

of Great Britain as head of the associated States."

The oath actually incorporated in the Treaty differs little from this, as it is an oath of allegiance to the Free State and of fidelity to the King dependent on the Free State's association with the British Commonwealth. It is not an oath of allegiance to the King, nor an oath of a subject, for fidelity is between equals; and hence a plain-speaking member of the Dail declared during the debates that he would not shoot a dog for the sake of the difference between the two oaths. Mr. O'Higgins revealed that there was some discussion as to the payment of an annual tribute to the King, by way of contribution to his personal revenue. Cathal Brugha opposed it strongly but under pressure from de Valera it was agreed upon by the Cabinet. Before the delegates went to England (says Mr. O'Higgins) de Valera "painted with a heavy brush the necessity for compromise and the terrible consequences of non-compromise." He also insisted that his oath of allegiance to the Republic only meant that he would do his best for Ireland as circumstances might demand. He said he would not bind himself by oath to any particular form of settlement. It was only due to great pressure from de Valera that Michael Collins consented to go to London. Collins held out against going for a long time but de Valera insisted.

*I wish to record my personal opinion, said Mr. O'Higgins, that no public man was ever so treacherously treated by a colleague as was Michael Collins by Mr. de Valera.*

All the evidence goes to show that de Valera abandoned the Republic before the Treaty. Harry Boland told Bishop Phelan to speak to the people of the United States on these lines. Dr. McCartan frankly told the Dail, in debate on the Treaty, that the Republic was let down, not in London, but in Dublin, and that, though he was a Republican, he would rather stand with the men who signed the Treaty than with the quibblers at home. Griffith, Boland, McCartan, O'Higgins, and scores of people through the country all testify that de Valera was seeking deliverance from the "strait jacket" of the Republic which he believed impossible of attainment. But as soon as the Treaty was signed he turned on the men who signed it and pretended that the Republic was his ideal. From America he sent us word not to advocate a Republic but to insist on self-determination. Collins and Griffith signed as a pledge to recommend the Treaty to the Dail. The Treaty was ratified by Dail Eireann and acclaimed by the Irish people exercising their right of self-determination at the elections. Then de Valera denied the right of the people to self-determination and determined to coerce them by force to accept his views—that is, his latest views. It is no wonder that a staunch, whole-time Republican wrote us from Ireland that de Valera had failed miserably in the crisis and proved a worthless leader.

### Towards Peace

There are indications that the people of Ireland are becoming tired of the civil strife which is plunging their country into ruin, and that many of the Irregulars are ready to lay down their arms in spite of the danger to themselves in doing so. Liam Deasy, whom Collins regarded as the bravest and most efficient of the commandants in the war against the Black-and-Tans, recently made overtures, together with hundreds of other prisoners, engaging to attempt to persuade their friends to lay down their arms. Commenting on this move, the *Nation and Athenaeum*, February 17, says:

The issue of peace remains foremost in people's minds in Ireland, and the negotiations entered on a new phase last week. Liam Deasy, the Irregulars' assistant chief of staff, then a prisoner in the hands of the Free State Army, followed up steps he had taken in the same direction when at liberty by a circular letter to his colleagues containing proposals for capitulation. His action was recognised by the Free State military authorities in a new offer of amnesty to all who surrender their arms before February 18. Deasy's proposal has been formally turned down by Liam

Lynch, speaking on behalf of the Republicans, but not before it had been backed by hundreds of Republican prisoners in Limerick and Clonmel, and by the surrender of armed bands in Westmeath and Cork. It is still to be seen whether the rejection of this particular proposal ends the matter for the moment, or whether de Valera will seek to regain in interminable discussion and unending counter-proposals the ground he has lost everywhere else. Free State opinion regards the surrenders which have taken place as the beginning of a landslide, and it is plain from their very exhortations to stand firm that great nervousness pervades the dwindling Republican ranks. The moment is propitious for peace. Such honest men as remain to them must be dismayed at the barbarity of the struggle, and such political sense as they have left must recognise its suicidal nature.

On this point an Irish correspondent writes:

"The honorable way out is for the Republicans to throw themselves into a constitutional campaign for the revision of the Treaty. The doctrinaires amongst them hold themselves debarred from this course by the terms of the oath as at present in the Free State Constitution. It is a self-created difficulty which anti-dynastic parties on the Continent have always ignored, but it is none the less real, as is shown by the interview published this week by the *Manchester Guardian* with such a typical intransigent as Miss MacSwiney. The interview was her attempted defence of Mr. de Valera against a damaging analysis of his conduct by the Free State Minister of Home Affairs, and in its course she was asked:

'Question—Supposing the oath then were made optional?

'Answer—Then we should go in and fight them inside—perhaps. I am not sure. We want the oath to be taken out completely.'

"Miss MacSwiney, it will be observed, speaks only of possibilities, and her hungry intransigence will not be satisfied by the mere deletion of the oath. But it is quite certain that an optional or revised oath would completely change the character of the struggle."

In an editorial on the subject the *Freeman* (Dublin) says:

A great hope has seized the heart of Ireland. The fighting men, not the hurlers on the ditch and the men "who belong to no party," are making a genuine effort at peace. Liam Deasy, under sentence of death, has asked for time to attempt something "for the future of Ireland." Six hundred prisoners in Limerick have also asked for an opportunity to press upon their leaders the futility of the war of extermination. They do not want Ireland to be turned into "ashes and blood," to use their own words.

These men are no doubt prisoners, and they will be reproached in some mean quarters with concern for themselves; but those who remember Michael Collins's description of Liam Deasy will be able to discount any depreciation of Liam Deasy's purpose. Up to the moment of his capture Deasy was a leading brain in the fight against the Free State. He has faced death a hundred times for his opinions. His eagerness for the fight did not begin when the fight was to be with his own countrymen. He fought the British foot to foot through Munster. If he has agreed that the fight against the Irish people's will and desire should now cease, we may rest assured it is because he, as a soldier, has taken the measure of its hopelessness. His peace overture is an act of genuine moral courage. The Limerick prisoners are unanimously of the same mind.

The Government have received these overtures as we should have expected. As their proclamation shows, the Government are not "out for scalps," nor do they believe in a policy of victimisation, sorely as they and the people whom they represent have been tried. At Liam Deasy's suggestion they have suspended all executions for the time being, even though the campaign of destruction goes on. Nobody will any longer have a doubt where the responsibility rests for the continuance of the struggle. Moreover, the Government will be given a perfectly free hand. They cannot again be indicted for the measures necessary to put an end to a

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