***The 1916 Rising: Ulster Connections***

by Gordon Lucy

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"The year 1916 is of crucial importance in Irish history. Ask a historically-minded unionist why and his or her reply will focus on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme. Ask a nationalist counterpart and the answer will refer to the events of Easter week in Dublin. Unionists have made the Somme central both to their sense of identity and the foundation narrative of the Northern Ireland state. Equally, the events of Easter week for many, if not most nationalists, are central to the creation narrative of the Republic of Ireland.

Most publications produced to mark the centenary of the Easter Rising will inevitably concentrate on the signatories to the Proclamation of the Republic or on those who were executed in its aftermath. Here the focus is on 11 men and women with Ulster connections whose lives were otherwise interwoven with the Rising. Some of those profiled are of scarcely less significance than the signatories to the Proclamation. Without their contribution the Rising would never have taken place. A couple were merely chance witnesses to the events - an officer in the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers who just happened to be in Dublin at the time and a Belfast day-tripper (and future Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland) who chose to spend the public holiday viewing Dublin’s architectural heritage. Their stories too are worthy of consideration.

"History," as Lord Blake has observed, "does not consist of a body of received opinion handed down by authority from the historiographical equivalent of the heights of Mount Sinai. It is a subject full of vigour, controversy, life—and sometimes strife." This is what makes the study of history so pleasurable and fascinating and, although the Easter Rising forms the central foundation narrative of the Irish state, it would be a disservice to preclude it from the same historical analysis and scrutiny as other events in world history.

The biographical sketches in this illustrated book are as follows: Roger Casement, Alice Milligan, Eoin MacNeill, Patrick McCartan, Thomas James Kennedy, Bulmer Hobson, Denis McCullough, Mabel FitzGerald, Ernest Blythe, Sean MacEntee and John Clarke MacDermott."

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