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'To the Nations of the World ! Greeting.': On the reception of the Irish claim for independence and the French and British press

Gerritsen, Wouter

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Abstract

On 21 January 1919 Sinn Féin sent out a message to the free nations of the world. The message showed that Irish Republicans realised that they were not fighting their battle in a political vacuum. Meanwhile, the Paris Peace Conference had just started and the United States, Great Britain, France, and to a lesser extent Italy, were busy in the French capital redrawing the map of Europe and the world. Therefore, Sinn Féin selected Sean T. O’Kelly to go to Paris, to obtain a hearing for the Irish before the Conference, and to promote the Irish claim for independence.

While the Irish claim in Paris has been amply studied, the same cannot be said for its reception. This thesis, therefore, analyses how the Irish claim for independence during the Paris Peace Conference was received by the British and French press. For France, the newspapers *Le Temps*, *La Croix*, *Le Petit Parisien*, *La Presse*, and *L’Humanité* are considered, while for Britain the *Manchester Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily news*, and the *Daily Herald* are studied. The analysis incorporates to what extent these newspapers were influenced by the Irish Wilsonian moment. The Wilsonian Moment, as defined by historian Erez Manela, was a moment between the final stages of the war and beginning of the Paris Peace Conference, during which US President Woodrow Wilson's wartime principles seemed destined to shape the coming new world order. The main principle was that of the right of nations to self-determination. Nationalists from multiple countries, those of Ireland among them, capitalised on these principles, trying to obtain self-determination for their nation in Paris. This created the Wilsonian moment. However, the Irish, like the Egyptians, Indians and Koreans, were confronted in the French capital with the Realpolitik of the victor nations. Like many other nationalists, the Irish resorted to violence when they found out that Wilson’s “imperative principles of action” did not seem to apply to them. In short, rhetoric met reality, and disillusionment and violence ensued.

In general, the reaction to of the majority of the French press to the Irish claims in Paris was indifferent. *Le Temps*, *Le Petit Parisien* and *La Presse* all stuck to short, factual reporting from an English perspective. Being a catholic newspaper *La Croix* was more friendly towards Ireland, publishing more in-depth articles. It favoured Dominion Home Rule, but never pleaded for the Irish to get a hearing. Lastly, *L'Humanité* was the only paper to fully support Irish independence. Although it was no fan of Sinn Féin, it agreed with the Wilsonian principles as presented by the Republicans.

L'Humanité was the only French paper to use Irish Wilsonian rhetoric, but since these principles were already strongly grounded in socialism it is difficult to conclude the influence that the Irish Wilsonian moment had on the paper. What can be concluded is that the Irish Wilsonian moment did not significantly alter any pre-held notions of the different sections of the French press on Ireland, nor did it manage to break the Anglo-French war-time alliance.

The reaction of the English press to the Irish claims varied greatly. It ran from extremely negative by the *Daily Telegraph* to immensely positive by the *Daily Herald*, with the *Manchester Guardian* and *Daily Mail* in between as respectively rather positive and rather negative. The *Daily Telegraph* was strongly opposed to the Irish getting a hearing or any form of self-government in the near future. It viewed the Irish question from a territorial integrity perspective and put the security of Britain high above principles like self-determination.

The *Daily Mail* mostly focussed on the British government and their handling of the situation. It was more anti-government policy than it was pro-Irish. It neither opposed, nor pleaded for the Irish getting a hearing, supported moderate nationalism and pleaded for Dominion Home Rule. The *Manchester Guardian* reacted positively and expressed the wish that Ireland should be granted a hearing before the Conference. It was increasingly critical of the government. In practice the paper pleaded for Dominion Home Rule. The *Daily Herald* was the only paper to openly argue for self-determination for Ireland, and seems to have been

influenced by the Irish Wilsonian moment. While it had already adhered to principles similar to those of the Wilsonian moment, the amount of exact overlap is fascinating. It truly believed Wilson's and England's war-time principles should have shaped a new world order.

The Manchester Guardian was the other paper that seems to have been influenced by the Irish Wilsonian moment, albeit to a significantly lesser extent. Interestingly, the *Guardian's* interpretation of self-determination laid bare the crucial difference between what historian Bill Kissane has called the internal and external interpretations of the term. It followed the internal interpretation, meaning the right for people to choose their own form of government, but not the sovereignty under which they live. This shows that while the vagueness of the term self-determination led to its mass appeal, it also meant that different interpretations led to clashing expectations. In a broader sense this does align with Kissane's idea that the use of nationalist ideas is shaped by the geo-political context. In other words: the same nationalist principle could be interpreted completely different, depending on the geo-political context. In turn, this shows how the Wilsonian moment must not be seen as one coherent entity but rather as a myriad of interpretations of the same ideal-type doctrine.

In England the Irish Wilsonian moment did also not significantly alter any pre-conceived notions about Ireland and its right to independence. Instead the influence of the Irish Wilsonian moment on the British press must be seen as an extra layer added to old beliefs. In general, it has to be concluded that the majority of newspaper readers in France and England were not significantly influenced by the Wilsonian moment in Ireland.

‘To the Nations of the World ! Greeting.’¹

On the reception of the Irish claim for independence and the French and British press

Wouter Gerritsen

¹ Houses of the Oireachtas, ‘MESSAGE TO THE FREE NATIONS OF THE WORLD. – Dáil Éireann (1st Dáil) – Tuesday, 21 Jan 1919 – Houses of the Oireachtas’, text, 21 January 1919, Ireland, <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1919-01-21/13>.

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Table of contents

Introduction	7
Sinn Féin and the Wilsonian moment	12
The French press, Sinn Féin and the Wilsonian moment	23
The English press, Sinn Féin and the Wilsonian moment	33
Conclusion	47
Bibliography	51

Introduction

‘The Nation of Ireland having proclaimed her national independence, calls ... upon every free nation to support the Irish Republic by recognising Ireland's national status and her right to its vindication at the Peace Congress.’² This was the message, that Sinn Féin (hereinafter SF) sent out to the other ‘Free Nations Of The World’ during the proceedings of the first Dáil Eireann, or Irish Parliament, on 21 January 1919. The message shows how Irish Republicans realised that they were not fighting their battle in a political vacuum. Meanwhile, the Paris Peace Conference had just started and the United States, Great Britain, France, and to a lesser extent Italy, were busy in the French capital redrawing the map of Europe and the world. Therefore, the Dáil selected its chairman, Sean T. O’Kelly, to go to Paris, to obtain a hearing for the Irish before the Conference, and promote the Irish claim for independence.

The history of this Irish claim for independence must be viewed in the context of what historian Erez Manela has called the Wilsonian Moment.³ This was a moment between the final stages of the war and beginning of the Paris Peace Conference, during which US President Woodrow Wilson's wartime principles seemed destined to ‘shape the coming new world order’.⁴ Nationalists from all over the world turned to Wilson and the Peace Conference to see their envisioned nations become reality. They mainly appealed to the principle of self-determination. This principle, according to Wilson meant that ‘peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent’.⁵ However, the Irish, like the Egyptians, Indians and Koreans, were confronted in Paris with the Realpolitik of the victor nations. Unsurprisingly, war-time allies were not willing to interfere in each other’s internal politics. Moreover, having

² Oireachtas, ‘MESSAGE TO THE FREE NATIONS OF THE WORLD’.

³ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: University Press, 2007).

⁴ Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 6.

⁵ ‘President Wilson’s Address, February 11, 1918’. Accessed December 1st 2021. <http://www.gwpda.org/1918/wilpeace.html>.

been seen as pro-German during the War, SF had a particularly weak diplomatic hand to play. Like many other nationalists, the Irish resorted to violence when they found out that Wilson's 'imperative principles of action' did not seem to apply to them. In short, rhetoric met reality, and disillusionment and violence followed.⁶

SF's claims in Paris, and their relationship with the Wilsonian moment, have been amply studied. Multiple analyses exist of O'Kelly's diplomatic efforts in Paris, or on how the party used Wilsonian rhetoric to appeal to the Conference. However, how these efforts and this rhetoric were received by the foreign press has not yet been sufficiently studied. How did the press in countries like England and France, who had fought for liberty and the rights of small nations, view these SF claims? Did the millions of newspaper readers in Paris and London share the Republican view that Ireland deserved independence based on the principles of the new age? In order to address these questions this thesis will analyse how the Irish claim for independence during the Paris Peace Conference was received by the British and French press. The analysis will incorporate to what extent newspapers in these countries were influenced by the Irish Wilsonian moment. In turn, this will further our understanding on how new world ideas like the principles of the Wilsonian moment reverberated in the old world of the Entente.

In general, recent studies of SF in Paris are mostly a result of diplomatic history. There are four main diplomatic perspectives in the literature on the Irish and the Paris Peace Conference: The first focusses on Irish–American relations.⁷ The second concentrates on Irish–

⁶ McGarry, Fearghal, 'The Ireland of the Far East? The Wilsonian Moment in Ireland and Korea', in *The Irish Revolution: A Global History*, by Patrick Mannion and Fearghal McGarry (NYU Press, 2022), 69.

⁷ Francis M. Carroll, 'The American Commission on Irish Independence and the Paris Peace Conference of 1919', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1985): 103–19; Michael G. Malouf, 'With Dev in America: Sinn Féin and Recognition Politics, 1919–21', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 4, no. 1 (2002): 22–34; Alan J. Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations 1899–1921* (University of Toronto Press, 1969).

French relations.⁸ The third concerns itself more with the Irish, including the experiences of Republicans in Ireland dealing with the conference, as well as the delegation in Paris.⁹ The fourth is a fairly new one and approaches the history from a more international relations perspective. It focusses, for example, on the development of the Republican foreign policy, or Ireland's strategic importance in international diplomacy.¹⁰

Although many authors have mentioned the link between SF and the Wilsonian moment, only a few have extensively researched it. Paul Sharp was the first one to do so in 1990.¹¹ Following him, Bill Kissane published an article on the doctrine of self-determination and the Irish independence movement in the early 2000s.¹² More recently, Martin O'Donoghue has looked at the 1918 election and the Wilsonian moment, and Fearghal McGarry has compared Ireland's Wilsonian moment to that of Korea.¹³

Lastly, multiple articles on the press and the Irish revolutionary period exist. Maurice Walsh has looked at British and American newspaper correspondents in Ireland during the War of Independence.¹⁴ Ian Kenneally has compared the war coverage of several Irish newspapers and the London *Times*.¹⁵ Both authors draw from David Boyce's pioneering work *Englishmen*

⁸ Pierre Ranger, 'Paris, Diplomatic Capital of the World: Sinn Féin Diplomatic Initiatives, 1919-21', in *Paris : Capital of Irish Culture : France, Ireland and the Republic, 1798-1916* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2017), 188–201; Pierre Ranger, 'The World in Paris and Ireland Too : The French Diplomacy of Sinn Féin, 1919-1921', *Études Irlandaises* 36, no. 2 (2011): 39–58.

⁹ John Gibney, 'Michael MacWhite's Memoirs of the Sinn Féin Delegation in France, 1919–21', *History Ireland* 27, no. 1 (2019): 36–38; Gerard Keown, 'Knocking on the Door: The Irish Presence at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 30 (2019): 41–57; Dermot Keogh, 'The Origins of the Irish Foreign Service in Europe, 1919-1922', *Études Irlandaises* 7, no. 1 (1982): 145–64.

¹⁰ Owen McGee, *A History of Ireland in International Relations*. (Irish Academic Press, 2020).

¹¹ Paul Sharp, *Irish Foreign Policy and the European Community: A Study of the Impact of Interdependence on the Foreign Policy of a Small State* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1990).

