

"Ireland": A Sovereign State

(By REV. ANTHONY LOWE, in *Young Ireland*.)

"If Ireland is a sovereign state she has a right to use physical force, but if Ireland is not a sovereign state the physical force policy is unlawful."

These words are from the Lenten Pastoral of the Bishop of Cork.

As an Englishman I say that Ireland is a sovereign state. There are several factors and vital characteristics that go to make a nation. A nation is an organism, and not an organisation; a moral entity; a racial unit.

Switzerland is not really a sovereign state in the strict sense of the word, as she is a mere agglomeration of various nations; a federation of cosmopolitan people. Ireland is a sovereign state. She has its essential qualities, its basis, and fundamental elements. She has racial unity, a common country with its clear cut out geographical boundaries. She has a distinct language. She has a common religion, she has unbroken national traditions, a national spirit, national sentiments, as vital forces that have moulded her life, spirit, policy, character, and intellect; she has social and economic independence (as far as it is possible for nations to-day); she had for centuries political independence, and possesses it now, if not actually, at least potentially; she has that identity, continuity, and perpetuity of national life, spirit, and vital will power to be a nation. Ireland, then, is a sovereign state from every point of view. From the year A.D. 9, when Brimthán I. died, till the year 1198, when King Ruari died, Ireland was a Monarchy, and, as such, was necessarily a sovereign state. When Ireland acknowledged five men as Lords or Kings of Ireland, she still remained a sovereign state, for those people reigned by the will of the Irish people. The people, the language, the traditions, the religion, the spirit and will of the people never ceased. England did not cease to be a sovereign state when William of Orange became King of England. Ireland does not cease to be a sovereign state because of economic, political, social, and financial fluctuations. These things happen to every nation, and that does not make them less a nation. I am not speaking of empires. No change in forms of government can disrupt this sovereignty. External accidental changes in a life's nation do not destroy that vital factor, those fundamental elements that make a nation a nation. The indestructible will, the deathless spirit, the ceaseless traditions, the undying language, religion, the geographical insularity live on for ever. For over a thousand years the City of Tara was the seat of the monarchs of all Ireland, and although the monarchy has ceased, the sovereign state and indestructible will of the Irish nation remains immortal and indivisible. An organism has one principle of life: a heart, memory, will and understanding; Ireland, as a racial unit, is a living organic whole; she has a heart, the centre of her national sentiments; a memory that goes back to the twilight of civilisation; a will the unchangeable seat of authority and sovereign power; an intellect that guides and enlightens her life. A nation is a sovereign state not by the will of other nations, but by its own inherent rights. A nation does not cease to be a sovereign state merely because other nations do not recognise her as such. No amount of foreign servitude, of external alien pressure, can destroy this inalienable national right. Ireland's claim to be a sovereign independent state is no new claim: it is a sovereign right, deep rooted in the past centuries, and based upon her racial unity; it is no fungoid growth, but indigenous to the soil. Long ages of English autocracy, of overwhelming brute force, of barbarian warring; of scarlet militarism, cannot destroy this just and inalienable right. That claim does not rest on Might, it is based on Right. Ireland has always lawfully possessed that right, although she has not always been able to exercise it. Brutal oppression from without does not destroy that indestructible principle from within. Ireland's soul and destiny is in her own hands; that guardianship she has never renounced or forfeited. You do not forfeit a just claim merely because someone stronger than you robs you of its exercise or title. Because Ireland, for long ages, has not been able to exercise that right, she does not thereby relinquish or renounce

that right; because England has for centuries rendered that right and just claim and possession of Ireland nugatory and inoperative, the right of Ireland to act as a sovereign state does not cease to exist. It seems as if his Lordship was upholding Might against Right. Because Ireland is not strong enough physically to exercise it against overpowering Might, therefore, argues Dr. Cohalan, "Ireland is not a sovereign state, and the physical force policy is unlawful." Such a doctrine is immoral and untrue. The right of a small nation is as sacred as the right of a large nation. Right is dependent on Right, and not on Might. Ireland is more of a sovereign state than Belgium, with its admixture of languages and people; more of a sovereign state than the heterogenous Balkans. Cardinal Mercier would never have been so temerarious or cowardly as to have said, when Belgium became the vassal of Germany during the great war, that Belgium was no longer a sovereign state. The truth is more of a king when on the scaffold than on a throne. Right is still Right when crucified. Ireland for past centuries up to the present time has been, and is, a sovereign state, and, as such, has a right to use physical force against her despoilers and invaders. Has Ireland ever ceased to be a nation? No. Has Ireland ceased to claim her right to sovereignty? No. Has Ireland ever forfeited or renounced her supreme right? No. Because a nation that was once a Monarchy chooses a Republican form of government, she does not thereby claim a new right, or reject her old rights. This has happened in Russia, Portugal, Germany, and Austria. His Lordship argues because the present form of government might be overturned at the next elections, and because the present form of government is not permanent or stable as regards the uncertain future, therefore it has no right to enforce the present form of government on the people. It is the people who have chosen the present form of government, and their will is the ultimate basis of all lawful authority. Supposing, even at the next election, Ireland voted Unionist (they would not contradict her past so amazingly), even she would not be relinquishing her supreme authority, but only using her legitimate authority, according to the will of the people, in the way they think best. The rights of the people, the will of the people are permanent in their essence; no surrender of sovereign rights takes place when the people choose another form of government; the form of government is an accidental change. The freedom to change their form of government is an inherent right that time and tyranny cannot destroy. Whether Ireland votes Republican, Monarchy, or Unionist, she still remains a sovereign state. His Lordship seems to think that because the present form of government may not be stable or permanent, therefore its authority is null and void; whatever government could stand the test of stability or permanency? Dr. Cohalan indulges in probabilities and hypotheses to uphold British rule in Ireland. The unity of Ireland is not endangered by Ireland, but by England. England has ever sought to break up the solidarity of the nation; aye, England has sought to decimate and wipe out the Irish nation through her tyranny, artificial starvation, and emigration. England's red reign of terrorism in Ireland is the ghastliest barbarism that civilisation has ever seen. When recruiting was going on in Ireland during the great war, they were promised self-determination, and now they are demanding it; they have got militarism instead. In fighting for self-determination (it is no privilege, it is Ireland's right) Ireland is guided by no erroneous principles that contravene ethics. If it is lawful (and it is not lawful) for England to use brute physical force in Ireland, it is, then, entirely lawful for Ireland to do the same. The sovereign will of the people, the unanimous voice of the people, is the only basis of all true authority. So Ireland's upbroken continuity of authority, of will, of right, and of justice have kept her for nearly 2000 years a sovereign state. Ireland has never sold her birthright. England's authority in Ireland is a violent usurpation; it is like a dishonored cheque, worthless and false. Ireland, in her incomparable battle for freedom, is the glory and envy of the world; with that glorious fight she has lost nearly all, save her honor, soul, and God.

Beware, do not give way to your sorrow.—St. Benedict.

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