

4.0 | The seven members of the Provisional Government

4.2 Seán MacDiarmada

Seán MacDiarmada, member of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic. He was the principal IRB organiser and has been described as 'the mainspring' of the Rising.

Seán MacDiarmada [John Joseph MacDermott] (1883-1916) was born in Corranmore near Kiltyclogher, Co. Leitrim, the son of Donald MacDermot, a carpenter and his wife Mary McMorrow. He was educated at Corradoona national school and at night school in Tullinamoyle, Co. Cavan, where he learned bookkeeping and Irish.

Following a spell in Scotland, MacDiarmada settled in Belfast in 1905, working as a tram conductor and later as a barman. He joined the Gaelic League and the politically moderate Ancient Order of Hibernians. He was sworn into the Irish Republican Brotherhood by Denis McCullough, and helped to organise the republican Dungannon Clubs then being set up by McCullough and Bulmer Hobson. He also acted as an organiser for Sinn Féin. Moving to Dublin in 1907, he came under the influence of Tom Clarke. He became a full-time organiser for the IRB and managed its newspaper Irish Freedom. Together with Clarke, MacCullough and Hobson he revitalised the IRB, this group assuming virtual control in 1911.

Also in 1911, MacDiarmada received a serious setback when he was stricken with polio which left him lame and having to use a walking stick. Around this time he was active in infiltrating cultural organisations such as

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the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Gaelic League, recruiting members to the IRB, and where possible getting them elected as officers of the relevant committees. Following the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, he campaigned against Irishmen joining the British army, his efforts gaining him four months in Mountjoy Jail under the Defence of the Realm Act. On his release, he was co-opted with Clarke to the IRB Military Council.

MacDiarmada had a leading role in planning the 1916 Rising, the historian F.X. Martin characterising him as 'the mainspring'. Well aware that most previous Irish revolutionary movements had been bedevilled with spies and informers, he was obsessively secretive in his planning, excluding most of his fellow IRB men from knowledge of the conspiracy, which was eventually to contribute to the confusion surrounding the outbreak of the Rising.

MacDiarmada spent the Rising in the General Post Office with most of the other members of the Provisional Government. Although he had no formal military rank, he was acknowledged by the garrison as one of the commanders due to his membership of the Provisional Government and his role in the IRB. He was tried by court-martial and executed by firing squad in Kilmainham Jail on 12 May, he and James Connolly being the last of the leaders to be executed. He was unmarried.

It is likely that MacDiarmada had no illusions regarding the probable outcome of the Rising or of the fate of those taking part. He believed that the only means of achieving a republic was revolution, but recognised that in the circumstances of 1916 a successful revolution was unlikely. Nevertheless, he seems to have thought that the Rising was necessary at that particular time—the eve of Home Rule and the likely partitioning of the country—to shock nationalists and unionists alike into a reappraisal of their destiny. Like Pearse, he may have believed in the efficacy of a blood sacrifice and martyrdom in the cause of freedom: in a speech at Tralee, Co. Kerry in 1914 he claimed that 'the Irish patriotic spirit will die forever unless a blood sacrifice is made in the next few years'. Such a statement, however, may not necessarily reflect his thinking and may amount to no more than rhetoric, being the sort of sentiment that could be guaranteed to raise a cheer from that particular audience.

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Seán MacDiarmada. He was described as being of average height and with good looks, dark hair and dark blue eyes. Following an attack of polio in 1911 he walked with a limp. (Keogh 53).

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Baile aths Olisth. 2/1/1912. A chars, As you are doubtless amore San MacDimumda has been in hospital since August last. Happily he is now slowly recovering from what was a very serious illness, but it will yet be many months before he can resume work. His illness was the direct result of his untiring efforts last Summer to prevent official recognition from the Irian Capital on the occasion of the British Monarch's visit. But the exertions which proved of such value from a National point of view brought a starling Nationalist almost to the grave, and his friends in Dublin think the present an opportune time to mark their estimation of Sean's cervices, and so enable him, by a holiday in the country, to recover his strength before resuming work. The Committee feel contain that all the believe in Mational principles will contribute generously, and and their friends to do likewise. It behoves each one of us to see that no stricken comrade who has given of his best to Ireland is forgotten. Subscriptions should be forwarded to the Treasurer or one of the Secretaries Sime. -Committee:-Treasurer:-Alderran 7. Bolly. B. O'Commor. Sem Clorino. 1. Brendan Road, Domnybrock, Dublin. Cathal Brughn. Seam O Dobhghaill. Bedrotaries:-Fran: Pahy.) 4. Earoldville Avenue. Sean O Eurohadha) Dolphins Barn, Dublin. Felens Molanoy. Domballi O'Nerohadha. Michaal C Foghludha.

Circular letter soliciting support for MacDiarmada during his illness, 2 Jan. 1912. (Ms. 33,912(3).

