

The Irish Nation and Majority Rule

(I)

To-day we publish the first of a series of three Articles by Miss Dorothy Macardle recalling an aspect of our recent history.

THE majority," it has been said, "is always wrong." That is a grand saying, and balm to the hearts of rejected prophets, would-be dictators and defeated minorities alike. But wise and witty as the saying is, it does not solve the problem of government. It offers no alternative to the system of Majority Rule.

Galling as the enlightened few find it, the fact remains that, where democratic principles are accepted, they may appeal, expound and persuade; they must not try by force to impose their way.

And rejection of democratic principles can only lead to anarchy or rule by force. No system, at the same time democratic and orderly, has yet been devised except that of the Majority Rule.

The Difficulties.

It has its difficulties. The system of Parliamentary Opposition, which is its governmental embodiment, wastes time and energy, just as committee work does. The general franchise invites every human stupidity to assert itself. Though the ballot may prevent the few from tyrannising over the many, it permits the demagogue to deceive and mislead. It may fail to protect the rights of the minority. It gives undue power to the Press. There are peoples who have won Constitutions, replaced tyrants by parliaments, achieved democratic franchise, by incalculable effort and sacrifice, and then have abandoned it all, and submitted to dictatorship. The difficulties proved too strong for their strength; or they were temperamentally unsuited for democratic institutions, perhaps.

Is the Irish Nation destined to go that way? Are we temperamentally unsuited for the system of parliamentary government, as General O'Duffy would have us believe?

The Principle Asserted.

It is agreed that our temperament is highly individualist, so that neither obedience nor solidarity is easy to us for long; and experience of democratic institutions is not inherited or traditional with us. For, although England professes the doctrines of democracy—"government by consent of the governed" and "Majority Rule"—never, in all the centuries of her domination of Ireland, did she permit them to operate here.

In 1918 we asserted that principle for ourselves. The English fought savagely to frustrate its application, then cunningly to destroy its effect. They succeeded, in spite of President de Valéra's warning to the people, in obtaining the appearance of a democratic sanction in Ireland for the British Crown.

By the "Black and Tan" Terror and threats of its renewal they induced a large section of our people—at one time a majority—to vote for a Treaty involving an oath of fealty to the English King.

A majority has now abolished that oath, asserting the democratic principle once again.

Revolutionary Situations.

Ireland's position has been remarkable in history because of the centuries during which democratic institutions were denied to the people, generations in which a revolutionary situation was the only one that patriotic men and women found it possible to maintain.

Such was the situation in 1916, when Ireland was governed by British Coercion Acts; and in 1922, when the Pro-Treaty Party enforced its supremacy by bombardment and civil war; and in 1923, when election rooms were raided, speakers and writers arrested, and hundreds of Republican organisers and thousands of Republican voters were held in the jails.

Because situations calling for Revolutionary action have been so frequent in Irish history, and because our patriots have been Revolutionists more often than not, the notion exists—and not only among our enemies—that the Irish temperament is anti-democratic and that there is some incompatibility

between Irish Republicanism and the principle of Majority Rule.

A brief survey of the efforts of our own time prove that the contrary is the truth. Despite our inborn individualism, despite centuries of disfranchisement, despite the necessity for Revolution which almost every generation has felt, the Irish people have shown a most steadfast regard for this rule of order whenever it could be fairly applied.

The Republican movement in Ireland has been remarkable among historic struggles for Independence on this account: the profound respect paid by its leaders to the principle of democracy and the scrupulous care shown to obey and justly apply, wherever possible, the system of Majority Rule.

Democratic Action.

A minority spoke for the nation in 1916. A few hundred men and women challenged a foreign government in the name of the whole Race. That was Revolution. But no sooner were the survivors freed from prison than, accepting and relying upon the principle of democracy, they asked the Nation to endorse their action at the polling booths.

Eamon de Valéra was among those who were given majorities on that issue at a by-election in 1917.

In 1918 Sinn Féin asked the whole Nation at a general election to approve the Rising and give its candidates a mandate to ratify the Proclamation of Easter Week. The Nation gave Sinn Féin a majority of seventy-three per cent.

It was by virtue of the principle of Majority Rule that Dail Eireann, the Government of the Republic, functioned, and the Republican Army fought under the control of the Minister for Defence. It was in the name of that principle that the Peace Conference in Paris was asked to receive the delegates from the Dail, that Mr. de Valéra was welcomed in America as President of the Republic of Ireland, and that the United States Government was requested by him to recognise that Republic as a Sovereign State.

