

# TO THE IRISH PEOPLE

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Your country stands in the shadow of a great disaster. Lord French, the hero of Ypres, the British General who in August, 1914, set out to march to Berlin, and succeeded after three years and nine months in getting as far as Dublin, is slowly and surely perfecting his military organisation for the purpose of imposing the English Conscription Act in Ireland. He has reported to the English War Cabinet that conscription can be enforced at the cost of the lives of a thousand English soldiers and possibly those of a few thousand Irishmen and that then the way will be easy. It is the intention of the English War Cabinet to enforce Conscription on Ireland despite all speeches and statements to the contrary. They only await their own time. Listen to these words written by Eamonn De Valera from Lincoln Jail:—“We are anxious that the attention of the people should be directed to **one food question only**—that of retaining in Ireland sufficient food for the Irish people. The increase in the amount of food grown this year carries with it the danger that the people will be less careful, less provident, when the harvest is in. The poorer people in the larger cities who are suffering cruelly at present may very well be in a worse plight next spring if the lure of high prices for exportation is not combated in the autumn. Now is the time for making arrangements for the securing of stocks so that the poor may be able to buy next winter at reasonable prices. All the energy of your Food Committee will be needed to make a success of any scheme that may be devised, and we shall be very happy to put up with our short commons if we feel that it will result in more food for, say, some of the little children in Dublin. Remember, there is no knowing how long it may suit the cause of the political mountebanks to keep us here, nor to what extent they may consider it desirable to increase our present numbers. Conscription is not quite dead yet. England wants the Irish harvests gathered in. A winter campaign might suit the Irish Expeditionary Force. Cumann na mBan will have its hands full.”

De Valera is a man who does not speak lightly. When in April last he said conscription would not be enforced till after the harvest people were inclined to smile. In the four months that have elapsed since what have our military governors done to justify the opinion that the conscription menace has passed. They have flooded our country with military, with machine guns, armoured cars, tanks of poison gas. They have disposed their military so as to effectively ring round the districts where the drive is to be first carried out. They have with their vile press propaganda poisoned the minds of their own people, of their Allies, and, to a large extent, of America against our country, and **they have taken steps to prevent our cries being heard when England presses her iron heel upon us.** England realises the importance of the fact that in view of the whole world Ireland has defied her mandate. She knows that the world is looking on while this fine old nation that has never been conquered tells the proud mistress of the seas that her sons and daughters will die sooner than accept the slave status. When by the united action of her people Ireland breaks England's will in this country, English domination ceases and Ireland's claim to freedom is established without further argument. And England cannot lightly let this go. The British Lion has been badly mauled in this war, but he reckons that if he cannot smash the German Eagle he can at least destroy the Irish wolf-dog and so well has he succeeded in inflaming the prejudices of the British democracy (whose love of fair play is proverbial) that a British victory in Ireland would be hailed in England with rejoicing. **Therefore do ye get ready.**

If you are being lulled into security by Mr. Shortt's antics you are very short-sighted. Shortt is the decoy who is to occupy our attention and divert it until the English War Lords are ready to strike, and that will be when the harvest has gone to England. French is preparing to strike, and the minds of his soldiers are filled with the blood-lust of the holocaust they are going to have in Ireland. They may be too sanguine as to the result.

This is not written for you men who have arms. You have your orders and you know what to do. But you men without arms. What are you thinking of? Indulging in an idle surmise that they won't do it? The fighting men will not allow themselves to be hampered by mobs of unarmed men. Therefore get your weapon. A pitch-fork is not as good as a machine-gun, but it's better than an idle surmise when you want to defend yourself or capture a rifle. When you have got your weapon go to the men you know in your district and you'll get your orders.

This will be a holy war—a fight for the existence of your race, for your religion, for Ireland and, if it starts, it will be a fight to a finish. Your comrades are everywhere on Irish soil, in the Glens of Antrim, the Hills of Connemara, on the Banks of the Slaney, in the Streets of Dublin. When England strikes they will fight for you and you for them. See to it that if England tries to trample us out of existence—and that is what she means to do if she can—she knows as well as you do that Irish conscripts will never fight against England's foes—see to it then that she pays the price. Then, if you are taken dead, be assured of this, that you have helped to hand on to the future generations the legacy that has been handed on to you—the unsullied honour of the grandest race the world has known—the race that spurned their blood-built Empire and faced their millions and their might with a courage worthy of Ireland. Be assured of this, too, that if we go down we bring them down with us, for the war will not be confined to Ireland . . . and they will know the flame of Irish vengeance.

**Therefore get ye ready!** Your country stands in the shadow of a great trial and the holy martyrs of Ireland whose names will never die are looking on. The future is dark and uncertain, but the pillars of Empire are not what they were. We have helped to shake them. To us may be given the glory of bringing them tumbling down. God grant it!

**A DIA SAOR FIRE**