sup> E. Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism* (New York, 1969), p. 53.

The Easter Rising of 1916 added to the nationalist myth. The Rising itself had no chance of success; it was a symbolic gesture, but as a symbolic act it provided the impetus to reinvigorate the nationalist movement.<sup>107</sup> It also provided the nationalist movement with contemporary martyrs who had sacrificed themselves in the cause of Ireland's freedom. O'Duffy would later add the names of three Blueshirt martyrs to place his movement within this nationalist tradition. As well as a struggle for political freedom, the War of Independence was portrayed by Irish nationalists as a battle between Irish and English culture, and Sinn Fein remained devoted to the abstract principles of the Gaelic revivalists. The mythology created around the 1916 Rising also served to create a more mystical Sinn Fein, where the leadership began to perceive themselves as a caste distinct from, and above, the masses.<sup>108</sup> Ireland, for many in the republican movement, became an idealised concept distinct from the Irish people, comparable to the idea of the German Fatherland or Russian Motherland. For the Sinn Fein leadership the movement came to act as the "political embodiment of the will of the Irish people and as the vehicle for expressing it."<sup>109</sup> The mythology surrounding the Rising was more important than historical accuracy. Ireland, as perceived by Sinn Fein, was becoming a metaphysical image. Sinn Fein acknowledged its debt to the Rising in creating the mythology that inspired a reinvigorated nationalist movement. Sean T. O'Kelly<sup>110</sup> was to state:

"Sinn Fein's birth certificate [had been] written with steel in the immortal blood of the martyrs of 1916."<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> S.F. Moran, *The Politics of Redemption* (Washington DC, 1994). p. 1.

<sup>108</sup> M. Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 216.

<sup>109</sup> B. Feenan, *Sinn Fein*, p.121

<sup>110</sup> Sean T. O'Kelly was an active member of the IRB and was to become first President of the Republic of Ireland in 1949.

<sup>111</sup> Sean T. O'Kelly cited in R.D. Edwards, *Patrick Pearse-The Triumph of Failure* (London, 1990), p. 326.

Irish history in the twentieth century and beyond would see nationalists vying to co-opt the rebels of 1916 to legitimise themselves. O'Duffy was just one of these.

Nationalist recognized the value in placing their political movements in the mainstream of Irish cultural and political tradition, as Patrick Pearse had recognised in his play *Ghosts*:

“Like a divine religion, national freedom bears the marks of unity, of sanctity, of catholicity of apostolic succession. Of unity, for it contemplates the nation as one; of sanctity for it is holy in itself and in those who serve it; of catholicity for it embraces all men and women of the nation; of apostolic succession, for it, or the aspiration after it, passes down from generation to generation from the nation's fathers.”<sup>112</sup>

Like Mussolini, Pearse seemed to believe that some form of secular religion based on nationalism could emerge to define the new nation.<sup>113</sup>

### *MASCULINITY, VIOLENCE AND SELF-SACRIFICE*

Rebellion, rural terrorism, armed bands and sectarianism have all contributed to the violent strand in Irish history and politics. It must be stressed however, that violence and rebellion were not the norm; constitutionalism was. After the Civil War there was a consensus condemning the use of violence for the cause of nationalism and unification. Before the 1916 Rising, the Irish Parliamentary Party was seen as the most effective means of achieving the political aspirations for some form of limited Home Rule,<sup>114</sup> and most believed that “the ashes of revolt had long since gone

---

<sup>112</sup> P. Pearse, *Ghosts*, as cited in Edwards, R.D. p. 253.

<sup>113</sup> E. Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, USA, 1996). Gentile argues that Fascism emerged as a form of secular religion.

<sup>114</sup> F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, p.260.



cold.”<sup>115</sup> The struggle for independence culminating in the 1916 Rising saw violence transformed into a new ideal, providing proof of commitment to the nationalist cause. The ideal of self-sacrifice was raised to new heights. General O’Duffy was to praise the values of violence and death demonstrated in the independence struggle and make them an intrinsic part of the path to his fascist revolution.

Historically, frustration in Ireland often led to violence as other, constitutional, outlets were found to be less effective. The nationalist rebellions of the United Irishmen and the Fenians became symbols to later generations. The land struggle led to the creation of extra-legal, frequently violent, rural secret societies such as the Peep O’Day Boys, the Whiteboys, and the Ribbonmen. Daniel O’Connell won widespread support by his threatened use of violence whilst Parnell rose to power in the wake of rural unrest.<sup>116</sup> The Land League was an agrarian organization that used violence and intimidation to press its demands.<sup>117</sup> Irish nationalism had acquired a tradition of violence and nationalist legitimacy was often linked to the extent to which nationalists were prepared to use violence in the cause of Irish freedom. Violence came to be accepted as a legitimate response to disaffection and frustration with constitutional methods. After 1917, the IRA became so powerful in a state where the Dail government was underground that “IRA officers came to assume the right to control local Sinn Fein *cumainn* (clubs) and, as the war continued, their ability to do so became greater,”<sup>118</sup> equating the national with the military interest.

Most nationalists did not accept the physical force tradition, however. Whilst the IRB came to see violence as a political, spiritual and moral force,<sup>119</sup> other such as

---

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. p.318.

<sup>116</sup> S.F. Moran, *The Politics of Redemption* (Washington, D.C., 1994), pp. 96-97.

<sup>117</sup> E. Rumpf and A.C. Hepburn, *Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Liverpool, 1997), p. 5.

<sup>118</sup> T. Gavin *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist politics* (Dublin, 1981), p. 99.

<sup>119</sup> S.F. Moran, *The Politics of Redemption*, p. 178.



Moran, Hyde and Griffith (at least initially) opposed the use of violence in the independence struggle. In Irish history, constitutional and violent routes existed side by side. Politicians were often required to reconcile the two forces.<sup>120</sup> However, the creation of the Irish Volunteer Force in response to events in the North<sup>121</sup> coupled with opposition to conscription, caused a militarization of Irish politics that led to the military uprising of Easter Week 1916. The Irish Volunteer Force, initially created as a defensive force, soon developed, under the influence of the IRB, into an instrument of armed rebellion. As late as 1920, the Supreme Council of the IRB was declaring itself as the sole government of the Irish Republic.<sup>122</sup> Freedom could only be achieved through an act of successful rebellion. Freedom had to be won, not given by the British. The rapid demise of the Irish Parliamentary Party only served to vindicate the physical force tradition to which Sinn Fein now subscribed, though it was soon to witness a rapid return to constitutional norms through its participation in the electoral process and the creation of *Dail Eireann*.

The increased use of violence served to highlight the masculinity of the Irish struggle. Pearse insisted on “a virile nationalism.”<sup>123</sup> The cultural revival had stressed the traditional perception of Mother Erin. Like the French Marianne, this was a feminized conception of the island nation, though perhaps a closer comparison would be Maurras’ concept of the *Deesse France* purged of all foreign influences.<sup>124</sup> The motherly connotations demanded that she be defended and given protection. This

---

<sup>120</sup> T. Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (1981), pp. 180-181.

<sup>121</sup> In Ulster, the UVF had been created to oppose Home Rule.

<sup>122</sup> K.B. Nowlan, ‘Unity and Division, 1919-21 in D. Williams, ed. *The Irish Struggle 1916-26* (London, 1966), p. 48.

<sup>123</sup> M. Goldring, *Pleasant the Scholar’s Life* (London, 1993), p. 131.

<sup>124</sup> E. Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism* (New York, 1969), p. 145.

perception of Ireland's feminine identity was reworked by nationalists into "an oppressed and violated woman calling her sons to fight and die on her behalf."<sup>125</sup>

The central position of violence to the myth of national renewal reached its apotheosis in the life, writings and death of Pearse. He elevated self-sacrifice and the purgative effects of violence to new heights until it came to take on a religious hue akin to the sacrifice of Christ. The rise of spiritual nationalism only increased with the execution of Pearse and his colleagues by the British who were then glorified as martyrs for the nationalist cause. This adulation of nationalist dead often bordered on the sacrilegious. In his speech at the grave of Wolfe Tone, Pearse had said:

"We have come to the holiest place in Ireland; holier to us ever than the place where [Saint] Patrick sleeps in Down. Patrick brought us life, but this man died for us...I am right in saying that we stand in the holiest place in Ireland, for it must be that the holiest sod of the nation's soil is the sod where her dead lies buried."<sup>126</sup>

As the prophet of the violent stream of nationalist thought, Pearse articulated an idea and programme that became the defining feature for republicans in the independence struggle. In his speech at the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa<sup>127</sup> in August 1913 he said:

"Life springs from death, and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations."<sup>128</sup>

Many of Ireland's nationalists committed themselves to using violence to achieving their aims. The continued subjugation of Ireland was indicative of their failure in the face of overwhelming odds, but in no way detracted from their standing, in the eyes of

---

<sup>125</sup> S.F. Moran, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption* (Washington, 1994), p. 91.

<sup>126</sup> Patrick Pearse, Address delivered at the Grave of Wolfe Tone in Bodenstown Churchyard, Co. Kildare, 22 June 1913, Proinseas Mac Aonghusa, ed. *Quotations from P.H. Pearse*, (Cork, 1979), p.7.

<sup>127</sup> O'Donovan Rossa was a Fenian who had directed a bombing campaign in mainland Britain. He had died in the USA and his body was returned to Ireland for burial in Glasnevin Cemetery

<sup>128</sup> Patrick Pearse funeral oration for O'Donovan Rossa, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1915, cited in R.D. Edwards, *Patrick Pearse. The Triumph of Failure*, p. 237.

their followers, as nationalist heroes. Violence had become, for some, “the standard of political validation.”<sup>129</sup> Pearse saw himself as the contemporary avatar of the republican martyr and used his journalistic and literary writings to emphasize his coming role. In the years up to the 1916 Rising, men such as Connolly, Plunkett, MacDonagh and MacDermott came to share Pearse’s central idea of the efficacy of violence in the independence struggle and the need for the martyrdom of Irishmen to achieve independence. J.M. Plunkett and T. MacDonagh in particular wrote of death in the service of the nation as a source of life for future generations, and their writings came to eroticise the idea of a violent death.

Pearse’s increased radicalism and the extremism of his rhetoric, particularly after 1912, provided the IRB with the leader that they needed to front an insurrection, a man who was not afraid to die in the process. The success, or otherwise, of the resurrection was immaterial for a man like Pearse who was more than willing to take on the role of sacrificial martyr for a cause greater in worth than an individual’s life. Pearse was developing a cult of death and sacrifice similar to that of the later Romanian fascists. It is poignant that the Rising was planned for Easter, the holiest date in the Christian liturgical calendar. The Easter Rising would be the re-enactment, by Pearse’s generation, of the myth of the failed insurrection, with himself as the central character. He longed to be the martyr for his generation, as Tone and Emmett had been for theirs. In his last speech to the pupils of his Gaelic boy’s school, St. Enda’s, Pearse said:

“As it took the blood of the Son of God to redeem the world, so it would take the blood of Irishmen to redeem Ireland.”<sup>130</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. p. 95.

<sup>130</sup> Patrick Pearse, cited in S.F. Moran, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption*, p. 160.

Pearse saw Ireland's fight for freedom as a Holy Crusade. His writings and speeches were rich in religious imagery. For instance, after the Howth gun-running, which saw the death of a number of Volunteers, Pearse wrote that "the whole movement, the whole country, has been re-baptised by bloodshed for Ireland."<sup>131</sup>

The need to fight to achieve Irish freedom was portrayed as a sacred trust handed down by each generation. Pearse's writings were intended to inspire others to fight for freedom and to be willing to make the ultimate sacrifice. He himself was willing to take on a role that would lead ultimately, and almost inevitably, to his own death.

Whilst awaiting execution, he wrote to his mother:

"We are ready to die and we shall die cheerfully and proudly. Personally I do not have a desire to live... You must not grieve for all this. We have preserved Ireland's honour and our own. Our deeds of last week are the most splendid in Ireland's history. People will say hard things of us now, but we shall be remembered by posterity and blessed by unborn generations. You too will be blessed because you were my mother."<sup>132</sup>

Just as Christ had willingly accepted death for the redemption of mankind, Pearse was willing to sacrifice himself in order to achieve the resurrection of the Irish nation, and its Gaelic and Catholic soul. His willingness for self-sacrifice was also tied to Irish myth, and he combined the Gospel ideas of Christ's sacrifice with the Irish legend of the self-immolation of the legendary hero, Cuchulainn, in a rising which attempted to "embrace the power of the myth in the service of a chiliastic vision."<sup>133</sup>

Pearse wrote:

---

<sup>131</sup> Letter from Patrick Pearse to J. McGarrity, 28<sup>th</sup> April 1916, in ed. S.O. Buachalla, *The Letters of Patrick Pearse* (Gerards Cross, 1980), p. 318.

<sup>132</sup> Letter from P. Pearse to his mother, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1916, *Ibid.* pp. 376-377.

<sup>133</sup> S.F. Moran, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption*. p. 195.



“We must be worthy of Ireland...the high tradition of Cuchulainn; the Christ-like tradition of Colm Cille, ‘if I die, it shall be from excess of the love I bear the Gael.’”<sup>134</sup>

In the end, Ireland’s freedom was won when it turned from reason to myth. But whereas Christ’s mission could be perceived as altruistic, Pearse’s motive was partly a selfish one. He wrote:

“I care not though I were to live but one day and one night provided my fame and my deeds live after me.”<sup>135</sup>

Pearse therefore placed himself in the vanguard of the physical force tradition, developing the cult of the nationalist martyr and preparing to fulfil that role himself, in the footsteps of the Manchester Martyrs, and the rebels of 1798, 1848 and 1867. In his last play, *The Singer*, Pearse portrayed a revolutionary leader who dies in self-sacrifice for the Irish nation, a role he was soon to assume himself. The Rising of 1916 would add a completely new swathe of names to the nationalist pantheon of dead heroes and would set apart the 1916 Rising as the defining myth that led to the creation of the Free State. Irish historical tradition was used to justify the use of arms and violence as an alternative to constitutional politics to the point where violence and sacrifice became the bench-mark of legitimacy, in a nation where the temporary arrogation of a conspiratorial minority<sup>136</sup> was the response to the failure of constitutional methods. The tendency to speak in terms of a spiritual nationalism backed up by physical force increased after 1916. Pearse himself had envisaged the

---

<sup>134</sup> Pearse, P. *The Story of a Success, June 1909*, in Proinsias Mac Aonghusa, *Quotations from P.H. Pearse*, p. 34.

<sup>135</sup> Patrick Pearse cited in R.D. Edwards, *Patrick Pearse. The Triumph of Failure*, (London, 1990), p. 344.

