

FRATERNITÉ

Céad de réabhlóidí a bhí san ochtú haois déag. D'éirigh gnáthdhaoine amach in aghaidh monarcaí. Chaith na Meiriceánaigh riail na Breataine ar leataobh; chuir na Francaigh an Rí Louis agus Marie Antoinette chun báis; agus i 1798 d' éirigh na hÉireannaigh amach chomh maith. Bhí beirt Éireannach lárnach sna himeachtaí seo, Wolfe Tone agus Edmund Burke. Labhair an bheirt fhear faoi bhráithreachas; ach, creidim féin, nach dtuigtear an bheirt i gceart ag na glúnta a tháinig ina ndiadh.

Tosaím le Réabhlóid na Fraince. Sílim go ndéanaimid dearmad ar cé chomh tábhachtach agus a bhí an ócáid sin. Scoilt sé tuairim pholaitiúil ar fud an domhain. Dar le Wolfe Tone, “Ba í Réabhlóid na Fraince teist ar chreidimh pholaitiúil gach fir.” Bhí an chonspóid faoin réabhlóid léirithe i ndá leabhar is mó díol ag an am. Sna *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, cháin Edmund Burke na réabhlóidithe as an bhforéigin iomarcach; ach níorbh fhada gur chuir Tom Paine in a aghaidh ina leabhar, *The Rights of Man*. Thacaigh Paine go láidir leis na réabhlóidithe. Nuair a chonaic Burke ainriail agus anró, chonaic Paine athordú radacach daonlathach na sochaí. Cén chríoch a bhí leis an gconspóid seo? D’admhaigh Wolfe Tone go

mb'fhéidir go raibh bua na hargóinte ag Burke i Sasana, ach go raibh “cúrsaí an-difriúil in Éirinn, náisiún a bhí faoi chois, faoi mhaslú agus faoi chreach”.¹ Bhí na hÉireannaigh Aontaithe ar fad ag tacú le Paine.

Mar sin, cérbh é Theobald Wolfe Tone? Rugadh Tone i 1763 do theaghlach meánaicmeach. Fuair sé a chuid oideachais i gColáiste na Tríonóide agus cháiligh sé mar abhcóid. Ina chleachtadh ag an mbeár, admhaíonn Tone nach ndearna sé “aon taispeántas íontach”.² Ach d’aimsigh sé a “métier” i saol na polaitíochta.

Ag an am sin, bhí na péindlíthe nó penal laws i bhfeidhm. Rinneadh géarleanúint ar na Caitlicigh faoi na dlíthe seo. Cuireadh srianta orthu maoin a bheith acu; bhí siad eisithe ó ghairmeacha áirithe; dóibh siúd a d'fhéadfadh, bhí orthu a gcuid leanaí a chur thar lear chun oideachas a fháil; ní raibh aon vóta acu agus ní raibh siad in ann suíocháin a ghlacadh sa pharlaimint. Bhí Tone thar a bheith cáinteach ar na dlíthe seo. Bhí sé den tuairim gurbh ionann sclábhaithe a bhí i dtrí mhilliún Caitliceach ag an am.

“This horrible system,” a scríobh sé, “pursued for above a century with

¹ *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone*, William Theobald Wolfe Tone a chuir in eagar, vol 1, l 43.

² Ba é an fáth nár éirigh leis go raibh aige “neither ... the means, nor the inclination, to treat messieurs the attorneys, and to make them drink (a sacrifice of their respectability, which even the most liberal minded of the profession are obliged to make...)”. *Ibid*, p 29.

unrelenting acrimony and perseverance, had wrought its full effect, and had, in fact, reduced the great body of the Catholic peasantry of Ireland to a situation, morally and physically speaking, below that of the beasts of the field.”³

In éineacht le daoine eile, ar nós Thomas Russell agus James Napper Tandy, bhunaigh Tone Cumann na nÉireannach Aontaithe i 1791. Dhiúltaigh na hÉireannaigh Aontaithe do pholaitíocht sheicteach agus chreid siad go raibh leas coiteann polaitíochta ag Caitlicigh, ag Protastúnaigh agus ag Easaontóirí. Ina phaimfléad, “An Argument on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland” (foilsithe i 1791) scríobh Tone: “My argument is simply this: That Ireland as deriving her government from another country, requires a strength in the people which may enable them, if necessary, to counteract the influence of that Government, should it ever be, as it indisputably has been, exerted to thwart her prosperity: that this strength may be most constitutionally acquired, and safely and peaceably exerted, through the medium of a parliamentary reform: and, finally, that no reform is honorable,

³ *Ibid*, pp 45-46.

practicable, efficacious, or just, which does not include, as a fundamental principle, the extension of elective franchise to the Roman Catholics ...”⁴

Bhí Tone i gcónaí lán-chinnte faoi dhá rud: i dtosach báire, gurbh í an ceangal le Sasana a bhí mar bhuncúis na bhfadhbanna in Éirinn agus, sa dara háit, gur theastaigh aontas an phobail uile, beag beann ar chreideamh reiligiúnach, le gur féidir neamhspleáchas a bhaint amach. Ach tháinig athrú ar a thuairimí ar bhealach amháin: thart ar 1795, d’aistrigh sé ón bpolaitíocht bhunreachtúil go dtí an pholaitíocht réabhlóideach. Sa bhliain 1796, tháinig sé go Páras mar ionadaí na nÉireannach Aontaithe, ag lorg tacaíochta ón Eolaire Francach nó an Directory (mar a tugadh ar rialtas na Poblachta ag an am sin) d’éirí amach in Éirinn.

