

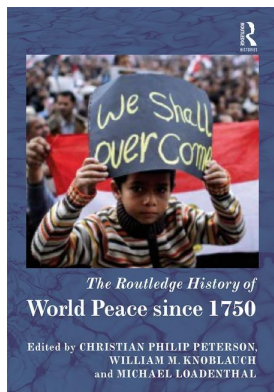
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NON-VIOLENCE IN IRELAND'S INDEPENDENCE

Patrick Van Inwegen

Ireland's independence represents a particularly striking example of how prominent violence is remembered and how underdeveloped non-violent history is within historical literature. This is particularly true in 2016, the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising—a violent nationalist rebellion that erupted in Dublin for a week during World War I (1914–1918). The commemorations of that event have become synonymous with Ireland's independence, even though the uprising failed. While violence's role in the struggle lives on in the historical record, non-violent action also played a crucial and underappreciated role in Ireland's independence. This alternative non-violent narrative—the focus of this chapter—reveals that much of Ireland's struggle for independence was won because of tactics advocated by non-violent activists. It was the boycotts, protests, petitions, noncooperation and mobilization of alternative governments that mobilized the political will to create an independent Ireland. What follows is a summary of non-violence in Irish history during the vital period of 1910 to 1923.

The revised story of Ireland's independence

The struggle for Irish independence is often portrayed as a series of rebellions undertaken by true Irish patriots.¹ In reality, a revised story of Ireland's independence shows that it came about through a long process of non-violent struggle as well as acts of parliament in London. Most current histories of Ireland's independence note that the struggle against foreign forces of occupation has been a common theme since at least 1000 CE, when the Irish king Brian Boru conquered other kings of Viking heritage; subsequent invasions by the Normans and the English led to new Irish rebellions. The long history of rebellion was, after 1000, largely unsuccessful and Ireland was gradually integrated into what became the United Kingdom of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

In this long lead up to independence, there were two key trends in Irish rebellion. First, the scope of Irish demands for autonomy grew. Initially, rebellions tended to be related to the expansion of rights for select groups, such as extending suffrage to Catholics or creating a more independent Irish Parliament. It was not until the 1790s that the demand for full independence and the cause of republicanism became a focal point of Irish uprisings. The 1798 rebellion by the first organized republican organization, the United Irishman, forced parliament to pass the Act of Union that created the United Kingdom in 1801. A second trend in this struggle was that the participants increasingly identified as ethnically Irish.

Indigenous Irish have long mixed with other interlopers to the island; however, the Irish, English, and Scots saw themselves as distinct. After the Reformation, Irish increasingly identified as Catholics with ethnic links to the Gaelic and Viking peoples, while those of English ancestry largely adhered to the Church of Ireland/England. The Scottish immigrants, located in the north of Ireland, tended to be Presbyterian and descended from Scottish Gaelic ancestors. In Ireland, as in their North American colonies, the British Crown largely excluded the indigenous population from most economic and political life. Over time, Irish Protestants adopted many Irish customs; in response, the English imposed restrictions on religion, public gatherings, speech (even speaking Gaelic), the playing of traditional musical instruments (the banned Irish harp became an icon of resistance), private property, involvement in foreign trade, and even owning horses of a certain value.² These restrictions aimed to keep Protestants loyal to England. It was not until 1829 that Catholics (then about 85 percent of the population in Ireland) could hold office or vote—although the fee for voting was more than most Irish could afford.³ The gradual expansion of suffrage throughout the UK allowed Irish Catholics to become politically active. That development, along with the growing nationalist elements of the Gaelic Revival, were brought to fruition in the Easter Rising of 1916, the last unsuccessful rebellion in which most of the participants were ethnically Irish.

