



**Pittsburgh 1916 Easter Rising Committee, LLC**  
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## **Eirí Amach na Cásca (Part 6)**

by Mike McCormack

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The following is abridged from Mr. McCormack's book, "The Road to Rebellion.

Tom Clarke, anticipating a war between England and Germany, returned to Ireland to organize another rebellion. John Devoy recommended him to the Supreme Council of the IRB which had grown inactive. The BBC website on the IRB notes: **the key figure in purging its aging leadership was Thomas Clarke, a veteran republican. He succeeded in bringing a new purpose and vitality to the organization, so that it was able to exploit opportunities for insurrection when they arose.** With his wife, Kathleen, they assisted in directing the pride inspired by the Gaelic Revival into a focused sense of militant nationalism. Clarke left his Manorville, Long Island, NY home in December 1907 and opened a tobacco shop at 55 Amiens Street in Dublin. As a parolee, he had to take a silent role in nationalist affairs or face re-arrest under the "Offenses Against the Realm Act" so he silently re-organized the IRB through men like Bulmer Hobson and Sean MacDiarmada.

By the General Election of December 1910, Liberals and Conservatives in the House of Commons were evenly matched, but Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party held the balance of power. They supported Asquith's Liberals in return for another Home Rule Bill and the **Parliament Act**, which curtailed the veto power of the House of Lords. The Parliament Act stated that if a bill passed Commons twice, Lords could no longer veto it, they could only delay it for two years. The Parliament Act passed in August 1911 and in 1912 the third Home Rule Bill became the second to pass Commons. It would become law in 1914! Starting on 28 September, 1912 nearly 500,000 unionists signed a **Solemn League and Covenant** pledging to defy Home Rule by all means possible. The Covenant was authored and organized by Unionist MPs Edward Carson and James Craig. By January 1913, 232 Unionist Clubs across Ulster coalesced into the paramilitary **Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)** sworn to fight Home Rule.

In October 1913, Hobson and Michael 'The' O'Rahilly convinced Gaelic League Secretary and UCD Professor, Eoin MacNeill, to write an article in the influential League journal, **An Claidheamh Soluis** (Sword of Light), encouraging the formation of an **Irish Volunteer Force** to defend the implementation of Home Rule, just as the Unionists had done to oppose it. On 1 November, The O'Rahilly took over as editor of the paper and in the very next issue, MacNeill's article "**The North Began**" and an article by Pearse entitled "**The Coming Revolution**" appeared. In his article Pearse stated: **To every generation its deed. The deed of the generation that has now reached middle life was the Gaelic League – the beginning of the Irish Revolution. Let our generation not shirk its deed, which is to accomplish that revolution.**

Clarke's IRB had already begun drilling IRB men with the Dublin GAA led by Harry Boland. With MacNeill agreeing to take part, The O'Rahilly and Hobson arranged a meeting at Wynn's Hotel in Abbey Street, Dublin, on 11 November, 1913 to discuss a formal organization with members of the Irish Parliamentary Party, the United Irish League, the AOH, the GAA, the Foresters, the IRB and others. At the same time, James Connolly was establishing his **Irish Citizen Army** in the aftermath of the lock out. They had similar aims, but no connection with the planned Irish Volunteers.



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**The Irish Volunteer** organization was launched on 25 November 1913 to safeguard the implementation of Home Rule as a legislated right of Irishmen. Their first public meeting and enrolment rally was held at the Rotunda in Dublin. Five thousand enlistment blanks were distributed by IRB men each wearing a small silken bow, the center of which was white, with one side green and the other orange – colors introduced by Young Ireland and which the Fenians had adopted as a national banner. The hall was filled to its 4,000 person capacity, with another 3,000 on the grounds outside. Speakers included MacNeill, Pearse and young Michael Davitt, son of the Land League founder. The O'Rahilly was made Treasurer and Director of Arms and began to organize the arming of the Volunteers. In February they launched a 16-page weekly newspaper entitled **The Irish Volunteer** as membership began to grow across the country.

In March, 1914, Officers at the main British Barracks in the Curragh, Co. Kildare pledged to resign rather than fight the Ulster Volunteers and enforce Home Rule. The government did nothing about the mutiny, prompting thousands more recruits to join the Irish Volunteers. On 2 April 1914, Agnes O'Farrelly and a group of ladies founded **Cumann na mBan** (Council of Women) as a Ladies Auxiliary to the Volunteers to **advance the cause of Irish liberty and assist in arming and equipping Irish men for the defense of Ireland**. Ireland was becoming a tinder box and open conflict between the two Volunteer groups seemed imminent. On the night of April 24, the UVF smuggled 25,000 rifles and 3 million rounds of ammunition into Larne in Co. Antrim and to Bangor and Donaghadee in Co. Down. They had amplified the UVF's fire-power while backing up their challenge against Home Rule. In July, Erskine Childers with his wife Molly and Mary Spring Rice smuggled 1,000 German rifles into Howth Harbor and distributed them to waiting Irish Volunteers. Another small arms shipment was smuggled into Kilcoole a week later by Sir Thomas Myles. Compared to the UVF, only a small number of the Volunteers were armed, even though they also had a variety of personal weapons and Lee Enfields which had been stolen from military and police barracks around the country. There were even pikes, daggers, bayonets and some bombs made from lengths of pipe, milk tins and jam jars. Though certainly insufficient to take on the British Army, the over-confident Irish Volunteers felt ready.

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