¹² Bill Kissane, 'The Doctrine of Self-Determination and the Irish Move to Independence, 1916-1922', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 8, no. 3 (2003): 327–46.

¹³ Martin O'Donoghue, "'Ireland's Independence Day": The 1918 Election Campaign in Ireland and the Wilsonian Moment', *European Review of History = Revue Européenne d'histoire* 26, no. 5 (2019): 834–54; McGarry, Fearghal, 'The Ireland of the Far East?'

¹⁴ Maurice Walsh, *The News from Ireland: Foreign Correspondents and the Irish Revolution* (London: Tauris, 2008).

¹⁵ Ian Kenneally, *The Paper Wall: Newspapers and Propaganda in Ireland 1919-1921* (Cork: Collins Pr, 2009).

and Irish troubles.¹⁶ Interestingly, Brindley Ronan has already explored the reaction of the Irish press to the Wilsonian moment in Ireland.¹⁷

This thesis wishes to expand on Ronan's work by exploring the English and French press reaction to the Irish Wilsonian moment. The choice for the UK, and France is based on several factors. Firstly, it will further our understanding on how the press in these old world countries reacted to the application of ideas of the new age to an old problem. Secondly, in theory both countries had just fought a war for the 'rights and liberties of small nations', for liberal values, and for democracy.¹⁸ This makes how their journalists reacted to Ireland's relation to these concepts a compelling facet to analyse. Moreover, while the English press was naturally quite interested in the Irish case, SF's main propaganda push in Paris was directed against the French press.

The French newspapers that will be studied are *Le Temps*, *La Croix*, *Le Petit Parisien*, *La Presse*, and *L'Humanité*. The British newspapers are: the *Manchester Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily news*, and the *Daily Herald*. The first characteristic of newspapers is the fact that they were not neutral. They were biased and heavily influenced by their owners and editors. This is, however, a strength, because they will be used to study diverging opinions. Furthermore, there is the question to which extent newspapers represent public opinion. Following Habermas, I believe newspapers during this time were the most important influencers of as well as representatives of public opinion in the public sphere.¹⁹ Newspapers

¹⁶ David George Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles: British Public Opinion and the Making of Irish Policy, 1918-22*, Modern Revivals in History (Aldershot: Gregg Revivals, 1994).

¹⁷ Ronan Brindley, 'Woodrow Wilson, Self-Determination and Ireland 1918-1919: A View from the Irish Newspapers', *Éire-Ireland* 23, no. 4 (1988): 62–80.

¹⁸ Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Lloyd George and Germany', *The Historical Journal* 39, no. 3 (1996): 759; 'Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Germany (1917)', National Archives, 16 September 2021, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/address-to-congress-declaration-of-war-against-germany>.

¹⁹ Jürgen Habermas, Sara Lennox, and Frank Lennox, 'The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)', *New German Critique*, no. 3 (1974): 52, <https://doi.org/10.2307/487737>.

had to decide daily on the relative importance of all sort of events to their readership and the world. The outcome of this decision-making process gives a glimpse not only into different schools of thought, but also into the perceived height of varying issues on the public agenda.

Sinn Féin and the Wilsonian moment

The Wilsonian moment was a moment between the autumn of 1918 and the spring of 1919 when Wilson's principles seemed destined to shape a new world order. This order would be a just international society of nation states based on the principle of self-determination.²⁰ The principle of the right of nations to self-determination was a vague one. In an attempt to neutralize Bolshevik critiques of Allied war aims, Wilson had borrowed the term from communist rhetoric. Within communism, self-determination meant the right of people to determine their own form of government, preferably communist, and thus the right to overthrow non-self-determined governments.²¹ This is what Kissane has called the external version of the doctrine. Wilson transformed its meaning to what Kissane labelled the internal version, which is based on the principle of 'consent of the governed'. This meant the right of people to choose their own leaders through democratic election, but not the right to overthrow their government and set up a different form of government.²² The distinction between external and internal would prove crucial to the diverging expectations during the Wilsonian moment. Wilson's ideas were based in democratic liberalism, and the idea that governments and international settlements should be based on popular legitimacy. What constituted popular legitimacy and self-determination and to whom it was applicable remained open for interpretation. It seemed that Wilson had meant it mainly, and perhaps only, for the crumbling Empires of Eastern Europe and Eurasia. However, the Wilsonian moment was not actively shaped by Wilson. Rather, it was an outcome of American and British wartime propaganda, and colonial nationalists capitalizing on that propaganda. Nationalists from all over the world turned their eyes towards

²⁰ Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 6, 7.

²¹ *Ibid*, 42.

²² Kissane, 'Self-Determination and Irish Independence', 330.

Wilson because they believed that as leader of the largest world power he could deliver on his promises.²³

One of the main critiques of the concept of the Wilsonian moment is that it implies that Wilson handed colonial nationalists rhetoric tools they had not yet or could not have developed on their own.²⁴ Another important one is the twofold argument that it was not Wilson's rhetoric but the experiences of the First World War that shaped post-war nationalism, and that a myriad of groups were differently affected and used Wilson's rhetoric in so many ways that one can hardly speak of one worldwide Wilsonian moment.²⁵ The last critique uses Ireland as an example of where wartime developments had a mayor disruptive effect on nationalism. This is in line with McGee's opinion that the Irish had developed a narrative of nationalism long before Wilson, and did therefore not experience the Wilsonian moment in the same way as other colonial nationalists. While this may be true, I still think that the Irish experienced a significant Wilsonian Moment, as shown by Martin O'Donoghue, Fearghal McGarry and Bill Kissane.²⁶ However, while Sinn Féin did drew on a long republican tradition of independence narratives, they were undoubtedly influenced by the Wilsonian moment and viewed it as a new opportunity, something that can be clearly seen in all their official communications. Furthermore, the critique on the absence of a worldwide uniform Wilsonian moment does not hold up. While, there were many nationalist groups that used the rhetoric of self-determination for a myriad of goals, they had one thing in common: they all poured their nationalist aspirations into the same rhetorical mould. The power of this mould was that it was so general and vague,

²³ Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 42–45.

²⁴ Vijay Prashad, 'The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism - By Erez Manela. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.', *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 1 (March 2011): 153–55.

²⁵ Eric Storm and Maarten Van Ginderachter, 'Questioning the Wilsonian Moment: The Role of Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Dissolution of European Empires from the Belle Époque through the First World War', *European Review of History = Revue Européenne d'histoire* 26, no. 5 (2019): 750–53.

²⁶ See: O'Donoghue, "Ireland's Independence Day"; McGarry, Fearghal, 'The Ireland of the Far East?'; Kissane, 'Self-Determination and Irish Independence'.

and therefore applicable to different goals. Not all nationalists experienced the same Wilsonian moment, but all experienced their individual Wilsonian moment. This thesis looks into the Irish Wilsonian moment and how this was received in France, and Britain. It can therefore mainly draw conclusions about the Irish Wilsonian moment and its influence on these countries.

Interestingly, it was the vagueness of the principle of self-determination that allowed SF to capitalise on it with great internal success. As Kissane has shown, within the party's circles there was no clear agreement on whether to use the internal or external interpretation of the term. In practice this was the difference between some form of Home Rule or a Republic. These two streams of thought would later develop in to pro- and anti-treatyites and fuel the Irish Civil War. For the time being, however, the external interpretation was used as the party decided to press for an Irish Republic to present a stronger front against the IPP and later to the world at Paris.²⁷ So while the Irish claim for independence was in theory based on a Republic, it is important to keep in mind that other forms of 'government of the consent' were not ruled out completely. On a more practical level was the right to self-determination, directly linked to the concept of nations. Therefore, SF needed to prove Ireland was a nation.²⁸ This once again links to the choice to push for a Republic, as anything less would imply that Ireland might not be a distinct nation. The textbook example of how they tried to do this can be found in the Message To The Free Nations Of The World: 'Nationally, the race, the language, the customs and traditions of Ireland are radically distinct from the English, Ireland is one of the most ancient nations in Europe, and she has preserved her national integrity, vigorous and intact, through seven centuries of foreign oppression'.²⁹ This passage touches upon the four pillars of (Irish) contemporary thinking on nationalism: race, language, customs and traditions. This is why the

²⁷ Kissane, 'Self-Determination and Irish Independence', 332.

²⁸ Karen Stanbridge, 'Nationalism, International Factors and the "Irish Question" in the Era of the First World War', *Nations and Nationalism* 11, no. 1 (2005): 32, 38.

²⁹ Oireachtas, 'MESSAGE TO THE FREE NATIONS OF THE WORLD'.

Gaelic revival was so crucial to SF, it proved that Ireland had a distinct language, culture, and traditions. Something that set it apart, not only from Britain, but also from white dominions. It served as an argument for complete independence and against colonial Home Rule. The passage also shows the essential argument that Ireland had always been a nation and had never become a part of Great Britain, but instead had been under constant occupation. Lastly, the race part of the argument was also substantial. SF saw the Irish as distinct to the English, but nevertheless part of the white race. While they compared their struggle to that of colonial nationalists, they always presented themselves as ‘the only white nation on earth still in the bonds of political slavery’, and thus more deserving of independence.³⁰ Irish nationalists even thought Ireland was more deserving of independence than many of the Eastern European nation states at the Peace Conference, like Czechoslovakia. This thought was most clearly expressed in a booklet from 1920, called *The first of the small nations*, which compared Ireland to eleven other European nations.³¹

So what did the Irish Wilsonian moment look like? The first examples can be found in the rhetoric employed by SF during the 1918 Westminster general election. Besides independence, an Irish parliament and to make British rule in Ireland impossible, SF promised ‘appealing to the Peace conference for the establishment of Ireland as an independent nation ... on the principle of government by consent of the governed’.³² Clearly, the party believed in the dawn of a new age, as it stated ‘that the time has arrived when Ireland’s voice for the principle of untrammelled national self-determination should be heard’. In line with Manela’s theory, the reason for this optimism was simple: ‘President Wilson is coming to Europe!’³³ While Sinn

³⁰ Jason Knirck, ‘The Irish Revolution and World History: Nation, Race and Civilization in the Rhetoric of the Irish Revolutionary Generation’, *Éire-Ireland (St. Paul)* 53, no. 3–4 (2017): 165–76; See also: Bruce Nelson, *Irish Nationalists and the Making of the Irish Race* (Princeton: University Press, 2012).

³¹ Ranger, ‘Paris, Diplomatic Capital of the World’, 199.

³² Id.

³³ Ranger, ‘Paris, Diplomatic Capital of the World’, 199.

Féin was not alone in picking up on Wilson's rhetoric, they seemed to have done so with more conviction than the IPP or the Unionists. Furthermore, by using their cultural nationalist approach they seem to have yielded a greater emotional response.³⁴ The fact that Ireland was not mentioned in Wilson's fourteen points was not so much a problem for the Republicans, and was apparently due to the IPP's lack of international appeal during the decades before.³⁵

After their election victory SF formed an Irish Parliament or Dáil Éireann on 21 January 1919 at the Mansion House in Dublin. The first real order of business was to read out the declaration of independence and 'ratify the establishment of the Irish Republic'.³⁶ After this ratification of the republic, they sent out a 'Message to the free nations of the world', calling 'upon every free nation to support the Irish Republic by recognising Ireland's national status and her right to its vindication at the Peace Congress'. The spirit of the Wilsonian moment at the Mansion House became even more clear later on, with the message stating that 'Ireland—resolutely and irrevocably determined at the dawn of the promised era of self-determination and liberty that she will suffer foreign dominion no longer'.³⁷

Following this, SF sent a delegation to Paris to present these claims to the Peace Conference. The leading envoy was the chairman of the Dáil, O'Kelly. Besides being a founding member of SF, O'Kelly was chosen because he had been able to obtain a passport as a member of the Dublin Corporation to present in Paris their invitation to President Wilson to visit Dublin.³⁸ Moreover, his wife was a professor of French, and he spoke the language.³⁹ After arriving in Paris on 8 February, he set up a bureau in the Grand Hotel near the Opera. On 11

³⁴ O'Donoghue, "'Ireland's Independence Day'", 842.

