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Marginalizing Memory: Political Commemorations of the 1916 Easter Rising

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Abstract

The recent centenary commemorations of the 1916 Easter Rising were notable for the considerable effort the Irish government put into making them inclusive. However, inclusiveness in this context masks the fact that the commemorations were exclusive of a particular brand of memory that traces in very uncomplicated fashion its own lineage back not just to 1916, but also specifically to the political violence utilized by the Easter Rising rebels. Not included within the state category of the inclusive, for example, was the second largest Easter Rising commemoration in the North, fronted by masked and uniformed figures. This article seeks to shed light on the tenebrous netherworld where the tradition of armed republicanism—through a combination of its own “purist” volition and state strategies of de-legitimization and marginalization—has been confined. It is written from the perspective that the dialectic between revolutionary memory and constitutional memory is an example of how the past is assessed through the prism of the present, and not with an eye for accuracy.

Keywords: Memory; Commemoration; Irish Republican Army, Dissident; Ireland--History--Easter Rising, 1916.

Included Memory

In 2014, the newly appointed Irish Arts Minister, Heather Humphreys, might, with justification, have felt she was about to enter a battlefield. 2016 and the daunting cultural matrix that would come with it was a ‘memory war’ waiting to happen, in which memory conservationists would endeavour to hold the official line against memory entrepreneurs,¹ who set themselves the task of challenging the established narrative. Today, after official commemorations have ended, it seem clear that the Minister calculated that the bellicosity of such warring would best be diluted if everybody was to be allowed a stake in the contested terrain; something of it for all, and all of it for nobody—apart from the entity nebulously

¹ An example of the dynamics in such a clash can be gleaned from Hopkins’ work on the battle of interpretation fought out over the Provisional IRA’s management of the 1981 hunger strike. Stephen G. Hopkins, ‘The Chronicles of Long Kesh: Provisional Irish Republican Memoirs and the Contested Memory of the Hunger Strikes’, *University of Leicester Research Archive*, 18 March 2014, <http://bit.ly/1PgZPx5>.

defined as ‘the people’.² In remembering the Rising, inclusivity was worshipped, even if the Rising excluded most in its day and considerable swathes of opinion in its wake.

There was certainly enough in the Irish state’s handling of the centenary commemorations to satisfy inveterate Rising critic Ruth Dudley Edwards,³ who, while watching the commemoration parade in Dublin, was, ‘delighted by the inclusiveness of the guest list’.⁴ Also enamoured by the emphasis on inclusiveness was the chief representative of the British state in Ireland who condescendingly praised its efforts for being, ‘marked in ways that are inclusive and designed to promote reconciliation.’⁵ This is the same British state figure who, in the eyes of much northern nationalist opinion, is irremediably hostile to appeals for the open processes considered necessary to promote reconciliation that is all inclusive: legal mechanisms through which redress can be obtained for the victims of Britain’s many pernicious acts of violence perpetrated during the state’s ‘dirty war’.⁶ British Secretary of State Theresa Villiers’ denial that the British pursued any such thing as a dirty war⁷ alienates former SDLP leader Mark Durkan⁸, and is arguably imperial hubris born of the same ‘imperial triumphalism’ so objected to by Irish President Michael D Higgins in his own commentary on how the Rising is commemorated.⁹

Excluded Memory

Minister Humphreys appeared less concerned with protecting the memory of the Rising from British attempts to manipulate historical memory.¹⁰ One of her priorities was to protect the Rising from those who are, ‘inheritors of a revolutionary tradition which stretches back through 218 years of Irish history. We are members of the oldest revolutionary movement in the world’.¹¹

The Rising must be protected from those who still want to rise in the tradition of those who did so a century ago. That is, from those today—and in living memory—who in attitude, ideology, analysis and methodology most resemble that self-referential body of Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) personnel indifferent to other perspectives and audacious enough to stand in front of the General Post Office (GPO), claiming to speak for Ireland while armed with guns. This very sentiment would be captured most eloquently a year after the Rising by Michael Collins at the funeral of Thomas Ashe when he said, ‘nothing additional remains to be said. That volley which we have just heard is the only speech which

2 ‘Upcoming 1916 Commemorations “belong to everyone,”’ *Irish Independent*, 28 July 2014, <http://bit.ly/281jg35>.