"When the people of a nation have proved beyond question their desire for an independent government of their own by the civilised as well as decisive test of the ballot; when they have, with scrupulous regard to propriety in method, taken all the measures necessary to establish such a government"

Such was the preamble to his official "claim" to the President of the United States.

Respect for the fair working of this rule—for the preservation of the rights of Minorities under it—made President de Valéra welcome the introduction of the system of Proportional Representation, although the purpose of the British in applying it to Ireland was to increase the Unionist vote. At a public Ard Fheis held in April, 1919, he said:

(II)

In this article Miss Dorothy Macardle deals with the period from the vote on the "Treaty" to the attack on the Four Courts in 1922.

"Whether it benefited us or not, I would be in favour of the principle, because it is founded on justice. We know the object for which it is designed. It is a crooked object. Let us meet it in a straight way."

Register Revision.

It was concern for the fair working of the ballot which caused the President and the Republican Ministry to insist upon a revision of the out-of-date Electoral Register in November, 1921.

Within Dáil Éireann, also, that order of Majority Rule was rigidly observed, and in the Cabinet and the Committees of the Dáil. Cathal Brugha, uncompromising spirit though he was, sharp as were his differences with Michael Collins, and strong as was his influence with the Army, never for one moment attempted to use force against the majority vote.

Opposition to the Treaty.

It was by virtue of Majority Rule that President de Valera held office when he agreed to a truce and negotiated with Mr. Lloyd George. In the message to the Irish people in which he rejected the Articles of Agreement it was to that principle of order that he appealed. He wrote, on December 8, 1921:

"There is a definite constitutional way of resolving our political differences—let us not depart from it, and let the conduct of the Cabinet in this matter be an example to the whole nation."

That constitutional way—"democratic way" might have been a more accurate term for it—was applied in the Dáil. When he was defeated by two votes in Dáil Éireann President de Valera resigned.

It was a non-violent opposition—an opposition working in accordance with democratic principles, that Mr. de Valera led against the Treaty until June 28, 1922.

DOROTHY MACARDLE.

THE signing of the Articles of Agreement in London in December 1921 created in Ireland a situation pregnant with the menace of war. There was, in theory, a constitutional way of settling the question of acceptance or rejection, but its application was difficult in the extreme. Indeed, the obstacles to a democratic solution seemed almost insuperable.

The matter could not be disposed of by a vote of Dáil Éireann: it was *ultra vires* for the Dáil to vote the surrender of the Republic it had been elected to defend. The Dáil could approve and recommend the proposed Treaty, no more, and it did this by a majority of only seven votes; not on its merits, however, as the pro-Treaty speeches showed, but as an alternative to a renewal of England's terrorist regime. No power other than the people had the right to abolish the State which the people had set up and had confirmed by their votes.

Revision of Register.

An appeal to the Electorate on the whole issue was clearly necessary. But the machinery for an Election was not in order; the revision of the Register decreed by the Dáil in November had not been carried out and the present Register was estimated to be more than one-sixth in error; in particular, the names of young men and women entitled to vote had not been included—young people who had been the strength of the national movement and had a right to express their wish as to its outcome.

Further, the proposed Treaty was a document drawn up with "meticulous ambiguity," capable of interpretations so various that constitutional lawyers have not found agreement over some of its clauses yet. Its advocates were assuring the people that it involved no oath and no partition and that the Constitution which would be established under it would be a Republican Constitution—would give "the Republic in all but name." That Constitution could not be completed and published for a considerable time. If the people voted before it had been published and interpreted they would vote in confusion and ignorance. Many of them would vote, moreover, in panic; for pro-Treaty speakers were luridly expatiating on the English threat of "immediate and terrible war."

Again, the "Provisional Government" set up by the Articles of Agreement, had every opportunity of prejudicing the issue by appointing supporters of the Treaty to positions of influence; this was being done rapidly, especially in the Army; and Arthur Griffith, although he had taken office as head of the Republican Cabinet, seemed to be conniving at it.

A Lasting Verdict.

These facts combined to make it improbable that an immediate appeal to the Electorate would give a representative or lasting verdict on the issues at stake. Quite apart from all these was the belief, expressed with passionate conviction by a great many Republicans, that the question of the Nation's Independence was not one which could be disposed of by the vote, since an inalienable right was involved. No majority, these maintained, would be justified in destroying the Republic and setting up the barrier of an oath to the English King which would, in effect, disfranchise Republicans. If this were attempted, the minority would have the right to resist in arms. Thus the democratic principle seemed divided against itself. The dilemma was genuine and acute.