³⁵ Id.

³⁶ Houses of the Oireachtas, 'DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. – Dáil Éireann (1st Dáil) – Tuesday, 21 Jan 1919 – Houses of the Oireachtas', text, 21 January 1919, Ireland, <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1919-01-21/8>.

³⁷ Oireachtas, 'MESSAGE TO THE FREE NATIONS OF THE WORLD'.

³⁸ Charles Townshend, *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence, 1918-1923* (London, 2014), 68.

³⁹ Sinead McCoole, *No Ordinary Women: Irish Female Activists in the Revolutionary Years 1900-1923.*, 2016, 54.

February, O'Kelly delivered a letter to the residence of president Wilson, accompanied by a journalist from the *Irish Independent*. In the letter he asked for Eamon De Valera, Arthur Griffith and George Noble Plunkett to be granted access to the Conference and the League of Nations Commission, to present the case for Irish Independence. The US delegation, however, only replied two days later that they would investigate the matter and get back to O'Kelly, which they never did. The letter and the response by the Americans were published in the *Independent*, and generated a lot of backlash towards SF as well as Wilson.⁴⁰ Following this, O'Kelly petitioned the French Prime Minister and President of the Conference, George Clemenceau on 22 February, who also ignored him. This trend continued when the appeal he sent to all the seventy-one delegates gathered in Paris on 7 March, fell on deaf ears.⁴¹ However, both of these letters were also sent to 140 newspapers in Paris and throughout France. According to O'Kelly, this caused quite the big stir in journalistic circles. Despite this success, he reported back to Dublin that he feared that 'the prospects of being heard are very slight', and that the best way forward was to pressure Wilson using the Irish diaspora in the US.⁴² The reason the Irish delegation was largely ignored was twofold. Firstly, none of the present delegations wanted to antagonize the British. Secondly, the alleged connection between Sinn Féin and the German Empire through the German Plot of 1918 was still in the mind of many delegates, specifically the French. As Clemenceau's right-hand André Tardieu noted a few years later: 'during the war, Sinn Féiners harboured and supplied German submarines and took German gold to pay for Casement's treason.'⁴³

⁴⁰ Keown, 'Knocking on the Door', 45; 'Wilson Rebuff for Ireland? His Extraordinary Attitude', *The Irish Independent*, 13 February 1919.

⁴¹ Ranger, 'Paris, Diplomatic Capital of the World', 190; 'Documents on Irish Foreign Policy - Volume 1', *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy* (blog), 7, accessed 10 June 2021, <https://www.difp.ie/volume-1/1919/george-gavan-duffy-to-cathal-brugha/7/#section-documentpage>.

⁴² 'Documents on Irish Foreign Policy - Volume 1', 8.

⁴³ Ranger, 'Paris, Diplomatic Capital of the World', 190.

Meanwhile, the process of pressuring Wilson was already started by the Friends of Irish Freedom (FOIF). They had organized a ‘Self-Determination for Ireland Week’ in December, that was attended by 25,000 people.⁴⁴ In addition, during the Third Irish Race Convention on 22 February, a group of Irish-Americans were selected to meet with Wilson during his brief trip back to the States to deal with some pressing legislation. Wilson agreed to this meeting because of political pressure. The FOIF had used their influence, to get the House of Representatives to adopt a resolution on 3 March calling on US representatives in Paris to present the case for Irish self-determination to the Peace Conference. The meeting on 4 March did, however, not put the concerns of the Irish-Americans to bed, as the President stated that he was sympathetic towards Ireland, but had little influence on the matter.⁴⁵ In response, they founded the American Commission on Irish Independence (ACOII), consisting of Frank P. Walsh, Edward F. Dunne and Michael Ryan. These influential Irish-Americans would try to present the Irish case to the peace conference, if the SF delegates were not allowed to travel to Paris.⁴⁶

On 11 April the Commission were welcomed by O’Kelly in Paris. Through their connections, they managed to meet with the American head of the Intelligence Department for the Peace Commission, William Christian Bullitt Jr. He promised to reach out to Lloyd George’s confidential secretary, and reported the next day that the British were willing to grant the Irish envoys passports, but would not let them appear before the conference. Bolstered by this news, the ACOII wrote to Wilson and secured a meeting with him. Wilson’s positive response was influenced by reports from his staff that the Irish leaders were more moderate than they seemed, and that arranging a meeting between them and the British could prove fruitful. During the meeting, Wilson explained that he could not bring up the Irish question at

⁴⁴ Michael Doorley, *Irish-American Diaspora Nationalism: The Friends of Irish Freedom, 1916-1935* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 145.

⁴⁵ Carroll, ‘The American Commission on Irish Independence’, 105.

⁴⁶ Shanon Delia Douglass, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Friends of Irish Freedom: How America Shaped Irish American Nationalism in the Twentieth Century’ (Honors theses, Union College, 2015), 58, 59.

the Conference. However, he promised to convince Lloyd George of the urgency of settling the matter for Anglo-American and Anglo-Colonial relations, after the peace talks.⁴⁷ For the commission this was considerable progress, and their goal seemed ever closer when they secured a meeting with Lloyd George himself. This meeting, however, was postponed and the ACOII decided they would use the spare time to visit Ireland. They met with De Valera and others at the Mansion House in Dublin, where they stated that the goal of their visit was to ‘confer with President de Valera upon the question of securing international recognition of the Irish Republic at the Peace Conference.’⁴⁸ The following day, one of the members of the ACOII was cited on their unwillingness to compromise for any lesser form of government. All of this was done while implying that their trip had the approval and support of Lloyd George and Wilson. While it was true that the commission had permission to investigate the situation in Ireland, Lloyd George had definitely not meant for them to plead the case for an Irish Republic.

As a result, the conservative British press, Unionists, and the government felt insulted by the Irish-Americans. The reaction of Lloyd George was to restrict the movement of the ACOII in Ireland and cancel their upcoming meeting. The prospects of getting De Valera, Griffith and Plunket to Paris or before Lloyd George were shattered. Back in Paris, the commission tried to continue their work, but were told by Wilson’s administration that any future attempts pressure the British government ‘would be futile and therefore unwise’. Although the ACOII had acted with disregards of diplomatic sensitivity, Lloyd George, and to a lesser degree Wilson, were all too eager to use the commission as a scapegoat. Their lack of discretion meant that the former did not have to come to grips with the Irish Question in Paris, while the latter could blame the ACOII for not getting the Irish a hearing before the

⁴⁷ Carroll, ‘The American Commission on Irish Independence’, 107, 108.

⁴⁸ Francis M. Carroll, *America and the Making of an Independent Ireland: A History* (New York: University Press, 2021), 46; *London Times*, 5 May 1919.

conference.⁴⁹ After the ACOII unsuccessfully asked Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau to present the Irish case before the conference themselves, they switched to a more public opinion-based approach. On 6 June, they published their report on the repressive conditions in Ireland. Even though the report caused quite a stir, it did not help the Irish get a hearing. Meanwhile, Wilson had agreed to meet with the ACOII one last time. During this meeting Wilson blamed the Irish-Americans and their indiscretion for the failure to get De Valera and co to Paris, while Walsh read Wilson's own speeches to him, explaining how he raised the hopes of the Irish, and how it was his task to fulfil these hopes. Wilson replied: 'You have touched on the great metaphysical tragedy of today ... When I gave utterance to those words I said them without the knowledge that nationalities existed, which are coming to us day after day.'⁵⁰ He continued to state that he had wished to do more for the Irish, but was hampered by other members of the Conference. On that same day, Irish-American influence on US politics became once more visible. The Senate passed a resolution, specifically asking US delegates to get De Valera, Griffith, and Plunkett before the conference. The President, however, simply forwarded this resolution to Clemenceau without any additional comment. On 8 July, the commission returned home because they felt there was nothing more to be gained in Paris.⁵¹

The Irish envoys in Paris, O'Kelly and Duffy, had been in close contact with the ACOII this entire time. On 20 April, Duffy wrote to Dublin that he was optimistic about a hearing, but that he was expecting it after the peace was signed and the League of Nations got into working. A month later, however, this optimistic view had vanished, as O'Kelly wrote to Dublin that he and Walsh had come to the conclusion that 'there is now no chance of the Dáil delegates being allowed to appear before the Peace Conference or any of its committees or commissions'. He

⁴⁹ Carroll, *America and the Making of an Independent Ireland*, 48–50.

⁵⁰ Carroll, *America and the Making of an Independent Ireland*, 52, 53.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 54, 55.

even discouraged the three Irish envoys from coming to Paris, as he saw no point in it.⁵² Meanwhile, he and Duffy protested the signing of the peace treaty by British delegates on behalf of Ireland, to no effect. Furthermore, their success in influencing the French press had been limited. Duffy wrote to Dublin on 22 June that ‘the French side of the work here has been most disappointing; the French press and politicians are very anxious to keep on good terms with England’.⁵³ In that same letter, Duffy stated that their direct Peace Conference work was over. He and O’Kelly would, however, be instructed to remain in Paris, even after the signing of the peace treaty on 28 June, to sustain the Irish Republic’s foreign relation efforts.

After the failure in Paris, Irish attention shifted to the United States, where Irish-Americans had been busy. Being disappointed with president Wilson’s failure to get the Irish a hearing, they joined forces with Republican Senators under the leadership of William E. Borah, to defeat Wilson’s League of Nations. While the Irish question was far from the only reason the Treaty of Versailles was never ratified by Congress, or the US never entered the League of Nations, it undoubtedly played a role.⁵⁴ Wilson defended himself from the Irish accusations by arguing that Ireland was not granted a hearing because its territory did not belong to the defeated powers. He combined this with his defence of the League of Nations. He explained that the League would not, as many Irish-Americans thought, lead to the preservation of the British Empire, but instead would provide a forum to which “all nations could bring any matter which was likely to affect the peace and freedom of the world”.⁵⁵ It seems that Wilson had no problem with self-determination being applied to Ireland. However, he was not convinced that the Peace

⁵² ‘Documents on Irish Foreign Policy - Volume 1’, 14–18.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 32.

⁵⁴ Doorley, *Irish-American Diaspora Nationalism*, 164–68; Carroll, *America and the Making of an Independent Ireland*, 59–63.

⁵⁵ Michael Hopkinson, ‘President Woodrow Wilson and the Irish Question’, *Studia Hibernica*, no. 27 (1993): 106.

Conference was the right place to do so, and was not prepared to antagonize one of his closest allies.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Hopkinson, 'Woodrow Wilson and the Irish Question', 111.

The French press, Sinn Féin and the Wilsonian moment

As mentioned in the previous chapter, France had politically nothing to gain from antagonizing one of her closest wartime allies, England. Furthermore, Irish Republicans were perceived as having been pro-German during the war. This left O’Kelly being ignored by Clemenceau and other French politicians. Realising this, he and Duffy turned their attention to the French press to influence public opinion. This chapter will look at how journalists from *Le Temps*, *La Croix*, *le Petit Parisien*, *La Presse* and *L’Humanité* wrote about the Irish claims, and what choices editors made regarding the coverage of some historic events.

