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► **To cite this version:**

Olivier Coquelin. Politics in the Irish Free State: The Legacy of a Conservative Revolution. *European Legacy*, 2005, Ireland: History and Literature, 10 (1), pp.29-39. 10.1080/1084877052000321967 . hal-02387451

HAL Id: hal-02387451

<https://hal.science/hal-02387451v1>

Submitted on 1 Dec 2024

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Politics in the Irish Free State: The Legacy of a Conservative Revolution

~ OLIVIER COQUELIN ~

ABSTRACT *This article is based on the premise that the social and political foundations of the geopolitical entity known as the Irish Free State was of a conservative nature, unique in Western Europe. Of course, conservative forces also featured prominently in the early twentieth-century in other European countries. However, they were counterbalanced by forces of opposition sufficiently powerful to generate a social and political balance that was practically nonexistent within the Irish Free State. When exploring the root cause of Ireland's conservative politics, I identify an ideological connection between the lack of radical forces in the Irish Free State and the revolution through which it was established. In other words, the 1916–23 Irish Revolution indisputably laid the foundations of the ideas that were to become the dominant ideology in southern Ireland during the 1920s and 1930s.*

Until recent times, Southern Ireland has been looked upon as a conservative State, mainly embodied by an omnipotent Catholic Church and a bipartite political system dominated by two right-wing political parties—Fianna Fáil and Cumann na nGaedheal/Fine Gael. While there is no disputing that the Irish Free State was established in 1922 as a result of a revolution, the aim of this revolution was merely to change the national identity of the rulers in Ireland within a native government liberated from the imperial authority. In other words, the Irish Revolution did not contain the seeds of any socioeconomic or socio-political changes despite both Sinn Féin's adoption of a social democratic programme—known as the Democratic Programme—and the social unrest that was an integral part of the War of Independence and the Civil War. Thus, the way was open for the most conservative sections of the Irish society to take the leadership of the new Free State. A phenomenon which was confirmed to a certain extent by Kevin O'Higgins, the Minister for Justice in the first Free State government. When he asserted in March 1923: "I think that we were probably the most conservative-minded revolutionaries that ever put through a successful revolution."¹

The purpose of this article is to highlight, on the one hand, the essentially conservative nature of the Irish Revolution and, on the other hand, its social and political repercussions on the Irish Free State. In doing so, I shall of course analyse the Irish revolutionaries' strategic and ideological development, starting with Sinn Féin.



Most historians trace the origins of the Irish Revolution to the abortive 1916 Easter Rebellion, which had been organized by both the Irish Volunteers and the workers' militia, known as the Irish Citizen Army. Although it took no direct part in the 1916 Insurrection, Sinn Féin was nevertheless to be the main beneficiary of the rising tide of patriotism, which followed the executions of the Insurrection's leaders.² Founded by Arthur Griffith in 1905, Sinn Féin actually represented the quintessence of the constitutional and revolutionary traditions within Irish nationalism, notably through the principle of civil disobedience,³ characterized by the refusal of the Irish Members of Parliament (MPs) to sit in Westminster so as to form instead an autonomous parliament in Dublin which would establish native institutions intended to render any British interference in Irish affairs null and void. In that way, according to Griffith, Ireland would assuredly force the imperial authorities into making her a self-governing country on the Austro-Hungarian model of the "Dual Monarchy," instituted in 1867.⁴ However, Ireland would not be fully emancipated, Griffith thought, without a policy of industrialization led by means of protectionist measures inspired by the concept of economic nationalism dear to the German theoretician, Friedrich List.⁵

The indisputable influence of Sinn Féin on the most advanced nationalists of the time did not mean that it threatened the electoral hegemony of John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party.⁶ Despite the fact that the 1916 Easter Rising was characterized by the press as the "Sinn Féin Insurrection," Griffith's party was to take advantage of the swing in public opinion in favour of the Easter rebels only in February 1917 when Count Plunkett was elected MP for North Roscommon as a Sinn Féin candidate.⁷ Henceforth, tens of thousands of people swelled the ranks of Sinn Féin which could count on about 250,000 members by October 1917. It was also during the same month that every separatist organization, from all shades of opinion, agreed to link themselves with Sinn Féin, with Eamon de Valera as its president in place of Griffith who had no thirst for power as long as his doctrine was adopted and followed by his party.⁸ From a small group of committed nationalists, Sinn Féin became a genuine mass movement by the end of 1917, a phenomenon which was to be confirmed by its crushing victory over the Irish Parliamentary Party in the December 1918 General Elections.⁹