3 Dudley was invariably appalled at the violence caused by the Rising but seemingly not so appalled with ‘Brave Israel’ using massive state violence against the civilian population of Gaza. Ruth Dudley Edwards, ‘Brave Israel has every right to bomb Hamas’, *Irish Independent*, 4 January 2009, <http://bit.ly/24hTxPh>.

4 Ruth Dudley Edwards, ‘Commemoration in Dublin of Easter Rising very fitting’, *Belfast Telegraph*, 28 March 2016, <http://bit.ly/1sZysOh>.

5 Ed Carty, ‘British government praises Ireland for “inclusive” 1916 centenary celebration’, *Irish Independent*, 26 March 2016, <http://bit.ly/1WXmjoX>.

6 John Loughran, ‘Why does murder by the State seem fine to Theresa Villiers? — asks John Loughran’, *EamonnMallie.com*, 27 October 2015, <http://bit.ly/1TVehtt>.

7 David Young, ‘Theresa Villiers denies State involvement in Troubles atrocities’, *The Irish News*, 11 February 2016, <http://bit.ly/1Ph1Auc>.

8 Eamon Sweeney, ‘Secretary of State is trying to airbrush British responsibility during Troubles’ — says Durkan, *Derry Journal*, 12 February 2016, <http://bit.ly/1TVRLlu>.

9 Fiach Kelly, ‘1916 centenary: President calls for re-examination of “imperial triumphalism”’, *The Irish Times*, 28 March 2016, <http://bit.ly/1spoSUv>.

10 Erna Paris, *Long Shadows: Truth, Lies And History*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2001), inside cover.

11 René Querin, ‘Address by New President of Republican Sinn Fein, Des Dalton to Ard-Fheis’, *Les Enfants Terribles*, 16 November 2009, <http://bit.ly/1sppV6E>.

is proper to make above the grave of a dead Fenian'.¹² It was exactly the type of speech that rang out at the 2012 Dublin funeral of IRA member, Alan Ryan.¹³

In demonstrating her determination to ensure that '1916 belongs to everybody, and particularly the people', and to make sure the events are, 'respectful and that they take accounts of all traditions',¹⁴ Minister Humphreys has excluded, and consciously so, the tradition that can most claim to resemble the men of 1916: today's armed republican dissidents who are only too willing to fire the volley so revered by Collins, and the entire post-partition armed republican tradition that precedes them.

Humphreys, in her endeavour to marginalize the revolutionary inclination of those 'ready to intone the funeral dirge with the staccato singing of the machine-guns and new battle cries of war and victory',¹⁵ has been joined by some strange bedfellows. They are people who were willing to be filmed praising 'the only speech which is proper' at the funerals of Provisional IRA dead.¹⁶ They are people who for almost three decades at the end of the last century bragged that they had, 'led the most dangerous and committed revolutionary force in Ireland for sixty five years', and who were categorical in their assurances about their commitment to political violence ('Our position is clear and it will never, never, never change. The war against British rule must continue until freedom is achieved [...] Don't go my friends. We will lead you to the republic'.¹⁷)

Former Provisional IRA chiefs of staff like Martin McGuinness¹⁸ were tolerated perhaps more than they were welcome in the Irish establishment phalanx arrayed across the front of the GPO on Easter Sunday. McGuinness was not there because he will lead anybody to a Republic through the warlike behaviour he long championed, but because through his own discourse he has—despite some expressions of fidelity to the Provisional IRA for internal management purposes—rubbed the very armed methods he once employed.¹⁹ McGuinness, an erstwhile lethal adversary of the Irish state,²⁰ has signed onto the narrative of that state, promising a 'mature and inoffensive' commemoration.²¹ Inclusive, in this context, means excluding old ways of doing things that might be used to buttress a different type of memory from one that is sanctioned by the state. By including symbols of formerly condemned voices (such as McGuinness), the state is able to further disenfranchise those who, today, refuse to alter their messages and beliefs.

