

# The Easter Rising of 1916: 'A Terrible Beauty Is Born'

By **Jim Cornelius**  
News Editor

*MacDonagh and MacBride  
And Connolly and Pearse  
Now and in time to be,  
Wherever green is worn,  
Are changed, changed  
utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.  
— William Butler Yeats*

Monday, April 24, 1916. The British Empire is locked in a death struggle with Germany in Belgium and Northern France.

In Dublin, Ireland, a collection of idealists, Celtic cultural mystics, and labor socialists about 1,250 strong seize several key municipal buildings downtown and declare the Irish Republic.

It is the beginning of the Easter Rising of 1916 — a military failure that turned into a symbolic victory of sacrifice and armed struggle that would one day lead to the founding of the Irish Republic.

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The Irish Volunteer Army (stiffened by hardcore members of the secret Irish Republican Brotherhood) was led by a schoolteacher and poet named Padraig Pearse, with reinforcements from James Connolly's Irish Citizens Army, and a contingent of women from the paramilitary Cumann na mBan (The Irishwomen's Council). Connolly was a noted socialist and labor agitator, unlike Pearse, who was a Celtic Catholic romantic nationalist. Pearse stood forth from

this strange collection of radicals of different stripes in front of Dublin's General Post Office and proclaimed:

**IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN:**  
*In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.*

*Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.*

Their confidence was misplaced. A shipment of arms from Germany — who was happy to disrupt its enemy Great Britain, but not to commit serious resources to the endeavor — had been scuttled at sea when intercepted by the Royal Navy. And the vast majority of the population of Ireland was not behind an uprising. Thousands of Irishmen — Catholic and Protestant alike — were fighting in the trenches on the Western Front, believing that their loyal service to King and Country would earn peaceful Home Rule for Ireland, and perhaps, eventually, independence.

Most of the Irish, no less than the British, saw the Easter Rising of 1916 as a stab in the back, abetted by the vile Hun. The takeover in Dublin and smaller actions throughout the countryside would not spark a revolution.

**“...all was “changed, changed utterly. A terrible beauty is born.”**

The British Army poured troops and artillery into Dublin to suppress the Rising. They surrounded the General Post Office and other occupied buildings and blasted them to rubble with heavy guns. The rebel Irish occupiers did little firing — the British mounted no assaults and hunkered down behind improvised barricades and armored cars (at least one made out of boilerplate steel from the Guinness brewery) and offered precious few targets.

However, one contingent of Tommies was ambushed on Mount Street as they attempted to cross Dublin's Grand Canal, and were mowed down in numbers by ferocious and accurate rifle fire from 17 Irish Volunteers holed up in houses along the street. They killed or wounded 240 British troops.

But with some 16,000 soldiers surrounding the 1,250 Irish republicans, pounding them with artillery fire, the

outcome was not in doubt. The GPO caught fire from the shelling and the rebels tunneled out to occupy a new position. Realizing that breaking out from this new position was impossible, and that civilian casualties were mounting, Pearse surrendered all the Volunteers on Saturday, April 29.

The Dublin population, furious at the civilian casualties and the destruction of the municipal core, reviled the defeated republicans. It looked like the Easter Rising of 1916 would go down among the long litany of failed Irish uprisings.

Then the British authorities made a mistake. Angered by 143 deaths at the hands of the rebels, and many more wounded, infuriated by what they considered a treacherous attack in the midst of an existential conflict, the authorities swiftly began court-martialing and executing the rebels by firing squad in Kilmainham Gaol.

Padraig Pearse whistled as he was led from his cell and died facing the guns and clutching a crucifix. James Connolly was so badly wounded that he had to be strapped to a chair to be shot.

The cold-bloodedness of the executions — and the courage with which the rebels went to their deaths — stirred and shifted public opinion.

Claims of British atrocities began to emerge, including a report that troops infuriated by a nasty ambush, had executed 15 accused rebels in houses on King Street in Dublin, shooting or bayoneting them, then robbing their corpses and burying them secretly in the yard.

Such stories made the British look exactly like the oppressive occupiers the Republicans proclaimed them to be, and abraded a raw cultural nerve that still felt the sensation of 300 years and more of atrocity and oppression.

An abject military failure, the Easter Rising nevertheless overturned the political outlook entirely. A satisfactory peaceful settlement of the Irish Question became virtually impossible. When Irish nationalists rose again in 1919 to launch a savage guerrilla war against Great Britain, the climate had changed. The Irish were ready to accept the use of violence to achieve independence.

As William Butler Yeats would write in his famous poem, “Easter: 1916,” though the fate of the Republican martyrs might be seen as needless death, yet in some sense, they did succeed in their aim, for all was “changed, changed utterly. A terrible beauty is born.”

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**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**Sisters Urban Renewal Agency Annual Report**  
The Annual Financial Report for fiscal year ending June 30, 2015 for the Sisters Urban Renewal Agency has been prepared and is on file at Sisters City Hall, 520 E. Cascade Avenue and is summarized here. In FY 2014-15 Sisters URA received \$1,598,569 in revenue, spent \$352,609 on projects and administration, and paid \$928,515 in principal and interest. Estimated tax revenues and interest for FY 2015-16: \$238,875. Budgeted expenditures for FY 2015-16: \$354,450 (Capital Projects Fund) and \$224,814 (Debt Service Fund). Interested persons may obtain a copy by contacting Finance Officer, Joseph O'Neill at 541-323-5222 or [joneill@ci.sisters.or.us](mailto:joneill@ci.sisters.or.us). A copy is also available on the City's website, [www.ci.sisters.or.us](http://www.ci.sisters.or.us).  
An analysis of the tax collection impact on the permanent rate of other tax districts is shown in the table below.

Taxing District	FY 14/15 Forgone Revenue	FY 14/15 Permanent Rate Levy	% of Permanent Rate Levy
Deschutes County	10,974	25,028,729	0.04%
Fairgrounds Bond	1,172	2,679,506	0.04%
County Library	4,722	10,700,489	0.04%
Countywide Law Enforcement	8,141	18,481,804	0.04%
County Extension/4H	163	437,202	0.04%
9-1-1	1,368	3,148,864	0.04%
City of Sisters	22,697	837,770	2.71%
Sisters/Camp Sherman Fire District	23,258	2,034,273	1.14%
Sisters Park & Recreation District	1,889	255,182	0.74%
School District #6	35,234	7,254,890	0.49%
School #6 Bond 2001	8,825	1,815,973	0.49%
High Desert ESD	814	1,843,045	0.04%
C.O.C.C.	5,308	11,859,779	0.04%
<b>Total</b>	<b>124,563</b>	<b>86,377,504</b>	<b>0.14%</b>