<sup>136</sup> S.F. Moran, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption* (Washington D.C., 1994), p. 36.

fighters being elevated above ordinary men and women, those he described as “the heroes who stand midway between God and man.”<sup>137</sup>

Ernest Blythe wrote in *Irish Freedom* in October 1913:

“As in the national language is all sanity and strength, so in the first blood of the martyrs is all hope and pride and courage...Let the little-hearted talk of living for Ireland, but be well-assured that it is a fine thing to die for Ireland and more profitable than to win great victories.”<sup>138</sup>

Pearse’s own death before a British firing squad put him firmly in the nationalist pantheon of martyrs. What was distinctive about the martyrs alongside whom he was laid was that they were all heroic failures, the vanquished. This did not detract from their status and perceived nobility of purpose. The mere willingness to die for Ireland was accepted as proof of nationalist sanctity. In the struggle for Ireland’s soul, it was those heroes who were prepared to go to the extreme in spite of failure that were consciously remembered. O’Duffy’s speeches and writings continued to use the language of violence and self-sacrifice in the tradition of Pearse, claiming that if the Republic was ever to be established it could only be done so by the shedding of more blood, glorying in the prospect of further violence. The mere spilling of blood precluded any talk of defeat, because sacrifice was in itself a victory. It had required poets and writers such as Pearse to romanticize death and sacrifice, the poet becoming a freedom fighter “tinged with the smell of gunpowder.”<sup>139</sup> O’Duffy was no poet but men like Pearse had made the use of violence a legitimate political weapon. Pearse himself had said:

---

<sup>137</sup> Patrick Pearse, Address delivered at the Robert Emmet Commemoration in the Academy of music, Brooklyn, New York, 2 March 1914, Proinseas Mac Aonghusa, *Quotations from P.H. Pearse*, p. 9.

<sup>138</sup> Ernest Blythe writing in *Irish Freedom*, October 1913, cited in M. Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 216.

<sup>139</sup> M. Goldring, *Pleasant the Scholar’s Life*, p. 42.

“I should like to see any and every body of Irish citizens armed. We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, to the sight of arms, to the use of arms...bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing and the nation which regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood.”<sup>140</sup>

The fascist cult of self-sacrifice, duty and heroism with its emphasis on the value of continuous struggle and its elevation and worship of strength, virility and the masculine can all be found in the writing of Patrick Pearse. The growing acceptance of violence by extreme nationalists resulted in the militarization of Irish politics that made the Rising possible. It also meant that Pearse and his fellow physical force nationalists came to accept the struggle as an end in itself, which resulted in a distinct lack of substance in their political philosophy or any concrete policies. O’Duffy was to find himself in a similar situation twenty years further on, but where he differed from Pearse was that he had a purpose and a programme. It is important to note, as Lee argues that “Shades of Sorel, Maurras and Corradini loom from Pearse’s page, but superficial similarities with contemporary continental neo-romantics or proto-fascists conceal fundamental differences.”<sup>141</sup> Pearse rejected totalitarianism and any authoritarian concept of the state, which he saw as a means, not an end in itself.

O’Duffy, like many nationalists was influenced by Pearse’s writings, but O’Duffy differed markedly from Pearse in that there is no evidence to suggest that he wished to sacrifice himself for his cause. However, fascists of all stamps would have had no difficulty relating to Pearse’s glorification of violence as an end in itself, for Pearse’s writings were as extreme as any fascist’s when he could write such as this (referring to the Great War):

---

<sup>140</sup> Patrick Pearse, writing in *Claidheamh*, December 1912, cited in R.D. Edwards, *Patrick Pearse. The Triumph of Failure* (London, 1990), p. 179.

<sup>141</sup> J. Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918*. p.148

“It is good for the world that such things should be done. The old heart of the earth needs to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields.”<sup>142</sup>

However, the IRB version of the 1916 Rising, as Foster points out, with its idea of “the mystic rebirth of nationality through an Easter sacrifice”<sup>143</sup> whilst romantic and certainly inspiring, is far from the full story. Independence allowed a new elite to emerge to replace the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, a new Irish Catholic class who had taken up nationalism as a force to push through a change in Ireland’s political culture. The vehicle they used, Sinn Fein, replaced the IPP as the leading party of change, creating a new mass movement that was still unsure what it had fought for, other than a pre-occupation with the issue of national sovereignty.

#### *POPULISM, AUTHORITARIANISM AND THE PUBLIC BAND IN IRELAND*

The Irish independence struggle led to the temporary victory of the physical force tradition after the failure of constitutional methods. The Irish Parliamentary Party had failed to win independence, though for years it had struggled to absorb violent and constitutional forces and as a result it developed into a “mass, militant and cross-class political party.”<sup>144</sup> Sinn Fein was built up in the image of its precursor and to contrast the separatist tradition of Sinn Fein with the Irish Parliamentary Party’s constitutionalist nationalist tradition is too simplistic.<sup>145</sup> Though independence was won through violence, the new state administration quickly restored democratic methods and a liberal constitutional structure. However, the physical force tradition only went underground reflecting the fact that the history of extra-constitutional

---

<sup>142</sup> Patrick Pearse writing in *Spark*, December 1915, *Ibid.* p. 238.

<sup>143</sup> R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, p. 491

<sup>144</sup> T. Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Dublin, 1981), p. 180.

<sup>145</sup> D. Fitzpatrick, *Politics In Irish Life 1913-21*, p.233.



methods to achieve political change was an important part of Irish political culture. The struggle for independence had seen the rise of militarists who claimed to represent the 'National Will' and who were better able to represent the people better than elected bodies such as the *Dail*.

The Irish Parliamentary Party represented the moderate constitutional approach to Irish Home Rule. The party was always condemned to be a minority party in the British Parliament, but it was able to pressurize a Liberal minority government into passing a Home Rule Bill for Ireland, suspended for the duration of the First World War. The British government was perceived by extreme nationalists as conceding a modicum of self-government, but they believed that it had to be won by force of arms if necessary, not won at Westminster. These nationalists, such as members of the IRB, could never accept the constitutional approach, though the vast majority of Irishmen and women were constitutionalists until the Rising of 1916.

Nationalists were not united in their approach to independence. Griffith and his minority Sinn Fein party proposed abstention from the British parliament and the creation of an alternative administration in Ireland with elected representatives. Abstentionism was the tactic adopted after 1917, when Sinn Fein took the majority of Irish seats. This approach, whilst recognizing the importance of elected representatives and the democratic element, also allowed for the creation of alternative administrative structures to those already in place. Sinn Fein was to set up *Dail Eireann* as "the supreme body of a pan-nationalist party rather than as a true inter-party parliamentary assembly in the Anglo-American tradition."<sup>146</sup> The campaign against Westminster fostered a distrust of parliamentary methods. Griffith had argued that attendance by Irish politicians at Westminster only served to sanction British

---

<sup>146</sup> T.Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (London, 1981), p. 183.

rule,<sup>147</sup> and that Ireland's independence could only be worked out in Ireland. The new Irish Free State, anxious to promote its identity became obsessed with 'Irishness' in an authoritarian state; "the regime showed its derivation from latter-day Sinn Fein, never unduly fastidious about democratic procedure."<sup>148</sup>

It was the rise of Ulster Unionism that undermined the democratic process in Ireland, and challenged the political culture based on parliamentary representation at Westminster. The opposition of the Ulster Unionists to Irish Home Rule led to the rise of para-militarism in the south in the shape of the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizens' Army.<sup>149</sup> The Ulster Volunteer Force provided the model for the Irish nationalists to emulate, and they were inspired by the successful challenge of the Unionists to constitutionalism in the Larne gun-running<sup>150</sup> and the Curragh Mutiny.<sup>151</sup>

The decades preceding independence had seen the growth in Ireland of local government and local democracy, whilst major decision-making continued to take place at Westminster. The creation of a Catholic University in Dublin meant that a new educated Catholic elite began to emerge, some of whom were prepared to work within the British administration. Nevertheless, a large number, who were unable to find jobs commensurate with their education or who were unwilling to work within the system, found themselves frustrated and angry. Many of these, radicalised by the Gaelic revival, sought a republic that broke all ties with Britain. Their attitude towards democracy was often ambiguous and they began to seek influence through their

---

<sup>147</sup>S. O'Luing, 'Arthur Griffith and Sinn Fein' in F.X. Martin ed., *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising* (London, 1967), p. 56.

<sup>148</sup>R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*

<sup>149</sup>F.S.L. Lyons, 'The Passing of the Irish Parliamentary Party' in Williams, D., ed. *The Irish Struggle 1916-26* (London, 1966), p. 96.

<sup>150</sup>The Larne gun-running incident landed substantial munitions from Germany to arm Ulster Unionists.

<sup>151</sup>The refusal by 60 British officers based in Ireland to oppose the Ulster Volunteers effectively meant that the Army could not be used against them,

involvement in alternative sources of influence such as the IRB and the Volunteer movement, groups that became a new focus for legitimacy.

It was the extreme republicans in the IRB and the Volunteers who declared the Irish Republic on the steps of the GPO in 1916. The armed force of the republic existed before the Irish state had its own, Irish, parliamentary institutions which were created only after abstention from Westminster after 1917.<sup>152</sup> Whilst the *Dail* was to ratify, in 1919, the Republic as declared in 1916, in the previous August, *An tOglach*,<sup>153</sup> declared the Volunteers to be “the army of the Irish republic, the agents of the National Will.”<sup>154</sup> This created a problem of legitimacy. In 1919, the Volunteers were associated with, but not subordinate to, the *Dail*, and in spite of an oath of loyalty to the latter, the Volunteers remained an autonomous force and focus of legitimacy. This question was not settled until the autumn of 1921, when the *Dail* ceased to function as an underground organization and entered into dialogue with the British.

The length of the struggle, and the repression of the British military forces had forced Republican military commanders, men like O’Duffy, to act autonomously and resulted in a “mystical, hysterical, neurotic worship of The Republic and The Army.”<sup>155</sup> The army commanders were elected by the rank and file and claimed their own legitimacy, alongside of, if not superior to, the *Dail*,<sup>156</sup> with the Army claiming its own historical mandate, and its claim to be rooted in the Public Band tradition. The Treaty shattered this Public Band source of legitimacy, replacing it with a constitutional commitment to “open, law-based and democratic” politics.<sup>157</sup> The pro-

---

<sup>152</sup> K.B. Nowlan, ‘Dail Eireann and the Army-Unity and Division 1919-21’, in D. Williams, ed. *The Last Struggle* (London, 1967).

<sup>153</sup> *An tOglach* was published by the IRA.

<sup>154</sup> *An tOglach* as cited in Nowlan, K.B. p. 69.

<sup>155</sup> E. Rumpf, and A.C. Hepburn, *Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Liverpool, 1977), p. 33.

<sup>156</sup> T. Garvin, *The Birth of Irish Democracy* (Dublin, 1996), p. 40.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.



Treaty Government would achieve this through the imposition of political order by the State, which meant the creation of a democratic political structure, and the rejection of the claim by the IRA, that it was morally superior to the State. The IRA continued to oppose the Treaty Government because it was partitionist. It was seen as the creation of the British and in their opinion it had betrayed the 1916 Republic. The ensuing Civil War had increased the power of the military and the government had to tackle the problem by drastically reducing its size, reducing its pay and subordinating it completely to the government once peace was achieved. It was a victory for the constitutionalists. The new political administration had to balance the need to ensure a functioning democracy with the ongoing problem of people who insisted that the gun was still a legitimate form of politics. As O'Halpin notes, it led to the state having to adopt an intrusive surveillance system coupled with a willingness to curtail civil liberties which was, however, acquiesced in by most of the population who were anxious to return to normality and peace.<sup>158</sup> The IRA was defeated but it did not disappear and as the people of Ireland voted for peace in 1922, the IRA met in convention, where they advocated a military dictatorship in the face of their inevitable defeat at election.<sup>159</sup>

### *PERSONALISM AND AUTHORITARIANISM IN IRISH POLITICAL CULTURE*

Irish culture possessed a system of human relations distinguished by personalism<sup>160</sup> and authoritarianism. In Irish history, the attitude of the public to its leaders was emotional and authoritarian, and always with the possibility of abuse. Men like

---

<sup>158</sup> E. O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland: The Irish State and its Enemies Since 1922* (Oxford, 1999).

<sup>159</sup> T. Garvin, *1922-The Birth of Irish Democracy*, p. 124.

<sup>160</sup> Personalism is a term used by D.E. Schmitt in *The Irony of Irish Democracy* (1973) to refer to the strong focus in Irish political culture on the strong bond between constituents and representative, at all levels of government with a stress on reciprocity and brokerage.



O'Connell and Parnell were key figures who relied on their personal charisma to dominate Irish politics, through a direct appeal to the populace. They were able to appeal to the deference of the population to its leaders, a deference that was in evidence right down to the lowest level, the family. In Ireland, the principle socializing agents, the family, community, education system and a particularly austere and puritanical Irish Catholic Church are all authoritarian. The Church itself encouraged the emulation of ecclesiastical styles by political parties- "pragmatism, internal unity, authoritarianism and social omnivorousness,"<sup>161</sup> with secrecy heightening these trends. This extended to the church-controlled education system, which institutionalised generalized authoritarian values.<sup>162</sup> As Basil Chubb remarked, authoritarian attitudes, fostered by the education system and by a strongly patriarchal society, do not usually bode well for democracy.<sup>163</sup> However, democracy became the norm in the Free State, and the failure of potential authoritarian challenges from the IRA and the Blueshirts indicate the strength of democratic ideals that deference to the legitimate government in power reinforced.<sup>164</sup>

There was a strong focus in national politics on the individual as opposed to party, and the adulation of the heroic figure in Irish history. There arose a strong focus in Irish politics in which the public interest was equated with that of the leader and his followers.<sup>165</sup> It led to a political relationship based on brokerage and reciprocal favours. Ireland's small size and small population allowed this to develop. But "this loyalty was to persons and institutions rather than ideas"<sup>166</sup> which meant people tended to support one political party consistently, making it difficult for new political

---

<sup>161</sup>T. Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (London, 1981), p. 215.

<sup>162</sup>D.E.Schmitt, *The Irony of Irish Democracy* (Lexington, Mass., 1973), p. 50.

<sup>163</sup>B. Chubb, *The Government and Politics of Ireland* (Harlow, 1992), p. 17.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid. p.18.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid., p.55.

<sup>166</sup>B. Chubb, *The Government and Politics of Ireland*, p.19.

movements to challenge the essentially bi-polar nature of Irish politics. O'Duffy had a loyal following based on his long-term involvement in Irish politics, particularly in the border counties where he was born. He also hoped to use the authoritarian and deferential strand in Irish culture and politics to legitimise his hierarchical political philosophy, promote the masculine element in his movement and justify his concentration on the value of strong leadership. As Commissioner of Police, O'Duffy had been a leader who was very concerned with the rank and file of his force, a tactic that won him a great deal of support. He fought hard for the rights of the police against the State. O'Duffy was always aware of his patriarchal role whether as Commissioner or politician.

The physical shift in the political process from Westminster to Dublin after 1916 with the failure of constitutional politicians and the victory of the extreme nationalists led to a political cleavage between democrats and insurrectionists that threatened to challenge the prevailing political culture of democracy and parliamentarianism. For a time between 1916 and 1922, the political culture of Ireland underwent an enormous change, as new forces were released that were to challenge the mindset of Irish politics up to the present day. However, the swift return to constitutionalism after the Civil War, and the rapid demise of militarism ensured that the new political infrastructure bore a remarkable resemblance to that at Westminster. De Valera and his party continued their policy of abstentionism by refusing to send its elected representatives to the *Dail* until legislation by the Cumann na nGaedheal government forced de Valera's hand. O'Duffy was a key figure in this return to constitutional normality. As O'Halpin argues, O'Duffy played a key role in the creation of a professional police force that, together with the army, played a key role in ensuring the return of Ireland to democracy, including the smooth transfer of power to De

Valera in 1932, through ensuring that the loyalty of these two key institutions to government and not to any particular party.<sup>167</sup> However, in 1931 he found himself faced with a hostile De Valera administration and was unable to accept the smooth transition to power of the party representing the forces he had fought against a decade earlier. The voters' rejection of Cumann an nGaedheal turned him against a political system which had returned De Valera. The apparent continuation of Civil War politics alienated him from constitutional democracy and led him to return to the tradition of the Public Band with the Blueshirts and the creation of the NCP which he had hoped would do away with the democratic process altogether, returning to the single party politics and militarism of post-1916 Sinn Fein.

#### ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES

The independence struggle focused almost exclusively on the issue of national self-determination. Events pushed the discussion of social and labour issues into the background. The socialism of Connolly and Larkin virtually disappeared off the mainstream political agenda. The nationalists came to believe that any discussion of such issues was side-tracking the national struggle. In the years leading to independence, the economic and social ideas of Arthur Griffith, though in the background, remained Sinn Fein party policy until 1922. This meant that ideas of autarky, state control over the economy, the defence of capitalism and opposition to socialism, and even corporatism were central to the policy of the Sinn Fein movement. Their abandonment by Cumann na nGaedheal only pushed the ideas underground until O'Duffy was to resurrect them in the nineteen thirties.

---

<sup>167</sup> E. O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland: The Irish State and its Enemies Since 1922* (Oxford, 1999)

The early years of the twentieth century saw the emergence of Sinn Fein under Arthur Griffith and the adoption by the party of many of his ideas. The meteoric rise of the party after 1916 led to a greater stress on the national question, whilst the economic platform that the party had developed was largely neglected. Griffith was profoundly influenced by the Church on social questions and by the German economist Friedrich List on economic issues.<sup>168</sup> Griffith's economic ideas, lifted largely from List, were accepted by the Sinn Fein party convention in 1905 and were to remain party policy until 1922.<sup>169</sup> Griffith, echoing List, believed that Ireland's dependence on agriculture should be reduced by the creation of a strong industrial base, built up by the introduction of a protectionist policy that relied on tariffs.<sup>170</sup> Banking and finance were to be controlled in order to serve the interests of the Irish economy.<sup>171</sup> Tariffs were essential if Ireland's dependence on the British market was to be broken. It would inevitably lead to a much greater control by the state over the economy in order to serve national interests, and the abandonment of *laissez-faire* policies. It was posited as a third way between unbridled capitalism and socialism.<sup>172</sup>

Griffith's Sinn Fein party rejected liberalism and individual rights in favour of a "mild corporate state where the individual became a means to the higher life of the body politic."<sup>173</sup> Labour and capital would both be submitted to government regulation. Protectionism and tariffs would replace free trade. This was deemed as essential to secure a base for a truly independent nation that would be economically as well as politically free of Britain.

---

<sup>168</sup> E. Rumpf and A.C. Hepburn, *Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Liverpool, 1997), p. 91.

<sup>169</sup> M. Cronin, 'Golden Dreams, Harsh Realities; Economics and Informal Empire in the Irish Free State' in M. Cronin and J.M. Regan, *Ireland: The Politics of Redemption 1922-49* (Macmillan Press: G.B. 2000), pp. 148-50.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.* p. 151

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.* p. 151

<sup>172</sup> C. Townsend, *Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1999), p. 49.

<sup>173</sup> R. Davis, *Arthur Griffith and Non-Violent Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1974), p. 152.



Griffith and Sinn Fein played a major role in Irish politics after 1916, but concentrated almost exclusively on the national struggle, taking a largely integrative approach to labour issues. A focus on labour issues, class struggle or socialism were all perceived as detrimental to the focus on the independence issue, and by 1923 “Griffith’s concept of classless nationhood...was victorious.”<sup>174</sup> By this time the government of Cumann na nGaedheal had completely abandoned the social agenda that Sinn Fein had begun to develop after 1916. The Labour Party and the unions had been prepared to subordinate the social question until after independence, though at the time some concern was expressed over this. In a report in 1918, the Labour Party and ITUC were concerned that a dominant Sinn Fein would be just “another political mouthpiece of the capitalist class in the country.”<sup>175</sup>

Sinn Fein’s ‘Democratic Programme’ (drawn up by Sean T. O’Kelly of Sinn Fein and Thomas Johnson of the Labour Party) was adopted by the party after 1916. Whilst pruned of most of its socialist content, the document implied that the social order would be changed in Ireland after independence with “a general and lasting improvement in the conditions under which the working classes live and labour.”<sup>176</sup>

The policy further stated that:

“...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 within the nation and ...we reaffirm that all rights to private property must be subordinate to the public right and welfare.”<sup>177</sup>

---

<sup>174</sup>J. Lynch ‘The Social Revolution That Never Was,’ in D. Williams, Ed. *The Irish Struggle* (London, 1966), p. 51

<sup>175</sup> ITUC and Labour Party *Annual Report of 1918*, p. 106.

<sup>176</sup> The Democratic Programme of January 1919, cited in Laffan, M., *The Resurrection of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 259.

<sup>177</sup> Democratic Programme of Sinn Fein, cited in E. Rumpf and A.C. Hepburn, *Twentieth Century Ireland*, p. 21.

At the time of the War of Independence, Ernest Blythe took an aggressive stand on the social question, saying that social reconstruction should go hand in hand with the language revival, as it was the poor who were always prepared to die for Ireland but who were rarely rewarded.<sup>178</sup>

Though labour organizations contributed to the independence struggle, many of the nationalists, particularly in the IRB and IRA were wary of watering down the nationalist struggle with the distractions of social issues. Indeed, many in the nationalist movement, including Griffith, saw socialism as a foreign import. The Catholic Church's hostility to socialism was very important in Ireland. The Church was able to offer the alternative of Catholic social thought, such as that present in *De Rerum Novarum*. Others in the nationalist movement were heavily influenced by Gaelic Romanticism and its vague ideas of a communitarianism and cooperation.<sup>179</sup> The nationalist movement wanted to embrace all classes and was opposed to any issue that might cause a class cleavage. This was a reflection of Griffith's enthusiasm for compulsory capital and labour arbitration by the state, and his admiration for the New Zealand arbitration system. He believed that labour troubles only served to cause disharmony amongst the Irish nation, dividing and weakening the nation. There was therefore a necessity, in the national interest, for the speedy resolution of strikes and lockouts, and preferably, their prevention. In August 1919, the Sinn Fein *Ard Chomhairle* was advised of the need for all classes to live in harmony:

“...consequently the labour troubles give much cause for concern. Every effort should be made to prevent strikes, lockouts etc. and when these cannot be prevented, persevering efforts should be made to bring about settlement and reconciliation.”<sup>180</sup>

---

<sup>178</sup> M. Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 255.

<sup>179</sup> H. Patterson, *The Politics of Illusion* (London, 1989), p. 17.

<sup>180</sup> Hon. Secretary's Report to the *Ard Chomhairle*, 30th August 1919, cited in Laffan, M., *The Resurrection of Ireland*, (Cambridge, 1999), p. 254.

Griffith's policies, and his interest in Catholic social thought point to the mild form of corporate politics, where the nation takes priority over the individual and individual rights and both labour and capital come under governmental regulation.<sup>181</sup> This was reflected in Article 45 of the Free State Constitution of 1922 which authorised the Oireachtas to "provide for the establishment of Financial and Vocational Councils representing branches of the social and economic life of the nation," which in turn was based on Article 165 of the Weimar Constitution<sup>182</sup>

Aodh de Blacam,<sup>183</sup> a leading Sinn Fein propagandist, was advocating a change to a corporate parliament by 1921, saying that the parliamentary system of the British was "played out."<sup>184</sup> In his writing, De Blacam advocated a utopian neo-Gaelic and Catholic order. The corporate alternative he suggested was to set up a voting system based on "some existing, natural group- an industrial union or cooperative society in which he can be in constant touch with his representative."<sup>185</sup> The government would bestow executive authority on experts who would work closely with the council of colleges, one representing each vocation. Only the Upper House would be elected territorially. De Blacam envisaged:

"...the disappearance of the party system. The latter is the inseparable companion of parliamentarianism...if administration ceased to be the prize and plaything of party rivalry, the need for periodic elections would disappear."<sup>186</sup>

The new structure would more truly represent the Irish nation as "it is for patriotism to harmonize competing interests and to keep the ideal of the nation...before the eyes

---

<sup>181</sup>R. Davis, *Arthur Griffith and Non-Violent Sinn Fein* (Dublin 1974), pp. 152-154.

<sup>182</sup> 1922 Irish Free State Constitution cited by J.Lee in *Aspects of Corporatist Thought in Ireland-The Commission on Vocational Organizations 1938-42*, p.324

<sup>183</sup> Aodh de Blacam,(1890-1951), born in London of Irish parents, and a convert to Catholicism, wrote for republican and Catholic journals. He later joined Fianna Fail but defected to Clann na Poblachta.

<sup>184</sup> A. De Blacam, *What Sinn Fein Stands For* (Dublin, 1921), p. 132.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid. p. 132.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. p. 147.



of all.”<sup>187</sup> De Blacam acknowledged his debt to Daniel Figgis’ book, *The Gaelic State*, and to AE (George Russell) and his book *The National Being* as the source of many of his ideas.<sup>188</sup> De Blacam wrote an important article in 1918 titled *Nationality in Economics* in which he saw the three pillars of Irish society as Church, State and family, respectively providing for the soul, social instincts and bodily necessities. He came to define the Nation as standing between individual and collectivity, coordinating life for the enrichment of community and individual.<sup>189</sup> In his utopian vision of Ireland, he saw the towns as “the ancient centres of rural contagion [and stressed]...a return to a rural society based on co-operative communes.”<sup>190</sup> During the thirties, De Blacam was to write in support of both Salazar and Franco “as exponents of a Catholic social order free from the evils of capitalism”.<sup>191</sup>

The focus on the independence struggle sidelined Sinn Fein away from social and economic issues. However, the autarkic ideas of List, the corporatism of men like De Blacam and Arthur Griffith, and visions of a rejuvenated Irish economy supporting a population of up to twenty million enjoyed a temporary vogue. With independence, and a return to party politics, the new Cumann na nGaedheal government pursued a cautious policy of fiscal and economic conservatism, promoting stability rather than radical change. It would be O’Duffy in the thirties who would revive and develop the radical economics of pre-1922 Sinn Fein, frequently acknowledging his debt to Griffith. He believed that the Irish state was stable enough to move on to tackle the social and economic issues raised during the independence struggle as a means to reunite and advance the Irish nation.

---

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. p. 148.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. p. 137.

<sup>189</sup> A. De Blacam, ‘Nationality in Economics’ in *Irish Monthly* Vol.XLVI, October 1918.

<sup>190</sup> M. Tanner, *Ireland’s Holy Wars* (London, 2001), p. 280.

<sup>191</sup> S.J. Connelly, (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford 1998), ‘De Blacam, A’., pp. 137-138.



O'Duffy used the independence struggle and particularly its myths to mobilise his followers and attract support. This was a political mistake. Whilst attachment to such values and ideals as motivated the rebels of 1916 were part of nationalist tradition and rhetoric, they were not the inspiration for most Irish voters. The myths were already part of the Free State's identity. Very few in the thirties wanted a return to the bitterness engendered by constitutional arguments and the consensus of Irish politics left no room for ideological parties that threatened to overturn the status quo. O'Duffy, throughout his speeches and publications, paraded the myths of the utility of violence in producing change, the unity of Ireland in the struggle as embodied in Sinn Fein, and the ultimate goal of an autarkic Gaelic nation free from all ties with Britain. The lack of substance in all these myths is immaterial. For O'Duffy they provided an inspirational myth that he believed would inspire a new generation. The implication was that fascism was rooted in Irish political culture, or at least in certain strands of that culture. What O'Duffy failed to recognise was that the norm in Irish politics was constitutionalism, with violence the aberration. By the thirties, Ireland was "well on the way to overcoming its own history, and achieving a stable underlying political consensus."<sup>192</sup> Whereas Ireland had moved on, O'Duffy was naïve enough to imagine that rehashing a plethora of selective myths particularly around the independence struggle would inflame a new generation who would use his fascist party to create a new Ireland. O'Duffy's failure is indicative of his misunderstanding of Irish political culture, his selective memory and use of myth, and the alien nature of fascism to mainstream Irish political culture.

---

<sup>192</sup> R. Stradling, 'Franco's Irish Volunteers,' p.1

## CHAPTER SEVEN - CONCLUSIONS

O'Duffy promised that any political programme that he introduced into Ireland would take account of Irish culture and political traditions. He frequently claimed that his National Policy was based on the Easter Proclamation and that he was indebted to nationalist leaders such as Griffith, Pearse and Michael Collins for his inspiration. O'Duffy, himself an active participant in the independence struggle, was able to take from this period some of the nationalist-republican ideas of the independence struggle to legitimise his fascist movement, which was largely derived from an imitation of continental models. The independence struggle had seen a reaction against British culture and politics and the search for an alternative. It was coloured by the utopian influence of the Gaelic Romantic movement and by the organization of the struggle around the militarization of Irish politics. The militarization of Irish politics and the Public Band tradition was to emerge again in the thirties with O'Duffy's Blueshirts and Greenshirts, an attempt to by-pass the constitutional structure by a direct appeal to action with the Public Band representing the National Will. O'Duffy was able to hijack nationalist symbolism in order to legitimise his political force. However, in this case, he was using the Public Band against a nationalist government, elected by the populace, which was itself engaged in a struggle against the British and against a stable political system that was successfully able to face the threat from O'Duffy's military style of politics.

The struggle for Home Rule came at a time when Europe as a whole was witnessing the development of the nation state. Ireland's development was coloured by her close economic and historical links to Britain, and her Catholic culture. Surprisingly, many in the nationalist struggle paid only lip-service to Ireland's Catholicism, but the

powerful influence of the Church was an accepted part of Irish life and it would continue to have an enormous influence on the development of the new nation. The independence struggle saw many changes in Irish political culture and the temporary upset of liberal democratic culture in Ireland. The resolution of the land issue at the end of the century had created a conservative property-owning and largely rural electorate. This was the bedrock of Irish political culture. The bombastic rhetoric, the appeal to sacrifice, the Gaelic idealism and search for alternatives to the British political and cultural model were all part of the aberration of the nationalist uprising. Whilst they were an interesting, but temporary, aspect of the struggle, peace saw a rapid return to liberal democratic norms.

During the thirties, O'Duffy tried to resurrect a number of these ideas and attach them to fascist organization and corporate authoritarianism. The stability of the Free State and the strength of the democratic tradition, coupled with the conservatism of a rural population who had had their important demands met (particularly the land issue), meant that O'Duffy never had the mass base from which to build an effective fascist movement.