Le Temps was despite its relatively small circulation, 30,000 in 1914, the most respected newspaper in France. It focussed mostly on political world events and intellectual developments. It was a republican and conservative newspaper and its journalists remained anonymous. Owned by journalist and politician Adrien Hébrard, *Le Temps* was the unofficial mouthpiece of French diplomacy.⁵⁷ By contrast, *Le Petit Parisien* represented the more common folk. It was one of the most popular dailies of France at the time, with a circulation of around 2,000,000 copies. It was known for its qualitative and well-rounded, but also sensationalistic approach to journalism. Under its owner Jean Dupuy the newspaper had a liberal, but moderate view on events. *La Presse* was one of the first penny newspapers to include advertising. It was a cheap daily that was known for its short and sharp style of reporting. It was founded by Emile de Girardin, who wanted the newspaper to report on and influence politics, but not be a mouthpiece of any party or the government. Because of this it produced a less pro-government view on world events.⁵⁸ Lastly, there were the outliers, *La Croix* and *L’Humanité*. *La Croix* was the biggest catholic newspaper, with a circulation of over 25,000.

⁵⁷ Laurent Martin, *La presse écrite en France au XXe siècle* (Paris: Librairie générale française, 2005), 52, 55, 74.

⁵⁸ Martin, *La presse écrite*, 50–55, 74; For more on *Petit Parisien* see also: Francine Amaury, *Histoire Du plus Grand Quotidien de La IIIe République: Le Petit Parisien, 1876-1944*. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1972).

Owned by catholic industrialist Paul Féron-Vrau the newspaper adopted the style of the popular dailies, but maintained a catholic perspective.⁵⁹ *L'Humanité* was the biggest socialist newspaper in France, with a circulation of around 100,000. It was founded in 1904 by Jean Jaurès, and functioned as the official mouthpiece of his socialist party. *L'Humanité* became communist after a party-split in 1920, but was still socialist in 1919. The paper stood behind the government during the war, but changed its policy in October 1918, with Marcel Cachin becoming chief editor. This change was reflected in articles that were increasingly critical of the government.⁶⁰

So, what did the French press write about the Irish claim? In general, there was not a lot of coverage, with *Le Temps* having thirteen articles on Sinn Féin in 1919, *Le Petit Parisien* and *L'Humanité* both ten, *La Croix* seven and *La Presse* only one. However, not all articles about the Irish claims mention Sinn Féin. *Le Temps* for example, published 44 articles on the political situation in Ireland in 1919. *La Croix* had slightly less but still 31, *L'Humanité* counted 27 articles. *Le Petit Parisien* on the other hand only had twenty articles, and *La Presse* even just eleven.⁶¹ These are the articles that specifically dealt with the Irish question. In the weeks leading up to the first Dáil, there were only a few articles on SF. *Le Temps* published two articles on 4 and 9 January, one reflecting on how the party's election victory issued in a new political era in Ireland, but that Ulster could not be forced. The other article was on the possibility of a SF national Assembly. *Le Petit Parisien* published a short article on the Police raid of SF's headquarters, during which drafts of the Declaration of Independence and Message to The Free Nations of the World were seized. *La Presse* published an article titled 'call to order of elected Sinn Féiners' which quoted the *Daily Telegraph* observing that if SF thought it had the freedom

⁵⁹ Yves Pitette, *Biographie d'un journal: "La Croix* (Paris: Perrin, 2011), 155, 178, 205.

⁶⁰ Martin, *La presse écrite*, 74–76.

⁶¹ 'Les Principaux Quotidiens | Gallica', accessed 7 June 2022, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/html/presse-et-revues/les-principaux-quotidiens?mode=desktop>.

to do as it pleased, the government would have to intervene vigorously.⁶² Neither of these newspapers were interested in SF's ideology. The articles on the proceedings of the first Dáil were not much different. On 23 January, *Le Temps* spoke of a Sinn Féin constitutional assembly. They noted the Declaration of Independence and the Message to the Free Nations Of The World, but the short page-two article lacked reflection. A day later, they printed a small excerpt from the Message, but paired this with a militant quote from Unionist leader Edward Carson. The paper did not use Sinn Féin terms like Dáil, parliament or government of the republic. *Le Petit Parisien* published a similar short page-three article on the Dáil. In comparison, the article on de Valera's escape from prison was three times as long. *L'Humanité* only published a five-sentence article titled 'Ireland, a provisional government?'. It spoke of a national Irish assembly that had chosen a prime minister and four other ministers. *La Presse* failed to report on the event. By contrast, *La Croix* opened its front page on 23 January with: 'Elected Sinn Féiners proclaim in Dublin the Irish Republic'. The article spoke of an Irish Republican Congress proclaiming the Irish Republic and sending out a Message To The Free Nations of the World. Although the article was fairly factual, it is clear that *La Croix* took the first Dáil more serious.⁶³

Similarly, O'Kelly's arrival in Paris and his appeal to Wilson went unnoticed. It was only on 15 February that *La Croix* published a front-page article in which it explained the Irish question. It gave a history lesson of the Irish conflict, starting with the Plantation of Ulster and ending with the Irish sacrifice during the Great War and France's historical sympathy for Ireland. It concluded by stating that it hoped for peace and justice in Ireland's future. It did not

⁶² 'Les élections britanniques', *Le Temps* [LT], 04 Jan 1919 (All newspaper articles hereafter are from 1919), p. 2; 'Réunion du sinn-fein', *LT*, 09 Jan, p. 2; 'En Irlande', *Le Petit Parisien* [LPP], 14 Jan, p. 3; 'rappel à l'ordre des Sinn Feiners élus', *La Presse* [LP], 02 Jan, p. 3.

⁶³ 'Sinn-fein et l'indépendance irlandaise', *LT*, 23 Jan, p. 2; 'Les députés Sinn-Fein proclament l'indépendance irlandaise', *LPP*, 22 Jan, p. 3; 'Irlande un gouvernement provisoire?', *L'Humanité* [LH], 24 Jan, p. 2; 'En Irlande, Les élus sinn-feiners proclament à Dublin la République irlandaise', *La Croix* [LC], 23 Jan, p. 1.

discuss the political situation. Nevertheless, *La Croix* clearly was interested in the Irish situation and wanted to educate its readership.⁶⁴

O’Kelly’s presence in Paris was first noticed when he sent his letter to Clemenceau on 22 February. *La Croix*, *Le Petit Parisien* and *L’Humanité* all printed roughly the same article from Francophone news agency Havas. The article did not use any quotations around terms like Republic of Ireland. However, this was the choice of Havas, as all papers printed the exact same article. *La Presse* did not report on the event. *Le Temps* based their article on the *Daily Mail*. They added ‘who calls himself’ before O’Kelly’s title, and used quotation marks around terms like Irish Republic. This showed *Le Temps*’s English view of Irish events.⁶⁵ The next day the paper copied an article from the *Times*, in which it reminded its readers of Irish-American’s pre-war German connections.⁶⁶ Additionally, all of these papers had received a copy of O’Kelly’s letter, as he sent it to 140 French newspapers. Yet none of them decided to print parts of it or write their own article. This showed the reluctance of the French press to mingle in the Conference’s politics.

In March, *La Croix* started reporting on Irish newspapers. On the 11th it published an article on Wilson’s refusal to receive O’Kelly, and the reaction of the Irish and Irish-American press. Some days later it stated that, apart from the *Irish Times*, the Irish press was hopeful on president Wilson helping to bring their cause before the Conference. Moreover, it was the only one to report extensively on the resolution of the US House.⁶⁷ *La Presse* printed two interesting articles in March. In the first, on SF redoubling their activity, the paper stated that the ‘elected of Ireland, invoke rightly the principles of Wilson – those that relate to the freedom of peoples’.

⁶⁴ ‘La Question d’Irlande’, *LC*, 15 Feb, p. 1.

⁶⁵ ‘Les délégués de la République irlandaise’, *LPP*, 26 Feb, p. 3; ‘La question irlandaise’, *LC*, 26 Feb, p. 4; ‘Les revendications irlandaises’ *LH*, 26 Feb, p. 2; ‘La “République Irlandaise” et la Conférence de la paix’, *LT*, 26 Feb, p. 1; ‘qui s’institue’ (all translations hereinafter by me).

⁶⁶ ‘Les Irlandais d’Amérique’, *LT*, 27 Feb, p. 1.

⁶⁷ ‘En Irlande’, *LC*, 11 Mar, p. 3; ‘Irlande et Wilson’, *LC*, 18 Mar, p. 6.

Similarly, in an article about the British governments lack of action it stated that ‘until then, Ireland stirs and three quarters of the Irish want to break up with the English’.⁶⁸ These quotes indicate the first time a mainstream French paper talked about the will of the Irish people and its relation to Wilson's principles.

At this point *L'Humanité* had already published a front-page article titled ‘Ireland wants its independence’, and was openly advocating for a free Ireland. Fascinatingly, the paper’s rhetoric closely resembled that of SF and the Irish Wilsonian moment. It stated that the Celtic people of Ireland formed a distinct nationality and therefore deserved independence, and that they had fought oppression by the English for seven centuries. It also placed the Irish struggle in the context of other little nations in Europe claiming independence. Where the paper differed from SF, was in that it pled for Dominion Home Rule along the lines of a Federalist solution as proposed by Marx. Furthermore, it was no fan of Republicanism, as it stated that ‘the blind chauvinists and brutal imperialists are preparing the most dreadful tomorrow’.⁶⁹

The French press was not interested in the ACOII. *Le Temps* and *La Presse* only published very short articles on the departure and arrival of the Commission, with only *La Presse* mentioning that the Irish-Americans were advocating for Ireland the ‘right of free disposition’ or self-determination.⁷⁰ *L'Humanité* noted towards the end of April that Lloyd George supposedly wanted to receive the three Irish-Americans.⁷¹ *La Croix* was the only paper to dive a bit deeper. It published an article on O’Kelly’s and the Irish press’ positive reactions to the talks between the ACOII and Wilson. Moreover, they published two articles on how the

⁶⁸ ‘Les revendications irlandaises’, *LP*, 16 Mar, p. 1; ‘L’Irlande libre’, *LP*, 18 Mar, p. 1; ‘Les élus de l’Irlande invoquent, assez justement, les principes Wilson – ceux relatifs à la liberté des peuples’; ‘Pendant ce temps l’Irlande s’agite et le trois quarts des Irlandais veulent rompre avec les Anglais’.

⁶⁹ ‘L’Irlande veut son indépendance’, *LH*, 12 Mar, p. 1; ‘les chauvins aveugles et les imperialists brutaux préparent les plus redoutables lendemains’.

⁷⁰ ‘Le revendications de l’Irlande’, *LT*, 09 Apr, p. 2; ‘Le revendications irlandaises’, *LT*, 13 Apr, p. 1; ‘Délégués irlandais à Paris’, *LP*, 03 Apr, p. 1: “Ils réclameront pour eux le droit de libre disposition”.

⁷¹ ‘Les Irlandais d’Amérique’, *LH*, 23 Apr, p. 2.