In accordance with Griffith's policy of parliamentary abstention, the separatist representatives met in Dublin to form a native legislative assembly, the Dáil Eireann, and ratify the establishment of the Republic of Ireland, on 21 January 1919. That is the day when the military wing of Sinn Féin, the Irish Volunteers, began what was commonly called the War of Independence in County Tipperary.¹⁰ During the months which followed, the Dáil constituted a national government and set up its own administrative and economic organs in the counties under separatist control.¹¹ As a result, most of the local Councils came under the authority of the Republican Parliament.¹² Arbitration Courts were established to dispense justice in accordance to British law although independently of the official courts of justice.¹³ The Irish Volunteers—now called the Irish Republican Army (IRA)—took on themselves the role of the Royal Irish Constabulary in many places so as to maintain or restore law and order and enforce the decisions taken by the Dáil courts.¹⁴ A land bank was created so as to accelerate the process of land purchasing—initiated by the 1903 land reform—by means of loans made available to the tenants anxious to purchase their own farms.¹⁵

During its inaugural session, on 21 January 1919, the Dáil also adopted a social democratic programme, commonly called the Democratic Programme. Its socialistic nature was first the work of the trade-union leader, Thomas Johnson, whose original draft was regarded as too subversive by the Sinn Féin deputies. As a result, one of them, Seán T. O'Kelly, was asked to expurgate it of what was considered to be its most socially revolutionary passages.¹⁶ Nevertheless, even the expurgated version of the Democratic Programme, adopted by the Dáil, seemed to lay the foundations of a radical socio-economic change. However, the Dáil never implemented this socialist-oriented Democratic Programme for two primary reasons.

In the first place, it is important to remember that Sinn Féin had endorsed a strategy of winning over the international community to its cause. To this end, the separatist organization decided to restrict its revolutionary activity to the political sphere, so as to demonstrate to the world that the Irish people was capable of governing itself both responsibly and respectably despite the violent acts perpetuated by the IRA against the British institutions.¹⁷ In addition to worry over world public opinion, Sinn Féin found it necessary to gain the favour of the conservative sections of the Irish society whose financial support for the nationalist cause was felt to be of the utmost importance.¹⁸

It was therefore necessary, according to Sinn Féin, to eradicate through the IRA any attempts meant or at least likely to overthrow the social order, for fear that the rather reassuring picture of a sovereign Ireland where nothing would radically change from a socioeconomic standpoint might be blackened. Efforts to supposedly change Irish social and economic structures were frequent during the War of Independence. They included the establishment of soviets in the industrial field, land seizures by those small or landless farmers who had been excluded from the various agrarian reforms since 1903, and strikes organized by agricultural workers in the larger estates. This agitation symbolized the dissension within the Irish nation that needed to be controlled by the new Sinn Féin government. Hence, the establishment by the Dáil of Arbitration Courts which decided most cases in favour of the landlords revealed the conservative nature of Sinn Féin policy.¹⁹ Yet the goal of most social agitators of the time was to demand economic improvements, not with a view to overthrowing the existing system but to reforming it.²⁰ Furthermore, by 1916, most of the Irish farmers, who were actually the backbone of the independence movement, had benefited from the various land acts enacted since 1903 as well as high prices during the Great War.²¹ This meant that there was not great pressure from the masses that would encourage any republican leader to seek significant socioeconomic change.

But if that was the position held by the vast majority of Sinn Féin deputies, why did they unanimously adopt a supposedly progressive Democratic Programme? Because the circumstances of the time made it necessary for them to find favour with the labour movement. Their assistance was considered as important as that of the more prosperous farmers and business owners whether at the international level (so as to plead the cause of Ireland at the international socialist conference at Berne in 1919) or at the national level (by means of strikes intended to hinder the imperial institutions).²² Such rhetorical gestures meant to win over labour were sporadically made during the revolutionary era and undoubtedly contributed to urban workers, whether they were trade-unionists or not, rallying under the banner of the IRA.²³ Although a certain number of the republican soldiers were also trade-unionists,²⁴ the IRA was never to reconcile its essentially military

action with any socioeconomic programme despite the efforts within its ranks made by a few leaders, such as Peadar O'Donnell and Liam Mellows, to achieve this end. It is clear that most republican activists merely aimed at the complete political independence of Ireland. This last point is well illustrated notably by the following sentence written by one of the republican officers, Ernie O'Malley: "We could not see any definite social shape or direction to our efforts."²⁵ Therefore, when the IRA units officially intervened in social conflicts, they usually did it as the protectors of private propriety, not so much to defend the status quo as to eradicate all that could sow the seeds of division within the nationalist "community" and in particular class struggle.²⁶

