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TAOISEACH LOOKS AT 1916 AND 1966

Reviews changing political attitudes

Irish Times Reporter

PRESIDENT DE VALERA attended at the Kings Inns, Dublin, last night for the inaugural meeting of the 156th session of the Law Student's Debating Society of Ireland. The Taoiseach, Mr. Lemass, was among the speakers as was the U.S. Ambassador, Mr. Raymond Guest, whose grandfather was Lord Lieutenant here during the 1916 Rising.

This meeting of the society, which was formed in 1850, was a commemoration of sorts, of the Rising, with its theme, "Retrospect '66." The honourable guest-in-attendance was the British Ambassador, Sir Geoffrey Tory, and it is believed that this was the first occasion that a representative of Britain was in attendance at the commemoration of an act of rebellion against the

The President was met by Chief Justice Cearbhaill O Dalaigh, president of the society, by the auditor, Mr. John J. Collins, and officers of the society. They also welcomed the other guests, who included the Most Rev. Dr. Sensi, Archbishop of Sardi and Papal Nuncio; Cardinal Conway, Archbishop of

LEMASS'S TRIBUTE TO IRISH SOLDIERS OF WORLD WAR I

MR. LEMASS, in his address, was reminiscent of his youth in 1916: told of the dream of himself and his brother, which envisaged uprising and inevitable military defeat. They had no clear conception of where it all might end, except the vague assurance that:

“Freedom’s battle once begun
Bequeathed by bleeding sire
to son
Though baffled oft is ever
won.”

These were words which had hardly ever before echoed in the halls of the Kings Inns. And he confessed that the Rising was over for some time before he realised that something more than just an act of protest had been accomplished.

The Taoiseach then went on to speak of these changing years — as he saw them. He said that his father had been a stalwart of the Irish Parliamentary Party who trusted John Redmond beyond argument and who resented any question of his leadership.

He then brought his listeners to

... then brought his history to his own home in the spring of 1916. He told them: "I returned home after the Rising on a Saturday night—alone, because my brother, who had been wounded in the fighting, was still in hospital—wondering what family arguments our participation in it might involve, but on the following Sunday morning my father entered my bedroom with a large celluloid tricolour button in the lapel of his coat. At first I thought this to be a demonstration of solidarity with his sons, and perhaps an act of defiance of those of his own friends who were finding fault with us, but in the days following I found out how deeply he had been moved and how much the change in him reflected the change which had taken place amongst the Irish people as a whole. It was then I understood that the Easter Rising was not just an isolated incident in Irish history, but something much more profound, and as the auditor said, not only an end, but a beginning

■ **MEMOIR**

"The Easter Rising released forces which had been moving deep but almost unsuspected in the Irish soul. These forces had been disturbed by the labour struggles of 1913, by the Ulster Volunteer movement, and by the impact of the world war, in which tens of thousands of generous young Irishmen, responding to the call of their Parliamentary leaders, had volunteered enthusiastically to fight, as they believed, for the liberty of Belgium.

"I ALSO WAS GUILTY"

"In later years it was common—and I also was guilty in this respect—to question the motives of those men who joined the new British armies formed at the outbreak of the war, but it must, in their honour and in fairness to their memory, be said that they were motivated by the highest purpose, and died in their tens of thousands in Flanders and Gallipoli believing they were giving their lives in the cause of human liberty everywhere, not excluding Ireland.

"After 1916 the whole situation was changed. Questions which had not previously been voiced were now asked openly, doubts about the policy of the Parliamentary Party, which were previously not often expressed, now were

widely discussed; the idea of Ireland getting freedom through the post-war Peace Conference seemed more sensible than reliance on parliamentary action at Westminster, and above all there was pride, a new fierce pride, that Ireland, and the desire of her people for freedom, had once more appeared in the headlines of the world's newspapers, and that men were prepared to fight so that Ireland's cause might be revitalised.

"In those days, the members of the Republican movement with whom I had personal contact,

U.S. envoy lauds Irish peace efforts

The U.S. Ambassador, Mr. Guest, spoke as an outsider looking in. He said: "It is because so many of your countrymen like to ask visitors 'What do you think of us?', that I am going to take the liberty and tell you that—while 'nationalism' is of course a distinguishing Irish characteristic—many of us foreigners, non-Irish, call us what you like, are equally impressed by that thread of internationalism running through recent Irish history, by the role in world affairs that this lightly populated country is playing, and with which it has been identified almost from its first year of independent nationhood."

"As our discussion is confined to the past 50 years, I can go back to early April, 1919, about the time of his election as first Minister of the first Dail, and shortly before leaving on his first mission to America, when Mr. de

Valera wrote in the *LONDON Daily Herald*: 'So far are we from desiring isolation that our whole struggle is to get Ireland out of the cage—to get Ireland back into the free world—to get her recognised as an independent unit in a world league of nations so that she might freely give of her gifts to, and receive in return of their gifts from, her sister nations the world over.'

"In 1923, the ink was barely dry on the 1922 Constitution of the Irish Free State when Ireland was led into the League of Nations by Mr. William T. Cosgrave. Also in 1923, Ireland became a member of the International Labour Organisation which was established concurrently with the League. Barely three years later, your Minister for External Affairs put Ireland forward as a candidate for the Council of the League of Nations—and in 1930 Ireland was elected to the Council, succeeding Canada.

"The years 1932 to 1938 were fateful ones at Geneva. Whether the League would have the strength