In some ways, O'Duffy's ability to reach into the Irish past to pad out and legitimise his fascist programme is evidence that the fascist tradition did appear to have its roots, at least superficially, in the Irish historical process. Different fascist leaders throughout Europe had created their own fascist movements whose programmes reflected native nationalist traditions and struggles, whilst also sharing common ideological elements. The fascism of the interwar period was a heterogeneous, European, and even international, movement which produced national varieties with their own peculiar identities. O'Duffy was able to look to the independence struggle to find some of the same raw ingredients to add to fascism in order to create an Irish

variation. By the time that he had formed the NCP in 1936, however, Ireland was able to absorb any threat he posed and he found himself without the mass base that Mussolini and Hitler had managed to forge at a time of political and economic crisis. Irish Fascism, as a result, was condemned to the fringes of Irish politics.

O'Duffy's unsuccessful development of fascist ideas within the context of Irish political culture demonstrated the narrow context in which successful fascist movements emerged in the inter-war years. The failure of the Irish fascist movement, in spite of the temporary crisis caused by the Depression and Economic War with Britain, demonstrates once again the narrow range of conditions from which successful fascism could develop. Fascism was not just a type of extreme nationalism; in Ireland, extreme nationalism was the norm at the time. It was not a response to rapid capitalism development and social upheaval; Ireland remained an underdeveloped and rural society. Nor was it a response to a failed political system; Ireland remained a nation committed to liberal democratic society. The factors which had led to the emergence of fascism in Italy and Germany were just not present in the right combination in Ireland, nor in most of the rest of Europe.

Irish fascism failed to develop into a mass-based political party. It was a fringe group based on the leadership and personality of O'Duffy, a key figure in post independence Irish politics. The NCP was the rump faction of the Blueshirt movement bound to O'Duffy's personalist appeal. The movement failed to grow; indeed it went into rapid decline over the year of its existence and it collapsed altogether when O'Duffy left the country to fight in Spain, no doubt taking his most ardent followers with him. O'Duffy clearly had an inflated opinion of himself and of his role in the destiny of independent Ireland. In the decade following independence, he played a key role in national affairs that made him a credit to his nation, only to



have his reputation irreparably tarnished by his attempt to raise his status to that of dictator, even to the point of being willing to act as Ireland's Quisling in the event of the German defeat of Great Britain. In spite of his nationalist credentials, for O'Duffy his own personal advancement, not the Irish nation, was his priority.

O'Duffy used fascism to provide a theoretical framework to support his personal bid for power. He was a believer in fascism and corporatism but he was a political realist as well. Like that of all fascisms, his was a pragmatic political philosophy that bent with any opportunity, the only real goal being absolute power. O'Duffy was a nationalist who clearly saw the need to carry on the path trodden by Pearse, Collins and others, as long as he led and decided where the path was heading. The nationalist cause was a way of promoting O'Duffy's personal quest for national prominence. In the event, neither nationalism nor fascism was to give him the role he desired. Even his Irish Brigade's foray into Spanish politics was a farce, winning him neither martial glory nor renown as the defender of Catholic Christendom, as he had hoped. Others may have seen O'Duffy as a potential charismatic dictator, to be used as a front man in the erection of a fascist state, flattering his ego in the process. Nevertheless, though he might have been an excellent organizer, he was not an inspiring leader and failed to arouse widespread support, as Irish nationalists such as Parnell or Daniel O'Connell had done in the past through their rousing rhetoric and broad national appeal.

O'Duffy was an experienced organizer but not a great charismatic leader, and Ireland did not want or need a charismatic champion to de-stabilize the infant nation state. O'Duffy thought he was indispensable for modern Ireland. Believing him to be superfluous, the Irish people did not flock to his green fascist standard. They were not roused by his rhetoric or frightened by his apocalyptic vision. They failed to laud him as their saviour. They voted for liberal democracy, fiscal rectitude and political

neutrality. In rejecting O'Duffy, the Irish people rejected the politics of confrontation, including the coming world war. O'Duffy offered strength at the cost of violence, unity at the cost of repression and conformity at the cost of freedom. Neither the man nor the vision which he offered were worth further sacrifice. O'Duffy's memory is besmirched with his tawdry involvement in fringe fascism which served to wipe out all the good that he had done for his nation in its formative years. Nonetheless, he was given a state funeral in 1944 as a mark of honour for his service to the nation, a nation which was prepared to forgive him his flirtation with fascism only because it had been such an abject failure. It is interesting to ponder how he would have been treated if he had taken Ireland down the same tragic path as Nazi Germany, Ustashi Croatia or any of the Nazi puppet states of occupied Europe.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### A. ARCHIVES

National Archives, Dublin, Ireland:

Papers of the Department of Justice, (D/Jus 8/ -70, 277, 286, 296, 307, 370).

Dail Debates: Volume 65 (3 February 1936-12 March 1937).

Department of the Taoiseach Private Office Files (S Series)

Wills and Probate

London School of Economics Archives, London:

Youth Movement Files

Public Record Office, Kew, London:

Dominion Office Files; Irish Free State (DO35, DO114)

University College, Dublin Archives, Ireland:

Mulcahy Papers (P7B/92-4)

Tierney Papers (LA30)

Blythe Papers (P24)

Military Archives, Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin, Ireland:

Military Intelligence Files- G2 Series :

Irish Friends of Germany (G2/X/0253)

People's National Party (G2/B/0453)

Ailtiri na hAiseirighe (G2/X/1320)

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (Belfast), Northern Ireland:

Home Affairs Series (HA/32/1)

### B. NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALS

*An Phoblacht* (1934-6)  
*The Blueshirt* (1934-5)  
*Cork Weekly Examiner* (1935-6)  
*Derry Journal* (1935-6)  
*Irish Independent* (1934-7)  
*Irish Press* (1934-7)  
*Irish Times* (1934-7)  
*Irish Weekly Independent* (1934-6)  
*Irish Workers Voice* (1936)  
*Keighley Greenshirt Review* (1933)  
*The Nation* (1935-6)  
*The New Age* (1932-3)  
*New English Weekly* (1934)  
*The Round Table* (1932-7)  
*Studies* (1931-7)  
*The Tipperary Star* (1935-6)  
*United Ireland* (1933-4)

#### C. CONTEMPORARY BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

Coughlan, P.J., *The Truth; The Story of the Blueshirts*, (Skibereen Star: Cork, 1935).

O'Duffy, E., *Crusade in Spain*, (Brown and Nolan: Dublin, 1938).

*An Outline of the Political, Social and Economic Policies of Fine Gael*,  
(Fine Gael Policy Series, pamphlet no.1 (Dublin, 1934).

*The Labour Policy of Fine Gael*, (Fine Gael Policy Series, pamphlet no.2  
(Dublin, 1934).

#### D. UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS

Walsh, L., *General Eoin O'Duffy, His life and Battle*, National Library of Ireland,  
unpublished MS.

#### E. AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS



T.V. Documentary:

*Dear Boy: The Story of Michael MacLiammoir*. Producers-Poolbeg Productions, financed by RTE, BBC Ulster and the Irish Film Board. First broadcast 21<sup>st</sup> October 1999, RTE1.

*Patriots to a Man: The Blueshirts and their Times*. Produced by Nick Coffey, for RTE. First broadcast 11 January 2001, RTE1.

## F. SECONDARY SOURCES

Allen, G., *The Garda Siochana* (Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1999) in *Ireland in the 1930s*, ed. by Joost Augusteijn, (Four Courts Press: Dublin, 1999).

Augusteijn, J., 'Motivation: Why Did They Fight For Ireland? The Motivation of Volunteers in the Revolution in J. Augusteijn (ed.) *The Irish Revolution 1919-23* (Palgrave: Basingstoke, 2002).

Benewick, R., *Political Violence and Public Order, A Study of British Fascism* (Penguin Press: London, 1969).

Beresford-Ellis, P., *A History of the Irish Working Class* (Victor Gollancz: Dublin, 1985).

Bew, P., 'Sinn Fein Radicalism and the War of Independence 1919-21', in *The Revolution in Ireland*, ed. by D.G. Boyce (Macmillan Education Ltd: Dublin, 1988).

Bew, P., Hazelkorn, E., and Patterson, H., *The Dynamics of Irish Politics* (Lawrence and Wishart: London, 1989).

Blythe, E., 'Eire,' in *Resistance Against Tyranny*, edited by E. Heimler (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1966).

Benewick, R., *Political Violence and Public Order. A Study of British Fascism* (Penguin Press: London, 1969).

Bowyer Bell, J., 'Ireland in the Spanish Civil War' in *Studia Hibernia*, 9:1963.

*The Secret Army-The I.R.A. 1916-1979* (The MIT Press: Cambridge, USA, 1980).

Blinkhorn, M., ed. *Fascists and Conservatives* (Unwin Hyman: London, 1990).

Boyce, D.G., *Nationalism in Ireland* (Routledge: London, 1982).

Brown, T., *Ireland, a Social and Cultural History* (Fontana Paperbacks: Glasgow, 1981).

- Bromage, M.C., *De Valera* (Hutchinson and Co.Ltd: 1956).
- Canavan, J., *Irish Political and Pres Reaction to European Events 1935-1939* (Unpublished PhD. Thesis, Ulster Polytechnic, 1980).
- Carocci, G., *Italian Fascism* (Penguin : London, 1970).
- Carsten, F.L., *The Rise of Fascism* (Batsford: London, 1980).
- Chubb, B., *The Government and Politics of Ireland* (Longman: Harlow, 1992).
- Cohen, C., *Communism, Fascism and Democracy-The Theoretical Foundations* (Random House: U.S.A., 1962).
- Colum, P., *Arthur Griffith* (Browne ad Nolan Ltd: Dublin, 1959).
- Comerford, R.V., *The Fenians in Context. Irish Politics and Society 1848-82* (Wolfhound Press: Dublin,1985)
- Coogan, T.P., *The I.R.A.* (Fontana :Glasgow, 1981).
- Cronin, M., *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* (Four Courts Press: Dublin 1997).
- ‘The Blueshirts in the Irish Free State 1932-35; the Nature of Socialist, Republican and Government Opposition’, in *Opposing Fascism; Community, Authority and Resistance in Europe* ed. by T.Kirk and A. McCilegott, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge,1995).
- Cronin, S., *Frank Ryan-the Search for the Republic* (Repsol: Dublin, 1980).
- Crotty, R., *Ireland in Crisis-a Study in Capitalist Colonial Underdevelopment* (Brandon Book Publishers: Dingle, Ireland, 1986).
- Davies, R., *Arthur Griffith* (Dundalgan Press: Dublin, 1976).
- Dwyer, T.R., *Eamon De Valera* (Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1980).
- Drakeford, M., *Social Movements and Their Supporters* (Macmillan Press: London, 1997).
- Ellwood, R., *The Politics of Myth* (State University of NY Press: Albany, 1999).
- English, R., *Radicals and the Republic* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1994).
- ‘Socialist Republicanism in Independent Ireland 1922-49’ in M. Cronin and J.M Regan (eds.), *Ireland: The Politics of Independence 1922-49* (MacMillan: London, 2000)
- Fanning, R., *Independent Ireland* (Helicon Ltd: Dublin, 1983).
- De Felice, R., *Fascism: An Informal Introduction to its Theory and Practice* (Transaction Books: U.S.A., 1975).
- Feeney, B., *Sinn Fein*, ( The O’Brien Press: Dublin, 2002)
- De Figueiredo, A., *Portugal: Fifty Years of Dictatorship* (Holmes and Meier: New



- York, 1975).
- Fisk, R., *In Time of War* (Andre Deutsch: Ireland, 1983).
- Finlay, J.L., *Social Credit-The English Origins* (McGill Q.U.P.: Montreal, 1972).
- Finnegan, R.B., 'The Blueshirts of Ireland During the 1930s: Fascism Inverted,' in *Eire-Ireland* Vol. xxiv: 2, Summer, 1989
- Fitzpatrick, D., *Politics and Irish Life 1913-1921, Provincial Experience of War and Revolution* (Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1977).
- Foley, C., *Legion of the Rearguard* (Pluto Press: London, 1992).
- The Papal Encyclicals in Their Historical Context-the Teaching of the Popes*, ed. by A. Fremantle, (Mentor Books: U.S.A., 1956).
- Foster, R.F., *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (Penguin Books: London, 1989).
- Gallagher, M., *Political Parties in the Republic of Ireland* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1985).
- Gallagher, T., *Portugal. A Twentieth Century Interpretation* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1983).
- Garvin, T., *1922-The Birth of Irish Democracy* (Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1996).
- The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Gill and MacMillan: Dublin, 1981).
- Goldring, M., *Pleasant the Scholar's Life* (Serif: London, 1993).
- Gregor, R.J., *Young Mussolini and the Intellectual Origins of Fascism* (University of California Press: 1979).
- Griffin, R., *The Nature of Fascism* (Routledge: London, 1991).
- ed. *Fascism* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1995).
- Halperin, S.W., *Mussolini and Italian Fascism* (Anvil: U.S.A., 1966).
- Hutchinson, J., *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* (Allen and Unwin: London, 1987).
- Ioanid, R., *The Sword of the Archangel: Fascist Ideology in Romania* (1990).
- Jelavich, B., *Modern Austria. Empire and Republic 1800-1986* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1987).
- Keogh, D., *Ireland and the Vatican* (Cork University Press: Cork, 1995).
- Ireland and Europe 1919-48* (Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1988).
- Jews in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Cork University Press: Cork, 1988).
- Keogh D., and O'Driscoll, F., 'Ireland', in *Political Catholicism in Europe* ed. by T. Buchanan and M. Conway, (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1996).

- Kershaw, I., *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris* (Allen Lane, Penguin Press: London, 1998).
- Kiberd, D., 'Modern Ireland; Postcolonial or European?' in Stuart Murray (Ed.), *Not On Any Map: Essays on Postcoloniality and Cultural Nationalism* (Exeter, 1997)
- Laffan, M., *The Resurrection of Ireland* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1999).
- Laquer, W., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide* (Pelican: G.B., 1979).
- Italian Fascism -From Pareto to Gentile*, ed. by A. Lytletton, (Jonathan Cape: London, 1973).
- Landaur, C., *Corporate State Ideologies-Historical Roots and Philosophical Origins* (Institute of International Studies, Berkeley Research Series No.54, University of California Press: U.S.A., 1983).
- Lee, J., 'Aspects of Corporatist Thought in Ireland: The Commission on Vocational Organisations 1938-43 in *Studies in Irish History Presented to R. Dudley Edwards* (University College Dublin: Dublin, 1979).
- Lee, J., *The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918* (Gill and Macmillan; Dublin, 1973).
- Ledeer, M.A., *Universal Fascism* (New York :1972).
- Loughlin, J., 'Northern Ireland and British Fascism in the Inter-War Years,' in *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. xxix no.116 (November, 1995).
- Lyons, F.S.L., *Ireland Since The Famine* (Fontana Press: Glasgow, 1985).
- MacAonghusa, P., *Quotations from P.H.Pearse* (Mercier Press: Dublin, 1979).
- Macdonagh, O., *Ireland: the Union and its Aftermath* (Allen and Unwin: London, 1977).
- The Years of the Great Test 1926-39* ed. by F. MacManus, (Mercier Press: Dublin, 1967).
- MacMillan, G.M., *State, Society and Authority in Ireland. The Foundations of the Modern Irish State* (Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1993).
- Manning, M., *The Blueshirts* (Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1987).
- The Courage to Succeed* (Fine Gael: Dublin, 1984).
- 'The Irish Experience' in *Who were the Fascists?* ed. by S.V. Larsen, B.Hagtuet, and J.A. Myklebus, (Universitetsforlaget: Oslo, 1980).
- Martin, F.X., Ed., *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising: Dublin 1916* (Methuen and Co: London, 1967).
- Maye, N., *Fine Gael 1923-87* (Blackwater Press: Dublin, 1993).