The Civil War, which broke out in June 1922 following the split within Sinn Féin and the IRA over the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty signed in December 1921, hardly represented a struggle over social or economic issues. During the Civil War, the Free State regular troops strove to suppress any socioeconomic struggles, while the irregular IRA soldiers did not try to take advantage of the same struggles even though they were organized and supported by poor farmers and industrial workers.²⁷

What was the social and political aftermath of the 1916–23 Irish Revolution? In the first place, there is no denying that the establishment of the Irish Free State mostly benefited the upper classes.²⁸ Industrialists, businessmen and larger farmers actually wished to keep the economic relations with Britain based on free trade, thus rejecting Arthur Griffith's protectionism. Until the beginning of the 1930s, they put pressure on the pro-treaty faction of Sinn Féin—known as *Cumann na nGaedheal* from 1923 to 1933—to continue existing trade and other domestic economic policies.²⁹ This position became easier to defend within the republican movement once Arthur Griffith, the ideological mentor of the pro-treaty faction of Sinn Féin who had advocated a more protectionist economic policy, passed away in August 1922.³⁰

While free trade served the interests of the exporting industrialists and big farmers, it hindered the development of the small manufacturers and farmers whose goods destined for the domestic market would have benefited from protectionist measures.³¹ Moreover under a secret agreement made between the British and Irish governments in February 1923, the Irish tenants, who had taken out a loan with a view to purchasing their own farms, had to continue to pay the land annuities to Britain and laid themselves open to court proceedings in case of insolvency. This actually had the effect of reviving the agrarian unrest in certain parts of the country, and from 1926 to 1932 there was a Land Annuities Campaign.³² As for the working classes, far from getting their own share of the national economy as Eamon de Valera had promised in 1917 when he asked labour to join with the separatists to free Ireland,³³ they saw their economic conditions gradually worsening throughout the 1920s—with the exception of the agricultural labourers whose wages steadily increased. The lack of concern for social and economic conditions was highlighted during the first *Cumann na nGaedheal* administration that sought to balance the budget at all costs³⁴ even though this was to mean, as the Minister for Industry and Commerce Patrick McGilligan put it in 1924, that "people may have to die in the country and die through starvation."³⁵

The way was thus open for the Irish people to express a feeling of deep distress which was manifested notably in a new wave of mass emigration³⁶ and a trend towards resignation and nihilism maintained by a Catholic Church, the power of which was henceforth strengthened. This can be illustrated by the influence of the Catholic clergy in

the passing of Censorship Laws, such as the Censorship of Films Act in 1923 and the Censorship of Publications Act in 1929, which incurred the wrath of Irish literary figures like George Russell, who wrote about the Censorship of Publications Bill in December 1928: “The Irish Free State, through the publicity given to its Censorship Bill . . . , has become . . . a butt for the wits of the world . . . To what must we attribute the Bill? It is, I think, a consequence of arrested growth; or, in other words, moral infantilism.”³⁷ Another outburst came from George Bernard Shaw: “Ireland—that is to say the Free State—has apparently decided not to be a cultured country . . . Ireland is going to relapse into the dark ages.”³⁸