Contested Memory

12 'Thomas Ashe', <http://bit.ly/1UslnW9>.

13 Jim Cusak, 'Dissident "show of strength" for Alan Ryan funeral', *Belfast Telegraph*, 9 September 2012, <http://bit.ly/1RKbej9>.

14 'Upcoming 1916 Commemorations "belong to everyone,"' *Irish Independent*, 28 July 2014, <http://bit.ly/281jg35>.

15 Che Guevara, 'Message to the Tricontinental', *Marxists Internet Archive*, <http://bit.ly/1UsjBoa>.

16 'Vols Willie Fleming & Danny Doherty's Funeral 1984', YouTube video, 12:25, from the funeral that took place in December 1984, posted by Micky Kellie, 2 July 2012, <http://bit.ly/25xMp3K>.

17 Martin McGuinness, 'On the Issue of Abstentionism', (speech, Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, Dublin, 2 November 1986), <http://bit.ly/1sZzwlq>.

18 Liam Clarke and Kathryn Johnston, *Martin McGuinness: From Guns To Government*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Company, 2001), 106.

19 'PSNI warns NI threat level at "upper end of severe" as prison office injured in explosion', *RTE News*, 4 March 2016, <http://bit.ly/1WXnrsO>.

20 Hugh O'Connell, 'McGuinness says comments over garda killings were 'absolutely wrong'', *TheJournal.ie*, 21 October 2011, <http://bit.ly/22we1V5>.

21 'Martin McGuinness promises "inoffensive" 1916 commemorations', *BreakingNews.ie*, 20 March 2015, <http://bit.ly/1WveSp9>.

In striving to secure an inclusive and inoffensive commemoration of the Rising, Humphreys's challenge was an obvious, if onerous, one. Memory is not something that can be invoked in unmediated fashion. Once prized free from the strictures of conservationists and opened to the laissez faire probing of entrepreneurs, Jelin's observation is confirmed: 'memories are the object of disputes, conflicts and struggles'.²² Just as troublesome when considering memory management is her belief that, 'memory is obstinate, it does not resign itself to remain in the past, insisting on its presence'.²³

The presence insisted upon, but which the government excluded, was the spectre of post-partition armed Irish republicanism. Its determination to be present, firing volleys in the tradition of Collins, caused then Mayor of Dublin, Naoise Ó Muirí, to state, 'this type of display is wholly unacceptable and belongs firmly in the past on this island'.²⁴ Ó Muirí's critique was discursively framed in periodisation; the wrongfulness of armed republican displays on the streets of Dublin were not, in his eyes, timeless, but rather their rightful time had long since passed.

Conveying such a time-specific concept in the hope of inserting fire-breaks is never straightforward. As the Irish Ambassador to London, Daniel Mulhall, observed with respect to the Rising, 'the past is multifaceted and it is susceptible to multiple, competing readings'.²⁵ How the Rising is 'read' and, more importantly, how it is allowed to be read is a process immersed in contestation, where an unbalanced power stresses inclusivity and marginalizes narratives favouring exclusivity. What Erna Paris notes as a general observation, finds particular resonance in the government's attitude toward memory in that it must be, 'managed to suit the perception of our present needs. The question is, whose perception and whose needs? Who gets to decide what happened yesterday, then to tell the tale'?²⁶

From the point of view of constitutional government, 'present needs' are not deemed to be revolutionary ones, best attained via recourse to revolutionary methods. The agenda-setting components of the ruling bloc in Irish society, if they agree on nothing else including, at the time of writing, the formation of a new government, certainly exhibit no discord on the illegitimacy of extra-legal political violence. There is a shared endorsement of the Weberian position on the necessity of the state to exercise a monopoly over the legitimate use of force. As the Irish state has never, as an expression of its 'institutional materiality',²⁷ tackled partition in an armed manner, it has invariably sought to maintain a legitimate firewall separating the violence of state formation from the violence of anti-partition republicans. As a constituent element in the process of legitimization, it has sought to pull the Rising back behind the firewall and then shield it from any critique that might probe and expose its vulnerability on the question of political violence.

