

Republican SÍNN FÉIN Poblachtach

Theobald Wolfe Tone Commemoration
Bodenstown, County Kildare

2010

Oration by ex-POW Stíofán Ó Dálaigh (former OC Republican Prisoners, Maghaberry jail) at the Republican Sinn Féin commemoration at the Grave of Theobald Wolfe Tone at Bodenstown, Co Kildare, Sunday, June 13:

A chairde agus a chomrádaithe

It is a great honour for me to address you all here today. As you and I gather here today we remember with pride not only the name of Theobald Wolfe Tone but the legacy he left behind. In the eyes of genuine Republicans he is viewed as the father of Irish Republicanism, a description truly deserving of a great man.

Wolfe Tone was only 35 years of age when he died for the cause in which he believed. That cause was to unite the people of Ireland, and I quote:

“To subvert the tyranny of our execrable government, to break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils, and to assert the independence of my country – these were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman, in the place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter – these were my means.

“To unite Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter under the common name of Irishman in order to break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils, that was my aim.

“If the men of property will not support us, they must fall. Our strength shall come from that great and respectable class, the men of no property”.

Tone was a revolutionary, he accepted in the short-term that debate on reform would have to take place but when talking would fail, revolt would happen. In 1798, like today, the United Irishmen would be scoured with informers like all revolutionary struggles throughout the world. There were and are those who are driven by the love of monetary wealth. In the case of Wolfe Tone his plans were betrayed to the British by a corrupt attorney.

The history of Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen is known to all you who attend here today. It is imperative that we, the Republicans of today, lead from the front as our forefathers did. It is true of today's struggle that we face many enemies; we have those whose sole desire is the total destruction of Irish Republicanism.

These people have been corrupted by their greed and as a result they have allowed themselves to become entrenched in criminality. The British government has a vested

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interest in Republicanism, they have for decades infiltrated all of the revolutionary bodies. However it must be stressed that the British would fail in their attempts if not for the help they undoubtedly receive from the hateful type of person that becomes an informer.

Today's struggle is no different from the struggle faced by Plunkett, Pearse and Tone. We the Republican people of today find ourselves in the minority. Our dedication to see our country free from the chains of British imperialism has been used by our enemies not only on the outside but from within. We have seen those who pretend to be Republican tarnish the good name of the Republican Movement by involving themselves with criminals, drug dealers and known informers. These people have asked for support in their actions claiming they are involved in taking 'military action'. What are these military actions they speak of, extortion, protection of drug dealers, racketeering and the shooting of teenagers; these are not the actions of a revolutionary Republican Movement. These are the actions of a criminal gang. Criminality cannot and will not be tolerated. The Republican Movement will no longer allow such gang lords to operate under the banner of Republicanism. Your dirty deeds have been uncovered.

As a result of these actions by criminals and informers, we the true Republicans must rebuild and regain the trust of not only our communities but of the whole of Ireland and the rest of the world. The road ahead will be difficult, we have a lot to overcome but these difficult situations are not insurmountable. The path we walk is well-worn, but it has not led us wrong yet. Of course there were those who deviated and they have the audacity to look over their shoulders and call us elitist. Well we say to you, the path we remain on is the same one our forefathers stood on, and if it was good enough for them than its good enough for us.

At this moment in time we have Republican Prisoners of War fighting for the reintroduction of political status. These men, some of whom are only teenagers, are involved in the third phase of Republican struggle. For centuries the British imperialist forces have been guilty of horrendous and heinous acts of barbarism against Republican prisoners. Today is no different.

Republican prisoners are locked in their cells for up to 23 hours a day. If a Republican prisoner has a legal visit he is then denied any form of exercise as a result he gets no fresh air. Republican prisoners are being subjected to strip-searches on a daily basis and now family members of Republican prisoners are being strip-searched on visits to see their sons, fathers and husbands.

Meals are handed in through locked doors, these meals are either served cold or lukewarm; bread has been handed to Republican prisoners already mouldy. Showers are being denied and some of the Republican prisoners have not have not had a

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shower in up to three weeks. Republican prisoners have been subjected to attacks by prison staff; one man received a boot in the face. A number of men have been beaten up by the notorious search team and forcibly removed from their comrades and placed in isolation.

The Northern Ireland Office (NIO), the British government and the prison service have denied all of the above, but as a former Republican prisoner I know that all of the reports are accurate. The Prison Officers association (POA) and not the governor run Maghaberry jail (Co Antrim). They have planted names in the cell of a Republican prisoner which resulted in the governor resigning. They are refusing to accept that change is necessary and that contrary to their assumptions the Republican prisoners are only looking to be treated with dignity and respect.

We the Republican people of Ireland hereby state that we will not stand idly by and let this abuse continue. The Republican Prisoners of War have our fullest support and dedication, we salute you.

I would like to finish by saying that the struggle in which Tone gave his life for is still ongoing. We the Republican people must move forward and once again strike a blow for Ireland. Let us not forget the sacrifices of the past and that the men and women who died for Ireland did so, not for any fringe benefits, but for the Republican cause and a united and free Ireland. "There are those who are and those who pretend to be."

To you, the true Republican people who gathered here today, I would like to thank you for your attendance, you are following in the footsteps of great men and women and their sacrifices and yours will not be forgotten.

Stay true to the cause of Ireland.

Tiocfaidh Ár Lá.