Conservative socioeconomic and cultural policies were advocated by both of the two major parties that emerged from 1927 onwards. The difference between these parties was not based on significant economic or cultural differences but from the split within Sinn Féin regarding the merits of the Anglo–Irish Treaty signed in December 1921. While Cumann na nGaedheal/Fine Gael was said to be “the prisoner of conservative pressure groups,”³⁹ Fianna Fáil could be described as a populist party, yearning not only for a self-sufficient, rural, pious and Gaelic-speaking Ireland but also for a united and indivisible Irish people—all social classes taken together.⁴⁰ From its creation in May 1926 to its accession to power in February 1932, Fianna Fáil had also appeared in many respects as an organization with a left-wing bias, capable once in office of disrupting the established order. An essentially rhetorical left-wing bias which was characterized by eulogies to the cause of labour⁴¹ as well as diatribes against a national banking network managed by “agents for British finance” mainly responsible for poverty in the Free State.⁴² Some Fianna Fáil leaders even went as far as to praise to a certain extent Stalinist Russia,⁴³ which undoubtedly contributed to the charge of communist sympathy thrown against Fianna Fáil by its Cumann na nGaedheal opponents. To such an accusation, de Valera was to answer notably in February 1932: “I am not a communist. I do not believe in the communist doctrine. I believe in the rights of private property.” Then he added, “but I believe that the State has rights to interfere when private property is being used against the interest of the community.”⁴⁴ It was actually through the willingness shown on many occasions by Fianna Fáil to favour state intervention so as to protect society against the excesses of unbridled capitalism that de Valera’s party could be regarded as a hypothetically left-wing force or, as Kieran Allen puts it, “a form of ersatz social democratic party.”⁴⁵ Hence, the support that Fianna Fáil received, before and after its accession to power, came not only from Labour⁴⁶ but also from the extreme left and legendary labour leader, James Larkin, who, in May 1932, “was heartily in accord with the [Fianna Fáil] government policy on tariffs. His only regret was that they did not go far enough.”⁴⁷

However, a few details should also be given about Fianna Fáil’s designs. For instance, it was not capitalism in itself that de Valera and his associates condemned but foreign capitalism, also referred to as British imperialism, which precluded native industries from developing properly. What Fianna Fáil actually aimed at in the strictly economic sphere was to set up in Ireland a self-sufficient and self-contained capitalist economy through protectionist measures on the model of economic nationalism dear to Arthur Griffith.⁴⁸ Similarly, Fianna Fáil gave its unqualified support for the workers’ struggles and demands on the sole condition that they took British companies as their targets. On the other hand, when Irish firms were the scene of social disputes, de Valera’s party usually remained neutral and, instead of class struggle generally championed by organized labour,

advocated the principle of arbitration meant to reach a fair settlement between employers and workers.⁴⁹ Another seemingly paradoxical aspect of Fianna Fáil was the Christian and clerical dimension of its social vision⁵⁰ which did not really accord with the ideologically secular nature inherent in the European left-wing of the time, mainly represented by various socialist, communist or anarchist organizations and movements.

These later policies and principles undermined the belief that Fianna Fáil had socialistic leanings despite its endorsement of traditionally leftist principles such as state control over the economy and the welfare of the working classes, which were actually far from being the ideological property of the European left-wing of the time. Indeed, such principles were also endorsed by certain trends within the European conservative thought and the extreme right, including nazism and fascism.⁵¹ Besides, in addition to the Soviet Union, Fianna Fáil also eulogized over Fascist Italy,⁵² not as an ideological subscriber to either one system or the other but rather as an admirer of the alleged state efficiency within both regimes.⁵³ As for the relationship between Fianna Fáil and the working class, it must be emphasized that despite its appeal to organized labour Fianna Fáil could not claim either the status of a workers' party or that of a class organization.⁵⁴ De Valera and his associates took up the cause of the Free State outcasts as a whole, among which were also the small farmers and sections of the native capitalist class that Fianna Fáil sought to unite with the industrial workers within a populist movement opposed to what it looked upon as Cumann na nGaedheal's submission to British interests.⁵⁵

Thus, we may safely infer that Fianna Fáil's populism and economic nationalism leaned not to the left but rather to the right, owing its ideological inspiration to three principal and discernible conservative schools of thought. From "old" or reactionary conservatism, de Valera's party derived the pre-eminence of the community over the individual; perpetuation of the social order based on hierarchy and tradition by the guardians of morality embodied in the family, church and state; primacy of rural life and values over urban culture associated with immorality and materialism; and a celebration of a mythical and glorious past. "Enlightened" or liberal conservatism instilled in Fianna Fáil respect for such principles as political democracy, private property and free enterprise. Lastly, the influence of "radical" or authoritarian conservatism over Fianna Fáil was reflected in the party's willingness to establish a strong state, to glorify the nation, to encourage class combination and cooperation, to lead an autarchic economic policy and to carry through certain social reforms.⁵⁶ In fact, these were the basic tenets with which the 1937 Constitution, essentially written down by de Valera, was to be deeply imbued. It was also this Constitution that ended the Irish Free State, instituted in 1922, so as to establish instead a new sovereign state, Éire.⁵⁷

