

SPEECH OF DE VALERA

(Continued from Page 2.)

have been planted. These foreigners were planted in Ireland, in every one of the provinces, and therefore the Irish race is not pure, any more than the race of any modern nation. They are all mixed; the blood is mingled of Gael and Gaul, as we say, so much so that the Gaul had long ago been absorbed into the Irish nation. And these men, their ancestors were some of the sturdiest supporters of Irish independence. Grattan was of that stock; Flood was of that stock; Wolfe Tone was of that stock; Robert Emmett was of that stock; (Applause.) Mitchell was of that stock; Smith-O'Brien, even—perhaps, in his case not so purely; Parnell was of that stock; (Applause.) Therefore, it is a misrepresentation to make it appear that those who inhabit that northeast corner of Ireland differ in any way from the rest of the people of Ireland, except in the fact that they hold different political views. They are simply a different political party, with different political zones, just as your Democratic party and your Republican party might differ. And the Solid South that I have heard talked of here is in no wise different from this. They have voted politically for the past, in the most part, in the same way. Therefore, you can see that these men can put forward no just claim for self-determination.

"There is one excuse might be put forward: We might be told, 'Well, there will be a minority in the whole country. Now, you can have no democratic government without a minority. In no country will all the people of the country have the same political opinions. Therefore, if you were to have democracy at all, you must have a minority. But suppose that plea is put forward, if you cut that portion off, as I told you, you would have difficulty to find what to cut off, because it would be one thing today and another thing tomorrow. (Laughter.) But suppose we take the results of the last election, cut that portion off up there, will it settle the minority problem? No, it creates two minority problems. You have here a minority of the same political views as the orange (indicating on the map), and in that portion which we have marked orange—the colors only show you the majorities—in that portion which is marked orange you would have the Nationalist minority, which will have to be subject to the majority, a minority which is relatively bigger. In that area there are more Nationalists, relatively, to Unionists, than there are Unionists relatively to the whole of Ireland. That is, in that portion you would be creating another minority question, a more intense question, and therefore you can see it was never put forward in good faith by anybody, as a political solution of the difficulty, or having a minority subject to a majority. You can't solve that question with democracy. You must always have, if you are to have any popular rule, you must have a minority subject for the time being to the majority. They have a habit of changing from minority to majority. That is what political parties do. Today the Republicans will be in a minority; tomorrow they may be in a majority, and the time after the Democrats may be in the majority again. So, you see, you can't solve that—to attempt to uphold the attitude of the minority which says that the majority are not to rule, is to uphold a principle that is going to end all rule of the people by the people.

Not a Religious Question.

"Now, I have said a couple of times that this question is a political question. You are told very assiduously by British propaganda that it is a religious question. In other words, you are told that the basis of division in Ireland between parties is religious, and not political. I say that is a lie, a demonstrable lie! (Applause.) To prove to you that it is false, will you not grant me this, that if it were a division on religious grounds, that it would be very unlikely to have the leaders of the Catholics Protestants, and to have some of the Protestant leaders Catholics? If this were a question of Protestant and Catholic, don't you think that the Catholics would choose Catholics for their leaders and Protestants would choose Protestants? I think you will agree with me that that is a fair test.

"Now, let us consider the history of this Republican movement. It was started first by the man of that very corner which today is orange. It was started in the northeast corner of Ireland by Presbyterians from that corner. (Applause.) They were the same stock that with their Catholic fellow countrymen, with whom they were at one at the time in Ireland, entered Washington's army. When you hear of the Protestants in Washington's army, remember that they were Irishmen who wanted Irish independence, and it didn't matter whether they were Protestants or Catholic, they all wanted that in Ireland, and they were willing to give their lives in fighting for it in their new country, America. (Applause.) So they are making a point for us, and not for the present inhabitants of the northeast corner of Ireland with their present political views. Those who draw the attention of the Americans to the fact that Protestants fought in Washington's army, these Protestants stood for the Irish republic. Wolfe Tone was the first, the founder of this Republican movement. That flag of ours (Applause) was chosen as a Republican flag, a tri-color, and the orange in it is to typify the men from the northeast corner, the Orangemen, who are united with the Nationalists, green, to win Irish independence. (Applause.) It started, then, this so-called Catholic movement, started with Protestants. Its founder was a Protestant; his comrades were Protestants. You had Orr and McCabe and Russell and myriad names at the

