




# IRISH NEWS




THE NORTHERN CATHOLICS—THE POPE AND IRELAND—MR. DE VALERA IN CLARE—THE DAIL  
AND THE BOUNDARY.

Last week (says the London *Catholic Times* for August 23) the Northern Catholics held a number of successful demonstrations, meetings at Dundalk and Omagh being particularly well attended. Speaking at the former town, Mr. Joseph Devlin, who still enjoys much influence in Nationalist circles in Louth and the excluded counties, pointed out that it was ludicrous to argue that Catholics aimed at the coercion of the North. It was their opponents who, in fact, relied upon coercion, and thus kept 350,000 Nationalists in unwilling subjection to the jurisdiction of Belfast. Ulster Catholics desired to live in peace, peace based upon the recognition of their rights as citizens of Ireland, but the setting up of a new Pale, involved possibilities as sinister and disastrous as did its great original. In the end, however, unnatural barriers were bound to pass away. A demand would come—from the Protestant elements themselves—for a cessation of feuds that were no longer based upon realities.

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His Holiness has sent the following reply to a message of homage from the President:—

“Beloved Son and Honorable Sir, Health and Apostolic Benediction. It was indeed with pleasure that We read the letter which you lately so kindly sent Us; for it was filled with a great fervor of love and devotion towards the Vicar of Jesus Christ and the Apostolic See. Wherefore you will readily understand with what gratification We have received this notable tribute; the more so because you have offered it reverently not only in your own name but also in that of all Ireland, of that nation assuredly most noble which, steadfastly preserving the Catholic faith, gloried to propagate it down along the centuries in distant islands and regions.

“We pray that that nation, which has deserved so well of Catholicity and civilisation, may ever gather new fruits of peace and prosperity.

“Meanwhile, in earnest of Divine gifts, as also for a token of paternal benevolence, We impart most lovingly to you, beloved son and honorable sir, and to the whole Irish race, the Apostolic Benediction.”

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On the Feast of the Assumption, the first anniversary of his arrest, Mr. de Valera explained his programme, if programme it may be called, to a large concourse of Republicans at Ennis. From a spectacular standpoint this gesture was, undoubtedly, successful. Accompanied by all the leading figures in the Anti-Treaty Party, the Republican leader passed through the narrow streets of Ennis, gaily decorated for the occasion, amid deafening applause from his admirers. Opponents of the Treaty were there from every part of Ireland, and when their hero reached his platform, erected at a point from which O’Connell delivered some of his most stirring messages to the Catholics of Clare, scenes of wild enthusiasm took place. To a man of Mr. de Valera’s temperament that moment must have seemed inspiring, though sober spectators, those whose minds remained uninfluenced by the almost Oriental picturesqueness of the scene—could not help observing signs that might have given pause to Republican enthusiasts, were they capable of analysing without passion the phenomena of politics. First and foremost, the crowd was composed, almost in its entirety, of boys and girls between the ages of sixteen and twenty-two. Secondly, the older people present were obviously unmoved by the message they received. Thirdly, no representative farmers, trade unionists, or business men were at the meeting, a remark-

able symbol of the divorce between Republicanism and the most solid interests in the country.

What of the Future?

But to come to Mr. de Valera’s speech. Republicans, he said, had no new policy; the policy of 1917, of 1921, held good to-day. Their goal remained unchanged, and they would strive to reach it by every means determined men could use in efforts to win liberty and freedom. There were two things that they must never do: They must never assent to the dismemberment of Ireland, and they must never pay allegiance to a foreign State. They might, indeed, submit to *force majeure*, but they would never barter away the freedom of their nation. Their hopes of a prosperous Ireland had been dissipated, but, if the people listened to the voice of Clare, lost ground could be recovered, existing misfortunes could be remedied with ease. The exact process by which our troubles—Partition, unemployment, high taxation—could be ended Mr. de Valera did not vouchsafe to say. That, he informed his audience, would be revealed when three million citizens had voluntarily registered their approval of his attitude! So, for the present, Republicans must take their leader’s powers of wizardry on trust. To question the efficacy of his mysterious recipe for banishing the nation’s ills would savor of high treason, and reduce them to the level of those soulless, materialistic creatures who believe that the Republic functions neither in Dublin nor Belfast.

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The Treaty (Confirmation of Supplemental Agreement) Bill passed its first reading in Dail Eireann by 64 votes to 10. Thus, on the eve of the Recess, the Government won a very real victory, for it was anticipated in Dublin that their majority would be narrow. From the commencement of the debate fortune favored the Administration. The President spoke, whatever Die-hard writers may suggest, with moderation and restraint, developing the Free State case in a reasoned statement which no impartial student of the Boundary question could regard either as unfair or unconvincing; members of the National Group, mollified by a Ministerial undertaking that the Bill would not be proceeded with until the identical measure, recently submitted to the House of Commons, reached the Statute Book, withdrew their opposition at an early stage; and Labor Deputies, though they resisted to the end, were half-hearted in their criticisms, realising, no doubt, that the country disapproved of their hostility towards the Boundary Commission. Yet even at the end of the debate, few thought that the Opposition would fare as badly as it did when Deputies divided. This miscalculation shows that in a crisis, involving issues of national importance, the Government can summon to its aid reserves of strength which remain in normal times unnoticed.

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