Most histories of Irish Independence tend to echo popular conceptions of this long struggle. For example, in 1899 W.B. Yeats, the well-known Irish nationalist poet, said “We have now a literary movement, it is not very important; it will be followed by a political movement, that will not be very important; then must come a military movement, that will be important indeed.”⁴ Sean MacDermott, a leader of the Easter Rising, in 1914 echoed that sentiment when he argued that:

The Irish patriotic spirit will die forever unless a blood sacrifice is made in the next few years. The spark of nationality left is the result of the sacrifice of the Manchester Martyrs nearly half a century ago, and it will be necessary for some of us to offer ourselves as martyrs if nothing better can be done to preserve the Irish national spirit and hand it down unsullied to future generations . . . Life springs from death and from the graves of these patriot men and women spring living nations.⁵

Historian George Boyce went further, and argued that the Easter Rising came to be viewed “among the other venerable Irish insurrections—1798, 1848, 1867—as episodes to be admired [and] turned into political capital,” even if not necessarily replicated.⁶ In this way, most historians, when explaining Irish independence, connect the chain of rebellions to the Easter Rising in 1916 and Ireland’s eventual independence in 1923.

What this common narrative omits is the crucial role that non-violent action played in the precursor to revolution. In its pre-revolutionary period, the Irish utilized numerous non-violent actions, including mass rallies, boycotts, and the creation of an alternative government. For example, Henry Grattan, a member of the Irish Parliament, organized a mass rally on February 15, 1782 for greater independence from England. Specifically, he demanded that the Irish Parliament not be subject to review by the British Parliament in Westminster. As such, this act was “in brief, Ireland’s Declaration of Parliamentary Independence” and similar conventions were held in the other three Irish provinces.⁷ Each convention became a mass assembly where people demanded their rights. Just three months later, because of

these meetings, the Westminster Parliament repealed its oversight and allowed the Irish Parliament to make its own laws without prior consent. This is but one example of how non-violent action aided in Ireland's independence.

Daniel O'Connell, often called the "Great Liberator" because of his role in "emancipating" the Catholics of Ireland, continued Gratton's legacy of mass assemblies. A young lawyer in the early 1820s, O'Connell later became an icon of Catholic rights in Ireland for demanding better representation. O'Connell's rank was rare; consider that at the time, of "the 3,033 government jobs in Ireland, the seven million plus Catholic population held just 134."⁸ O'Connell sought to utilize non-violent means to correct these injustices. In the early 1800s he drew up an annual petition to the government demanding rights for Catholics, and by April 1823 he created the Catholic Association which "signaled the opening of a new, more aggressive campaign . . . for all manner of Catholic grievances."⁹ This innovative organizational strategy worked because it gained the support of parish priests who created a "Catholic rent" where members paid a penny per month. O'Connell realized that the Catholic Church could mobilize millions of participants in constitutional reform, and "by Christmas 1824 some £7,500 had been collected" to fund political agitation. The organization became so powerful that in 1825 Parliament outlawed the Catholic Association; in response, O'Connell established another organization, the New Catholic Association, which did basically the same thing.¹⁰ It was clear that the act of Parliament was meaningless.

O'Connell's organization worked with priests in the 1826 elections to encourage Catholics "to vote for his religion, rather than for his (Protestant) landlord" as was more typically the custom at the time. The result was that numerous landlords lost to Protestant, but pro-Catholic, candidates. O'Connell seized on this momentum and pushed Parliament even further by announcing his candidacy in a by-election in June of 1826, "even though if elected he would be unable to take his seat" because he was Catholic.¹¹ Parliament conceded and passed a bill allowing Catholics to serve as members of Parliament, what was then referred to as the emancipation of Catholics. As the historian R. F. Foster argues, "the real revolution in the 1820s was O'Connell's mobilization of mass politics."¹² In the span of only a few years, O'Connell had effectively mobilized millions of disenfranchised Irish to demand representation in Parliament.