time, they all stand out in the history of the period. "Eleven Presbyterian ministers were hanged by the British for standing for Irish independence. Surely they weren't hanged for standing for Catholicism. Come down a few years further, the next name, the next time a fight was fought for Irish independence, an armed fight, 1803, we have the name of Robert Emmet, another Protestant (loud applause)—another Protestant who, I suppose, was hanged for leading the Catholics. (Laughter and applause.) That reminds me, in these days, when you are fighting for Ireland, you are pro-French, so he was hanged as a French emissary, if you please. The Irishmen of that day were pro-French when they fought for Ireland, because England was fighting France; and a few centuries earlier the Irishmen who were fighting for the independence of Ireland were pro-Spanish, just the same as the Irishmen in the last war who fought for Irish independence were said to be pro-German, or pro-something else. (Applause.)

An Old Fight.

"This war of ours began seven hundred and fifty years ago. We have had one enemy, one fight, for seven hundred and fifty years; and those who say we stabbed America in the back I would like them to remember that we were in this particular fight of ours before Columbus was born; (applause) that we were fighting that fight of ours before I think a member of the family of Hohenzollern sat on any throne in Prussia. And, as I am on that question, I might point out to you, those who say we stabbed America in the back, that 1916, April, 1916, is exactly one year before April, 1917, and that we fought our fight and were in English convict jails when you started into this war, and, therefore, that when we fought our fight, this one battle, in a long campaign of seven hundred and fifty years, we fought it at a time when you did not believe that profession of Britain that Britain was fighting for any altruistic motives; that she was fighting for any country except fighting for that which the secret treaties showed she was fighting for, and which the peace that has been signed at Paris shows she did not fight for in vain. (Applause.) We fought in Dublin; and if we had fought even after you came into the war it would prove nothing. We have our enemy, and as long as we have that enemy we don't want any more. (Laughter and Applause.) (And as long as we have that enemy, no matter who is fighting for her or against her, we will be against her. (Loud applause; map removed from stage.)

America's Resistance.

"When I think of that, I always remember the speech of the Earl of Chatham at the time of the fight of the Colonies for their independence, when he excused the attitude of the Colonies saying, 'If I were an American, so long as there was a foreign army, a foreign soldier, in my country, I would never lay down my arms; Never! Never! Never!' (Applause.) Many of you have read that speech, and many of you felt that as Americans you would never lay down your arms; Never! Never! Never! (Applause.) And I ask you to consider this and suppose that after a thousand years of freedom a foreign foe were to come in here and destroy your civilization, or attempt to destroy it, and enforce his will with a superior army to yours for the time being; do you think that if for seven hundred and fifty years you contested or were contesting his right, that if George Washington and Jefferson and his comrades had not won their fight (applause)—had not won their fight, but had been hanged, drawn and quartered and burned in quicklime by Britain, and the next generation produced new Washingtons and new Jeffersons, as I am sure in this country it would produce them; had they, too, suffered the fate of the first, and had Jefferson and Washingtons fought again in the next generation, as they would in every country where good red blood flows in its inhabitants; had they, too, shared the fate of those that had preceded them and if at the beginning of this war England was treating your country, subjecting it to all the misrule, which was such at the time of '76 that Jefferson considered it, and his comrades considered it, a justification for throwing off Britain's rule forever; do you think that you would have gone to fight under England's flag, that you would be deceived by England's hypocrisy about democracy, making the world safe for democracy? (Applause.) It is not so many years ago that England showed her anxiety about democracy and about the freedom of small people by robbing the Boer republics of their freedom to make, as I heard an American say—(applause)—to make, as I heard an American say, the world safe for diamonds. (Applause and laughter.)

"If those were the circumstances at the beginning of this war, would you have said to the British imperial power that was putting its heel upon your neck, would you say, 'I go and help you against the forces that are attacking you, and then, when I have helped you and saved you I will put down my neck in order that you may drive your heel more firmly into it when you are safe again?' (Laughter and applause.) I don't think there is any American here who would forget that their first duty was to America as long as a foreign soldier (applause)—a foreign soldier was upon their soil; and Americans would not forget that if there was a blow to be struck for freedom the first country to whom they owed it a duty to strike for its liberty was their own country. I have heard Americans say they are 100 per cent Americans; I have heard them say that they are Americans all the time! Why should it be a crime for Irishmen to say that they are Irishmen first, Irishmen last, and Irishmen all the time? (Applause.)