How well this works is a moot point. Despite greatly increased cross-border cooperation, it certainly under achieved in County Tyrone, where an alternative, more inclusive Easter commemoration constituted 'the second biggest parade in the North of

22 Elizabeth Jelin, 'State repression and the struggles for memory', *openDemocracy*, 11 September 2006, <http://bit.ly/1XNdDkh>.

23 Ibid.

24 Christine Bohan, 'Alan Ryan funeral scenes: "Wholly unacceptable and belongs in the past" —Mayor', *TheJournal.ie*, 10 September 2012, <http://bit.ly/20RL4Sb>.

25 Daniel Mulhall, 'Seven signatories would hardly recognize Ireland today', *Irish Independent*, 2 April 2016, <http://bit.ly/1Ph0TB2>.

26 Erna Paris, *Long Shadows*, 2.

27 The Irish state conforms to its own institutional materiality of which a core component is the, 'law as the code of organized public violence'. Bob Jessop, *Nicos Poulantzas: Marxist Theory and Political Strategy*, (New York: Palgrave, 1985), p. 120, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-17950-3>.

Ireland²⁸ with thousands willing to walk behind a masked and uniformed colour party and listen to the main speaker, a former IRA prisoner, pointedly speak in the discourse of revolution. It was an event described by one academic as a blow against normalization.²⁹

Effortless Memory

The success in marginalizing alternative republican memory depends in part on the ability to blur the gap between the partition that currently exists and the vision that leaders of the Rising like Padraig Pearse sought to make manifest in an Ireland of a radically different kind. Pearse states,

Ireland's historic claim is for Separation. Ireland has authorised no man to abate that claim. The man who, in the name of Ireland, accepts as 'a final settlement' anything less by one fraction of an iota than Separation from England will be repudiated by the new generation [...] The man who, in return for the promise of a thing which is not merely less than Separation, but which denies Separation and proclaims the Union perpetual, the man who, in return for this, declares peace between Ireland and England and sacrifices to England as a peace-holocaust the blood of fifty thousand Irishmen, is guilty of so immense an infidelity, so immense a crime against the Irish nation, that one can only say of him that it were better for that man (as it were certainly better for his country) that he had not been born.³⁰

Pearse leaves little room for a more liberal interpretation that he meant that a nation-state characterized by dual truncation would meet either the spirit or the letter of the Rising. Total separation from England was the one thing neither the Rising nor any armed action since has secured.

It is this unfinished business is what continues to spur armed republican activists. Thus the intellectual and ideological space exists within which the memory of post-partition armed republicans can express itself and articulate the position that the two major Anglo-Irish Treaties in 1921 and 1998 that guarantee partition fall far short of what the Rising leaders first arose and then died to achieve. They can point to the famous funeral of O'Donovan Rossa where Pearse delivered his legendary and incendiary speech, and then cite the words of the Fenian being laid to rest,

I am not talking to the milk and water people [...] I am talking to those who mean fight, who mean war and who know what war is. When an enslaved nation can produce men who are brave and daring enough to risk life and to face death for the mere glory of showing that the national spirit still lives, that nation is not dead and those men should be encouraged instead of repressed.³¹

Therefore, when Michael McKeivitt (described as a 'former Provisional IRA Quarter-Master General and founder of the Real IRA'³²) emerged from 15 years of repression in the Irish prison system, there is not a scintilla of inconsistency from his point of view when he proclaims that,

Those who signed the original Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1922 are no different to those who signed the Good Friday Agreement [...] Historically, the only form of resistance in Ireland,

28 Dieter Reinisch, 'Coalisland 2016: A Blow Against Normalisation', *European University Institute*, 31 March 2016, <http://bit.ly/1r1qQsL>.

29 Ibid.

30 'The writings of Padraig Pearse', *The Apricity*, posted on the forum by 'Oisin', 15 November 2008, <http://bit.ly/1P22XaI>.