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-66 (SAOIRSE NA hEiReann") A Monthly Paper designed to aid in preserving the principle of Irish National Independence. WXKO 5 FINDLATER PLACE. My Dear for Jom has given me your letter and it has made me feel very much achamed that I have not sent you a live now and again even as you say about my "state of health at least " It is saw then is a certain place filled with good intentions if that is as I could had a new place with my good intentions that await fulfilment. I think though that I rent you a couple gletters about a year ago as In not as bad as I shought I wonder if you got a letter that Torbien can't you from Brooklyn when he was there a year ago It contained , I believe \$ 25:00 that he borrowed from you . he did not hear if you got it Well about my health I'm very much better but unfortun still very lone. my general health is good if I aure to ky on the treatent in our the leg would now be much bills that it is while I was getting massage the improvement was very not ceable but I have not been alle day that for the past eight or nine months & was away a great deal dury the Samer then my fathis death the ched The about a good deal of course he was a old man's I only wish to god I had have the physical drough he had when he was a your man I could do work. H. was great to see now hopeful of the national cause he was up to he death . These was comethy wonderful a

Letter from MacDiarmada to Joseph McGarrity. He refers to his state of health and the death of his father; he also notes that 'Larkin is a doubtful quantity'; 12 Dec. 1913. (Ms. 17,618, McGarrity Papers).

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ASIGNO. (SAOIRSE na A Monthly Paper designed to aid in preserving the principle of Irish National Independence. TONYOT 5 FINDLATER PLACE, the men of that generation. But will all there and other reasons his afrain I have been neglecting the leg to some artest However Im able to do a good deal front and there is a good deal to be done we've had hard pegging for the pass eightee months or more bus things are looking well. Som told me he has written you a long letter and he sume he can't you all the news about things i general I don't know if he arewered your query about haskin hask is a doubtful quantity the did good work amongst a very difficult crowd & against torrible opposition I mean in the way of quing them some kind of apivet & making them more -converting & color + getting them better conditions with their employees but for all that his afrains he is a dange, mationally hasking is not a mationalist be talks notion alism, but only is as far as he think it is lettely to help along his so cialist programme. We are friendly with hask and with some by his heatenants, but then he has men about his who have a very bad record and is any care Socied in and the Sympathetic are dangeous minous weapons in heland at the present time. The present Calour troats. are doing a los of him Industrially it has done an imment harm to culle & t Ireland, the work of years a suffort of mich manufacture is practically belonger. Implich

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(SAOIRSE A Monthly Paper designed to aid in preserving the principle of Irish National Independence. PROVING . 5 FINDLATER PLACE. DUBLIN,..... firm have been going the buccuess of the mich from who affected by the strike & it will by course take those mish firm a boy ten to regain their trade. He beland for the is not all hartins. The employers have take up a very alourd attitude - an intobrable attitude. But them all the talk about the friendlines of the English worky man 7 of the Brothstood of ma, the English food ships the have a very lad unrational influence, and there is not wanting evideous that if haster I be people got much influence, the transport their would be a terrible tyramy I believe though that before the present trackel is ended the bogy of "the Singlest working man" will have spent itself & all will have learned a leveen not to place the fail in Rughil worky man any more than in the Rughal hard. We he high Freedom hold to the same course no matte what happens we are not gaing to be dragged acide though since the trouble be gan as had some little apply will come of our friess who became hastin maniaco It is importable at the press moment to say what will be the f als of the Home Rale Hill. I believe the will be considerable chopping at it before it goes through but it will I that pass are treatly, at least what is help of it - that won't be need. Sure a its nothered form. These it will get through . There is likely to be some cost

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AS GAD SAOIRSE na héiReann " A Monthly Paper designed to aid in preserving the principle of Irish National Independence. NOWLOW 5 FINDLATER PLACE. DUBLIN,..... and Redmond is even to concede many more found week as Part office. Education even Control by Education is one of the week few points as the Bill that is any good whatever its fate may be use are in a better position to do work than we have been for years. you have seen about the bolanter movement it looks great at the preses moment. I hear Redword is quiets work ; against it but the Post, are divided on the question & Redword is afraid to come and against it. If they allow it to go on for a few month " if it progresses as well as we have swy reason t expert from prent indications, his repudiation or denounciation or offoreiten wit avail his much I find to talking a los of generalities and very poles going over the same ground that Som cover d. & I have the inportal matter & deal with yet has as the is a kind of "chat" and to make of for long delay I hope you with feel loved while wading though it. In cending enclosed the Philadelphia hist what and are due Pedlar sent on fourter outor a few weeks ago. nearly all of the menewals. About the Wolfe Some men. You probably think it strange that we have not cent on the sketch and collection literature that we promised you are in Freedom' the two suggested designs we gat

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calles. 66 (SAOIRSE TA A Monthly Paper designed to aid in preserving the principle of Irish National Independence. PERKER. 5 FINDLATER PLACE, DUBLIN of course we could not think of sending them anyou Then there is the new idea of the anche which some told me he had explained to you, but which we conit know yes how it may go . We are keeping the thing quiet until we have all the data ready to start canvasing the Corporation numbers. There are any about hay a doy copie of the Certificates left. " I don't think they would be at all cuitable for you I never liter then , hi sending you one as you can real with that matter as you think best they are of no use to as at present. I mean if we are to get a break anypeg, I we certains would not get set. a draign like the one we hope to get plenty more even do we make a start on the work I we will Start down so we get the new thing settled up. We have an hando well filles with work al preat inder non the filles for a few of us, but it is great eating faction to find that they's are moving in the right direction. The whole sailuates needs careful wat. ching & caneful handley just now as there as a certainly of great developenuts with the next year or two I must find now, I will very harm negatedo to cert & mits MP. J. may we hope to ere you also summer & your find stanmal your found alcanmach

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