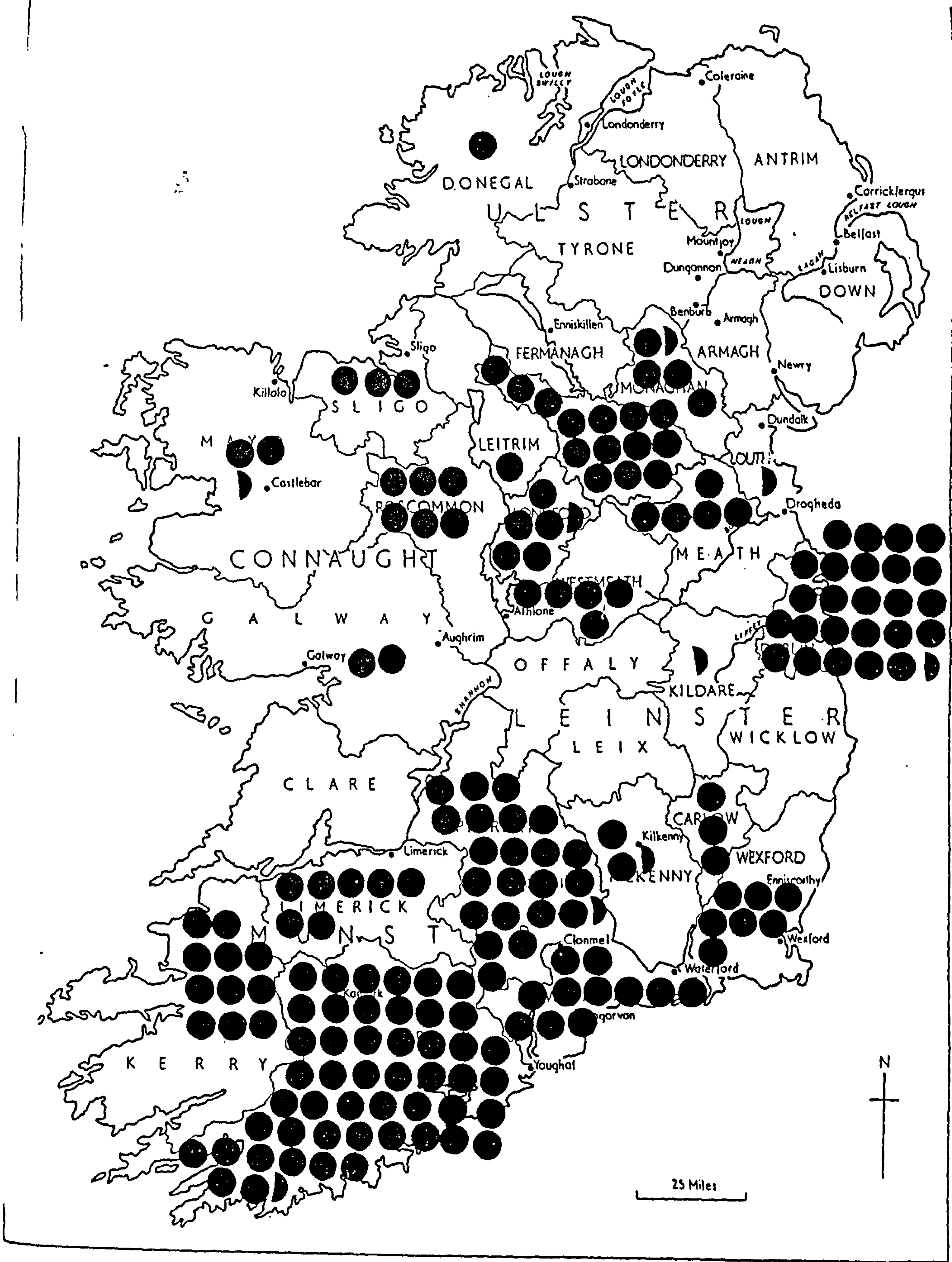


- McGarry, F., *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork University Press: Cork, 1999).
- Moran, S.F., *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption* (The Catholic University of America Press: Washington D.C., 1994).
- Mosley, N., *Beyond the Pale* (Secker and Warburg: London, 1983).
- Najda, M., *Fascism as a Mass Movement* (Allison and Busby: London, 1976).
- Neary J.P. and O'Grada, C., 'Protection, Economic War and Structural Change: the 1930s in Ireland' in *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol xxvii No.107 (May, 1981).
- Neocleous, N., *Fascism*, (OUP: Oxford, 1997).
- Novak, M., *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (The Free Press: New York, 1993).
- O' Buachalla, S., *The Letters of P.H. Pearse* (Colin Smythe: Gerards Cross, 1980).
- O' Drisceoil, D., *Censorship in Ireland 1939-1945* (Cork University Press: Cork, 1996).
- O'Gadhra, N., 'Eamon de Blaghd,' in *Eire-Ireland*, Vol.11: 3 (1976).
- O'Halpin, E., *Defending Ireland: The Irish State and its Enemies Since 1922* (OUP: Oxford and New York, 1999)
- O'Leary, D., *Vocationalism and Social Catholicism in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Irish Academic Press: Dublin, 2000).
- O'Riordan, M., *Connolly Column* (New Books: Dublin, 1979).
- Paseta, S., 'Ireland's Last Home Rule Generation: The Decline of Constitutional Nationalism in Ireland 1916-30,' in M. Cronin and J.M. Regan (eds.), *Ireland: The Politics of Independence 1922-49* (MacMillan Books: London, 2000) pp. 14-29.
- Patterson, H., *The Politics of Illusion-Republicanism and Socialism in Modern Ireland* (Hutchinson Radius Books: London, 1989).
- Paxton, R.O., *French Peasant Fascism: Henry Dorgeres's Greenshirts and the Crises of French Agriculture 1929-39* (OUP: Oxford, 1997).
- Payne, S.G., *A History of Fascism 1914-45* (UCL Press: London, 1995).
- Fascism, Comparison and Definition* (University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, USA, 1980).
- Pegis, A., Ed. *The Wisdom of Catholicism* (Four Square: London, 1962).
- Pitigliani, F., *The Italian Corporative State* (P.S. King and Son: London 1933).
- Porter, N., *The Republican Ideal* (The Blackstaff Press: Belfast, 1998).
- Prager, J., *Building Democracy in Ireland. Political Order and Cultural Integration in*

- a Newly Independent Nation* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1986).
- Regan, J.M., *The Irish Counter Revolution 1921-1936* (Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1999).
- Renton, D., *This Rough Game. Fascism and Anti-Fascism* (Sutton Publishing: Stroud, 2001).
- Ridley, J., *Mussolini* (Constable and Co Ltd: London, 1997).
- Rumpf, E. and Hepburn, A.C., *Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Liverpool University Press: Liverpool, 1977).
- Ryan, D., 'Sinn Fein Policy and Practice (1916-26)' in D. Williams (editor), *The Irish Struggle 1916-26* (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1966).
- Salvemini, G., *Under the Axe of Fascism* (Victor Gollancz: London, 1936).
- Schmitt, D.E., *The Irony of Irish Democracy* (Lexington Books: Lexington, Mass, 1973).
- Stephan, E., *Spies In Ireland* (Macdonald: London, 1963).
- Sternhall, Z., *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* (Princeton University Press: U.S.A., 1994).
- Stradling, R., *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War* (Mandolin: Manchester, 1999).
- 'Franco's Irish Volunteers' in *History Today*, March 1995
- Thompson, W.I., *The Imagination of an Insurrection* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1967).
- Tierney, M., *Eoin MacNeill* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1980).
- Togliatti, P., *Lectures on Fascism* (Lawrence and Wishart: London, 1976).
- Villari, L., *The Fascist Experiment* (Faber and Gwyer: London, 1926).
- White, T.J., 'Nationalism vs. Liberalism in the Irish Context: From a Post-Colonial Past to a Postmodern Future in *Eire-Ireland* , Fall-Winter 2002 retrieved March 2004 from [http://www.findarticles.com/cf\\_dls/m0FKX/2002\\_Fall-Winter/955598121/p1/article.jhtml](http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/m0FKX/2002_Fall-Winter/955598121/p1/article.jhtml)
- Whyte, J.H., *Church and State in Modern Ireland* (Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1980).
- Williamson, P.J., *Corporatism in Perspective; An Introductory Guide to Corporatist Theory* (Sage Publications: London , 1989)
- Williamson, P.J., *Varieties of Corporatism; Theories and Practice* (CUP: Cambridge, 1985)
- Younger, C., *A State of Disunion* (F. Muller Ltd: London, 1972).

# APPENDICES





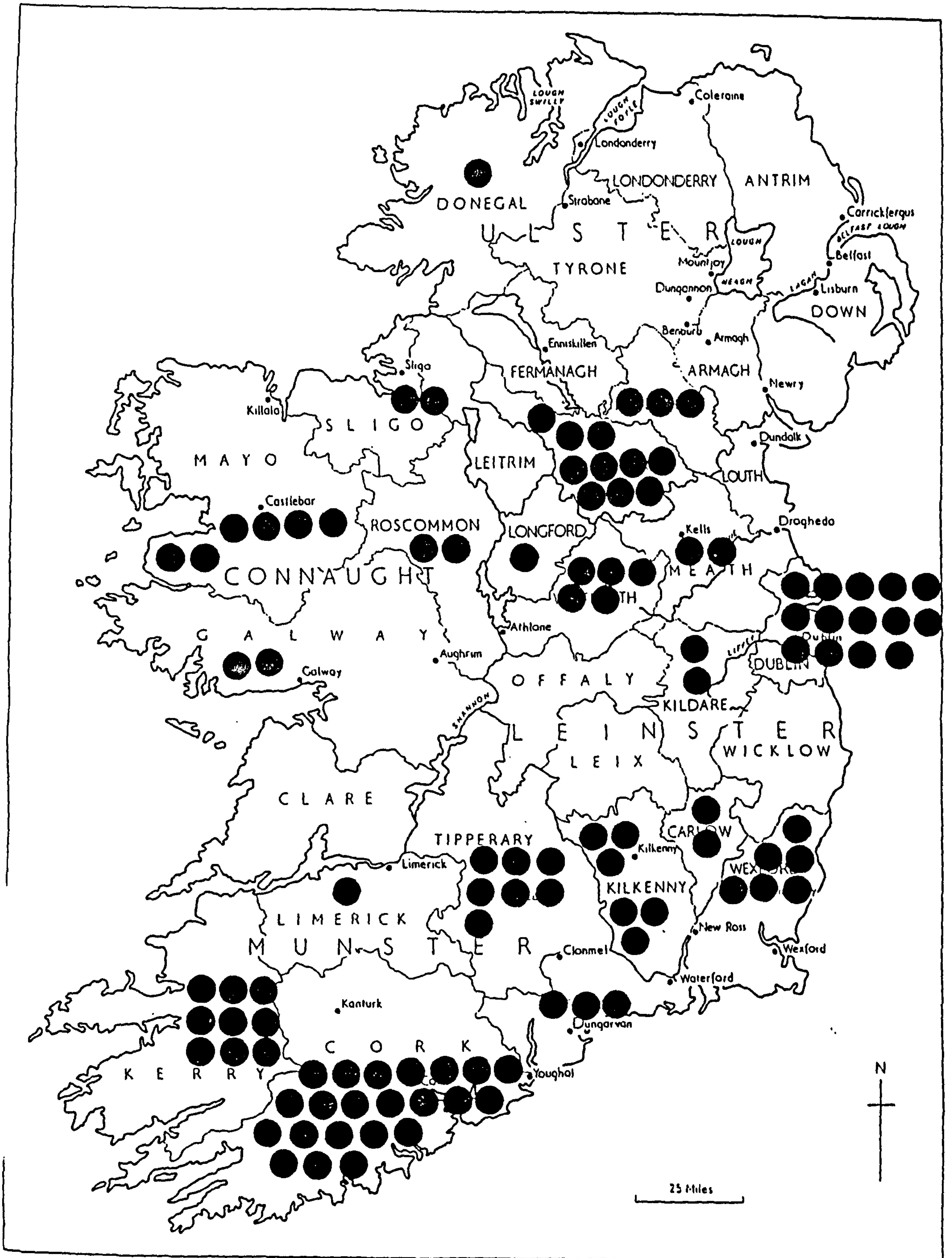
IRELAND

Map 1-Geographical distribution of NCP members. Sample size, 369.

Sources-National and regional newspapers, party journals, NCP bulletins and newsletters, Department of Justice files.

● Represents 2 members

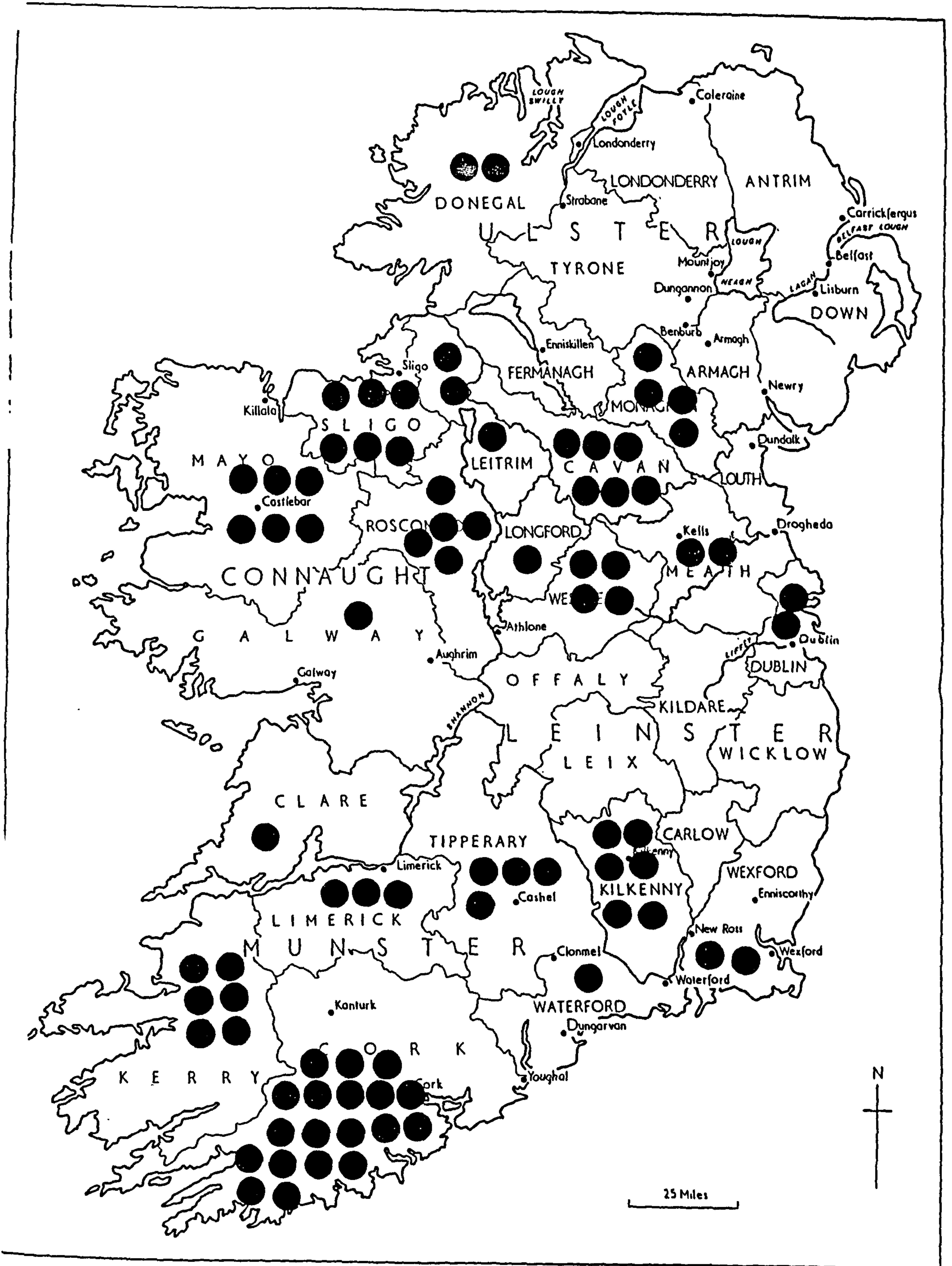




MAP 2-LOCAL N.C.P. MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES 1935-6  
 SAMPLE SIZE 106

SOURCES, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL NEWSPAPERS, PARTY JOURNALS, N.C.P. BULLETINS AND NEWSLETTERS, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE FILES.