British press had found renewed interest in the Irish situation, and wanted the government to act. According to *L'Humanité* the English press realised the Irish question was an international one and that the call on America might not be in vain.⁷²

Similarly, the trip of the ACOII to Ireland was not well documented. Only *La Croix* and *Le Petit Parisien* wrote articles about the reception of the Commission in Dublin, with the latter refusing to use terms like President of the Irish Republic, while the former had no problem doing so. Meanwhile, *Le Petit Parisien* thought that an Irish Republic was not something that would be achieved in the near future. *L'Humanité* was the only paper to cover the American trip at length, publishing five articles. It noted the reaction by the British press, citing the *Times* and *Morning Post* who asked Lloyd George to explain why he granted the ACOII permission to go to Ireland.⁷³ After their return to Paris, the paper disagreed with Lloyd George's decision to not receive the Irish-Americans because they took part in a rebel movement. It stated that 'these are the legitimate aspirations of Ireland that Lloyd George ... qualifies as a "revolt movement"'. And yet the English Prime Minister is busy in the Council of Four to revise the map of Europe in the name of the principle of self-determination of peoples.⁷⁴ A week later the paper published part of the letter that Walsh and co sent to Wilson while also giving an overview of the Commission's meetings with Wilson and his secretary, Lansing. After attacking Lloyd George, the socialists went after Clemenceau. It didn't expect anything from SF's protests to

⁷² 'La question de L'Irlande', *LC*, 12 Apr, p. 2: 'La presse anglaise paraît reconnaître aujourd'hui que la question d'Irlande n'est plus une question purement domestique, qu'elle s'internationalise chaque jour davantage, et que, l'appel des Irlandais à l'aide américaine, n'a peut-être pas été vain.'; 'La question irlandaise', *LC*, 29 Apr, p. 3; 'La question irlandaise', *LC*, 27 Apr, p. 2.

⁷³ 'En Irlande', *LH*, 07 May, p. 3; 'L'Irlande réclame son Indépendance', *LH*, 14 May, p. 3.

⁷⁴ 'Les délégués Irlando-Américains', *LH*, 18 May, p. 1: 'Ce sont, les légitimes aspirations de l'Irlande à l'indépendance, que Lloyd-George ... qualifient de « mouvement de révolte ». Et cependant, le Premier anglais s'occupe au-Conseil des Quatre de remanier la carte de d'Europe au nom du principe de l'autodétermination des peuples.'

the signing of the peace treaty by British delegates in the name of Ireland, as it was ‘needless to add that the rights of Ireland are those that Mr Clemenceau puts under his feet’.⁷⁵

The report of the ACOII failed to make any headlines in the French press. *La Petit Parisien* published a short reaction by the British government on 19 June, saying most of the accusations were exaggerated or false. *La Croix* noted that the delegates had met with Wilson and sent him their report. *Le Temps* only noted briefly that Wilson had received the delegates. *La Presse* informed its readers that the *Daily News* had published parts of the report and had called it one-sided. *L’Humanité* went into more detail. The paper focussed on the Commission’s findings on prison conditions. It quoted the report on how German prisoners in France were better off than the prisoners in Mount Joy.⁷⁶ Five days earlier it had addressed the pro-Germanness of SF during WWI. It stated that ‘not the *Times*, nor the English government will succeed in making the world believe that the partisans of Irish independence are sold to Germany’.⁷⁷

For the French press it is interesting to look at a few articles from after the Conference to see if there was a lessening in pro-English sentiment. For the big dailies this was not the case. *Le Petit Parisien* and *La Presse* did not change their tone. However, *Le Temps*, did take a bigger interest in Ireland. On 12 August, the ‘problem of Ireland’ made the paper’s headline. It tried to explain the Irish situation, starting with the Home Rule bill of 1914, and wished for it to be resolved with the ‘triumph of a new spirit, the spirit that has to inspire the League of Nations’. It stated that France was loyal to England, but also noted the instinctive French sympathy for Ireland. The paper stressed that the Irish question was not just a religious question, but one of

⁷⁵ ‘Les droits de l’Irlande’, *LH*, 29 May: “Inutile d’ajouter que les droits de l’Irlande sont de ceux que M. Clemenceau met sous ses pieds”.

⁷⁶ ‘Le rapport Américain’, *LPP*, 19 Jun, p. 3; ‘Les Irlandais-Américains à Paris’, *LC*, 20 Jun, p. 3; ‘Les délégués Irlandais’, *LT*, 23 Jun, p. 1; ‘Un rapport Irlandais’, *LP*, 12 Jun, p. 1; ‘En Irlande’, *LH*, 15 Jun, p. 3.

⁷⁷ ‘En Irlande’, *LH*, 10 Jun, p. 3: ‘Ni le Times, ni le gouvernement anglaise ne réussiront à faire croire au monde que les partisans de l’indépendance irlandaise sont vendus à l’Allemagne’.

race. They quoted Irish scholar and member of the Dáil Eoin MacNeill on the Celtic race being the last white race to be governed against its will. The paper saw two solutions: either withdraw all English troops from Ireland and hold a referendum, or govern Ireland like a colony until they figured out their internal differences. It argued for the first, but feared the English government was opting for the second.⁷⁸ A month later, the paper published a reader's letter, pleading for the implementation of the report of the Irish Convention of 1918. He argued that 'if we grant the right to self-determination to rural and catholic Ireland, in name of what principle could we refuse the same privilege to the industrial and protestant north of Ireland?'⁷⁹ Although it can hardly be said that the paper was pro-SF or pro-Irish, it did use of terms like last unfree white race and self-determination. This implies that some rhetoric of the Irish Wilsonian Moment had infiltrated the rhetoric of French conservatism.

La Croix continued its call for Irish independence. It agreed with the *Times*' proposition of *Dominion Home Rule*, and warned that inactivity by the British government was dangerous.⁸⁰ In September, they concluded that England 'must repair without delay one of the biggest faults of its history'.⁸¹ In October it argued that the Unionists were being guided by a simplistic spirit, but also noted that the solution of a Republic ignored the wishes of Ulster and England. That same month it used for the first time Wilsonian rhetoric. *La Croix* stated that SF was chosen by the Irish people and by suppressing it England took away from these Irishmen their votes. Additionally, it quoted Labour Leader William Adamson who asked if the promises of the

⁷⁸ 'le problèm d'irlande', *LT*, 12 Aug, p. 1: 'se termine enfin par le triomphe d'un esprit nouveau, de l'esprit qui doit inspirer la Société des nations.'

⁷⁹ 'La question d'Irlande', *LT*, 26 Sep, p. 3; 'Mais si d'on accorde à l'Irlande agricole et catholique le droit de disposer d'elle-même, au nom de quelle principe refusera-t-on le même privilège à l'Irlande du nord, industrielle et protestante?'

⁸⁰ 'Informations irlandaises', *LC*, 24 Aug, p. 3.

⁸¹ 'L'Irlande', *LC*, 23 Sep, p. 3; 'se doit de réparer sans tarder une des plus grands fautes des sont histoire'.

English government fighting for the rights of small nations had not turned out to be a lie for Ireland.⁸²

Lastly, *L'Humanité's* use of Wilsonian rhetoric only became stronger. Commenting on the suppression of SF in September, the paper rhetorically asked 'is it an application of the famous 'rights of peoples'?'⁸³ Later that month it argued that "Ireland has to freely dispose of itself" or more freely translated: 'Ireland has to determine its own future'.⁸⁴ Subsequently, in November the paper addressed on its front page the fact that 'British politics, which pretended to fight for the rights of peoples during the entire war, submits the two Egyptian and Irish people to a more and more brutal oppression'.⁸⁵ It found the repression of SF a 'grave attempt against the liberty of a people', and thought it would lead to Ireland 'revolting and declaring its independence, arms in hand'.⁸⁶ The article concluded that little could be expected from the League of Nations if England 'tramples under her feet with such cynicism the right of people to self-determination'.⁸⁷

So, how did the French press react to the Irish claim for independence during the Peace Conference? The answer to this question was perhaps already given by Gavan Duffy, who concluded in 1920 that 'Catholics generally are friendly. The socialists support Ireland on principle, but nearly all hate the hold of religion in Ireland ... the Bloc National is no lover of England, but it is too wise to antagonise a friend it expects to need'.⁸⁸ First, *La Croix* was indeed in general friendly towards and more interested in Ireland. However, the paper never really

⁸² 'Mesures répressives en Irlande', *LC*, 14 Oct, p. 3.

⁸³ 'En Angleterre', *LH*, 14 Sep, p. 3: 'Est-ce une application du fameux "droit des peuples"?'

⁸⁴ 'Le problème irlandais', *LH*, 22 Sep, p. 3: 'L'Irlande doit donc librement disposer d'elle-même'.

⁸⁵ 'La repression anglaise', *LH*, 30 Nov, p. 1: 'La politique britannique, qui a prétendu, lutter pour le droit des peuples durant toute la guerre, soumet à une oppression de plus en plus brutale les deux peuples égyptien et, irlandais.'

⁸⁶ Id; 'Ce grave attentat contre ta liberté d'un peuple'; "se révolte et réclame son indépendance les armes à la main'.

⁸⁷ Id; 'foule au pieds avec un tel cynisme le droit des peuples à disposer d'eux mêmes'.

⁸⁸ Ranger, 'Paris, Diplomatic Capital of the World', 194.

seemed to support Republicanism and did not truly share in the Irish Wilsonian moment and its rhetoric. Second, *Le Temps*, *Le Petit Parisien* and *La Presse* did not want to antagonise England. These papers took most of their Irish news straight from English sources, and although *La Presse* had some sharper comments now and then, it never openly supported Irish independence. In general, these papers definitely did not share in the Irish Wilsonian moment as terms like self-determination were not mentioned in relation to Ireland. This was a clear choice, as the term self-determination was undoubtedly used in other contexts. A search for ‘Droit des peuples à disposer d’eux-mêmes’, meaning self-determination, in 1919 turns up: 334 hits for *Le Temps*, 258 hits for *Le Petit Parisien* and 162 hits for *La Presse*, talking about Poles, Greeks, Yugoslavians, and others. Lastly, Duffy’s analysis of *L’Humanité* also seems correct. It was the only one to openly support Irish independence, and link this to Wilsonian concepts and English wartime aims. Although they did not support SF, they did share their rhetoric. Caution is needed, however, in concluding that they shared in the Irish Wilsonian moment. The idea that people must decide their own future and government is one that was hardly new to socialism and socialist. It is therefore very plausible that *L’Humanité* was not directly influenced by SF, but that their rhetoric sounded all too familiar and struck a chord with the socialists. Nevertheless if there was an Irish Wilsonian moment among the French press it was a socialist one.

The English press, Sinn Féin and the Wilsonian moment

Just like any other part of society, the English press was severely influenced by the First World War. According to Kenneally and Boyce the war had shifted public opinion and the press' stance on Home Rule. The *London Times*, for example, was against Home Rule in 1914, but stated in March 1919 that 'we are all Home Rulers today'.⁸⁹ This chapter will explore to what extent this change in attitude meant that *The Manchester Guardian*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Herald* were susceptible to the Irish Wilsonian moment, and how they reacted to SF's claim to independence in Paris.

The Manchester Guardian was a liberal newspaper of record, with a circulation of around 45,000, owned by businessman and liberal politician C.P. Scott, who had been its editor since 1871.⁹⁰ He initially opposed British involvement in WWI, but supported the government during the war. However, the *Guardian* became more critical of the government, as Scott was disappointed in Lloyd George's handling of the Peace Conference and repulsed with government policy in Ireland.⁹¹ The *Daily Mail* was the most popular daily in England, with a circulation of around 1,533,000, owned by the conservative press baron Lord Northcliffe, who also owned *The Times*, among other newspapers.⁹² The paper was aimed at the lower middle class, with more literary styled articles and a bigger interest in sports and human interest stories. Northcliffe had been director of Propaganda for the government in 1918, but had a falling out with Lloyd George. After this, he used his newspapers to attack government policy.⁹³ The *Daily Telegraph* was a conservative paper of record, with a circulation of around 180,000, owned by

⁸⁹ Kenneally, *The Paper Wall*, 147; Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles*, 25, 37.