In 1843, O'Connell set his sights on repealing the Act of Union so that Ireland could have its own parliament again. He resurrected the Catholic rent but also held what became known as Monster Meetings. These were

mass shows of strength by the Repeal movement . . . held at historic Irish sites—Tara where the ancient High Kings of Ireland had been crowned, Clontarf where Brian Boru had defeated the Danes in 1014—and attended by huge crowds, 800,000 in the case of the Tara meeting of August 1843, complete with banners, bands and speeches.¹³

A rally that "marched from Phibsborough in the north of Dublin, through the city center to Donnybrook, south of the city" was typical of the meetings:

On reaching Dublin Castle, they sang "God Save the Queen" to show their loyalty and then halted outside the old Parliament Building on College Green, where they gave 9 cheers for Repeal of the Union. Outside Trinity College they exchanged

taunts with Tory students, but were asked by their stewards not to be provoked . . . At his house on Merrion Square, Daniel O’Connell addressed the marchers and told them that after “500 years of unmatched persecution . . . England should give Ireland her rights peaceably and quietly, if not the Irish nation would wring it out of them as it had wrung Emancipation.”¹⁴

The non-violent character of these protests made it difficult for the British government to know how to respond.

[They] could not simply be repressed, like, for instance the republican insurrection of 1798 or the agrarian unrest of the 1830s. “The peaceable demeanour of the movement is one of the most alarming symptoms,” Lord Chancellor Edward Sudgeu wrote to Prime Minister Peel in May 1843.¹⁵

O’Connell’s September 1843 Monster Meeting scheduled for Clontarf “promised to bring up to 1 million people to the capital city in support of the Repeal of the Union.”¹⁶ Clontarf was

deliberately chosen to rouse memories of Brian Boru’s confrontation with the Norsemen in 1014 . . . This encounter, like so much else in Irish history, had . . . been incorporated into an inspirational tale of an insuppressible Irish nation constantly struggling against invaders and sustaining an indomitable cultural identity going back to Gaelic (and, implicitly, Catholic) roots.¹⁷

In response, the government sent two warships into Dublin Harbor, carrying around 3,000 British troops to halt the mass rally.¹⁸ In an effort to avoid bloodshed, O’Connell called off the rally but was still jailed for sedition; the repeal movement stagnated for another thirty years. When the Great Hunger (or Irish Potato Famine) struck in 1845, the mass exodus and starvation continued until 1852, greatly disrupting the independence movement.

After the trauma of the Great Hunger, non-violent resistance to English rule continued, especially with economic resistance in the form of boycotts. The word “boycott” comes from the Irish Land Wars. During the 1870s and 1880s, peasants openly defied landlords. Violence erupted periodically, usually in the form of crop burning or property destruction. Irish elites worked to contain violence and promote organized efforts to avoid paying high rents. Charles Stewart Parnell, an Irish politician, reformed the Home Rule League into the now unified Irish Parliamentary Party to push for parliamentary reform and allow Ireland to self-legislate and provide relief from rents in the context of crop failures. Outside of these reforms, he called for all Irish citizens to support the cause by refusing to work for any landlords who fired their tenants, and reject their rental properties. The plan, then, was to ostracize those landlords so completely that they would accept lower rents. When Captain Charles Boycott, a land agent who worked for an absentee landlord, tried to evict eleven families from their land, work in the fields stopped, the post officer refused to bring his mail, and local businesses refused to provide any goods or services. The name “Boycott” quickly became synonymous for ostracizing someone to achieve a specific purpose. The campaign was long lasting and eventually resulted in changes in tenant rights and the first hearing of an Irish Home Rule bill in 1886.¹⁹

This effective use of boycotts and the emerging emphasis on non-violent political organization came about because resisters recognized that violent tactics were unsuccessful. The failure of the uprising of 1867 and the lack of change from the Land War uprisings “persuaded many ‘physical-force men’ . . . that independence was more likely to be achieved through parliamentary agitation than insurrection.”²⁰ As a result, the largest Irish separatist organization, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, changed its constitution; now, members

were bound to confine themselves “in time of peace to the exercise of moral influences,” such as supporting “every movement calculated to advance the cause of Irish independence.” War against Britain was to await “the decision of the Irish nation, as expressed by a majority of the Irish people” (a most improbable event).²¹

Charles Stewart Parnell’s power grew significantly when he was able to bring this nationalist movement into a more focused and “constitutional,” that is non-violent, political movement. Parliament debated the first Home Rule bill in 1886 not because of violence in the Irish countryside, but because the Irish Parliamentary Party finally controlled the balance of power in Westminster. Parnell’s legislative success depended on isolating spontaneous violence and directing public energies toward non-violent mobilization. This practice continued right into the revolutionary period and was a hallmark of the early Sinn Fein movement.