Mr. de Valera did not despair of securing a solution by peaceful means. He sought, during these critical months, to provide for an ultimate democratic and peaceful solution of the dispute, while safeguarding the

nation from a blind and precipitate surrender of its hard-won position and indefeasible rights.

His object was to prepare for an appeal to the electorate, but under conditions which would give more hope of a fair and considered verdict.

Agreement.

With this object he secured the agreement with Arthur Griffith, which was unanimously accepted, in February, by the Ard Fheis of Sinn Féin: an agreement that no election should be held until the proposed Constitution had been submitted to the people.

Delays over the Constitution, refusals to revise the Register, increasing abrogation of the Republican position, and increasing restiveness in the Republican section of the I.R.A., made the situation very dangerous. Republican Volunteers withdrew their allegiance from the Dáil, placed themselves under the control of their own Executive, occupied the Four Courts, and carried out armed action from time to time.

(III)

In this third Article
Miss Dorothy Macardle
concludes her survey
of our recent history.

The Conference held in the Mansion House under the auspices of

the Archbishop of Dublin, in April, broke down. On May 2nd, after it had failed, Mr. de Valera issued a statement, in which he said—

"For my part, I see clearly that unless the question of the 'Treaty' be held in abeyance indefinitely, it must be decided by force or by reference to the people at some stage. In the interests of peace I proposed to Mr. Griffith that it be referred to the people, but not until at least six months had elapsed."

"For the intervening period arrangements on the line of the Labour proposals could be made; the Army united under a single command; Dáil Eireann could be kept in session; the proposed Constitution could be introduced, adult suffrage and other necessary legislation enacted, and full preparation made for a peaceful election."

"Time would be secured for the present passions to subside, for personalities to disappear, and the fundamental differences between the two sides to be appreciated—time during which Ireland's reputation could be vindicated, the work of national

reconstruction begun, and normal conditions restored."

"I promised that if Mr. Griffith agreed I would use whatever influence I possessed with the Republican Party and with the Army to win acceptance for the proposal, not indeed as a principle of right and justice, but as a principle of peace and order. Mr. Griffith refused."

The Panel Election.

There followed the agreement known as "the Collins-de Valera Pact," which was approved by Sinn Féin and by the Republican Army, and was made a decree of Dáil Eireann: a Pact for an agreed election at which the Treaty should not be an issue, with a panel of candidates selected by the two Parties, to be voted for by members of both, for a Dáil which would carry on the government of the country until a final appeal to the people could be made.

The Pact was broken by the Pro-Treaty Party. The Constitution was published, but not until the morning of polling day. Republicans, loyal to the Pact, gave votes to their opponents, only to find that Treaty supporters had voted for outside candidates, and then to find the result of the election interpreted as a verdict for the Treaty, and a few weeks later, as a mandate for war against the Republicans.

On June 28th Pro-Treaty leaders borrowed artillery from the British and bombarded the Four Courts. All hope of a constitutional solution fell with those shattered walls. The question had been taken out of the field of democratic action and put to the arbitration of war. It was then that Mr. de Valera joined his old battalion of the I.R.A.

DOROTHY MACARDLE.

"THE will of the people"
was the phrase reiterated by the Pro-Treaty Party as their justification for the war which they were waging against Republicans. Nevertheless, few things can be more certain than that the orders for that war came from England and not from the Irish people. Sir Neville Macready's book told a story which was no surprise to Republicans.

Indeed, no one in Ireland can have been deceived by the attempt to interpret the result of the Pact Election as a mandate for Civil War. It was a manifest demand for peace.

A Fait Accompli.

By the attack on the Four Courts, the subsequent refusal to summon Dáil Eireann, and the suppression of the Republican Courts, the Pro-Treaty Party had sought to cut the Gordian Knot of their problem and present the nation with the Treaty as a fait accompli.

The I.R.A. tried to defend the Republic in arms; a great number of the Republican Deputies were soon on active service; those who could be captured were imprisoned. The Provisional Parliament was set up, meanwhile, in Dublin and the Pro-Treaty Party governed practically without an opposition since the small Labour group and few Independent Deputies were helpless to do more than protest.

The Treaty-Constitution was made law and the oath to the King of England imposed, so that even if it should become otherwise possible for Republican Deputies to take their seats, they would be debarred by this conscience-test.

Regulations were passed giving extraordinary powers to the Pro-Treaty forces. Gaols and detention camps were filled with Republican prisoners of whom seventy-seven were executed.

Military Defeat.