"I have drifted into this question of the war; I might as well finish it before I go back to the succession of Protestant leaders. In Ireland there were Irishmen who held that creed of 100 per cent Irishmen; men who said, 'England will not deceive us,' men who said, 'We know England's history, we know that she has never yet fought a fight for freedom except when the liberty of peoples that she wanted to free was going to break her commercial rivals and give her greater supremacy, when the liberty of the people she was going to free meant that she was going to have plunder out of the war.' I ask you, point to any war that Britain has been in that she has not got plunder out of it. (Applause.)

"England's history, to those who know it—and we in Ireland know it to our cost—those who know England's history—and when I talk of England, now, mind, I am not animated with any hate for the English people; I think the English people have a right to rule in their own country, and if they contained themselves to ruling their own country they would be as good as any other people (applause); I have nothing to say to the British democracy, except this, that they say their country is a democratic country, a country in which government is based upon the will of the people; if that be so, they are responsible as long as they live for any power, they are responsible for the misdoings of the government that they have put in power. (Applause.) It is with the government of England as it has been for centuries past that we have the quarrel. Once England ceases to do injustice to Ireland, we are ready to forget the past. (Applause.) But so long as England is guilty of iniquity in Ireland, we shall hate Britain's iniquity and we shall hate the instruments of that iniquity. (Applause.) But Britain's history has been this: She has today sided with A to beat B and get some of the possessions of B, and tomorrow she has joined with B to rob her previous partner, A, and get the possessions of A, and she robs them both in turn. (Applause.) That has been Britain's history.

Scraps of Paper.

"Of the sanctity of treaties in the mouth of the representatives of the nations, there was none as promising as perfidious Albion. The sanctity of treaties, indeed? Irishmen can point to scraps of paper, and it was not an Imperial German government, or any other government, that tore up these scraps of paper; it was the British government, the British Imperial government, and Lloyd George, who is their spokesman, himself tore them up. (Applause.) We, particularly those of us who have any relation to Limerick, remember Limerick, remember Limerick and Saxon treachery, because Limerick was a place at which a treaty was signed, a treaty signed by Britain's representatives and violated before the ink with which it was written was dry. And we had later treaties. In 1783, the year that England recognized the independence of America, she also, by a solemn act of her Parliament, recognized the sovereign independence of Ireland and declared that henceforward—these are the words—henceforward, forever, the sovereignty of the Irish Parliament should be unquestioned and unquestionable, and Pitt set about tearing up that treaty within eighteen years, when England could afford to tear it up. And so we have not forgotten, were not misled, particularly because, as I have said, Asquith himself, and Lloyd George and his companions had even at that time, within a few days before, violated solemn pledges that were given to the people's representatives, the representatives of the Irish people, and so we would be fools if we were taken in by England's altruistic professions at that time. We know that it was not for the sake of Belgium, or the sake of France, or any other country, but for her own selfish sake, that England entered the war; and we (applause)—we, the Irish people, of whom it was said that they fought every nation's battles but their own, we thought—some of us, anyhow—thought that the time was come when at least we should fight for once our own battles. We did not want to be instruments to be used by England, and then, when she had used us, that she should fling us aside.

"Unfortunately, there were people in Ireland who, in the generosity of their hearts—and it is hard to blame them, it is hard to find fault, even, with their want of judgment, because the cry of liberty is a cry which has a potent spell over the heart of every Irishman; for generation after generation Irishmen have been striving for that liberty. They have seen themselves ruthlessly crushed by a power that they knew was inferior in everything but in brute force. And the cry, 'Remember Belgium!—See Belgium!—Belgium to which some of them, fugitives from British misrule, once fled—'See France!—oh, which Sarsted and his brigades went—'See them! They were your friends! See them invaded now! Will you not go and help them?' And the Irish people, I would like you to consider how generous they were, these Irishmen who have let their hearts, as I have often put it, their hearts run away with their heads, they forgot that they were fighting for a power that was committing a crime against their own land, even at the time—Irishmen and women were shot down in the streets of Dublin, three days before the declaration of war, by British soldiers—they were to forget that the power under whose banner they were going to serve was a power that was committing on themselves exactly the things which they represented Germany as committing against Belgium, and in their own case there could be no doubt about it, they could see it with their own eyes; they knew from their history that time after time in the past it had been done, by England. They