One may wonder why the Irish Free State was devoid of any ideologically progressive forces of opposition, sufficiently powerful and radical to counterbalance the proponents of the Establishment. This phenomenon was actually in part the result of the wait-and-see attitude adopted by the main proletarian organizations during the 1916–23 Irish Revolution. But this again is only a partial explanation of the historical period known as the Union era as an ideological analysis reveals that, despite her indisputable propensity to rebel and to aspire to reforms, political and social Ireland contained the seeds of the conservative revolution⁵⁸ that was to give birth to the Irish Free State in 1922. For most nationalists from all shades of opinion merely contemplated a political

liberation of the country, whether partial or complete, and the various social movements of the time only aimed at reforming the system or overthrowing it through a revolutionary scheme inspired by conservative, not progressive motives.⁵⁹

NOTES

1. See *Dáil Debates*, 2 (1 March 1923): 1909.
2. P. S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin: The Talbot Press, 1924), 3–5.
3. The phrase “civil disobedience” was used for the very first time by the American radical philosopher, Henry David Thoreau. As a general rule, it refers to any act of non-violent resistance to authorities, laws or policies considered as unfair or pernicious for the well-being of humanity. However, civil disobedience can also be a means to use pressure to obtain reforms meant to enforce democracy, social justice and human rights. In addition to Thoreau, Tolstoy, Gandhi and Martin Luther King were to be among the most prominent followers of the tenets of civil disobedience. Although not as famous as the latter, Arthur Griffith's theories were nevertheless to influence Gandhi and his disciples. For a brief introduction to the tenets of civil disobedience, see for example *Dictionnaire de la pensée politique [Dictionary of Political Thought]* (Paris: Hatier, 1989), 172–4. On Arthur Griffith and civil disobedience, see Sean O'Luing, “Arthur Griffith (1871–1922): Thoughts on a Century,” *Studies* 60 (1971): 127–8.
4. Arthur Griffith, *The Resurrection of Hungary: A Parallel for Ireland, with Appendices on Pitt's Policy and Sinn Féin* (Dublin: Whelan and Son, 1918, orig. 1904), 80, 89, 139–64.
5. *Ibid.*, 123–6, 142–50.
6. While Sinn Féin could boast 128 branches throughout the country at the peak of its popularity in 1909, on the eve of the 1916 Easter Rising, only one central branch in Dublin was still active through its press organ, *Nationality*. See O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin*, 7; Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1981), 116–7.
7. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin*; Michael Laffan, “The Unification of Sinn Fein in 1917,” *Irish Historical Studies* 17 (1970–71): 357–9.
8. Laffan, “The Unification of Sinn Féin in 1917,” 368, 375–6.
9. The December 1918 General Elections saw the victory of the separatist candidates in 73 constituencies out of 105 over the Irish Parliamentary Party which won only six seats as against 83 during the previous polls held in 1910. See Brian M. Walker, *Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland, 1801–1922* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1978), 177–82, 185–91.
10. D. George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* (London: Routledge, 1995), 322–3; Liz Curtis, *The Cause of Ireland* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications, 1994), 309–10.
11. On the domestic front, the political domination of the separatist movement reached its peak in January and June 1920 when Sinn Féin won the various local elections by a wide margin. It was also during the year 1920 that the IRA took over up to 21 counties. See André Guillaume, *L'Irlande: une ou deux nations? [Ireland: One or Two Nations?]* (Paris: PUF, 1987), 109; Roger Faligot, *La Résistance irlandaise, 1916–2000 [The Irish Resistance, 1916–2000]* (Rennes: Terre de Brume, 1999), 22.
12. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin*, 35–6.
13. On the Arbitration Courts set up by the Dáil, see Mary Kotsonouris, “Revolutionary Justice: The Dáil Eireann Courts,” *History Ireland* 2(3) (1994): 32–6.
14. As an example, it is interesting to note that, on 4 June 1920, the *Freeman's Journal* published a list of all the police and judicial activities led by the IRA and Sinn Féin, between 15 April and 2 June 1920. See *Freeman's Journal* (4 June 1920): 3.
15. The 1903 Wyndham Act gave the tenants the opportunity to purchase their own farms, by means of loans repayable to the State over 68 years at 3.25% interest. Through this major land reform several centuries of landlordism formally came to an end, for which was substituted peasant proprietorship. See Elie Halévy, *Histoire du peuple anglais au XIX^e siècle—Epilogue I: Les*