The Pro-Treaty forces, having the support of the British Empire, had inexhaustible resources in reserve, as Mr. Winston Churchill constantly pointed out. They had, furthermore, control of barracks and jails, in which their prisoners could be detained; and in spite of that fact, they did not scruple to execute prisoners. The Republican Army, on the other hand, would not kill prisoners and had no means of detaining them, with the result that men captured by them were released, to reveal the whereabouts of their captors and to fight against them again. It was an unequal combat, and by the spring of 1923 the issue was no longer in doubt. The I.R.A. and its resources were exhausted; the Republic was faced with military defeat.

In March, Mr. de Valera and the Republican Army Council met secretly in the Comeragh Mountains to decide how the hopeless war might be brought to an end with least injury to the cause. Mr. de Valera recognised the fact that the Republic had been, for the time being, destroyed by armed force.

But he had never ceased to believe that, eventually, a solution of the question of the Treaty would be found; and he believed that there was enough patriotic feeling among the supporters of the Treaty, and enough regard for democratic principles among Republicans, to make it possible to construct a *modus vivendi*, find some means of carrying on life and government in the country meanwhile.

He drafted, as a basis for negotiation, a set of six principles which he hoped might be accepted by both sides. Liam Lynch was killed in April, the Army Council met in Poulacappal in Tipperary to complete its deliberations. Mr. de Valera was authorised to negotiate on the basis of his proposals.

The Proclamation.

On April 27, a Proclamation was issued which began:

"The Government of the Republic, anxious to contribute its share to the movement for peace, and to found it on principles that will give governmental stability and otherwise prove of value to the nation, hereby proclaims its readiness to negotiate an immediate cessation of hostilities."

A brief statement of the six principles followed.

At the same time a "Cease Fire" order was issued to the I.R.A.

Terms of settlement in accordance with these proposals were drawn up by Mr. de Valera and, Senators Douglas and Jameson acting as intermediaries, were sent to Mr. Cosgrave on May 7th.

They were as follows:—

Proposed Terms of Settlement—Draft, May 7, 1923.

We are agreed:

1.—That the sovereign rights of this nation are inalienable and inalienable.

2.—That all legitimate governmental authority in Ireland, legislative, executive, and judicial, is derived exclusively from the people of Ireland.

3.—(a) That as a practical rule of order and democratic government, political issues shall be decided by the majority vote of the duly elected representatives of the people, sub-

ject always to the right of referendum and appeal directly to the people, and to an understanding that 1 and 2 are fundamental.

(b) That, as a corollary, the people

are entitled to have all lethal weapons within the country in the effective custody or control of the Executive Government, responsible to the people through their representatives.

4.—That no citizen who subscribes to the foregoing can be justly excluded by any political oath, test, or other device from his or her share in determining national policy, or from the Councils and Parliament of the nation.

5.—That freedom to express political or economic opinions, or to advocate political or economic programmes, freedom to assemble in public meeting, and freedom for the Press are rights that must be guaranteed.

In order to give practical effect to foregoing—in the present circumstances and as a condition of the immediate restoration of peace—we are agreed further:

(a) That a General Election shall be held not later than September 15 of this year.

(b) That a further opportunity shall be afforded, as soon as possible, for the hearing of any claims and objections to the register now being revised, and that a Commission representative of all parties shall be appointed to guarantee fair play in all election arrangements.

(c) That all censorship of the mails and of the Press shall be abolished; that the Press shall be requested by the undersigned, jointly, to guarantee a fair proportion of space for the advocacy of the Republican programme; and that adequate protection shall be guaranteed to Republican printers and newspapers.

(d) That, pending the election effective control of lethal weapons shall be secured by

i. The strict supervision and control of all arms in the F.S. forces and their auxiliaries.

ii. Assigning to the Republican forces at least one suitable building in each province, to be used by them as barracks and arsenals, where Republican arms shall be stored, sealed up, and defended by a specially pledged Republican guard—these arms to be disposed of after the elections by reissue to their present holders, or in such other manner as may secure the consent of the Government then elected.

(e) That within twenty-one days from the date on which the General Election is held, the newly-elected representatives shall assemble, and all powers and machinery of Government shall then be handed over without question to the Executive chosen by the majority of the assembly.

(f) That the funds of the Republic, subscribed in the U.S. and elsewhere, and at present sealed up by injunction, shall be made available immediately for peaceful efforts in support of the Republican cause, and that all property of the Republican Party seized by the F.S. forces shall be restored.

(g) That in awarding compensation for losses sustained by individuals during the direct conflict with England there shall be no discrimination against those who in the present conflict have been supporters of the Republic.