● REPRESENTS ONE MEETING



IRELAND

3. Units and divisions voting in favour of General Eoin O'Duffy leading the Blueshirt movement in opposition to Edward Cronin, as recorded in 'The Blueshirt' 7.11.34-1.3.35. Sample size-84.

● Represents one unit or division.



APPENDIX FOUR

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL CORPORATE PARTY (Sources; Blueshirt publications, bulletins and circulars, correspondence, Dept of Justice files)

NAME	SOURCE	POSITION	COUNTY
J.Abbey	Bulletin no.5 12/35	Deputy/Director Dublin NE	Dublin
*Alice Barrett	Bulletin no.1 8/35	Secretary, City Ladies	Limerick
Ernest Bates	Garda Rep. 22.6.36	Party member	Tipperary
*Miss E de Blaquiure	Bulletin no.5 12/35	Leader (Women) South Dublin	Dublin
H.Bolger	The Nation, 4/36	Director	Waterford
Thady Bolger	Bulletin no.5, 12/35		Wexford
A. Borgor	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Treasurer, South Dublin	Dublin
Hugh Brady	The Nation, 5/36	Deputy Director	Cavan
James Butler	Garda Rep. 22.6.36	Member	Tipperary
John Butler	Garda Report, 22.6.36	Vice-Captain, Cashel Company	Tipperary
William Butler	Garda Report,22.6.36	Secretary, Cashel Company	Tipperary
Dr. Butterfly	Bulletin no.5, 12/35		Louth
Pat Brennan	The Nation, 5/36	Divisional Director	Dublin
Dr.P. Cagney	The Nation ,6/36		Cork
*Miss Cahill	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Secretary (Women), Dublin NW.	Dublin
Thos. Cahill	Garda Report 22.7.36	Member	Tipperary
C.G. Campbell	The Nation, 6/36	Secretary	Dublin
P.J. Campbell	Bulletin no.5 ,12/35	Divisional Secretary	Donegal
Thos. Carew	Garda Report 22.7.36	National Executive	Tipperary
Col. T.Carew	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Staff Officer	Tipperary
Dennis Carrol	The Nation, 6/36		Limerick
P.J. Carolan	The Nation,5/36	Secretary	Cavan
T. Casey	The Nation ,4/36		Cork
*Miss S. Casserly	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Leader (Women), Dublin NW.	Dublin
Mr. J. Cassidy	The Nation, 6/36	Captain	Cavan
T.J. Caulfield	The Nation, 6/36		Roscommon
Jos. Coffey	The Nation, 5/36	Captain	Cork
P. Coffey	The Nation 4/36	Treasurer	Waterford
Dennis Collins	The Nation 5/36	Treasurer, Bandon	Cork
J. Coleman	The Nation 6/36	Sec. Co.of Agric.	Cork

James Collins	Garda Report 23.6.36	Member	Cork
John Collins	Garda Report 23.6.36	Member	Cork
Terence Connelly	The Nation, 4/36	Assistant Director	Sligo
Patrick Connolly	The Nation, 4/36	Secretary	Monaghan
Dr. J. Conway	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Staff Officer	Dublin
*Mrs Conway	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Treasurer (Women) Dublin Townships	Dublin
Thos. Cooke	The Nation, 5/36	Director	Cork
J. Corcoran	The Nation, 6/36	Deputy Director	Cork
Danny Coughlan	The Nation, 5/36	Captain	Cork
Capt. P.J Coughlan	Letter 23.9.35, D/Jus Files	Deputy Director- General N.C.P.	Cork
J. Cooney	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Divisional Director	Meath
John Corr	The Nation, 5/36		Mayo
Paddy Connolly	The Nation, 6/36		Limerick
MI. Coulter	The Nation, 6/36		Mayo
John Cowhy	The Nation, 5/36	Director	Cork
Joe Cox	The Nation, 5/36	Divisional Secretary	Roscommon
Patrick Coyle	The Nation, 4/36		Monaghan
Capt. Creed	The Nation, 6/36	Captain	Cork
J. Crerand	The Nation, 6/36	Assistant Director	Dublin
John Croker	Garda Report, 22.7.36	Divisional Secretary	Tipperary
M. Cloonan	The Nation, 4/36	Treasurer	Meath
James Cronin	The Nation, 4/36	Director	Kerry
B. Crowley	The Nation, 5/36	Director	Cork
Capt. J.Crowley	The Nation, 5/36	Captain	Cork
P. Cuddihy	The Nation, 6/36		Kilkenny
D. Culhane	The Nation, 4/36	Assistant Secretary	Cork
Michael Cusack	The Nation, 6/36		Mayo
J.P. Currid	The Nation, 6/36		Sligo
C. Dalton	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Divisional Director	Monaghan
Eugene Daly	The Nation, 2/36	Divisional Director	Cork
J. Daly	The Nation, 4/36	Treasurer	Meath
Patrick Daly	The Nation, 8/36		Carlow
Michael Darcy	Garda Report, 22.7.36	Captain	Wexford
E.J. Delaney	The Nation, 6/36		Kilkenny
Dr. V.S. Delaney	The Nation, 6/36	Trustee of N.C.P.	Longford
W.F. Delaney	The Nation, 6/36		Limerick
Dennis Dempsey	The Nation, 5/36	Vice-Captain	Cork
Michael Denning	The Nation, 5/36	Treasurer	Cork
P. Desmond	The Nation, 6/36	Secretary	Cork
Peter Dineen	The Nation, 5/36	Deputy Director	Cork
John Joe Daly	The Nation, 4/36	Deputy Divisional	Cork



		Director	
Comdt. T. Donnelly	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Divisional Director	Monaghan
John Donohue	Garda Rep. 22.6.36	Member	Cork
C.B. Donoghue	The Nation, 3/36	Divisional Staff	Cork
John Donovan Sr.	The Nation, 4/36	District Treasurer	Kerry
John Donovan	The Nation, 5/36	Secretary	Cork
Alfred Donovan	The Nation, 5/36	Captain	Cork
Garet Donovan	The Nation, 5/36	Captain	Cork
J.Doyle	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Secretary, South Dublin	Dublin
John Dowdall	The Nation, 5/36		Roscommon
S. Dowling	The Nation, 3/36		Westmeath
Patrick Duffy	The Nation, 5/36	Director	East Cavan
Chas. Dullea	The Nation, 5/36	Treasurer	Cork
Thos. Dunne	Garda Report, 22.6.36	Treasurer	Tipperary
Edward Dwyer	Garda Report, 22.6.36	Member	Tipperary
Sonny Dwyer	Garda Report, 22.6.36	Member	Tipperary
*Mary Egan	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Deputy Leader, Sth Dublin (Women's)	Dublin
J.Egan	The Nation, 2/36	Divisional Director	Cork
V.Eivers	The Nation, 4/36	Assistant Director	Meath
Ml. Farrel	Bulletin no.1, 8/35	Deputy Director	Kilkenny
Col. Farrelly	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Divisional Director	Leitrim
Dr. E. Fehilly	Garda Report, 29.10.35	Divisional Treasurer, W Cork	Cork
Maurice Fielding	The Nation 5/36	Director	Cork
John Fitzpatrick	Garda Report, 23.6.36	Member	Cork
J. Fitzgerald	The Nation, 4/36	Director	Waterford
F.B. Fitzgerald	The Nation, 4/36	Secretary	Waterford
Thos. Fitzgerald	The Nation, 4/36	Secretary	Waterford
F. Fitzgerald	The Nation, 4/36	Treasurer	Waterford
Terence Fitzpatrick	The Nation, 5/36	Deputy Director	Cavan
Michael Fleming	The Nation, 5/36	Secretary	Cork
Richard Fleming	The Nation, 5/36	Treasurer	Cork
Patrick J. Fleming	Garda Report, 22.6.36		Tipperary
F. Flynn	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	District Director	Leitrim
Gerald Flynn	The Nation, 6/36	Director	Roscommon
D. Foley	The Nation, 4/36	Vice-Captain	Limerick
Sidney Gallagher	Bulletin no5, 12/35	Divisional Director	Sligo

Patrick Gallagher	Garda Report, 7.11.36	County Director, Sligo	Sligo
Joseph Gannon	The Nation, 5/36	District Director	Roscommon
P.J.Gaynor	The Nation, 3/36	Divisional Staff	Cork
T.Gerety	Bulletin no5, 12/35	Divisional Director	Longford
James Gilligan	The Nation, 3/36		Sligo
J. Gleeson	The Nation, 3/36	Divisional Staff	Cork
Patrick Gleeson	Garda Report, 22.7.36		Tipperary
W. Grayden	Bulletin no5, 12/35	Deputy Director, Dublin NW.	Dublin
T.P. Gunning	Letter O'Duffy, 7.8.35	Editor of The Nation	Dublin
Patrick Hanratty	The Nation, 4/36	Secretary	Monaghan
Mr. Harte	The Nation, 5/36	Treasurer	Cork
Thomas Hartley	The Nation, 6/36		Kilkenny
Mr. Hayes	The Nation, 5/36	Treasurer	Cork
Mr. Hannan	The Nation, 5/36	Secretary	Cavan
J. Hector	Bulletin no5 12/35	Director, Dublin NW	Dublin
J.Hegarty	The Nation, 4/36		Cork
Patrick Henney	Bulletin no1, 8/35	District Secretary	Kilkenny
Dr. John Hennessey	Garda Report, 22.7.36	National Executive	Tipperary
P.J. Henry	The Nation, 6/36		Roscommon
Donald Herlihy	The Nation, 2/36	Secretary	Cork
*Miss W. Hickey	The Nation, 5/36	Captain	Cork
Mr. Higgins	The Nation, 4/36		Cork
Lt. M Hiney	The Nation, 4/36	Deputy Director	Meath
Danny Holland	The Nation, 5/36	Treasurer	Cork
T. Holmes	The Nation, 4/36	Divisional Director, N.Dublin Townships	Dublin
*Miss M.Hurley	The Nation 5/36	Treasurer	Cork
Capt. P.Hughes	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Staff Officer	Dublin
Tom Hyde	The Nation, 4/36		Cork
L. Ingham	Bulletin no5, 12/35	Treasurer, Dublin NE.	Dublin
J.Irish	Bulletin no.1, 8/35	District Director	Kilkenny
J. Kearney	The Nation, 4/36	Vice-Captain	Waterford
T. Kearney	The Nation, 4/36	Secretary	Waterford
D. Keating	The Nation, 4/36	Divisional Secretary	Tipperary
J. Keating	The Nation 4/36	Secretary	Tipperary
James Kearns	Garda Report, 3.10.36	Treasurer	Wexford



J.J. Kelly	Bulletin no5, 12/35	Divisional Director	Wexford
M. Kelly	Bulletin no5, 12/35	Treasurer, Dublin NW.	Dublin
Michael Kelly	Garda Report, 22.6.36	Captain	Tipperary
Capt. T Kelly	The Nation, 3/36	District Director	Cork
C. Kelly	The Nation,, 3/36	District Director	Cork
Dennis Kelly	The Nation, 5/36		Roscommon
Sonny Kelly	The Nation, 5/36	Director	Cork
*Miss Josie Kelly	The Nation, 5/36	Treasurer	Cork
Tom Kennedy	The Nation, 6/36		Sligo
Wm. Kennedy	The Nation, 6/36		Tipperary
*Miss M. King	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Secretary, South Dublin (Women)	Dublin
John Killigrew	The Nation 4/36	Captain	Waterford
T. Kinsella	The Nation ,8/36		Cork
Thomas Kinsella	Garda Report 27.7.36	Member	Wexford
Patrick Mahoney	Garda Report, 23.6.36	Member	Cork
John Martin	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Divisional Director	Cavan
Thos. Martin	The Nation, 4/35	Deputy Director	Cavan
Patrick Martin	The Nation,5/36	Secretary	Cavan
Sean Martin	The Nation, 4/35		Cavan
R. Matthews	The Nation, 6/36		Carlow
*Miss Nora Mawe	The Nation, 5/36	Captain	Cork
Thos. Mawe	The Nation, 5/36	Captain	Cork
John Markham	The Nation, 4/36	Captain	Limerick
James Masterson	The Nation, 5/36	Deputy Director	Cavan
Dennis Mahoney	Garda Report, 23.6.36	Member	Cork
James Maher	The Nation, 6/36	Director Dublin Nth.Townships	Dublin
J. MacGillicuddy	The Nation, 4/36	Secretary	Kerry
John MacNamee	The Nation, 5/36	Treasurer	Cavan
J.J. McCarthy	Garda Report, 27.10.35		Cork
J.F. McCarthy	Letter O'Duffy, 29.10.35		Cork
P. McCabe	The Nation, 3/36	Divisional Director	Westmeath
H.V. McConnell	Bulletin no.5 ,12/35	Director, Dublin NE.	Dublin
Ed. McCarthy	The Nation 5/36	Secretary	Cork
Tim MCarthy	The Nation, 5/36	Captain	Cork
Chas. McCarthy	The Nation, 5/36	Secretary	Cork
W. McAuliffe	The Nation, 4/36	Director	Limerick
T.McCormack	The Nation 3/36	Captain	Longford
D.S.McCarthy	The Nation, 4/36		Cork