31 Colm Tóibín, 'After I am hanged my portrait will be interesting', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 38 No. 7, 31 March 2016, <http://bit.ly/1Vtw3qa>.

32 Ed Moloney, 'Michael McKeivitt: "British Only Take Notice of Armed Struggle"', *The Broken Elbow* (blog), 28 March 2016, <http://bit.ly/24hU1Fa>.

that the British actually took notice of, was armed struggle; like they did in 1916 and in every decade since [...] Throughout this historic year, political parties of all persuasions, are tripping over themselves to commemorate the violent uprising of 1916. How can they, who have accepted the partition of Ireland, lay claim to the legacy of 1916? [...] People can ask themselves: is this the vision that Pearse and Connolly fought and died for? Is this what the last 100 years of bloodshed was about? It is a sorry legacy [...] Those who took up arms in 1916, were a minority of the population at that time with little or no popular support. Some commentators have even described the rising as: ‘an immoral and anti-democratic act organised by a minority within a minority who, looking into their own souls, saw there what they deemed was right for the Irish people’. Could any credible historian or impartial observer of Anglo/Irish strife, honestly differentiate between the men of 1916 and militant republicans who took part in any of the campaigns over the last 100 years? I doubt it!³³

At least, and in McKevitt’s favour, the Rising, whatever else might be said about it, was not a democratically constituted act taking place in a wider democratic context. The historian Brian Hanley provides context to the Rising taking place:

In a society in which 15% of the population had a vote in national elections [...] British rule ultimately rested on force and everyone knew it [...] There seems to be little awareness that political, communal and sectional strife were well established in Ireland before 1916 and that violence was part of political life. People were shot during election campaigns; street fighting was an established part of electioneering; hundreds of Catholics were driven from their workplaces in sectarian riots in Belfast during 1912; suffragettes were beaten up for campaigning for the vote; strikers and their supporters were batoned and sometimes killed, not only in the Dublin Lockout but in disputes in Sligo and Wexford as well, and civilians shot dead by troops on Dublin’s Bachelor’s Walk in 1914. All that happened before Easter 1916, the event that supposedly introduced violence into Irish politics [...] ³⁴

Nevertheless, that the Rising was a revolt against a power that had globally flouted democracy through its territorially invasive imperialism and which crucially had no democratic mandate to rule Ireland does not negate the claim that the Rising itself was not intrinsically democratic. In a bid to defend the Rising against ‘balderdash’³⁵ of the type that, ‘it was an attack against democracy at that time’, a long-term critic of Provisional IRA political violence, the influential newspaper political columnist Brian Feeney, recently argued that it is only undemocratic from today’s understanding of democracy.³⁶

Yet the matter is more nuanced than that. The ideologues of armed republicanism are hardly strangers to the argument about relational democracy being wholly subverted by the power and might of Britain.³⁷ However, their fidelity to the Rising is not predicated on the notion of some democratic deficit, but instead on democracy itself being deficient. In the view of these ideologues, democracy does not work and the British state would conjure a way around it, as revealed with their own assertion that British display a, ‘lack of integrity, a lack of willingness to address the causes of conflict’.³⁸

33 Michael McKevitt, ‘Interview With Michael McKevitt Upon His Release From Portlaoise Prison’, *MichaelMcKevitt.com* (blog), 26 March 2016, <http://bit.ly/1Y1mgYM>.

34 Brian Hanley, ‘The Ireland of our ideals’, *The Cedar Lounge Revolution* (blog), (lecture, ‘Proclaiming the Revolution’ conference, NUI Galway, 22 January 2016), reproduced on 26 January 2016, <http://bit.ly/22wdy5l>.

35 ‘Enda Kenny criticises Arlene Foster over snub to Easter Rising centenary events’, *Irish Independent*, 26 May 2016, <http://bit.ly/1WXncxZ>.

36 Brian Feeney, ‘The Easter Rising tide of historical nonsense’, *The Irish News*, 23 March 2016, <http://bit.ly/1P1WjRL>.

37 Francie Mackey, ‘Easter Message from the 32 County Sovereignty Movement 2016’, *32CSM.net*, (speech, graveside of IRA volunteer Ronan MacLochlainn, Dublin, 25 March 2016), <http://bit.ly/1WXn1m>.