(h) That immediately on the signing of this agreement, peace and a general amnesty shall be proclaimed, and when it is announced on behalf of the Republican authorities that (ii), paragraph (d) has been complied with, all political prisoners of war shall be released, and further military or civil action shall not be taken or lie against any person who has supported the Republican cause in this conflict.

Signed in acceptance of the foregoing this, the day of May, 1923."

Mr. Cosgrave refused to discuss peace on this basis. He objected to paragraph four. He could not, he stated, negotiate with England with regard to the oath.

The terms proposed were communicated by the Army Council to Volunteers in the prisons and detention camps, and met with no opposition from them. The Labour Party found the proposals, in the main, acceptable.

Oath to Go.

Mr. Thomas Johnson said in the Dáil that "these six principles which were enunciated could be accepted, and were, as a matter of fact, accepted by the people generally, who had supported the movement for freedom in Ireland." He thought that when minor items were eliminated they were left with two, "the

question of the disposal of arms and the question of the oath."

Mr. Gavin Duffy, referring to the oath, said: "If one thing is more certain, politically, than any other, it is that the oath clause has got to go. There is no enthusiasm for it in the Dáil. There is a very general feeling against it, and there is a very general feeling against it outside.

It has to go for two reasons, the first of which is that this country cannot afford to have driven into the wilderness of unconstitutional opposition those who are entitled, and ought to be encouraged, to constitutional opposition.

It has to go, secondly, because the clause as it stands goes a good deal beyond what we pledged ourselves to in the Treaty."

After Mr. Cosgrave's rejection of the Peace offer, the Republican leaders issued an order to the I.R.A. to dump their arms. It was loyally obeyed. The Volunteers remained defenceless.

Military action against them continued, however, with rounding-up, arrests, imprisonment of men and women, raids on houses and offices. In August, during the General Election campaign, over twelve thousand Republicans, including nearly all the experienced organisers, were in jail; speakers were arrested; Mr. de Valera was seized from his platform at Ennis and was imprisoned for nearly a year.

Barrier Removed.

He came out faced with the task of striving to re-unite a people divided by civil war; to restore to a place in the national life a party which had suffered a military defeat; to reclaim for at least one part of a partitioned Ireland stable political conditions and the possibility of settling its differences by peaceful means. To all this many barriers remained, and one that dominated all the rest—the barrier of the Oath.

That barrier has now been removed.

The Six Counties are beyond our help in this matter still, but for twenty-six counties this much has been gained: there are no groups or individuals now who are not free to submit themselves and their policies to the electorate, and every one elected will be free, without oath or test, to take his or her seat in the Dáil.

Of no previous election in all Irish history has so much been true.

The conditions offered and asked for by the Republican Party at the end of the Civil War have, in the main, been secured.

In a Democratic Way.

Given these conditions, is it obligatory upon us now to accept majority rule, recognise the existing Government, refrain from violent action, and strive to resolve our political differences in a democratic way? It is a question that must be answered, and we cannot have the answer both ways. To all who take pride in the justice of the Irish cause, and the devotion to principle shown all through our struggle, and who desire peace, happiness and progress for the Irish people, the answer is simple and clear.

The Irish Nation and Majority Rule

Miss Mary Mac Swiney has sent us the following article dealing with the series on Majority Rule recently published

MISS DOROTHY MACARDLE has written three articles in THE IRISH PRESS with the title "The Irish Nation and Majority Rule." I ask leave to reply with one, on an aspect of the same subject which Miss Macardle has not touched.

Let it be granted that majority rule is a rule of order, which must prevail in the domestic concerns of a nation, if government of the people, for the people, by the people, is not to perish from the earth.

It is not essential, however, that democratic government should continue to express itself in the form hitherto familiar to us—Party Government. Proportional Representation has already to a large extent broken up that system, and bids fair to destroy it. It is not unlikely that democratic government will find its best expression, in the future, in some form of vocational councils, which would preserve the essentials of majority rule, while minimising the dangers of mob caprice, and that self-assertion of human stupidity, which Miss Macardle deprecates as one of its difficulties.

That solution, however, is not of immediate concern, and would be a matter for consideration only when Ireland's independence is no longer in question. Once the national position is secure, and the Republic of Ireland enjoys the international recognition to which it is entitled, the innate common sense and sound democracy of the Irish people—a Gaelic inheritance, which centuries of injustice have been powerless to destroy—will speedily find the form of democratic government, and its concomitant, majority rule, which will give the maximum of advantage to the whole people of Ireland. Until the Republic is recognised, at home and abroad, until the Treaty of surrender is repudiated, not in one clause or in ten, but from the first line to the last, such pleadings for majority rule are futile and irrelevant.