S. McCarthy	The Nation, 4/36		Cork
J.M. McDonnell	The Nation, 3/36	Divisional Secretary	Longford
Joe McDonald	The Nation, 3/36	Captain	Longford
F.L. McEoin	The Nation 6/36		Galway
T. McDonagh Mahoney	The Nation, 6/36		Kerry
P.J.McElligott	Correspondence issued by NCP	Former Divisional Director	Kerry
Mr. McGarry	Garda Report, 20.6.36		Dublin
P. McGorick	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	District Director	Kildare
MI. McGinn	The Nation, 5/35	Deputy Director	Cavan
Mr McGonaghe	The Nation, 3/36		Donegal
J. McGrath	The Nation, 4/36	Director	Waterford
Sean McKiernan	The Nation, 4/36	Director	Cavan
J.P. McKiernan	The Nation, 3/36	N.C.P. Treasurer	Cavan
Bern. McMahan	The Nation, 4/36	District Director	Monaghan
John McMahan	The Nation, 5/36	Treasurer	Cavan
T. McSweeney	The Nation, 6/36	Treasurer, Council of Agriculture	Cork
George McSweeney	Garda Report 20.6.36	Captain	Tipperary
Jasper Meher	The Nation, 6/36	Director, Dublin Townships	Dublin
Jack Meade	The Nation, 4/36	Deputy Director	Meath
Sean Mooney	The Nation, 4/36	Deputy Director	Limerick
Jackie Morrissey	The Nation, 5/36	Captain	Tipperary
Roger Morrissey	The Nation, 5/36	Captain	Tipperary
John Mooney	The Nation, 4/36	Director	Limerick
John Morrissey	The Nation, 5/36	Secretary	Tipperary
Jack Moran	The Nation, 3/36	District Director	Mayo
*Miss A. Moloney	Bulletin no1, 8/35		Limerick
Walter Morrissey	The Nation, 4/36	District Director	Kerry
Patrick Mulligan	The Nation, 5/36	Secretary	Cavan
J. Mulvihill	The Nation, 3/36		Longford
B. Mulvihill	The Nation, 3/36	Divisional Director	Longford
P.J. Mulcahy	The Nation, 4/36	Treasurer	Waterford
Patrick Munday	The Nation, 4/36	Divisional Staff Officer	Monaghan
Tim Murphy	The Nation 4/36	Director	Limerick
Sean Murphy	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Staff Officer	Cork
D.J. Murphy	The Nation, 2/36	Assistant Divisional Director	Cork
J.T. Murray	The Nation, 2/36	Divisional Director	Cork
Jack Murphy	The Nation, 5/36	Vice-Captain	Cork
Pat Murphy	The Nation, 5/36	Treasurer, Templemartin	Cork



Eoin Newman	The Nation, 4/36	Director	Meath
Thos. Nolan	Garda Report 22.6.36	Deputy Divisional Director, Cashel	Tipperary
Patrick Nolan	Garda Report 22.6.36	Vice-Director, Cashel	Tipperary
J.Nolan	The Nation, 3/36	Captain	Longford
James Noctor	The Nation, 4/36	Director, Dublin NW	Dublin
Mick Norris	The Nation, 4/36	Divisional Director	Waterford
John Nulty	The Nation, 5/36	Director	Cavan
Nicholas Nulty	The Nation, 5/36	Director	Cavan
John Oakey	The Nation, 6/36		Kilkenny
Denis O'Brien	The Nation, 4/36		Kilkenny
John O'Brien	The Nation 4/36	Deputy Divisional Director	Tipperary
Morris O'Brien	The Nation, 4/36	District Director	Tipperary
Chris O'Brien	Garda Report, 22.7.36	Member	Tipperary
*Mollie O'Brien	Bulletin no.1, 8/35		Limerick
Thomas O'Connell	NCP Correspondence	Divisional Director	Kerry
Louis O'Connell	NCP Correspondence	Divisional Director	Kerry
M. O'Carroll	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Staff Officer	Galway
*Mrs H. O'Connor	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Leader (Women) Dublin Townships	Dublin
Dr. O'Connor	Special Branch Report, 20.6.36		Dublin
Joe O'Callaghan	The Nation, 2/36	Secretary	Cork
W. O'Connor	The Nation, 3/36		Cork
T. O'Connor	The Nation ,3/36	Vice-Captain	Longford
*Miss F.O'Connell	The Nation ,6/36		Kerry
P.S. O'Carolan	The Nation, 6/36		Cavan
Eoin O'Duffy	HQ circular, no.5 19.6.35	Director -General NCP	Dublin
Sean O'Donnell	Garda Rep,22.7.36	Member	Tipperary
Sean O'Dell	The Nation, 2/36	Director	Kerry
T. O'Duffy	The Nation, 3/36		Westmeath
John O'Donoghue	The Nation, 4/36	Director	Kerry
C.B. O'Donoghue	The Nation, 5/36	Secretary	Cork
Thos. O'Donoghue	The Nation ,5/36	Captain	Cork
Brian O'Driscoll	The Nation ,5/36	Secretary	Cork
John O'Donovan	The Nation, 5/36	Deputy-Director	Cork
Cornelius O'Driscoll	The Nation ,5/36	Secretary	Cork
*Mrs C. O'Driscoll	The Nation, 6/36		Cork
John O'Hea	The Nation 6/36	Captain	Roscommon

J. O'Hanlon	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Staff Officer	Galway
*Miss B. O'Hanlon	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Leader(Women)NE	Dublin
S. O'Hanlon	The Nation, 3/36	Secretary	Dublin
T.O'Keefe	Special Branch Report, 20.6.36		Dublin
Don O'Leary	The Nation, 4/36	Secretary	Waterford
Sonny O'Leary	The Nation ,5/36	Secretary	Cork
*Miss H. O'Leary	The Nation, 5/36	Captain	Cork
Arthur O'Leary	The Nation, 5/36	Captain	Cork
J.J. O'Leary	The Nation, 6/36		Cork
John O'Mahoney	The Nation, 5/36	Secretary	Cork
Con O'Neill	The Nation, 5/36	Vice-Captain	Cork
Jeremiah O'Neill	The Nation, 4/36	Director	Kerry
P. O'Regan	The Nation, 4/36	Assistant Secretary	Cork
Bernard O'Reilly	The Nation, 5/36	Secretary	Cavan
P.J.O'Reilly	The Nation, 5/36	Deputy Director	Cavan
Sean O'Reilly	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Divisional Sec.	Wexford
John O'Reilly	Garda Report, 27.7.36	Member of League of Youth	Wexford
Comdt. D. O'Sullivan	Bulletin no.5, 12/35	Deputy Divisional Director	Wexford
D. O'Sullivan	The Nation ,6/36	Assistant Director-General of NCP	Dublin
M. O'Sullivan	The Nation, 4/36		Cork
John J.O'Sullivan	The Nation, 4/36	Director	Kerry
Patrick O'Sullivan	The Nation, 4/36	Deputy Director	Kerry
J.F. Owens	The Nation, 6/36		Cork
Kevin Patton	Garda Rep. 16.5.37	Member L of Y	Westmeath
J. Pierce	The Nation, 4/36		Cork
W. Pierce	The Nation, 4/36		Cork
Michael Pender	Garda Report, 3.10.36	Captain, Ferns Company	Wexford
George Plunkett	The Nation, 3/36		Cavan
John Poland	The Nation ,,4/36		Cork
J. Power	The Nation ,4/36	Deputy Director	Waterford
J. Power	The Nation, 6/36		Tipperary
Thomas Quinlan	Garda Report 22.6.35	Director	Tipperary
*Minnie Quigley		Captain, Ferns (Women's)	Wexford
William Quinlan	The Nation, 2/36	Divisional Director	Cork
Frank Quirke	The Nation, 4/36		Kerry
Thos. Quirke	The Nation, 4/36	District Secretary	Kerry
James Redmond	The Nation, 8/36		Carlow
D. Reeves	Bulletin no.5,12/35	Staff Officer	Dublin



James E.Reilly	The Nation, 4/36	Secretary	Donegal
A. Roche	The Nation,4/36		Cork
John Roche	The Nation, 4/36	Director of Elections	Dublin
Matthew Ryan	Garda Report 22.6.36	Divisional Secretary	Tipperary
Ml. Ryan	Garda Report 22.6.36	Member, Cashel Company	Tipperary
Jas. Ryan	Garda Report 22.7.36	Member ,Cashel Company	Tipperary
Jim Ryan	The Nation, 2/36	Staff Officer	Cork
B. Ryan	The Nation, 3/36	District Director	Longford
S. Ryan	The Nation, 4/36		Waterford
T. Ryan	The Nation, 4/36	Divisional Staff Officer	Cork
Dr. Garry Scanlon	The Nation, 6/36		Limerick
James Scanlon	The Nation, 4/36		Limerick
John Shaw	The Nation, 6/36		Kerry
Patrick Sheridan	Garda Report 22.6.36	Member	Tipperary
John Sheridan	The Nation, 5/36	Director	Cavan
Philip Sheridan	The Nation, 5/36	Secretary	Cavan
Miss M.Sheehy	The Nation, 5/36	Secretary	Cork
Miss M.Sheehan	The Nation 5/36	Secretary	Cork
John Shaw	The Nation, 6/36		Kerry
Jack Skinner	The Nation, 5/36	Secretary	Cork
P.Skelly	The Nation, 4/36	Director	Meath
T. Slattery	The Nation, 4/36	Divisional Treasurer	Kerry
John Spilane	The Nation, 5/36	Captain	Cork
H. Steward	Bulletin no.5 12/35	District Director	Galway
Mrs Sunderland	Garda Report 3.10.36		Wexford
Tim Sullivan	Garda Report 22.7.36	Member , Cashel Company	Tipperary
Capt. M.Sweetman	Bulletin no.5 12/35	Divisional Director	Dublin
P.Tennyson	The Nation, 6/36		Kilkenny
J.Tobin	The Nation, 4/36	Secretary	Waterford
William Tobin	Garda Report22.6.36	Member	Tipperary
Mrs Toner	Bulletin no.5 12/35	Deputy Leader(Women's), Dublin NW.	Dublin
James Traynor	The Nation, 8/36		Monaghan
Patrick Treanor	The Nation, 4/36	Deputy Director	Monaghan
E.Tuohy	The Nation, 4/36	Captain	Waterford





APPENDIX FIVE

CHART TO SHOW RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE NCP BY COUNTY,

IRELAND, 1935-6

(Sources: national and regional newspapers, NCP journals, bulletins, circulars and newsletters, Department of justice files including *Garda* Reports, and personal correspondence of Eoin O'Duffy and other NCP members. Sample size for members, 337, and for meetings, 106.

County	Number of local members	Number of local meetings
CARLOW	3	2
CAVAN	25	10
CLARE	0	0
CORK	95	22
DONEGAL	3	1
DUBLIN	41	14
GALWAY	3	2
KERRY	20	9
KILDARE	1	2
KILKENNY	9	6
LAOIS	0	0
LEITRIM	2	1
LIMERICK	14	1
LONGFORD	10	1
LOUTH	1	0
MAYO	5	6

MEATH	8	2
OFFALY	0	0
MONAGHAN	9	3
ROSCOMMON	8	2
SLIGO	6	2
TIPPERARY	39	7
WATERFORD	20	3
WESTMEATH	4	5
WEXFORD	10	6
WICKLOW	0	0



APPENDIX SIX

PERSONS CONNECTED WITH THE IRISH FRIENDS OF GERMANY

Source: G2 Military Archives files on the IFG, Rathmines Barracks, Dublin

Dr Booth  
Mrs Booth  
Seamus Bourke  
James Burke  
Kevin Cahill  
Dr. J Carroll  
Dr. P Collins  
Kevin Duff  
George Griffin  
Michael Herlihy  
Cloum Kerry  
Mrs Mallin  
Seamus Mallin  
Alec McCabe  
Miss Louie McCahy  
Dr Patrick McCartin  
Dr Nora McNaly  
Mr O'Callaghan  
Maurice O'Connor  
Eoin O'Duffy  
Mr O'Gorman  
T O'Rourke  
Francis Stuart  
Captain Liam Walsh  
Mrs Liam Walsh

APPENDIX SEVEN

MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE'S NATIONAL PARTY 1940-41  
(Source-G2 Files on the People's National Party, Military Archives, Dublin).

NAME	POSITION
George Griffin	President
G. Sinclair	Vice-President
Thomas Fahy	Trustee and Secretary
C. Crowley	Trustee
R. Collins	Member
Edgar F. Corrigan	Committee member
Francis Dillon	Treasurer
Con O'Leary	Committee member
Eamon Graham	Member
Joe Andrews	Committee member
R. Burgess	Committee member
H. O'Neill	Committee member
J.J. Byrne	Committee member
P. Byrne	Committee member
J. Graham	Committee member
Mrs Griffin	Member

## APPENDIX EIGHT

### PARTY PROGRAMME FOR PNP FOR NATIONAL PLANNING

- 1.Currency. Control of the issue of currency and credit.
- 2.Political. The reunion of the 32 counties. The severance of political connections with England.
- 3.Employment. The state shall concern itself in the first instance with the task of providing employment for all its citizens.
- 4.Citizenship. Irish citizenship can be claimed by Irish nationals, The Jew has a distinct Nationality of his own. No Jew, therefore, may be an Irish citizen.
- 5.Persons who have no title to Irish citizenship are to be allowed to live in Ireland but will have no claim to civil or legal rights. All such non-citizens referred to, who immigrated to Ireland after 25<sup>th</sup> April 1916, must leave Ireland at once. All further immigration, except under license, must be stopped immediately.
- 6.Education. The teaching of all subjects in the Primary and Secondary Schools and Colleges in the Gaeltacht to be in Irish.
- 7.Agriculture. Land reforms in keeping with our national requirements. The passing of an Act of law to enable the State to expropriate land held by non-citizens without compensation. Abolition of all ground rents payable to non-citizens and exterior trusts.
- 8.Traders. The elimination of chain-stores, controlled or financed by non-citizens.
- 9.Revision of laws relating to non-Irish controlled Factories and Companies.
10. Civil Service. All Civil Service posts, no matter what kind, to be filled by Irish citizens.
11. Social. Provision of decent housing for all Citizens.



12. Corporate Charities. The creation of Corporate Councils in every county, representative of all professions and trades, in order to help in Social and Economic planning.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Party Programme for PNP for Proper National Planning, G2/B/0453, The PNP, G2 Military Archives Files, Rathmines.

## APPENDIX NINE

### AN CUMANN NAISIUNTA by Ernest Blythe

The document in the Blythe Papers lists the objectives of *An Cumann Naisiunta* as:

“To carry on the National tradition.

“To utilize the power of Government in the hands of the Irish people as well as other forms of political activity for the fuller development of the Nation’s heritage, political, cultural and economic.”<sup>1</sup>

The document goes on to present the following political programme:

“To secure the territorial unity of Ireland and to combine the divergent elements of the Nation in a common bond of citizenship.

“To present and foster the National language, literature, games and arts and every element of National culture and custom which tends to give Ireland distinction as a Nation.

“To stimulate and safeguard the development of manufacturing, industry, fisheries and natural resources.

“To make the whole soil of Ireland available for the use of the people by completing land purchase and utilizing the depopulated grass lands in accordance with a broad National Plan.

“To obtain the provision of adequate financial assistance for a National scheme of housing, urban and rural.

“To substitute as far as possible for the unemployment dole, National schemes of useful work, including arterial drainage, reforestation, improvement of roads and waterways.

---

<sup>1</sup> *An Cumann Naisiunta*, Ernest Blythe, Blythe Papers P24/977, UCD Archives, Dublin.