Arthur Griffith founded the Sinn Fein movement in 1905. Its agenda was similar to O’Connell and Parnell’s in that it sought the establishment of an independent Irish Parliament. The key tactical difference was that Griffith argued for “abstention,” where a Sinn Fein party member would be elected to Parliament but abstain from going to Westminster; instead, they would serve in an Irish Parliament as an alternative government. His primary inspiration for this policy came from the Hungarian example after it pulled itself away from the Austrian Empire to create Austria–Hungary.²² This tactic, Boyce argued, appealed to Griffith “because it has proved successful without recourse to arms.”²³ As Townshend argued,

The Sinn Fein programme offered a smorgasbord of variously risky or risk-free ways of resisting, subverting or simply ignoring British rule. As one leading Sinn Fein writer put it in a 1909 tract, the Irish people “need not obey, and they need not be governed, a day longer than they wish.”²⁴

Griffith saw this strategy as one with global significance; “Gandhi, for instance, acknowledged the influence of Sinn Fein on his own idea of passive resistance, *satyagraha*. People could refuse to buy British goods, refuse to pay taxes, play English games, attend English plays, or indeed to speak English.”²⁵ As detailed in the next section, it was this strategy of non-violent noncooperation that led to the first alternative Irish parliament that declared its independence from the United Kingdom.

As a whole, the tactics of mass rallies, boycotts, noncooperation, and abstention all created significant changes in the Irish system. Non-violence in the form of mass rallies was responsible for the creation of the early autonomous Irish parliament under the leadership of Henry Grattan in the 1780s and emancipation of Catholics under the leadership of Daniel O’Connell in the 1820s. Boycotts organized throughout Ireland allowed peasants to demand land reform channeled by Charles Stewart Parnell’s Irish Independence Party in the 1880s. Finally, the seeds of the revolutionary period were laid by noncooperation as a political tactic of the newly emerging Sinn Fein political party.

Ireland's revolutionary period 1911–1923

The trend of organizing non-violent campaigns continued into Ireland's final period of struggle for independence, which truly began in 1911. At that point, it became increasingly unlikely that Ireland would remain a part of the United Kingdom. In 1911, Westminster failed to get a budget passed through the House of Lords; as a result, the Parliament Act of 1911 passed, curtailing the power of the House of Lords only to delay bills passed by the House of Commons. This was quite a momentous change because no longer could the House of Lords vote bills down, which eliminated the last barrier to passage of a Home Rule bill. Earlier, in 1886, during Charles Stewart Parnell's mobilization of the Irish Parliamentary Party, there was sufficient support to put forward a Home Rule bill that would have allowed an Irish Parliament within the British Empire. Although both nationalists and republicans felt that this was not enough, both recognized that political autonomy within the Empire could someday lead to full independence; still, conservatives within the House of Lords pledged that they would never allow Irish home rule. After the 1910 election, Liberals depended on a coalition with the Irish Parliamentary Party to retain a majority in the House, so Home Rule became the necessary condition of that coalition government. It was clear to all that after the constitutional changes to the power of the House of Lords, Irish Home Rule was inevitable. The upper house could only delay it, and only for three years.²⁶

This struggle set into motion mass mobilizations within Ireland for and against Home Rule. Protestant Unionists in northeastern Ireland opposed home rule, while most nationalist Catholics supported home rule; only a minority of nationalist Catholics opposed it, favoring instead full independence. The interaction of these three groups, Westminster, and the broader context of militarization for the Great War (1914–1918) shaped the course of this revolutionary phase. While the famed Easter Rising occurred in the middle of this tumultuous period, it was the broader mobilization for and against the Home Rule legislation that mattered.