Majority rule has its limitations, and unless these are recognised, and scrupulously acknowledged, chaos, not order, will result.

A majority may not infringe on fundamental individual or national rights. The majority has no power over conscience, nor may it lawfully be used to compel subservience to cowardice or cupidity. So confused are the minds of the majority in this country, by attempts to impose the acceptance of the line of least resistance as an almost divine decree, that it is not only salutary, but imperative that the issue should be made clear.

A Small Group.

Let us take first a case about which agreement would be pretty general. There is a small group in Ireland at present calling itself a "Communist Party." One of its aims—according to its chief spokesman—is the complete secularisation of education—in other words, no religion is to be taught to children in the schools. Probably the majority of this small group do not understand what is involved in that tenet, and would not accept it if they did. But for argument's sake, let us suppose that this group got the support of the majority of the people of Ireland for that particular plan. If a majority government decreed Godless education should the minority accept and obey the law made by such "duly elected representatives of the majority of the people?" Some spineless Catholics might, but an intelligent and courageous minority certainly would not. They would continually, consistently, and openly disobey that law, and refuse to recognise the government guilty of making it. The supine would seek to make a virtue of cowardice by misnaming it patience, or resignation, but, a misnomer it would be.

Now the freedom of our nation is an inalienable right, as is religious freedom. No generation may lawfully surrender that right—which it holds only in trust—nor is the surrender of the independence of any country a question which may be validly submitted to an electorate.

That statement would be accepted as axiomatic in any civilised country in the world—outside Ireland. But it is as true here as elsewhere, in spite of the muddled mentality and inferiority complex which have resulted from generations of alien injustice, often tolerated, when it should have been relentlessly resisted.

In every generation Irishmen have fought and died for freedom. The course of history, at home and abroad, since the Battle of Kinsale, made it inevitable that their aspirations for independence should tend towards a Republican form of government. The men of 1798, of 1848, of 1867, of 1916, fought for the Republic of Ireland. That Republic was established in 1919. The men of 1922 fought for its maintenance against traitors. The men of to-day stand, and will fight again, if

necessary, for the same cause. Should the majority persist in maintaining the Treaty position, that is, the authority of the King of England in Ireland—camouflage it as they may—then, sooner or later the clash must come, and it is not the loyal minority who will be in the wrong.

British Authority.

Republicans in resisting the Treaty of surrender, and in refusing to acknowledge any authority derived from England, are opposing the same British authority which sent us the Yeos and the Black and Tans; which connived at the murder of Tomás Mac Curtáin, and the horror of Ballyseedy. That renegade Irishmen were found to act as tools for Westminster "with an economy of English lives," does not alter the fact that the maintenance of British authority is still the cause of the persecution of those loyal Irish citizens, who will not accept that alien authority. If to-day the King of England is more effectively camouflaged; if jobs and pensions, the removal of tests and professions of Republicanism—though the Treaty is still maintained—if these have replaced Ballyseedy and Countess Bridge, "damn good bargains" and "bonds of honour" the "Free" State is none the less a British institution, forcibly imposed, with the Partition of our country, on the people of Ireland, and its acceptance by Republicans would be as much a denial of the fundamentals of National Sovereignty to-day, as it would have been in 1922.

That a majority of the people desiring a Republic, may be

fooled by the camouflage would not justify the surrender of the loyal uncompromising minority, who stand for a fundamental right which is inalienable.

At the end of her third article, Miss Macardle asks:—

"Given these conditions," i.e., the removal of tests, etc., "is it obligatory upon us now to accept majority rule, recognise the existing government, refrain from violent action, and strive to resolve our political differences in a democratic way?"

We cannot "have the answer both ways," she tells us, and she assures us that the answer is simple and clear. But she does not give it. Before commenting on her query I shall put her another. Suppose a majority were found so foolish as to give England's latter-day blue heroes a majority to maintain the authority of the King of England and "stop talking about a Republic" would Miss Macardle expect us to obey those blue-shirted gentlemen who are making such fools of themselves? If so, she is not the same Dorothy Macardle I once knew.

Our "differences" are national, not political, and imposed from outside. They can only be resolved by the united repudiation of every vestige of alien authority.