“To encourage proper physical development of the children of the Nation by the provision of meals, the introduction of dental and medical examination in Schools, and the organization of National pastimes.

“To promote the extension of education facilities by easy access from primary to higher schools, so that all children shall have opportunities for the fullest training of their mental powers.”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



## APPENDIX TEN

### O'DUFFY'S ITINERARY 1935-6

8 June 1935 Annual conference, Dublin

21 June 1935 Dublin Division Pears Street HQ

29 June 1935 Conference at Carrickshock, Co Kilkenny.

Meeting at Knockbrock, Glenmore

5 July 1935 Hugginstown, Co. Kilkenny

9 July 1935 Conference at Boardford, Co Kildare.

17 July 1935 Conference of officers, Knocktopher District, Hugginstown, Co Kilkenny

18 July 1935 Public meeting in Owing Hall, Kilkenny

18 July 1935 South Tipperary Conference at Clonmel

20 July 1935 Director-General visited several places in Co Louth with a view to holding a conference at a later date

23 July 1935 National Executive meeting Dublin HQ

4 August 1935 Cavan Divisional Convention

11 August 1935 Sligo NCP Convention

August Beal na Blath Commemoration ceremony

29 September 1935 Cork Divisional meeting

September-Italy, Montreux, Germany

2 October 1935 Navan Co Meath

20 October 1935 North Kerry Divisional Convention at Listowel

Early November Navan NCP Convention

9 November 1935 Central Mayo District

10 November 1935 Westport District, Mayo

10 November 1935 Claremorris District, Mayo

10 November 1935 Ballinrobe District, Mayo

11 November 1935 Visits to key men in north Mayo

12 November 1935 National Executive Cttee in Dublin

24 November 1935 Monaghan District Convention

17 November 1935 Public meeting at Ferns

November series of meetings in Dublin city and area inc 14th National Executive

1 December 1935 South Kerry Division Convention, Sneem

2-3 December 1935 Conference in Co. Cork

4 December 1935. District dance at Dungarven

8 December 1935 Co Monaghan Conference Ballyboy

15 December 1935 Co Kilkenny anniversary of Carrickshock

31 December 1935 Dance at Party HQ Pearse Street, Dublin

12 January 1936 Inishannon Commemoration Parade  
12 January 1936 Millstreet, Co Cork N Cork constituency meeting 13.1.36 Macroom  
Divisional Meeting West Cork  
16 January 1936 Bandon  
Also in January -Bantry and Roscarbery

9 February 1936 Cashel dance  
16 February 1936 District Conference Ballymahon Co Longford  
23 February 1936 Conference of officers, Bruff Co Limerick

1 March 1936 Cavan county convention  
7 March 1936 Dinner and presentation at Grand Hotel Dublin  
15 March 1936 Mulingar, Westmeath Convention of district and divisional officers

19 April 1936 Clonakilty for funeral of Mrs Micky Murphy  
29.4.36 Roscommon conference of officers

6 May 1936 Lecture at TCD Historical Society Dublin  
9 May 1936 National Executive meeting Dublin  
17 May 1936 Consecration of new church in Merrion Park  
May; conferences attended at;  
Carlow town  
Carbury Co Kkildare  
Tyrrellspass, Co Westmeath  
Ballycanew Co Wexford  
1916 Commemoration, Arbor Hill  
Aviation Day at Phoenix Park, including flight over Dublin.  
Attendance at Fairyhouse, Punchtown and Callery race meetings.  
Attendance at funeral of Mr E. Fitzpatrick of Newtownbutler, Co.Fermanagh, in spite  
of N.I. banning order.

20 June 1936 NCP Meeting at Cashel  
21 June 1936 NCP meeting at Rosscarbery  
June conferences attended;  
County Cork  
Cork city  
Ballineen  
Bantry  
Cloakilty  
Rosscarbery  
Bandon  
Macroom

18 July 1936. NCP First Annual Convention, Rathmines ,Dublin.

9 August 1936 Ten-day holiday to Holland  
30 August 1936 Annual commemoration service at Beal na Blath in memory of

Michael Collins and Blueshirt martyrs.

21 September 1936 O'Duffy leaves for Spain to meet Franco

13 November 1936 First Volunteers leave for Spain

22 June 1937 O'Duffy arrives back in Dublin from Spain.



## APPENDIX ELEVEN

### ERNEST BLYTHE (1889-1975)- A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Ernest Blythe was born in Lisburn, Co. Antrim in 1889 to a Protestant family of Orange persuasion.<sup>1</sup> As a Northern Protestant in the Free State Government, Blythe was able to offer to the Irish cause a unique and insightful perspective on the issue of Irish unity. In his three-volume autobiography, *Trasna na Boinne* written in Gaelic under the Irish form of his name, Earnan de Blaghd, Blythe admits that he was ignorant, as a youth, of the Gaelic Catholic culture of his native area. In 1905, now an impressionable teenager, he moved to Dublin where he joined the Civil Service in the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction,<sup>2</sup> and began to immerse himself in Irish culture and language with all the zeal of a convert. Under the influence of his close friend, the playwright Sean O'Casey, he joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Gaelic League.<sup>3</sup> He was strongly influenced by the nationalism of Griffith and Sinn Fein.<sup>4</sup>

His interest in journalism was fostered by his contributions to W.P. Ryan's newspaper, *The Peasant*, which promoted the ideas of the Irish-Ireland movement. He returned to Ulster to land his first job as a paid journalist with *The North Down Herald*, which was published in Bangor.<sup>5</sup>

In Dublin, he had begun to learn Irish, and this would become his life's passion. It prompted him to go and live in Corca Dhuibne, the West Kerry Gaeltacht, in 1913 in order to improve his fluency in the language.<sup>6</sup> He supported himself by working on

---

<sup>1</sup> Maye, B., *Fine Gael 1923-1987* (Blackwater Press, Dublin, 1993), p.,289.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> O'Gadhra, N., 'Earnan de Blaghd' in *Eire-Ireland*, 11,3 (1976).

<sup>5</sup> Maye, B., *Fine Gael 1923-1987*, p. 289.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

the land as a farm labourer. By this time, he had completely rejected his Orange background and saw himself as an Irishman firmly committed to the nationalist cause.

During 1914-16 he organized the Irish Volunteers in Muster and south Connaught. He was ordered to leave Kerry by Government edict in July 1915, and was arrested in March 1916 for failing to do so. He was imprisoned in Brixton, where he met Roger Casement,<sup>7</sup> and was then transferred to Reading Gaol. His detention meant that he was unable to take part in the Easter Rising of 1916 in Dublin. On his release, he continued to organize the Volunteers and as a result was re-arrested and imprisoned first in Cork and then in Belfast.

Blythe summarized his career to date as follows:

“I was appointed shortly after the start of the war<sup>8</sup> as an I.R.B. organizer in the South...At the beginning of 1915 I was sent south as an official organizer under the direction of the Volunteer Executive, and more particularly under the direction of Hobson<sup>9</sup> who was its general secretary. I was assigned the counties of Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Clare and part of Tipperary.”<sup>10</sup> Much of this area was later to be a stronghold of the Blueshirt movement.

In 1918, he was elected to the Executive of Sinn Fein and to the first Dail, representing the constituency of North Monaghan.<sup>11</sup> He was to hold this constituency for the next fifteen years. He first met O’Duffy when the latter stood in the same multi-member constituency with Blythe on a shared pro-Treaty platform in 1922.<sup>12</sup> He was appointed Director of Trade and Industry (April 1919) by the first *Dail*. He

---

<sup>7</sup> Roger Casement (1884-1916) was a British diplomat and Irish patriot. A member of the Gaelic league he had helped to found the Volunteers. He sought German material aid for the Irish cause and was arrested by the British for treason. Found guilty at his trial, he was hanged in August 1916 (The Oxford Companion to Irish History).

<sup>8</sup> World War I.

<sup>9</sup> Bulmer Hobson was an Ulster Protestant and Secretary of the Irish Volunteers.

<sup>10</sup> Ernest Blythe, ‘Eire,’ in *Resistance Against Tyranny* ed. by Eugene Heimler (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966).

<sup>11</sup> Maye, B., *Fine Gael 1923-87*, p. 289.

<sup>12</sup> Regan, J.M., *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936* (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1999), p.61.



supported the Treaty during the Dail Treaty Debates but, unlike most of his colleagues, he argued that the Irish state had the right to coerce the six Northern counties into a united Ireland.<sup>13</sup> He was later to justify his support for the Treaty by claiming that the Irish language question needed to be addressed immediately if the language was to be saved.<sup>14</sup>

He was a prominent figure in the new Cumann an nGaedheal administration following the acceptance of the Treaty by the Dail and the end of the Irish Civil War that followed. He occupied the posts of Minister for Local Government (1922-23), Minister for Finance (1923-32) and Minister for Posts and Telegraphs(1927-32). Following the murder of Kevin O'Higgins,<sup>15</sup> he became Vice President of the Executive Council. Blythe was a fiscal conservative and is widely remembered, and was severely criticized at the time, for reducing old age pensions in his 1924 budget. He saw the need for economic cooperation with Great Britain as vital if the infant Irish Free State was to be a viable political entity. He saw a stringent economic policy as essential to consolidate markets and earn international respect and recognition.

Blythe used his powerful position in government to promote his views on cultural identity and nationalism, not least on the language issue. He believed that a strong state was necessary for the language revival. For this reason he was opposed to proportional representation, believing that it could lead to weak government. He used his position as head of the finance department to coordinate the work of language revival. Gaelic was introduced as a subject in all schools, and Irish speakers were sought out to train as teachers. Irish was made compulsory for Civil Service entry. He made possible Galway's Irish language theatre and initiated the Irish publishing

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> O'Gadhra, N., *Earnan de Blaghd*.

<sup>15</sup> Kevin O'Higgins was assassinated by members of the IRA. He was a conservative hardliner and was Minister for Justice and External Affairs.



house, *An Gum*.<sup>16</sup> He tried to improve conditions in the Gaeltacht areas, which he saw as the repository of Irish language and culture. He encouraged employment initiatives and introduced housing grants and other measures to benefit the Gaeltacht. If independence was to have any real meaning, Blythe believed, it would have to be within a Gaelic cultural framework.

Blythe lost his *Dail* seat in the election of 1933, though in the following year he was to take up a seat in the Senate, a position he held until that body was abolished by the Fianna Fail government in 1936. However, Blythe had found a new cause; the Army Comrades Association. In fact it was Blythe who suggested that the colour of the shirt be St Patrick's blue.<sup>17</sup> The blue shirt made its first appearance at the Kilkenny County Convention of the A.C.A. on 5 April 1933 and a week later Blythe was photographed in uniform at an A.C.A. at-home.<sup>18</sup> *The United Irishman*, began to produce a weekly column on A.C.A. activities written by 'Onlooker,' who Manning suggests may have been Blythe.<sup>19</sup> It was Blythe and Michael Tierney who encouraged O'Duffy to enter politics as head of the A.C.A after his dismissal from his post as Commissioner of Police. Blythe had been advocating the merger of the A.C.A and Cumann na nGaedheal since the end of 1932 in order to attract more young people, and to alleviate his party's chronic organizational problems.<sup>20</sup>

Blythe and O'Duffy were often to be seen on the same platform at party rallies as Blythe quickly became a leading figure in the Blueshirt movement, and he began to move in a more authoritarian direction. He was especially strident in his demands for an end to partition. At a rally in Tipperary in June 1934 he said:

---

<sup>16</sup> O'Gadhra, N., *Earnan de Blaghd*.

<sup>17</sup> Cronin, M., *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* (Dublin 1997), p. 47.

<sup>18</sup> Manning, M., *The Blueshirts* (Dublin, 1987), p. 57.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p. 57.

<sup>20</sup> Regan, J.M., *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936*, p. 339.

“The first great national task that lies before us is to secure that the whole of Ireland shall be one State under one Government, that Government representative of the Irish people and responsible to them alone.”<sup>21</sup>

Blythe was always keen on the theatre and with drama. He had links, via the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, with the poet and fascist sympathisers W.B. Yeats and Walter Starkie.<sup>22</sup> He was a firm supporter of corporatism, deriving his ideas from men like Tierney and Hogan and converting them into practical policies for Fine Gael and the Blueshirts. With the creation of Fine Gael, Blythe had been one of the six men nominated by William Cosgrave to sit on the new party’s 18-man Executive Committee. Blythe promoted corporatist ideas and saw a key role for the Blueshirts in the corporate state, supporting the National Army and Civic Guard,<sup>23</sup> an idea that was taken up with enthusiasm by O’Duffy. He portrayed the Blueshirts as the successors to the Irish Volunteers.<sup>24</sup>

O’Duffy resigned in late 1934 as President of Fine Gael, but in the Blueshirt split which followed Blythe stayed loyal to the Fine Gael faction now led by Ned Cronin. Blythe had become increasingly disillusioned with O’Duffy as a politician and had ambitions of his own.<sup>25</sup> O’Duffy was furious and declared: “Mr Ernest Blythe has been a traitor to me.”<sup>26</sup>

With the winding up of the Blueshirt movement over the next two years by Fine Gael, and his departure from the political scene with the end of the Senate in 1936, Blythe concentrated more on his work at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, where he became a Director, and on writing and broadcasting in Irish. He returned to politics in

---

<sup>21</sup> Blythe speaking on 17 June 1934 in Tipperary, as quoted in *The Irish Press*, 18 June 1934.

<sup>22</sup> Professor Walter Starkie of Trinity College, Dublin was part of the *Centre International d’Etudes sur la Fascisme* based in Lausanne. He was an editor of its journal which published articles in praise of fascism. He was a director of the Abbey Theatre, like Blythe

<sup>23</sup> Regan, J.M., *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-36*, p. 353.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p.358.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* p.369.

<sup>26</sup> Manning, M., *The Blueshirts* p. 167, quoting O’Duffy.

the forties with his involvement with Ailtiri na hAiseirighe, a corporatist political party that advocated an Irish-speaking, authoritarian republic, that would act to preserve Irish language and culture within the framework of a strong state (see Chapter 6). He left politics after this but continued to write, largely in Irish. He died in 1975.



## APPENDIX TWELVE

### THE NATIONAL AND POLITICAL POLICY OF THE NATIONAL GUARD

“To promote the reunion of Ireland.

“To oppose Communism and alien control and influence in national affairs and to uphold Christian principles in every sphere of public life.

“To promote and maintain public order.

“To make organized and disciplined public service a permanent and accepted feature of our political life and to lead the youth of Ireland in a movement of constructive national action.

“To promote the formation of co-ordinated national organizations of employers and employed, which, with the aid of judicial tribunals, will effectively prevent strikes and lockouts and harmoniously compose industrial differences.

“To co-operate with the official agencies of the state for the solution of such pressing problems as the provision of useful and economic public employment for those whom public enterprise cannot absorb.

“To secure the creation of a representative national statutory organization of farmers, with rights and status to secure the safeguarding of agricultural interests, in all revisions of agricultural and political policy.

“To expose and prevent corruption and victimization in national and local administration.

“To awaken throughout the country a spirit of combination, zeal and patriotic realism which will put the state in a position to serve the people efficiently in the political and economic spheres.”