⁹⁰ Tom Jeffery and Keith McClelland, 'A World Fit to Live in: The Daily Mail and the Middle-Classes', in *Impacts and Influences: Media Power in the Twentieth Century*, ed. James Curran, Anthony Smith, and Pauline Wingate (Routledge, 2013), 28, 29.

⁹¹ Kenneally, *The Paper Wall*, 167.

⁹² Id.

⁹³ Kenneally, *The Paper Wall*, 148, 168; For more see: J. Lee Thompson, *Northcliffe: Press Baron in Politics, 1865-1922* (London: John Murray, 2000).

conservative politician Harry Levy-Lawson, who had left the Liberal Party in 1895, in protest of its Home Rule policy. The editor of the *Telegraph* fully supported the government during the war and was awarded a knighthood.⁹⁴ Lastly, the *Daily Herald* was a socialist newspaper owned and edited by George Lansbury, a Labour politician. Lansbury had opposed WWI, a stance that led to the paper having to be published weekly during the war. It became a daily again in May 1919 and quickly reached a peak circulation just shy of 330,000.⁹⁵

Naturally, the first Dáil received more attention in the British press than it did in the French. All papers had multiple articles reflecting on SF possibly setting up their own parliament. Assessments differed greatly, however. The *Guardian* foresaw trouble and argued that a ‘plan of liberty at which Sinn Féin itself will find it difficult to cavil must be put in operation.’⁹⁶ On the proceedings of the first Dáil, the paper was clear: they were dull and might have looked cheap, but the importance of the event was not to be understated.⁹⁷ The *Daily Telegraph* stated on SF that ‘we do not forget the cowardly murders which marked the Easter Rebellion of 1916’. The paper argued that Britain would not give Ireland independence and that the government had to deal firmly with SF if they tried to set up their own parliament.⁹⁸ On SF’s aims in Paris, the *Telegraph* said that the Republicans claimed ‘right of political self-determination’, but were already given the opportunity during the Irish Convention, and failed to come to an agreement.⁹⁹ It saw the appointment of SF delegates to the Peace Conference as ‘theatrical’.¹⁰⁰ They also mentioned the hypocrisy of a party that was funded by German gold during the war, appealing to the Allies. On the Dáil itself, the *Telegraph* concluded that the

⁹⁴ Edward Frederick Lawson Burnham, *Peterborough Court: The Story of the Daily Telegraph* (London: Cassell, 1955), 50, 70, 115.

⁹⁵ Huw Richards, *The Bloody Circus: The Daily Herald and the Left* (London: Pluto Press, 1997), 22–27.

⁹⁶ ‘Sinn Féin policy’, *The Manchester Guardian [MG]*, 06 January 1919, p. 4. All newspaper articles hereafter are from 1919

⁹⁷ ‘Sinn Féin assembly’, *MG*, 21 January, p. 5.

⁹⁸ ‘Ireland and Sinn Féin’, *The Daily Telegraph [DT]*, 02 January, p. 6.

⁹⁹ ‘A Sinn Féin ‘envoy’’, *DT*, 06 January, p. 8.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Irish Republic’, *DT*, 17 January, p. 11.

meeting was ‘flat’.¹⁰¹ The *Daily Mail* published in January the account of one their correspondents who visited SF headquarters. He explained the SF perspective of Ireland being a nation and deserving self-determination just as much as Belgium does. The correspondent argued that freedom was a key value of the Empire, so ‘let us not call Irish nationalist disloyal but show that in the commonwealth there is room for their passionate nationalism’. Consequently, he pleads for the earliest implementation of Dominion Home Rule.¹⁰² The paper continued this plea two weeks later, claiming that self-government was the only way to get responsible Irishmen to influence public affairs.¹⁰³ The *Daily Mail* pointed out to their readers that the SF MP’s, however, were not hooligans, but men of respectable professions.¹⁰⁴ On the ‘so-called Parliament’ itself, it noted that the proceedings caused little excitement and resembled a debating society.¹⁰⁵ By contrast, the *Daily Herald* interpreted SF’s election victory as an ‘expression of the faith of Irishmen and women that their right to “the unfettered control of Irish destinies is sovereign and indefeasible”’. It noted that the Irish mission to the Paris was ‘an earnest endeavour to discover whether Dr. Wilson’s great moral tide is or is not a reality’.¹⁰⁶ In another article, the paper cynically noted the British rejection of universalism of the Wilsonian principles, stating ‘self-determination for all peoples, except those which Britain ... can keep in subjection’.¹⁰⁷ It trusted, however, that “no doubt, before very long, we shall hear that some member of the Conference has raised the question of Ireland’s, India’s, and Egypt’s right to self-determination”.¹⁰⁸ Its tone on the Dáil was wholly different, stating that the event was marked by ‘dignity, earnestness, popular enthusiasm and pride’.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹ ‘Irish Republic’, *DT*, 22 January, p.9.

¹⁰² ‘Sinn Féin’, *Daily Mail [DM]*, 02 January, p. 2.

¹⁰³ ‘Ireland’, *DM*, 14 Jan, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Sinn Féin MP’s’, *DM*, 24 Jan, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Dublin “Parliament”’, *DM*, 17 Jan, p. 5; ‘Dublin “Parliament”’, *DM*, 21 Jan, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Irish notes’, *Daily Herald [DH]*, 04 Jan, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Irish notes’, *DH*, 11 Jan, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ ‘In Paris now’, *DH*, 25 Jan, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Irish notes’, *DH*, 25 Jan, p. 16.

Not all newspapers immediately picked up on O’Kelly’s work in France. The *Guardian* observed on 17 February how within the League of Nations the principle of Allied territorial integrity seemed to take precedence over Wilson’s doctrine of the rights of small nations. It feared this, combined with the Dáil delegate in Paris being ignored, would lead to more unrest in Ireland.¹¹⁰ The paper published O’Kelly’s entire letter to Clemenceau and ‘hoped on every ground that the British authorities will give their support to this claim for a hearing’.¹¹¹ The *Daily Telegraph* did not publish a single article on O’Kelly’s mission. It only mentioned that the Irish in Paris were being ignored by delegates and the press, because of SF’s wartime allegiances. The *Daily Mail* published a short article on O’Kelly’s letter on 25 February. They did publish an interview with O’Kelly, in which they were mostly interested de Valera’s escape from prison.¹¹² The *Daily Herald* mentioned on 22 February that O’Kelly had been appealing to the Conference for over a week. It warned Wilson that if ‘in face of his own writings and speeches’ he ‘chooses to consider the Irish demand for self-determination a mere domestic question for Great Britain, the Irish people will consider him a humbug and the Wilson peace a curse.’¹¹³ The paper was also the only one not to use quotation marks around O’Kelly’s title or preceding it by ‘who calls himself ...’

In March, the US Congress grabbed the attention of British newspapers. The *Guardian* warned that the resolution of the House had to be viewed as a ‘friendly and by no means unnecessary warning’. The paper argued that the Irish claim was the same as that of other oppressed nationalities at the Conference, and thought it should be treated as such. It regretted the present situation and thought it was ‘time for change, time for reparation’.¹¹⁴ They continued

¹¹⁰ ‘Ireland and the League of Nations’ *MG*, 17 Feb, p. 5.

¹¹¹ ‘Sinn Féin’s appeal to the Peace Conference’, *MG*, 26 Feb, p. 7; ‘Ireland’s claim at the Conference’, *MG*, 28 Feb, p. 9.

¹¹² ‘Sinn Féin in Paris’, *DM*, 25 Feb 1919, p. 5; ‘O’Kelly in Paris’, *DM*, 26 Feb, p. 5.

¹¹³ ‘Irish notes’, *DH*, 22 Feb, p. 16.

¹¹⁴ ‘America and the Peace Conference’, *MG*, 06 Mar, p. 6.

this plea in an article on how censorship in Ireland perhaps only existed to avoid embarrassment for the British in Paris, while they were settling world affairs on the basis of principles like ‘nationality and justice’.¹¹⁵ The *Daily Telegraph* only published a five-sentence article on the resolution. It was less enthusiastic about Irish-American agitation, who they thought were trying to secure ‘separation for Ireland’.¹¹⁶ The choice of ‘separation’ instead of independence indicates that the paper judged the situation more based on the principles of territorial integrity than self-determination. The *Daily Mail*’s only article on the Americans was one in which they reminded their readers about the pre-war German connections of the Irish-Americans.¹¹⁷ However, the paper agreed with the *Guardian* that ‘something needs to be done, and done quickly’. It argued that only some form of self-government could turn the tide in Ireland.¹¹⁸ Surprisingly, the *Daily Herald* failed to report on the resolution, and instead focussed on outrages by the British ‘army of occupation’, and the ‘Prussian’ government style of the authorities.¹¹⁹ It did again confirm that it believed in ‘self-determination of nationalities’, and that it supported Irish independence.¹²⁰

In April, the *Daily Mail* was the only paper that failed to report on the ACOII. The other three papers published short articles stating their departure and their goals in Paris.¹²¹ Meanwhile, only the *Guardian* and the *Daily Herald* reported on O’Kelly’s request to Clemenceau and all the delegates, for Ireland to be admitted to the League of Nations. The *Daily Telegraph* simply noted that ‘not much interest is taken in the protests of Ireland’.¹²²

¹¹⁵ ‘Irish censorship’, *MG*, 28 Mar, p. 6.

¹¹⁶ ‘America and Ireland’, *DT*, 05 Mar, p. 9; ‘Wilson and Ireland’, *DT*, 06 Mar, p. 10.

¹¹⁷ ‘Judge refused hearing’, *DM*, 06 Mar, p. 5.

¹¹⁸ ‘Irish paralysis’, *DM*, 13 Mar, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ ‘War on the children’, *DH*, 22 Mar, p. 9.

¹²⁰ ‘Ourselves and the future’, *DH*, Mar, p. 4.

¹²¹ ‘American mission to Paris’, *MG*, 02 Apr, p. 12; ‘America and Ireland’, *DT*, 31 Mar, p. 7; ‘America and an Irish Republic’, *DH*, 02 Apr, p. 3.

¹²² ‘Peace Conference’, *DT*, 07 Apr, p. 9.

The *Guardian* continued its call for a solution. It published multiple articles on how the situation in Ireland was damaging Anglo-American relations, and argued that England had only herself to blame.¹²³ Interestingly, in an article on the rise of Indian nationalism, the paper said its causes were the same as that of the rise of SF: ‘the West cannot fight a world war in the name of liberty and self-determination without the East in its turn absorbing a good deal of the potent doctrine and expecting its application to itself.’¹²⁴ The *Daily Telegraph* opposed this line of thinking. It argued repeatedly that the restoration of order in Ireland was needed before any solution could be implemented.¹²⁵ It also was against Dominion Home Rule, as Dominions have a military, and to ‘contemplate that in the case of Ireland would be to contemplate suicide’.¹²⁶ This was because, unlike Australia and Canada, Ireland was fundamentally disloyal to Britain, and could not be trusted with an independent military policy. The *Daily Mail* focussed on the ‘dangerous’ government policy of doing nothing in Ireland. It no longer viewed SF as reasonable men and blamed them for the violence in Ireland. According to the paper, the only solution was to give the country a ‘reasonable amount of self-government’.¹²⁷ The *Herald* noted cynically that ‘we English talk of self-determination and applaud the freedom of the Czechoslovaks, but not Ireland. We think nothing of her self-determination.’¹²⁸ It also published an article by de Valera explaining the Irish claim, which it prefaced by stating that while the *Herald* favoured self-determination for Ireland it did not agree with the Sinn Féin policy in its entirety, but that it printed de Valera’s letter unedited in the name of freedom of the press.¹²⁹

The *Daily Mail* was again the only paper to not report on the ACOII securing a meeting with Lloyd George. The *Daily Telegraph*, however, refused to believe that George would have

¹²³ ‘Law in disrepute’, *MG*, 23 Apr, p. 9.