- Impérialistes au pouvoir (1895–1905)* [*History of the English People in the XIXth Century—Epilogue I: The Imperialists in Power*] (Paris: Hachette Littérature, 1975, orig. 1926), 374–7.
16. Patrick Lynch, “The Social Revolution That Never Was,” in *The Irish Struggle (1916–1926)*, ed. Desmond Williams (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 47. On the original Democratic Programme, see “Thomas Johnson’s draft of the Democratic Programme as submitted at their Request to the Sinn Fein Leaders, January, 1919,” in Thomas Johnson’s Papers (MS 17124) available for consultation in the National Library of Ireland. On the modifications made to the original draft, see for example the article about the Democratic Programme written by one of the Labour leaders of the time, Cathal O’Shannon, “The 1919 Democratic Programme,” *The Irish Times* (31 January 1944): 1, (2 February 1944): 3.
 17. Erhard Rumpf and Anthony Hepburn, *Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1977), 24–5.
 18. David Fitzpatrick, “The Geography of Irish Nationalism,” *Past and Present* 78 (1978): 119.
 19. That the Dáil courts gave judgment in favour of the landlords occurred, notably between 15 April and 2 June 1920, on six occasions out of at least 17 land disputes, recorded by the *Freeman’s Journal* on 4 June 1920 with only one verdict being returned to the advantage of each litigant. As for the other trials, the Irish daily merely mentioned the fact that they had been held. See *Freeman’s Journal* (4 June 1920): 3. On this topic, also see Emil Strauss, *Irish Nationalism and British Democracy* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1975), 265; Curtis, *The Cause of Ireland*, 327; Ronnie Munck, *Ireland: Nation, State, and Class Struggle* (London: Westview Press, 1985), 103.
 20. Faligot, *La Résistance irlandaise*, 22–4; Arthur Mitchell, *Labour in Irish Politics, 1890–1930* (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1974), 136–7; John A. Murphy, *Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), 10–1; John Hoffman, “The Dialectic Between Democracy and Socialism in the Irish National Question,” in *Ireland: Divided Nation, Divided Class*, ed. Austen Morgan and Bob Purdie (London: Ink Links, 1980), 141–3.
 21. Lynch, “The Social Revolution,” 41; Francis Costello, “Labour, Irish Nationalism, and the Social Order During the Anglo–Irish War,” *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 17(2) (1991): 16.
 22. Murphy, *Ireland in the Twentieth Century*, 9; Costello, “Labour, Irish Nationalism, and the Social Order During the Anglo–Irish War,” 13.
 23. In January 1919, the IRA could count on 29,196 men within the framework of the coming War of Independence. Besides, this popularity was never to flag during the next three years since the separatist army could boast a membership of 112,650 volunteers on the eve of the Civil War. See Fitzpatrick, “The Geography of Irish Nationalism,” 129; John O’Beirne-Ranelagh, “The IRB From the Treaty to 1924,” *Irish Historical Studies* 20 (1976–77): 33.
 24. As an example, during the Limerick general strike which saw the establishment of a soviet by the workers between 13 and 27 April 1919, the IRA contributed to supply the city secretly with food. On the Limerick Soviet, see Connor Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland: Popular Militancy, 1917–23* (London: Pluto Press, 1996), 70–88; James Kemmy, “The Limerick Soviet,” *The Irish Times* (9 May 1969): 14. It was also in County Cork that, during the War of Independence, a certain number of IRA men—most of the time as individuals—sporadically sided with workers on strike or farmers in conflict with their landlords, especially when the latter were protected by the British army. See Peter Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916–23* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 146–7; Tom Barry, *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* (Tralee: Anvil Books, 1969), 17.
 25. Ernie O’Malley, *On Another Man’s Wound: A Personal History of Ireland’s War of Independence* (Boulder: Robert Rinehart Publishers, 1999, orig. 1936), 323.
 26. In this respect, Connor Kostick reveals that, following a social dispute in County Meath which turned to the agricultural labourers’ advantage, despite the intervention of the IRA on behalf of their employers, the Meath Farmers’ Union began collecting money for the republican militiamen, henceforth regarded as allies. Kostick also recounts how the IRA contributed to eradicate in June 1922 the soviets established by workers in County Tipperary. See Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland*, 188–9.