forgot that; they forgot that the flag under which they were going to serve was a flag every shred of which was stained with the blood of the noblest of their own race. They forgot all that. Aye, they forgot more, or, rather, they put aside all that; they put aside more; they put aside the knowledge that they must have had, that even then England was laying the lines to cheat them at the end. What was the meaning of Earl Grey's statement, which was flashed out through the whole world, 'Ireland is the one bright spot?' The meaning of that statement was that they were even starting then to misrepresent Ireland. They wanted to make it appear that these men who went into England's armies out of the generosity of their hearts, that these men were fighting, not for Belgium, not for France, but were fighting because they loved England, (laughter), fighting because at last they were satisfied with British rule. Oh, they began to exult and to gloat, and they said, 'Oh, there will be no Home Rule question any more. It is settled forever. The Irish are at last assimilated. The Irish nation is dead at last. We have won this fight of seven hundred and fifty years. The Irish in the eyes of the world will no longer be distinguishable from the English. Why have they gone out to fight under our flag? Who will believe them if they say that they were oppressed by the nation which that flag was the symbol of?' Oh, who would believe them? Do you think, if we could hear throughout the world today, we would be laughed at if we said we went into that fight with all these grievances against England, that we went in under her banner and forgot them all. What would you say? You would say, 'They must have been very light grievances, indeed, if you were able to forget them so easy.' And so England was beginning then to misrepresent them. If they had eyes open they could see it.

Ireland and Poland.

"England has wiped out, in seventy years, four and a half millions of that race. She has cut down in seventy years a population of eight and a half millions to four and a half. The part of Poland that was under the Czar has doubled its population in these seventy years. The part of Poland that was under the Emperor of Austria has doubled its population and increased its prosperity in these seventy years. The part of Poland that was under the Kaiser, even—and you know how the Kaiser's rule of Poland was written up during the war—Poland under the Kaiser has doubled its population in these seventy years. Had Ireland been ruled as well as any part of Poland, we would today not be a nation of four and a half millions; we, too, would have doubled our population; we would have had today a population of eighteen millions. (Applause.) Yes, wiped out ruthlessly, when the world was not looking; wiped out four and a half millions of people. Ah, 'Tis she did it! Don't think it is a question of race suicide, or anything of that sort in Ireland. (Laughter and applause.) Scientifically estimated, there is but one people in the whole world who have a higher birthrate than ours, and that people is the people of Holland; and today, for some time past, we have had the highest, in fact, the only increasing birthrate—well, the highest; in fact, I think it is the only increasing birthrate in Europe. So that, you see, that not merely should we have doubled our population, as Poland did, these countries in subjection, but that we should have done

much more, if England's rule was only as good in Ireland as the Czar's rule was in Poland, or the Emperor of Austria's rule was in Poland, or the Kaiser's rule was in Poland.

Ireland's Volunteers.

"And, hence, you see that we are a nation of only four and a half millions. We have more than our share of old people, because we have the old people for a population of almost double the size. We had, as so estimated by Britain, available for military service, in Ireland—of course, when they wanted to misrepresent Ireland they put it much more—but when their own estimate was given they estimated the total men available in Ireland, with the same methods followed as in England, would only be four hundred thousand. Of these four hundred thousand, this nation that was supposed to be selfish during the war contributed two hundred and fifty thousand volunteers. (Applause.) Two hundred and fifty thousand volunteers from a nation that was destroyed by British rule. And the aim of Britain was to take all the young men and to kill them all off and thus end the Irish question forever. But you probably don't appreciate what two hundred and fifty thousand men, at first sight, out of four and a half millions, means. You would, to be as generous as Ireland, have to give six million volunteers. Aye, and you would have to have given them from 1914 to 1918; you would have to have given six million volunteers to equal in proportion what Ireland gave in that war against all the odds, everything that would make her selfish. This nation that you accuse of selfishness in the war, if you were to lose as many soldiers—as many of her youth that she can so, even spare—if you were to have given as many of these to Flanders' fields and to Mesopotamia and all the rest of it, you would be mourning today, not seventy-five thousand, you would be mourning three million in proportion to the number Ireland mourns—Aye, and she has not the satisfaction of knowing that if she wanted not to be cheated she could not be cheated; you have that satisfaction; you know that if you wanted it you can see that they shall not be cheated out of their blood, of your seventy-five thousand, Ireland has lost her sons knowing that she will be cheated out of their blood, insofar as they fought in the hope that liberty would be established everywhere. They fought believing they were fighting for the sake of small nations, believing that they were helping these countries; aye, and believing, too—and since I have come here to America I have met Americans who are as much 100 per cent Americans as any Americans, who have said, 'We fought in that fight, we have Irish blood in our veins, and when we were engaging in that fight we thought, as did the men who went from Ireland to fight in that war, we thought that we were fighting for that which we sought out of the other nations that we sought to free.' (Applause.) But Ireland has lost her men, her youth, she has lost them, in men, as I said, that would correspond to three million from you, and she has no satisfaction in feeling that she will not be cheated out of their blood. As a matter of fact, Ireland mourns these men today, knowing that they have the tragedy of all tragedies in the war. Every one of them, as she feels, has laid down his life on Flanders' fields, felt as their life blood flowed, felt again what Sarsted felt, when he, on the same field of Flanders, saw his blood flowing for France, said, 'Oh, if it were