¹²⁴ ‘Trouble in India’, *MG*, 19 Apr, p. 9.

¹²⁵ ‘Irish situation’, *DT*, 04 Apr, p. 8.

¹²⁶ ‘Dominion Home Rule’, *DT*, 19 Apr, p. 8.

¹²⁷ ‘Ireland cannot wait’, *DM*, 28 Apr, p. 4.

¹²⁸ ‘Ireland a nation’, *DH*, 04 Apr, p. 4.

¹²⁹ ‘Sinn Féin’, *DH*, 02 Apr, p. 4.

consented to meet with these men, who came only to encourage of self-determination, while ignoring Britain's safety. It argued that 'to parley when you have no intention of yielding is folly'.¹³⁰

By contrast, the ACOII's trip to Ireland grabbed the full attention of the English press. All newspapers published at least five articles on Walsh, Dunne and Ryan, their speeches, what they represented, and the incidents that occurred. These incidents included the delegates being refused entry into the Westport military zone and the occupation of the Dublin Mansion House by military and police, right before a SF reception. The *Guardian* published an article on how the delegates were respectable and influential men.¹³¹ It saw the Westport and Mansion House incidents as foolish, and it stated that if the delegates were allowed to come they should have been allowed to finish their mission in peace.¹³² However, afterwards the *Guardian* argued that the ACOII's trip had enabled extreme forces within SF, and repressed moderate forces. Their preferred solution of Dominion Home Rule seemed ever further away.¹³³ On Lloyd George cancelling the interview with the Irish-Americans, the paper had no clear opinion. It did publish the Commission's letter to Lansing, asking for safe conduct for the Irish envoys. It also printed Lansing's reply on how this was no longer possible as the ACOII had offended the British government.¹³⁴

The *Daily Telegraph* strongly opposed the ACOII's trip to Ireland. It reminded its readers that SF was the 'treacherous enemy within our gates', which had stabbed the Allies in the back during the war.¹³⁵ It labelled the Irish-Americans 'indifferent diplomats', who had come to disrupt the British constitution.¹³⁶ The paper disputed claims by the delegates that

¹³⁰ 'Premier and Irish danger', 03 May, p. 10.

¹³¹ 'Irish-American delegation', *MG*, 06 May, p. 12.

¹³² 'A typical incident', *MG*, 12 May, p. 6.

¹³³ 'Irish-American visit', *MG*, 19 May, p. 9.

¹³⁴ 'Irish-American delegates', *MG*, 19 May, p. 8; 'Irish-Americans offence', *MG*, 19 May, p. 6.

¹³⁵ 'Prime minister and Irish-Americans', *DT*, 06 May, p. 11.

¹³⁶ 'Irish-Americans', *DT*, 08 May, p. 12.

Britain was a tyrant, arguing that Ireland was one of the richest and most prosperous countries for its size, and that ‘large masses of the Irish people’ bitterly resented SF.¹³⁷ Afterwards, it thought the decision of Lloyd George to no longer meet the delegates wise, claiming that the delegates had only their own ‘recklessness’ to blame.¹³⁸ Lastly, it saw O’Kelly’s continued efforts in Paris as an ‘attest that Sinn Féin does not understand world affairs.’¹³⁹

The *Daily Mail* noted the optimism that swept Ireland, as if the ACOII had ‘brought the gift of Irish independence in their coat-tail pockets.’ It was mostly amazed about why Lloyd George had agreed to the visit of these Irish-Americans, who were trying to help Ireland to ‘secede from the British Empire’, and urged the premier to clarify.¹⁴⁰ Even after the premier had cancelled the interview, the paper continued to be critical. It agreed with the *Guardian* that the visit had emboldened extreme sections within SF, who would no longer settle for anything less than a Republic, something they could only obtain by rebellion.¹⁴¹

By contrast, the *Daily Herald* reported positively to the ‘popular tour’ of the ACOII, and noted that the Commission could measure its success by the ‘exasperation of the shoot ‘em down papers’.¹⁴² Like the *Guardian*, it portrayed the Irish-Americans as influential and respectable men. In general, it used terms like freedom and self-determination, instead of secession and disruption, to describe the goals of the ACOII. Furthermore, it did not think that the ACOII had done any harm to the Irish situation. Instead, it wished to ‘put it the other way and say they have stirred things up so sharply that British Statesmanship is now provided with a magnificent opportunity’.¹⁴³ This attitude was praised by the delegates, who appreciated the

¹³⁷ ‘Premier and US delegates’, *DT*, 13 May, p. 13.

¹³⁸ ‘Lloyd George and the Irish-Americans’, *DT*, 14 May, p. 11.

¹³⁹ ‘Sinn Fein and the treaty’, *DT*, 24 May, p. 13.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Elated Sinn Fein’, *DM*, 05 May, p. 6; ‘US Sinn Feiners in Ireland’, *DM*, 07 May, p. 6.

¹⁴¹ ‘The next rebellion in Ireland’, *DM*, 28 May, p. 4.

¹⁴² ‘Ireland’s claim to be free’, *DH*, 07 May, p. 4.

¹⁴³ ‘Waiting for George’, *DH*, 14 May, p. 4.

papers ‘fight ... for oppressed nationalities’.¹⁴⁴ Correspondingly, the *Herald* was disappointed that ‘our yea and nay premier’ had cancelled his interview with the Commission.¹⁴⁵ On the denial of the request of the delegates to president Wilson to obtain safe conduct for de Valera and co. the paper wrote a first-page article titled ‘Who’s afraid?’.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, it reminded Wilson that if he denied the request of the delegates for an interview, he would betray his wartime principles and the principles of democracy.¹⁴⁷ Lastly, the paper was the only one to publish a letter in which the ACOII defended themselves from the accusations that their actions had ruined the prospects of an Irish hearing.¹⁴⁸

As the Conference came to a close, the British press focussed on four subjects: the resolution of the US Senate asking US delegates to get De Valera, Griffith, and Plunkett before the conference, the report of the ACOII, the continued agitation of the Irish-Americans in Paris, and the diplomatic failure of SF. The *Guardian* regretted the resolution by the Senate. It acknowledged that government practices in Ireland were undemocratic and was worried that this would weaken Anglo-American relations. It argued that the policy of government by force would no longer be accepted by Europe and the world. Consequently, it stated that the Peace Conference had been so busy with destroying autocracies and dealing with questions of nationality, but that these questions also existed in and applied to Ireland. It hoped that the League of Nations would take up the matter.¹⁴⁹ Interestingly, these statements bear resemblance to SF’s Wilsonian rhetoric. On the final meeting between Wilson and the ACOII the paper published that Wilson had said he could officially do nothing for Ireland, but that unofficially he would continue to press the case.¹⁵⁰ The *Guardian* waited with publishing on the ACOII

¹⁴⁴ ‘Irish-Americans’, *DH*, 16 May, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ ‘Our yea and nay premier’, *DH*, 14 May, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ ‘Who’s affraid?’, *DH*, 21 May, p. 1.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Acid test for Wilson’, *DH*, 22 May, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Irish-American letter’, *DH*, 28 May, p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ ‘East Antrim sensation’, *MG*, 10 Jun, p. 6; ‘Ireland and America’, *MG*, 18 Jun, p. 6.

¹⁵⁰ ‘Wilson and Ireland’, *MG*, 13 Jun, p. 8.

report until the official government response. It gave a brief overview of the main claims of the Commission and the government's response.¹⁵¹ Two weeks later, the paper reflected that, while it was true that rule in Ireland resembled that of the Turks in Armenia, many of the details of the report were inaccurate.¹⁵² A day before the signing of the Peace Treaty, the *Guardian* again pleaded for the implementation of Dominion Home Rule.¹⁵³

The *Daily Telegraph*, on the other hand, argued that the Senate was not angry with England but with Wilson, and that this was simply payback for the UK lecturing the US on the Monroe doctrine.¹⁵⁴ Likewise, it was not impressed by the appeals of the 'farcical delegates', O'Kelly and Duffy, to the Conference. Nor was it surprised by Wilson's dismissive reply to the requests of the 'extremists' that were the Irish-Americans.¹⁵⁵ As for the report, the paper went into detail to repudiate 'one of the most fantastic documents ever prepared for political propaganda', arguing that it was 'full of misstatements'. It urged that 'an official and detailed refutation of this farrago of falsehood is required without delay.'¹⁵⁶ Four days later, the paper published the entire government reply.¹⁵⁷ Lastly, it continued to oppose Dominion Home Rule, which it thought would be a security threat to England.¹⁵⁸

The *Daily Mail* was mostly interested in SF's failure in Paris. It talked of an Ireland 'awakening from its dream', and thought that now was the time for some sort of solution for Ireland.¹⁵⁹ On the Senate resolution, it followed the *Telegraph*, stating that it was simply a tit-for-tat. However, it also blamed Irish-American propaganda for 'poisoning Anglo-American

¹⁵¹ Irish-American delegates', *MG*, 18 Jun, p. 8.

¹⁵² 'Ireland as Americans saw it', *MG*, 30 Jun, p. 4.

¹⁵³ 'Force in Ireland', *MG*, 24 Jun, p. 4.

¹⁵⁴ 'US and Ireland', *DT*, 09 Jun, p. 7.

¹⁵⁵ 'Sinn Fein impudence', *DT*, 07 Jun, p. 13; 'Irish-Americans', *DT*, 12 Jun, p. 9.

¹⁵⁶ 'Condition of Ireland', *DT*, 14 Jun, p. 7.

¹⁵⁷ 'Calumny stripped bare', *DT*, 19 Jun, p. 10.

¹⁵⁸ 'Ireland as a dominion', *DT*, 05 Jul, p. 9.

¹⁵⁹ 'New chance in Ireland', *DM*, 02 Jun, p. 8.

relations'.¹⁶⁰ The paper was not surprised by Wilson's dismissive reply to the ACOII, stating that it had been expected by anyone, 'who had not succumbed to Sinn Féin's fatal facility for chasing rainbows.'¹⁶¹ Despite its previous criticism of the government, the *Daily Mail* presented the ACOII report as 'obvious, malicious rubbish', and the government's response an 'admirable piece of work'.¹⁶² Nevertheless, it favoured a solution to the Irish question, and pleaded that with the failure of SF's diplomatic offensive, now was the time to bring the moderate nationalists back in control through Dominion Home Rule.¹⁶³

The *Daily Herald* interpreted the Senate resolution as a sign that the US stood behind Ireland. It argued that this was shown by the vast meetings in favour of Irish self-determination that had been held throughout America, and the fact that the resolution 'obliterated party lines'. Similarly, it urged every Englishmen to read the ACOII report, as to make his country worthy of the men who 'died to make it safe for democracy'. According to the *Herald*, the verdict of the Irish-Americans was 'as impartial as it is damning'.¹⁶⁴ It was surprised that the report was censored in Ireland, since the incidents it described were supposedly common knowledge. In response they decided to print the most relevant parts of the report.¹⁶⁵ Subsequently, the government's response was ridiculed, as the paper argued that it disproved nothing and only made some shameful admissions about military rule in Ireland.¹⁶⁶ The paper did not blame SF for their failure in Paris, but instead argued that the statesmen at the Conference should 'have adhered to their wartime principles'.¹⁶⁷ Lastly, the *Herald* noted on the first of July that the British press was starting to back Dominion Home Rule. It stated that it had always supported

¹⁶⁰ 'US Senate on Ireland', *DM*, 09 Jun, p. 6.