It is never obligatory to accept the decision of the majority if the majority is wrong—if it infringes a fundamental right. To submit to wrongful duress in certain cases is permissible, not obligatory—and because there has always been in

Ireland a loyal and fearless minority, who refused to submit, the cause of Ireland has never been lost. To yield to-day to Miss Macardle's arguments, would be to give to British authority in Ireland that democratic sanction against which Mr. de Valera himself warned the nation in 1922. Moreover, in the Spring of that year, Mr. de Valera made a speech, full of wisdom, on the dangers of the acceptance of the Treaty of surrender. He has been undeservedly maligned by the enemies of the Republic for that speech, and accused of inciting to civil war, when he was merely pleading for the good sense and statesmanship which would have made war impossible. The arguments he used in 1922 apply equally in 1933, even though he now stands for the acceptance of the "Treaty." The responsibility for the war of 1922-23 rests on those who took English guns to fight their own countrymen on England's behalf.

If again, force has to be used for the restoration of the powers of the established Republic, the responsibility will rest on those who would persuade the people of Ireland that it is obligatory on the loyal to acknowledge the authority of the King of England in our country, because the majority, who for four glorious years stood firm for freedom, failed, when some of their leaders failed and committed treason and, as is the way with majorities, took what seemed the easier way. It has not proved either easy or successful. Will the majority now sanction a further persecution of Republicans, or will they take the brave path and stand with us once more?

"If the whole nation stand for freedom we are happy; we shall be grandly victorious. If only a few are faithful found, they must be the more steadfast for being but a few." Loyal Republicans are still steadfast, but they are no longer a few; they are gradually winning back the strength of the nation. Will the leaders of the majority to-day—those who stood, until 1926, loyally with us against the majority of England's servants—learn the lesson of the last twelve years? They cannot have it both ways; they must be with the Republic, or against it. Let them take their stand once more on the rock of the Republic, then, the whole nation will be "happy, and grandly victorious."

MAIRE NIC SHUIBHNE.

Irish Press
November 7th - 1923

THE IRISH NATION AND MAJORITY RULE

To the Editor, THE IRISH PRESS.

Dear Sir,—May I attempt to narrow down Miss MacSwiney's arguments against majority rule to the points on which there is real disagreement between her view and mine.

She insists that minorities, when their inalienable rights are invaded, are justified in resisting, even by force. On that point, surely, we are agreed. We are all agreed, too, in holding that a minority is not bound in principle to accept a majority's surrender of the nation's independence.

The differences between our views, then, are two: there is the old, familiar question as to what is the wisest and most patriotic course for "the faithful" to take after such a surrender has been made; and there is the immediate question as to whether the majority is or is not "accepting surrender" to-day.

If So—

The first question is difficult to settle because the case on neither side can be proved. Would a continuance of the Civil War in 1923 have brought victory to the I.R.A.? If so, Miss MacSwiney, who denounced the "cease fire" order, was right and the Army Council which gave that order was wrong. In 1926 would a continuance of the abstentionist policy have brought victory to Sinn Féin? If so, she was right in opposing the programme of Fianna Fáil. It would be wasted energy now to argue about these.

The immediate question is the second one: the situation to-day.

The fact is—we must have the mental courage to face it—that the Republic was defeated and the Treaty established under the Cosgrave régime. The concrete effects of the Treaty were imposed on us: Partition; the occupation of our Ports and the Constitution with its dictated clauses giving authority to the British Crown. Any effort to redeem the nation after that had to begin not at 1916 or 1921, unhappily, but where the Cosgrave Ministry left off.

What, then, does "faithfulness" mean? What but genuine and unrelenting efforts to extricate the nation from the meshes in which it had become involved? "Faithfulness" surely cannot be satisfied with a refusal to face the facts; an attempt to live as though the Republic still functioned; a child-like consistency in a game of make-believe?

Does it mean refusing to acknowledge any government, refusing, therefore, to pay taxes and living, or dying, in jail? Does it mean living in a state of "protest," refusing to co-operate with the majority in any effort good or bad, and carrying out an act of law-breaking to register the protest from time to time? All these seem to me barren and wasteful ways of dealing with the problems of to-day. If the Oath closed all other ways to us and forced us into that sterile desert of protest, there was the more need for the Oath to be abolished and there is the more cause for rejoicing now that it is gone.

English Influence Undermined.

The Oath has been removed now, and it has been removed by the majority. The majority has decreed that never again shall our Representatives be required to declare

acceptance of the Treaty. The majority has attacked and undermined England's influence in the Privy Council, the Senate, the Veto, the Governor-Generalship as well as in the matters of the Annuities and the Oath. Are these the acts of a Party bent on making it "obligatory on the loyal to acknowledge the King of England"? Are these the acts of a government resolved to "enforce the Treaty" or "accepting surrender"?