27. *Ibid.*, 179–98; Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970), 47–8; Pierre Joannon, *Histoire de l'Irlande [History of Ireland]* (Paris: Plon, 1973), 272–3.
28. The June 1922 General Elections saw the victory of the pro-treaty faction of Sinn Féin—led by Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith—with 58 seats out of 128 as against 36 only for their anti-treaty rivals—led by Eamon de Valera. In addition to the various Sinn Féin candidates, there were 17 Labour members of the Dáil, seven Farmers, six Independents and four Unionists from Trinity College. See Walker, *Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland*, 104–8.
29. In this respect, it must be noted that the Cumann na nGaedheal government led by William Cosgrave also got support from the shop-keepers, the major national dailies—the *Irish Independent*, *Cork Examiner* and *Irish Times*—and the various Churches. See Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922–1985* (London: Fontana Press, 1985), 45.
30. Isabelle Rufflé, *Du néocolonialisme au dragon celtique: Croissance et dépendance de l'économie irlandaise au XX^e siècle [From Neocolonialism to the Celtic Tiger: Growth and Dependency of the Irish Economy in the XXth Century]*, PhD thesis, University of Rennes II (France), December 2002, 35, 41–2, 53. On the social background of the Cumann na nGaedheal voters, also see Tom Garvin, “Nationalist Elites, Irish Voters and Irish Political Development: A Comparative Perspective,” *Economic and Social Review* 8(3) (1977): 177–9; Peter Mair, “Labour and the Irish Party System Revisited: Party Competition in the 1920s,” *Economic and Social Review* 9(1) (1977): 64.
31. *Ibid.*, 34.
32. Richard English, *Radicals and the Republic: Socialist Republicanism in the Irish Free State, 1925–1937* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 86–95.
33. As early as November 1917, de Valera had admitted that the separatists would be unable to liberate the country without the help and support of the workers. Hence this appeal made by the president of Sinn Féin to labour: “We ask labour to join with us to free the country . . . When labour frees this country—helps to free it—labour can look for its own share of its patrimony.” See *Irish Opinion* (1 December 1917): 4.
34. This last point is well illustrated notably by the desperate housing conditions in Dublin City. According to the 1926 census, there were over 800,000 people in the Free State living in overcrowded dwellings, most of which were located in the slum tenements of North Dublin City. Such unhealthy housing conditions inevitably resulted in a high infant mortality rate in Dublin. Similarly, when the old age pensions were reduced in 1924, many pensioners were left in harsh living conditions from that time on. To that one may add the fact that, by 1929, the number of unemployed highly increased as a consequence of the American slump which led many Irish emigrants to return to the motherland. See Rufflé, *Du néocolonialisme au dragon celtique*, 49; Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History*, 16.
35. See *Dáil Debates*, 9 (30 October 1924): 562.
36. The 1920s emigration rate was thus twice as high as those of the 1900s and the 1910s put together. See Rufflé, *Du néocolonialisme au dragon celtique*, 49.
37. Quoted in Michael Adams, *Censorship: The Irish Experience* (Dublin: Scepter Books, 1968), 48.
38. *Ibid.*, 49.
39. Garvin, “Nationalist Elites, Irish Voters and Irish Political Development,” 179.
40. According to the *Dictionary of Political Thought*, there are two major types of populism. The first, referred to as agrarian populism—which appeared in Russia and in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century—is a set of radical doctrines and movements supposed to represent the socioeconomic interests of a peasantry victimized by urban elites and economic modernity; hence their propensity to glorify the community traditions inherent in rural life. Another kind of populism takes on a political form, the advocates of which usually appeal to the people as a whole—as opposed to a particular social class—whose interests they claim to represent. See *Dictionnaire de la pensée politique*, 610–3. We may safely infer from this that Fianna Fáil undoubtedly drew in many respects its ideological inspiration notably from both agrarian and political populisms, as it is succinctly hinted—among other examples—in the following passages taken from its 1932 electoral programme: “We pledge ourselves further not to use our majority to pursue a vindictive course against any minority, but to govern fairly in the interests of all sections of the community . . . We believe also in the