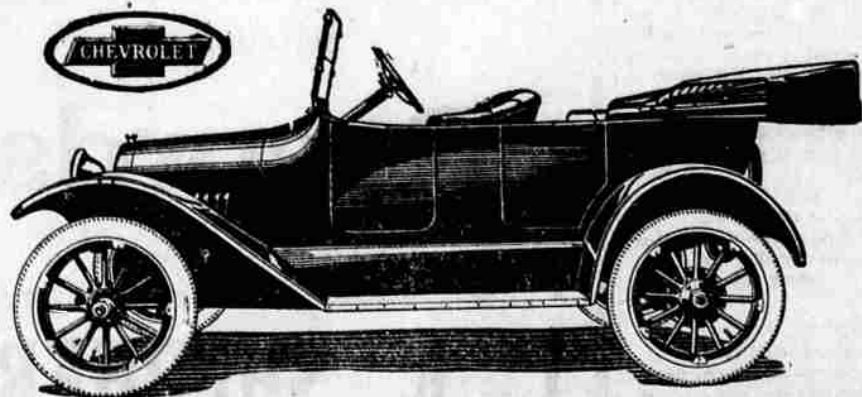
only for Ireland.' (Applause.) And these men, we know as they died, as they saw their life blood flow, Ah, many of them didn't die before they recognized that England had again fooled them. They did not die before they recognized that it was not for the principle of freedom everywhere they were fighting, but that their blood would be used to strengthen the power that had been crushing and strangling their own motherland for seven hundred and fifty years. Ah, that has been the tragedy of the war! "The tragedy of the war, as far as Ireland has been concerned, was not these men who went out and challenged England's power Easter Week in Dublin. It was not the men who were taken out and shot by Britain, thought they had fought as soldiers of war; they were taken out by Britain and shot, as Britain would have shot Washington and the rest if she had been able to beat them. (Applause.) The tragedy of the war has not been their death, for they, when they saw their life blood flowing, could with pride look at it and say, 'Oh, thank God, this is for Ireland.' (Applause.) They represented the men, who, as I have said, did not allow their hearts to run away with their heads. They were men who said, 'How can this be a war for the freedom of the peoples? If England were anxious to give freedom to all peoples, there are many millions she could give freedom to and to give them their freedom she had to conquer no Kaiser, no Emperor, no Sultan.' She could give them their freedom with a single stroke of her monarch's pen, and if she were unwilling to give them their freedom was she not there and then proven to be a hypocrite? And as such—(Applause)—as such, those of us who took the other line of action, those of us who said, 'Aye, if this is a war for liberty, we can be in it. We have a nation to free right here in Ireland. (Applause.) We don't want—if we want to fight for small nations, we don't need—to cross to Flanders' fields; we have the only small nation in Europe here in our own home, to whom we owe our first duty; we have that here to fight for ourselves, and if it be imperialism we want to fight against, if it be imperialism we want to destroy, oh, we don't need to go across the Channel to find imperialism that should be destroyed; we have imperialism here, we have British imperialism, British—to use the word that was used during the war—British Prussianism, which would put any Prussianism to shame. We have that (Applause); we have that to fight against. And we knew, we fought, we at least could not be cheated out of our blood.' Every man who fought felt, knew that really, in his own heart, that he was fighting for liberty subjectively, but he knew as a matter of fact that he was fighting for freedom, fighting against imperialism, fighting for those principles which must appeal to every man who has anything like love of country in his heart. And so they fought their fight, and the result of their fight has been this, that England no longer can pose as the champion of small peoples. We have torn that hypocritical mask off her imperial face. (Applause.)

(Continued on page 6.)

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