Mobilization against Home Rule first began on September 23, 1911, when 50,000 men marched from Belfast city center to nearby Craigavon, to persuade Sir Edward Carson, leader of the Ulster Party, to resist the law more forcefully.²⁷ Carson traveled throughout the north in September of 1912 to drum up opposition to Home Rule at mass rallies similar to O'Connell's Monster Meetings. On September 18 at Inniskillen, he addressed a crowd of 40,000 saying, "if this unprovoked and wicked attack [on the union] is allowed to go on and this Bill to become law . . . it is not only a right but a duty to prepare to resist it."²⁸ His tour culminated on "Ulster Day," September 28, 1912, when 218,206 men signed the Ulster Covenant, declaring that they would resist by any means necessary the passage of a Home Rule Bill; if it were passed, they would resist its implementation. In addition, 228,991 women signed a similar declaration, meaning nearly half a million people signed their support. The point of the Covenant was to pressure the MPs, as implicit in the Covenant was that those who signed could be mobilized for military action to resist Home Rule, but the rallies and mass meetings were peaceful events.²⁹ A year later, in November of 1913, 500 delegates of the Ulster Unionist Council in Belfast voted to establish a provisional government should the Home Rule Bill be passed.³⁰ These tactics, of mass rallies, signing declarations, and setting up an alternative government, were all non-violent and all aimed at mobilization for parliamentary pressure.

In both Belfast and Dublin, organized labor action was growing. In August of 1913, numerous Dublin unions began to pressure the government for better workers' rights.

To break this movement, industrialist and newspaper owner William Martin Murphy locked out union workers and convinced several other owners to do the same. In response, street car drivers organized a walkout, abandoning their trams in the middle of the road during Dublin's Horse Show week, a major city event. By the end of September, 24,000 people were locked out for striking, and by mid-October that number had grown to almost 30,000, with thirty-two unions supporting the initial Transport Union's strike. During the lockout, workers used their time off to strike, picket, march, and protest. Police and city leaders, colluding with business owners, banned union organizer Jim Larkin from joining any public protest. In response, on August 31, the union strikers held a massive rally where Larkin addressed the crowd of thousands in central Dublin. The Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC, the local police force) charged the crowd with batons, killing two, injuring five hundred and arresting Larkin along with other union leaders. Up to this point, the strikers had been tactically non-violent, but in response to the brutal crackdown by the RIC, in November of 1913, James Connolly, a key union leader, created the Irish Citizens' Army to protect striking workers from RIC harassment. The strike eventually crumbled, but led to a much more organized and militant nationalist organization: The Irish Volunteers.³¹

As mobilization for and against Home Rule continued, the legislation became ready for final passage. In August of 1914, England declared war on Germany and Parliament decreed that all non-war legislation would have to wait until the end of the war, so the Home Rule Act only became law upon the effective completion of the war effort. The majority of both pro- and anti-Home Rule activists supported the war effort, with only the nationalist Irish Volunteers opposed to war. As the war dragged on and an independent Irish Parliament became more likely, nationalists saw that full independence was increasingly unlikely so, out of desperation, a group of the Irish Volunteers planned an armed uprising that would take advantage of England's focus on the war effort. Several of the leaders forced others to go along with a planned Easter Rising, but numerous factors meant a smaller turnout than planned. Padriac Pearse, one of the nationalist leaders, coordinated the uprising from the General Post Office, where he read the Proclamation of the Irish Republic to a small crowd of confused bystanders. The British responded with significant military force, including sailing a boat up the river Liffey into downtown Dublin and using heavy artillery to shell the shopping area. Over five days, the body count totaled 230 civilians, 132 British troops, and 64 rebels.

At the time of their surrender, the rebels were reviled and unpopular throughout Ireland . . . The rising seemed as complete a failure as was possible. Not only had the Irish people not risen in support, they now denounced those who had as fools.³²

The violent Easter Rising clearly set back the efforts at securing an independent Irish Parliament.