38 Henry McDonald, ‘Real IRA says it will target UK bankers’, *The Guardian*, 14 September 2010, <http://bit.ly/1ZbdSEL>.

The Rising leaders, like their post partition armed adherents, were thoroughly undemocratic because they were thoroughly revolutionary. They would find little to dissent from in Friedrich Engels's zealous revolutionary outlook, which took positions such as, 'revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is the act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon'.³⁹ This is perfectly in line with the IRA Easter Rising Centenary statement:

The men and women of Easter 1916 were revolutionary activists engaging a foreign oppressor and asserted their right to national sovereignty via legitimate armed action [...] A century on and the IRA armed actions against Britain and her agents are as legitimate as they were in 1916.⁴⁰

The reason these revolutionary leaders give for this point of view harkens back to the issue of commemoration and tribute. In an Easter statement they noted, 'We pledge our resolve to continue the struggle against British Rule. The Volunteers of the Continuity Irish Republican Army will continue to strike at will at the British forces of occupation. That is the most fitting tribute we can make to the men and women of 1916'.⁴¹

Feeney, from a perspective that sees democracy as relational, seeks to shift the onus for being democratic onto the most powerful and dominant adversary in a conflict. Rather than claim that the Rising was democratic, he pleads mitigatory: that any democratic response to unjust rule was made impossible by the lack of a democratic framework within which it could happen. While true, given that according to John Redmond 'no single reform [...] had been obtained by purely constitutional methods',⁴² it overlooks the salient point that even within their own bodies the Rising leaders sought to be neither democratically accountable nor constituted.

Shortly after the war broke out a small cabal within both within the Volunteers and the IRB, behind the backs of both organization's leaders, began to plan an insurrection, to take place before the war was over. In early 1915 the group was formalised into the "Military Committee ... it was this group, a conspiracy within a conspiracy, that was to plan the Rising."⁴³

Moreover, Feeney's argument tends to strip post-partition armed republicanism of the props, based on a memory of revolution, which it uses to ideologically support itself. It implies that today's armed republicans' memories of the Rising is suspect in that it blanks out the Rising as having occurred in a context where there was a democratic deficit, and which, in present Ireland, has been substantively remedied to the point where there is no place for the tradition of armed struggle. In this line of thought, the lineage back to 1916 is, therefore, effectively broken.

A better understanding of the armed republican attitude to these questions can be gleaned from a recent academic assessment of dissident republicans, which stated,

39 John Jay Ray, 'Authoritarianism is Leftist, Not Rightist', *JohnJayRay.com* (blog), <http://bit.ly/1TP4Squ>.

40 Henry McDonald, 'New IRA warns of more attacks on "age-old enemies" in Northern Ireland', *The Guardian*, 29 March 2016, <http://bit.ly/1TVe0GT>.

41 '2016 Easter Statement from the Leadership of the Republican Movement', national website of Republican Sinn Féin, last modified 25 March 2016, <http://bit.ly/1P1Xr7T>.

42 Brian Hanley, 'The Ireland of our ideals'.

43 John Dorney, *The Story of the Easter Rising, 1916*, (Green Lamp Editions (epublisher), 2010), 22.

They reject the logic of those who argue that they lack support, or have no mandate. For them this is to miss the point, namely that where questions of inalienable right and national sovereignty are concerned such matters are irrelevant. Their collective view is that being popular is of no consequence, as compared to the virtue of being correct [...] at the heart of this is a perception that that an armed minority can act in pursuit of the national demand and history will, in the end, vindicate them.⁴⁴

While today they would be unremittingly hostile to the position adopted by Sinn Fein,⁴⁵ they would find absolute merit in comments by its party president, Gerry Adams, in the year of the 75th anniversary of the Rising:

Would any of the men who signed that document have signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Would Tom Clarke have extradited Dessie Ellis? [...] No way would those people be involved in talks about talks, rolling devolution, Atkins' round-table conferences and the whole litany of Sunningdale -Darlington [...] They had no mandate, those people [...] Pearse never stood for an election in his life [...] If you in any way try to justify 1916, then you can't say it was okay in Dublin 75 years ago, it was okay for your grandad, but it's not okay in Belfast or Derry or south Armagh today [...] If you say today that the IRA is wrong, then they were wrong then as well.⁴⁶

In the view of the armed republicans with alternative memories that hold just as good for their own IRA as they do for the one Adams once served as chief of staff.⁴⁷ One major recent scholarly study on republican splits found that those unhappy with the peace process have found that, 'the armed campaign must be maintained, continuing the struggle of Connolly and Pearse'.⁴⁸ That Adams has abandoned his revolutionary rhetoric in favor of gradualist and reformist language reinforces republicans who believe, much like Michael McKevitt did, that Adams was ultimately an armed advocate for Catholic Civil rights in the North rather than a genuine defender of The Republic.⁴⁹

Conclusion

Those sympathetic to the armed minority were not present at the official state event in Dublin on Easter Sunday 2016. They marched elsewhere, many of their faces concealed as a safeguard against arrest and imprisonment. Their memory of the Rising is no less genuine than the State's memory, and probably rests easier in their minds. President Michael D Higgins comments that, 'the long shadow cast by what has been called "The Troubles" in [Northern Ireland](#) has led to a scrutiny of the Irish republican tradition of "physical violence"'.⁵⁰ As revolutionaries of the same undemocratic line willing to engage in, 'revolutionary violence designed to challenge the state and if possible topple it',⁵¹ their memory of the Rising is as effortless as it is uncomplicated by the needs of the present.

44 Martyn Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish Republicanism*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2011), 281.

45 Dr. Peter Trumbore, 'Tony Catney Sharing His Political Thoughts', *The Pensive Quill*, 13 August 2014, <http://bit.ly/1XNdPQo>.

46 'Easter Rising commemorations: The 1991 interview that has come back to haunt Gerry Adams', *Belfast Telegraph*, 25 March 2016, <http://bit.ly/1O2NmWd>.

47 Ed Moloney, *A Secret History of The IRA*, (New York: Penguin, 2003).

48 John F Morrison, *The Origins And Rise of Dissident Irish Republicanism: The Role and Impact of Organizational Splits*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 199.

49 John Mooney and Michael O'Toole, *Black Operations: The Secret War Against the Real IRA*, (Meath: Maverick House, 2003), 27.

50 Fiach Kelly, '1916 centenary: President calls for re-examination', *The Irish Times*.

51 John Dorney, *The Story of the Easter Rising, 1916*, 20.

Memories of the 1916 Rising are heavily policed and directed by a moral compass, more readily palatable than accurate. The Irish government, sensitive to its current ‘beliefs, values, and mores’, and regardless of past ones, has sought to create a ‘regime of truth’⁵² in which the Rising, which excluded so many, can be commemorated as inclusive. Its modern-day revolutionary republican detractors may have successfully been pushed to the background, but have ensured that in the Easter rebellion discourse the Rising has not been pushed back behind the partition line of 1921. As the Belfast journalist and long-time observer of republican politics, Suzanne Breen, writes:

It is time for some intellectual honesty about the Easter Rising. It is a complete cop-out to portray its leaders as saints and those who follow the same beliefs today as some sort of Frankenstein creation. But few in Irish nationalism have the guts to say that.⁵³

And even fewer the temerity to articulate the probable: had the leaders of the Easter Rising not been executed in 1916, their fate might only have been a delayed one. Ultimately, for their sedition and infidelity to the Irish state, for pressing on in pursuit of the ideals of the Rising, they could have been tied to a mine in a remote place called Ballyseedy and blasted to smithereens by a state whose descendants today revere them.

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52 Shawn Rider, ‘Michel Foucault’, <http://bit.ly/1TVSh2T>.

53 ‘Easter Rising commemorations: The 1991 interview that has come back to haunt Gerry Adams’, *Belfast Telegraph*, 25 March 2016, <http://bit.ly/1O2NmWd>.

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