Miss MacSwiney's view of things makes her see no more in these steps than quibbling pieces of "camouflage" or bribery to Republicans. On the alleged ground that the majority is "accepting surrender" she preaches non-co-operation with its efforts, refusal to support the Government, non-recognition, still, of majority rule.

That is where the difference between us lies; and I am thankful that I do not share Miss MacSwiney's unhappy views.

The Republic could not have been established in 1918 without the majority vote. Without a majority it will not be restored. Therefore I rejoice to see Fianna Fáil supported by a majority which is advancing, however slowly, in the right direction again.

I rejoice still more to see the Oath which barred so many Republicans from helping in this great effort removed. If the majority could be strengthened, now, in numbers and in courage, by the support of all Republicans, what might not be achieved?

The obstruction and hampering of this effort, and the refusal to recognise majority rule, need, at this moment, much justification—more, I think, than can be found to exist.

DOROTHY MACARDLE.

J. Press.

17th Nov 1933

READERS' VIEWS

THE IRISH NATION AND MAJORITY RULE

To the Editor, THE IRISH PRESS.

SIR,—Whether Miss Macardle is justified in her intense thankfulness that she does not share my "unhappy" views is a matter which I shall let your readers judge. On the whole, it will probably be agreed that the real peace of soul still rests, as Pearse found, with those who have not learned to compromise. For the rest:

The majority of those who elected the Fianna Fáil Government did so, not to maintain the Treaty position, but "to smash it up." The deterioration resulting from the compromise shows itself chiefly in this—that the leaders of Fianna Fáil are no longer satisfied with justifying their action in entering the "Free" State Parliament as "a means to restore the Republic," but are expending their energy in justifying that institution itself—the fruitful source of so much shame and sorrow and suffering in our country—as the "People's Government."

I do not deny that the removal of the Oath of Allegiance has a value; that the absence of Viceregal pomp is a good thing. But I fear that the dangers of these advantages are becoming greater than the benefits, owing to the smoke screen of "Freedom," by which it is sought to hide the humiliating facts. The symbol is gone, but the reality remains. It is not the King of England's garden parties that mattered, so much as his name appended to the laws which govern our country, North and South. Since the Fianna Fáil Government has accepted the Treaty position, it is no more the lawful Government of any part of Ireland than is Craigavon's. No government in Ireland is entitled to claim as lawful any authority exercised under a constitution of which the King of England is the acknowledged head.

THE FIANNA FAÍL ARD-FHEIS.

That the delegates of Fianna Fáil at their Ard-Fheis were not altogether happy was clear from several of their resolutions, notably their call for the release of the prisoners. The Fianna Fáil Government is as guilty in permitting the Galway men to be imprisoned for destroying a British propaganda film as was Cosgrave in countless other cases. A Republican Government would settle the matter without delay by passing a law forbidding the display of British propaganda anywhere in our country, and by depriving of citizen rights any person whatsoever who advocated the maintenance of the British connection. Imagine the German people tolerating a French propaganda film in their country!!!

I was at a Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis in 1925, when Nurse Maguire came in, having just completed a term of imprisonment under the Cosgrave regime for throwing a bottle of ink at the Prince of Wales in a British film. The whole Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis—including Mr. de Valera, probably Miss Macardle, certainly Father O'Kelly, who credits me with living in the seventh heaven, and many others who were present at the Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis a few days ago—all rose to their feet and cheered Miss Maguire for her plucky protest against British propaganda. No one then raised the cry of the sacredness of these British films from the point of view of "property." Now, what made Miss Maguire's action right, and the Galway men's action wrong? Were they not both protests against the same poisonous foreign influence? I am not asking Miss Macardle to answer this troublesome question. I leave it to the judgment of the public. The present Administration of 26 counties of Ireland wishes to be considered Republican. Surely their first duty should be to see that anti-Irish propaganda should not be displayed in Ireland.

The kernel of the whole matter is that the only lawful Government in Ireland is the Government of the Irish Republic, and that no majority will ever get the allegiance of the uncompromising Republicans to a government based on the Treaty of surrender. We long for unity of all who believe in the Republic—in the right of Ireland to be free, *outside* the British Empire; but that unity is possible on one basis only—the uncompromising repudiation of the Treaty of Surrender. We dare to be right, the majority notwithstanding.

MAIRE NÍ SHUIBHNE.

Corcaig, November 11, 1933.