- ruralisation of industry, not in its concentration in large cities.” See *The Irish Press* (12 February 1932): 5.
41. De Valera, to quote but one significant example in this respect, stated on 26 October 1927: “We have, as an ideal towards which we will work, the ideal that the individuals who are living in the country should have the fullest life possible, that they should not be merely wage-slaves or simply spending their lives to make money for somebody or other.” See *Dáil Debates*, 21 (26 October 1927): 397.
 42. See *The Nation* (27 August 1927): 4. On the attack on banking by the official organ of Fianna Fáil, also see *The Nation* (16 April 1927), (5 October 1929): 2, 4.
 43. Thus stated for instance Gerry Boland on 2 November 1927: “In Russia, at any rate, they treat labour on a human basis, not as a commodity to be bartered about . . . They took into consideration the human element.” See *Dáil Debates*, 21 (2 November 1927): 694.
 44. See *The Irish Press* (6 February 1932): 7.
 45. Kieran Allen, “Forging the Links: Fianna Fail, the Trade Unions and the Emergency,” *Saothar* 16 (1991): 48.
 46. By November 1931, the official organ of the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, *The Watchword*, was convinced that: “They (Fianna Fáil) will be advocating the Labour Party programme in its entirety before long.” As a result of that conviction, just a few weeks after Fianna Fáil had won the February 1932 General Elections, it was decided that: “The Party . . . will give general support to the new Government in dealing with economic and social questions, such as unemployment, housing, widows’ and orphans’ pensions, transport, and the strengthening of the industrial and agricultural position of the country—where the measures introduced are not in conflict with the policy of the Labour Party.” See *The Watchword* (21 November 1931): 5 and (2 March 1932): 1.
 47. See *The Irish Press* (13 May 1932): 5.
 48. Kieran Allen, *Fianna Fáil and Irish Labour: From 1926 to the Present* (London: Pluto Press, 1997), 16–21.
 49. *Ibid.*, 25–6.
 50. Among other significant examples, we can quote the following extract from a lecture delivered in January 1931 by the Fianna Fáil Senator, Joseph Connolly: “I believe in a Christian Social State and that the absence of Christianity from the every-day life of Christians is the root cause of all our social problems and misery.” See *The Nation* (31 January 1931): 2.
 51. On this topic see, for example, Pierre Milza, *Les Fascismes [Fascisms]* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1991), 304–16; Jean-Christian Petitfils, *La Droite en France: de 1789 à nos jours [The Right-Wing in France: From 1789 to the Present]* (Paris: PUF, Coll. “Que sais-je?”, 1994), 7, 106–9, 112–4; François Borella, *Les Partis politiques en Europe [Political Parties in Europe]* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1986), 100, 135–6.
 52. In September 1929, de Valera went as far as to state that “Fianna Fáil could do for Ireland what fascism did for Italy.” See *The Irish Independent* (16 September 1929): 3.
 53. Allen, *Fianna Fáil and Irish Labour*, 34.
 54. *Ibid.*, 15–22.
 55. A fact which was admitted by Fianna Fáil’s official organ notably on 9 July 1927: “Although not technically a workers’ party, they (Fianna Fáil) are mainly so, and they have certainly been elected by the workers.” See *The Nation* (9 July 1927): 7.
 56. On the different conservative hues, see notably Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 23–59; Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideas and Concepts: An Introduction* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1994), 286–93; Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1998), 66–102; Nigel Ashford and Stephen Davids, *A Dictionary of Conservative and Libertarian Thought* (London: Routledge, 1991), 45–51; Noël O’Sullivan, *Conservatism* (London: Dent and Sons, 1976), 22–31.
 57. On the Constitution of Ireland enacted by the People on 1 July 1937, see “Tithe an Oireachtas: Houses of the Oireachtas,” Available at: <http://www.oireachtas.ie/ViewDoc.asp?fn=/home.asp>. (16 August 2004).

58. It must be noted that the oxymoron “conservative revolution” is also used to refer to two schools of thought. The first was launched in 1918 by German intellectuals who questioned the ideological legacy of the Enlightenment which was to be embodied notably in the liberal and capitalist Weimar Republic forced on Germany, according to them, by her enemies after World War I. What they aimed at was to re-establish the position of spiritual and temporal leadership as enjoyed by Germany in Europe at the time of the medieval Holy Roman Empire. The second ideological movement which sought to bring about a “conservative revolution” was initiated in the United States and the United Kingdom in the 1970s as a reaction against not only state interference in economic and social affairs but also what was considered to be the 1960s permissive society. The Anglo–American conservative revolutionaries therefore stood for unregulated capitalism and the restoration of moral values. See, for example, Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996); Tim Hames and Andrew Adonis, *A Conservative Revolution? The Thatcher–Reagan Decade in Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).
59. On this topic, see for example Olivier Coquelin, *La Révolution conservatrice: Genèse idéologique de l’Irlande politique et sociale, 1800–1923* [*The Conservative Revolution: Ideological Genesis of Political and Social Ireland, 1800–1923*], PhD thesis, University of Rennes II (France), June 2004.