British response to the uprising, however, turned Irish public opinion. According to historian William H. Mulligan:

Military tribunals quickly convened and sentenced 90 people to death. Executions began without opportunity for appeal. Public opinion in Ireland changed quickly and decisively. The 'fools' had been transformed into martyrs for Ireland, new victims of the continuing brutality of British rule. World opinion followed shortly

. . . Finally, British public opinion changed as well, unwilling to further condone what their government had done.³³

Despite not being involved, the British held Sinn Fein responsible for the rising, and when the popular mood turned against British repression, Sinn Fein embraced that association and pushed for independence. In July of 1917, the government called for a convention to discuss the parameters of Home Rule—and debate whether partition with the North would be a part of it. The Unionists opposed any compromise, Sinn Fein refused to attend, and the Irish Party increasingly became irrelevant.³⁴ Sinn Fein drummed up support for the newly released prisoners as heroes at mass rallies and by “July 1917 the RIC Inspector General reported that 166 [Sinn Fein] clubs with a membership of about 11,000 had been noted by the police. A month later the membership had doubled and the number of clubs trebled.”³⁵ Clearly, the initial reaction to the Easter Rising was condemnation; only after the British retaliated with severe repression did Irish opinion turn to support the nationalist cause. It was not violence by revolutionaries, but government repression and a non-violent alternative offered by Sinn Fein that garnered support.

The war crisis fueled growth in Sinn Fein membership, especially after England passed a military service act that allowed for Irish conscription. Anger over this act pulled together various nationalist strands who, on April 18, 1918, gained “surprisingly explicit support of the Catholic hierarchy for resistance ‘by the most effective means at our disposal’ (if ‘consonant with the law of God’).” The British postponed conscription after priests encouraged Catholic resistance at mass on April 21, “followed by a one-day general stoppage two days later.” The government created an alternative to compulsory conscription and “by extension of deadlines and trimming of quotas the need to revert to compulsion was evaded up to the armistice of 11 November.”³⁶ Thus, the act of conscription did not result in any new soldiers, but it did shift popular opinion of the Irish further away from England. The end of the war resulted in many troops returning home but also a return to the delayed question of Home Rule.

A key turning point for Irish independence was when Sinn Fein turned its increasing popularity into electoral success. In December of 1918, the Irish Party won only six seats, while Sinn Fein took 73. Fulfilling founder Arthur Griffith’s original plan, those Sinn Fein members who were not in prison

convened as a national assembly, Dail Eireann [the Irish Parliament], on 21 January 1919. Its functions were at first propagandist rather than administrative, and the Republic’s inauguration was designed primarily to win international confidence and a hearing (if no longer recognition) at the peace conference.³⁷

The non-violent noncooperation campaign that Sinn Fein led against the British government was clearly popular with the voting Irish, but a rift soon emerged within Sinn Fein as to how best to force independence. Under Michael Collins’ direction, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) sought to attack the British as a force of occupation utilizing guerrilla tactics. These attacks were largely unpopular; until the spring of 1920, IRA “activity was largely confined to arson, arms raiding, intimidation, and ostracization rather than murder of the constabulary.”³⁸ Historian D. George Boyce argues that even these relatively limited IRA tactics were unpopular, for

nationalists had not voted for the application of the physical force policy in 1918, and had indeed been assured that no recourse to violence would be necessary; and there were ample signs, especially in the early phases of the struggle, of the public's disapproval of the ruthlessness and callousness of the republican forces.

Collins and violence-advocating Volunteers feared losing ground to the political process, as Boyce argues: "The decision of Collins and individual volunteers to push ahead strongly with physical force methods was aimed as much at outflanking the politicians as it was at driving the British out of Ireland."³⁹ The political movement would foreseeably lead to accepting Home Rule as a step toward independence, which was unacceptable to the radical minority who sought to use violence to bring about full immediate independence—which never happened.

