

1916: Seán MácDiarmada



Early Life

Seán Mác Diarmada was an Irish republican political activist and revolutionary leader. He was born on the 27th of January 1883 in Carranmore, Co. Leitrim. The area had a long history of British oppression and many reminders of An Gorta Mór. He was also heavily influenced by his father Donald McDermott, who was a member of the IRB. He was educated by the Christian Brothers and was a strong supporter of the Irish language and Irish culture.



Seán Mác Diarmada's house in Co. Leitrim where he grew up.

Before the Rising

Seán moved to Dublin in the year 1908, and by 1910 he became the manager of the radical newspaper called Irish Freedom. By then he had become a member of many organisations such as the Gaelic League, the Ancient order of Hibernia, Sinn Féin, The Irish Republican Brotherhood, and then the Irish Volunteers, he was also promoted to the military committee for the IRB. During this time Seán was stricken with polio and was forced to walk with a cane.



The 1916 Easter Rising

POBLACHT NA H EIREANN.
THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
OF THE
IRISH REPUBLIC
TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

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.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty: six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right, and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms; and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on behalf of the Provisional Government,

THOMAS J. CLARKE,	
SEAN MAC DIARMADA,	THOMAS MACDONAGH,
P. H. PEARSE,	EAMONN Ceannt,
JAMES CONNOLLY,	JOSEPH PLUNKETT.

In 1915 Seán was arrested for giving a speech against conscription into the British military during the Great War. By 1916 he had been promoted to the military committee of the IRB. Both Seán Mác Diarmada and Tomas Clark were the two main people responsible for the organising of the Easter Rising. He was also one of the seven signatories of the proclamation of the Irish Republic. Seán believed in armed rebellion and was not afraid to die for Ireland. He said “the Irish patriotic spirit will die forever unless a blood sacrifice is made in the next few years”.

The 1916 Easter Rising

Due to Seán having to walk on a cane he could not take part in the fighting during Easter week. Instead, Seán was stationed at rebel headquarters in the GPO as part of the provisional government. By the end of Easter week the rebels were defeated. After the surrender Seán almost escaped but he was recognised by a police man. He was then court martialed and executed by firing squad on the 12th of May 1916 at the age of thirty three.



The GPO after the destruction of the Rising

After the Rising



A memorial statue for Seán Mác Diarmada in his home town in Co. Leitrim.

Daniel Hoey, the police officer who recognised Seán after the surrender, and Lee Wilson the British officer who ordered Seán to be shot and not imprisoned, were both killed on Michael Collins orders during the War of Independence.

Just before his execution Seán wrote “I feel a happiness the likes of which i have never experienced. I die that the Irish nation might live”.