¹⁶¹ 'Sinn Fein hopes', *DM*, 13 Jun, p. 5.

¹⁶² 'US and us', *DM*, 20 Jun, p. 5.

¹⁶³ 'Dominion of Ireland', *DM*, 23 Jun, p. 5.

¹⁶⁴ 'Our shame in Ireland', *DH*, 14 Jun, p. 4.

¹⁶⁵ 'Alas poor censor', *DH*, 12 Jun, p. 1.

¹⁶⁶ 'Government reply on Ireland', *DH*, 18 Jun, p. 3.

¹⁶⁷ 'Sinn Fein "reverse"', *DH*, 02 Jun, p. 5.

this, but that 'it is for the Irish themselves to decide whether or not they will accept such a solution. Only the Irish themselves can determine their own faith.'¹⁶⁸

In conclusion, the reaction of the British press to the Irish claim for independence in Paris varied greatly. The Irish Wilsonian moment had varying influences on different papers. In general, *The Manchester Guardian* reacted positively to the Irish claims in Paris, as the paper had expressed the wish that SF's request for a hearing be granted. It was also to some extent influenced by the Irish Wilsonian moment, as it noted on multiple occasions that Ireland's case was no different than those of other nationalities at the Conference, that the west could not fight a war for the rights of small nations while ignoring Ireland, and that that the security forces in Ireland constituted an army of occupation. Additionally, C.P. Scott's increasing criticism of the government was clearly reflected in the paper's articles on Ireland. Nevertheless, the *Guardian* favoured Dominion Home Rule, not a republic. Self-determination for Scott and his readership meant the right to determine one's government, or consent of the governed, not the right to determine one's political system. This was what Kissane has called the internal definition of self-determination and the way Wilson had meant it, not the external definition of SF.¹⁶⁹

The *Daily Telegraph* reacted negatively to SF's claims in Paris. It did not think the Irish had any place at the Conference, and it did not believe in independence, self-determination, or Dominion Home Rule for Ireland. It viewed SF as traitors who had stabbed the Allies in the back during the war, and should not be rewarded for it. Because of this, they chose to ignore the Irish presence in Paris for the majority of the Conference. The paper was in favour of restoring order in Ireland, and protecting the territorial integrity and security of the UK above anything else. It was the only paper that continued to wholeheartedly support the government's

¹⁶⁸ 'Ireland a nation', *DH*, 01 Jul, p. 4.

¹⁶⁹ Kissane, 'Self-Determination and Irish Independence', 330.

Irish policy. Lastly, they disagreed with SF's Wilsonian claims, and were not influenced by the Irish Wilsonian moment.

Lastly, the *Daily Mail* had a mixed reaction to SF and their claims at the Peace Conference. In general, it was more interested in the situation in Ireland, than the Irish presence in Paris. Although it was openly critical of the government's failure to take the initiative in Ireland, it was certainly not pro-SF or pro-independence. This anti-government tone was a result of the falling out between Northcliffe and Lloyd George. While the paper was quite positive on SF in January and of the opinion that their nationalism could be expressed within the framework of Dominion Home Rule, this attitude changed as the Peace Conference progressed. It continued to call for Dominion Home Rule, but became more hostile towards SF. What is more, the paper was not significantly influenced by the Irish Wilsonian moment, as it never used principles like self-determination when pleading for Dominion Home Rule, or compared Ireland's case to that of other nationalities at the Conference.

As in France, the socialist newspaper was the clear outlier. The *Daily Herald* reacted extremely positively to SF's claims in Paris and their rhetoric on self-determination and nationality. It expressed multiple times that it favoured self-determination and the rights of small nations. It linked Britain's and the US' wartime goals to Ireland's freedom, and thought the Irish no different from the other nationalities at the Conference. What is more, it strongly opposed what they called Britain's tyrannical rule in Ireland. Interestingly, the *Daily Herald* implicitly recognised Dáil Éireann as the duly elected parliament of Ireland, and therefore recognised SF's mandate. In this they differed from *L'Humanité* which favoured self-determination, ideally in the form of Home Rule plus, but were very wary of SF's nationalist chauvinism. The *Daily Herald*, then, seems to have been influenced by the Irish Wilsonian moment. It is true that undoubtedly it had already believed in some of these principles, simply because they were also socialist principles. However, just like SF it poured old principles into

the rhetoric mould of the Wilsonian moment and increasingly used terms like self-determination. What is more, it thought it was Wilson's and the Conference's duty to adhere to these principles and usher in a new age. In conclusion, the Irish Wilsonian moment among the British press was mostly a socialist point of view.

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to explore the British and French press reaction to the Irish claims at the Paris Peace Conference and how this related to the Wilsonian moment. The Wilsonian moment can be identified with the period between the autumn of 1918 and the spring of 1919 when Wilson's principles seemed destined to shape a new world order. It has been argued on the basis of the works of O'Donoghue, McGarry, and Kissane that there was a specific Irish Wilsonian moment, which differed from those of other nationalities. This Irish Wilsonian moment was manifested most strongly by Sean T. O'Kelly and the ACOII. The tracing of their actions in Paris and in Ireland led to a solid historical foundation on which the various press reactions could be tested.

In general, the reaction to of the majority of the French press to the Irish claims in Paris can be described as indifferent. *Le Temps*, *Le Petit Parisien* and *La Presse* all stuck to short, factual reporting from an English perspective. Most of their news came from news agencies like Reuters or Havas, from London correspondents, or from conservative English newspapers like the *Times*, *Daily Mail* or *Daily Telegraph*. Being a catholic newspaper, *La Croix* was more friendly towards Ireland, publishing more in-depth and supportive articles on the Irish claims in Paris and in Ireland. However, even though it was in favour of a solution, more specifically Dominion Home Rule, it never pleaded for the Irish to get a hearing before the Conference or the League of Nations. Lastly, *L'Humanité* was the only paper to fully support Irish independence. Although it was no fan of SF, it agreed with the Wilsonian principles as presented by the Republicans. In practice the paper argued for a federalist solution which would bind Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales as equal nations into a confederation.

L'Humanité was the only French paper to use Irish Wilsonian rhetoric. It thought that Ireland should get the same rights as other small nations at the Conference and pleaded for Ireland to determine its own future. By contrast, the majority of the French press was not

influenced by the Irish Wilsonian moment. In turn this meant that their readership probably did not experience the Irish Wilsonian moment, and that for them Ireland was at the periphery of their thoughts. Conversely, it is difficult to conclude the opposite for *L'Humanité*. While it is true that the socialist paper thought that Ireland deserved independence based on Wilsonian principles, these principles were already strongly grounded in socialism. It is, therefore, challenging to conclude to what extent the paper was influenced by the Irish Wilsonian moment. For this an at length study comparing the rhetoric of *L'Humanité* on Irish independence before and after WWI is needed. What can be concluded is that the Irish Wilsonian moment did not significantly alter any pre-held notions of the different sections of the French press on Ireland, nor did it manage to break the Anglo-French war-time alliance.

The reaction of the English press to the Irish claims varied greatly. It ran from extremely negative by the *Daily Telegraph* to immensely positive by the *Daily Herald*, with the *Manchester Guardian* and *Daily Mail* in between as respectively rather positive and rather negative. The *Daily Telegraph* ranked lowest on the scale of positivity as it was strongly opposed to the Irish getting a hearing or any form of self-government in the near future. It viewed the Irish question from a territorial integrity perspective and put the security of Britain high above principles like self-determination.

The *Daily Mail* was less hostile towards the Irish claims. Its reaction, however, was mostly focussed on the British government and their handling of the situation. In the end Northcliffe's paper was more anti-government policy than it was pro-Irish. It was neither opposed to nor in favour of the Irish getting a hearing, but did refer to the thought of an Irish Republic as a dream. From the beginning, the paper supported moderate nationalism and pleaded for Dominion Home Rule.

The *Manchester Guardian* reacted positively and expressed the wish that Ireland should be granted a hearing before the Conference as its case was no different than that of other small

nations. It was increasingly critical of the government, something that could be explained by C.P Scott's falling out with Lloyd George. In practice the paper pleaded for Dominion Home Rule, not full independence.

At the final end of the spectrum there was the *Daily Herald*. This paper argued openly to grant self-determination to Ireland and was subsequently in favour of the Irish getting a hearing before either the Conference or the League of Nations. What truly set the *Herald* apart was the fact that it did not just plead for a solution of the Irish question, but stressed that, although it had its preferences, only the Irish people had the right to determine their own future. In this it differed from its French socialist counterpart, and it is this that makes it plausible that the paper was influenced by the Irish Wilsonian moment. While, just like *L'Humanité*, it had already adhered to principles similar to those of the Wilsonian moment, the amount of exact overlap is fascinating. It truly seemed to have believed Wilson's and England's war-time principles should have shaped a new world order. Consequently, it also was a staunch supporter of freedom for countries like Egypt and India. Again, an at length study of the development of the rhetoric of the *Herald* before and after WWI would shed more light on the matter.

The *Guardian* also seems to have been influenced by the Irish Wilsonian moment, albeit to a significantly lesser extent. It did not plead as vigorously for Irish self-determination, but was in favour of the Irish getting a hearing, as it thought self-determination also applied to Ireland. Interestingly, the *Guardian's* interpretation of self-determination laid bare the crucial difference between what Kissane has called the internal and external interpretations of the term. It followed the internal interpretation, meaning the right for people to choose their own form of government, but not the sovereignty under which they live. This difference in interpretation was significant because it was one of the major causes of the Irish civil-war and played an important role during the talks leading up to the Anglo-Irish Treaty, with the British government following the internal version. Moreover it shows that while the vagueness of the term self-

determination led to its mass appeal, it also meant that different interpretations led to clashing expectations. In a broader sense this does align with Kissane's idea that the "use of nationalist ideas is shaped by the geo-political context".¹⁷⁰ In other words: the same nationalist principle could be interpreted completely different, depending on the geo-political context. In turn, this shows how the Wilsonian moment must not be seen as one coherent entity but rather as a myriad of interpretations of the same ideal-type doctrine. As for the other papers, nor the *Daily Telegraph*, nor the *Daily Mail* was influenced by the Irish Wilsonian moment.

All in all, what was true for France, was also true for England. The Irish Wilsonian moment did not significantly alter any pre-conceived notions about Ireland and its right to independence. Instead the influence of the Irish Wilsonian moment on the British press must be seen as an extra layer added to old beliefs. This was similar to the influence of the Wilsonian moment on SF, which also did not significantly alter Republican beliefs. It simply made it possible to link these old ideas to those of the new age, in order to broaden their appeal. In general, it has to be concluded that the majority of newspaper readers in France and England were not significantly influenced by the Wilsonian moment in Ireland. The idea of the dawn of a new era in Irish history existed mostly in the minds of Irish Republicans and perhaps socialists, not in those of the average Frenchman or Englishman. This conclusion aligns with Kennealy's and Boyce's claims that the majority of the English did not care about Ireland.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, the significance of the Irish Wilsonian moment must not be underestimated. As Manela has concluded, the disillusionment that followed it led to violent uprisings in Asia and the Middle East, and Ireland was no exception. After SF's diplomatic efforts failed the disgruntled Irish Volunteers started to take matters into their own hands. The War of Independence that followed started from the ground up, and by early 1920 SF could do little but support it.

¹⁷⁰ Kissane, 'Self-Determination and Irish Independence', 343.

¹⁷¹ Kenneally, *The Paper Wall*, 177; Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles*, 46.

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