In 1920, a new version of the Home Rule bill created two independent parliaments, one in Belfast and one in Dublin. The bill went into effect in May of 1921 in the north with the creation of Northern Ireland and elections there for a local assembly. Sinn Fein won all but four seats in the south and opposed a parliament established by Westminster, instead reconvening the Dail Eireann.⁴⁰ In the Dail, Eamon de Valera, now leader of the Irish Parliament, labeled the English army as an occupying force and thus a fair target for fighting, which the IRA had already been doing. The cause of the IRA now became independence for the whole of Ireland—and they demanded independence with no ties to the United Kingdom. In June and July of 1920, the IRA led more than fifty raids on British emplacements and government buildings. In response, Westminster passed the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act in August 1920, which "empowered military authorities to make blanket searches and seizures and arrests of anyone swearing allegiance to the Dail." This crackdown had profound implications for the independence movement because it authorized massive repression. The mass arrests provided a new opportunity for resistance. While the small guerrilla movement continued, prisoners taken into custody began a much larger non-violent campaign and demanded treatment as prisoners of war. Some Sinn Fein prisoners in Dublin and London resorted to hunger strikes, arousing public sympathizers to chant songs of support. The first casualty of the hunger strikes was Terence McSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, who was arrested by the British for IRA activity and died after 74 days.⁴¹ Many of the hunger strikers were later released and the prisons changed prisoners' classification, allowing them to drill, dress in uniform, and have other rights associated with being prisoners of war.

The end of British rule in Ireland ultimately came about not via violence, but through negotiations between British and Sinn Fein leaders. Sinn Fein rejected the division of Ireland into north and south. By 1921, the British gave an ultimatum that led to the creation of an Irish Free State, one under the dominion of the United Kingdom but with an independent parliament. When anti-treaty forces took over government buildings in October of 1921, the Irish Civil War began. After two years of fighting, anti-treaty forces surrendered and joined the Dail; in the process, they renounced violence. The end result of the IRA's guerrilla campaign and the Civil War was the exact same division of Ireland first announced in 1920, one that reflected the pre-World War I emerging consensus that Northern Ireland would not be a part of an independent Ireland. The decade of violence, then, brought about no change. It took non-violent abstention, mass rallies, protests, and demonstrations to mobilize effectual political support and bring about Ireland's independence.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that non-violent actions, particularly that of mass mobilization to pressure the legislative process as well as noncooperation in setting up an alternative government, were the primary forces that moved Ireland toward independence. This distinction is important, as the centennial celebrations of the brief eruption of rebel violence in the 1916 Easter Rising encourage the notion that it was violence that led to independence. Rather, it is clear that popular opinion opposed the rebels who participated in the Rising until after the British overreacted with repression. That British repression spurred Irish popular opinion which was then mobilized through mass rallies in support of Sinn Fein. Continued British repression, especially the threat of forced military conscription, further mobilized public opinion against the British. Sinn Fein provided an avenue for expressing that discontent by running candidates who would abstain from taking their seats in Westminster and instead work to build an independent Irish parliament. The Easter Rising, then, should be remembered as the work of a few radical nationalists who sacrificed everything for their cause, but achieved little politically in the short term. It was non-violent mobilization that followed that achieved independence. This perspective is particularly relevant because much of the strategy of the IRA in its continued struggle in Northern Ireland was based on the notion that a few violent episodes could bring about independence. In that conflict, there was no non-violent mobilization; thus, the conflict devolved into a devastating, violent, and decades-long stalemate.

When looking back at Irish history, scholars can note the many failed rebellions led by true believers willing to be martyrs for the cause of the Republic. However, one must also acknowledge that it was the long struggle of non-violent action through mobilization that brought about the actual independence of Ireland. It was non-violent and constitutional actions that created the expansion of Catholic rights in Ireland and an independent Irish parliament. When the people of Ireland were denied political power, innovative leaders within Ireland mobilized the masses to enact change. The effective use of boycotts, meetings, rallies, petitions, strikes, and other non-violent techniques changed the relationship of the people of Ireland to their systems of political power. And when the Irish had mobilized sufficiently for independence, it was through noncooperation—not violence—that Sinn Fein created an independent parliament that led the new country.

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- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 According to parliamentary procedure, a bill that passed in the lower house could be rejected by the upper house only three times. After the third time, if it passed the lower house again, it would become law.
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- 28 *Ibid.*, 26.
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