A fhad is a bhí sé i bPáras, choinnigh Tone dialann. Tá sé suimiúil, lán le tráchttaireacht ar an saol i bPáras, turais chuig an amharclann ina measc. Uaireanta, áfach, is cosúil go raibh Tone sách dubhach, ag pointe amháin deireann sé: ““I lead the life of a dog here in Paris, where I am as much alone as in the deserts of Arabia.” Ag amanta eile, bhí an saol níos suimiúla. Insíonn sé mar shampla gur bhuail sé le Tom Paine:

⁴ *Ibid*, p 348.

“I have been lately introduced to the famous Thomas Paine, and like him very well. He is vain beyond all belief, but he has reason to be vain, and for my part I forgive him. He has done wonders for the cause of liberty, both in America and Europe, and I believe him to be conscientiously an honest man. He converses extremely well; and I find him wittier in discourse than in his writings, where his humor is clumsy enough.”

Luann dialann Tone go ndúirt sé le Paine go raibh aithne aige ar Edmund Burke. (Cuimhnigh gur cháin Paine ina leabhar *The Rights of Man* leabhar cáiliúil Burke *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.) Deireann iontráil Tone: “I mentioned to him [Paine] that I had known Burke in England and spoke of the shattered state of his mind, in consequence of the death of his only son Richard. Paine immediately said that it was the *Rights of Man* which had broke[n] his heart, and that the death of his son gave him occasion to develop the chagrin which had preyed upon him ever since the appearance of that work. I am sure the *Rights of Man* have tormented Burke

exceedingly, but I have seen myself the workings of a father's grief on his spirit, and I could not be deceived. Paine has no children!”⁵

In iontráil dialainne don 23 Iúil 1796,⁶ thug Tone cuntas ar agallamh leis an nGinearál Hoche, an Francach a bheadh i gceannas ar an turas cabhlaigh a chuaigh faoi uisce taobh amuigh ó Bhá Bheanntaí níos déanaí sa bhliain chéanna. D’fhiafraigh Hoche de Tone cad a bhí sé ag súil a tharlódh d’uaisleacht na hÉireann, agus d’fhreagair Tone gur cheap sé go ndéanfaí slad orthu, mar gheall ar “the just indignation of the people, whom they have so long and so cruelly oppressed, adding that it was what I sincerely deprecated, but what I feared was too likely to happen”. Dúirt Tone go raibh dearcadh daonnachtúil ag Hoche, agus dúirt sé freisin: “I hope I am humane myself, and trust we shall be able to prevent unnecessary bloodshed in Ireland, which I shall, and most sincerely, exert my best endeavours to do.”

Tar éis teip ar thuras 1796, bhí Tone páirteach sa dara turas Francach i 1798.

An uair seo, ghabh na Briotanaigh é, cuireadh faoi thriail armchúirte é.

Shocraigh cairde Tone iarratas *habeas corpus* thar a cheann, *Wolfe Tone’s*

⁵ *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone*, William Theobald Wolfe Tone a chuir in eagar, vol 2, ll 347-348.

⁶ *Ibid*, ll 161-167.

Case (1798) 27 St Tr 614; ach sula bhféadfaí é a scaoileadh, chuir Tone lámh ina bhás féin.

Tá Tone ar dhuine de na daoine is tarraingtí i stair pholaitiúil na hÉireann, a thacaigh go hiomlán le prionsabal an bráithreachais mar gheall gur éalaigh sé “aontas croíúil idir mhuintir na hÉireann ar fad”. Cé go bhfuil sé fíor go raibh sé lárnach in éirí amach armtha a eagrú, ba cheart é seo a mheas i gcomhthéacs ré réabhlóideach. Is léir go raibh gráin ag Tone ar aon chineál seicteachais agus gur chuir sé i gcoinne foréigean gan chúis.

Má táimid neamhchinnte faoi Tone, feictear dom go ndéanaimid neamhaird ar Burke. Sílim go ndéanaimid neamhaird air mar féachann go leor daoine ar an eite dheis air mar “athair an choimeádachais”. Mura dtuigtear Tone i gceart, is íobartach iomrall ceartais é Burke. Ní raibh sé ina choimeádach; agus caithfidh mé admháil gur maith liom é.

Bhí Burke níos sine ná Tone ós rud é gur rugadh i 1729 i mBaile Átha Cliath é. Protastúnach a athair agus Caitliceach ó Chorcaigh a mháthair. (Is cosúil go bhfuil conspóid ag baint le go leor gnéithe dá shaol; deir daoine áirithe gur rugadh i 1730 i gCorcaigh é.) Chaith Burke cuid mhór dá óige le gaolta a

mháthar, a chothaigh tuiscint agus comhbhá do chás na nÉireannach Caitliceach, a bhí faoi chois ag an am mar gheall ar na péindlíthe.

Tar éis slí bheatha shuntasach a bheith aige i gColáiste na Tríonóide, inar bhunaigh sé club díospóireachta ara dtugtar the “Hist” sa lá atá inniu ann, d’imigh sé go Londain chun tús a chur le staidéar dlí sa Middle Temple; ach níor cháiligh sé riamh. Ina ionad sin, scríobh sé aoir pholaitiúil agus leabhar ar aeistéitic. Ghlac sé páirt i gciorcal Samuel Johnson ina raibh daoine cáiliúla mar Joshua Reynolds, David Garrick agus Éireannach eile, Oliver Goldsmith, i láthair.

Thosaigh saol polaitiúil Burke nuair a d’fhostaigh William Gerard Hamilton, a bhí ina Phríomh-Rúnaí ar Éirinn ó 1761 go 1764, é mar a rúnaí príobháideach. An bhliain dár gcionn rinneadh rúnaí de do cheannaire na Whigs, an Marquess of Rockingham, agus go gairid ina dhiaidh sin toghadh é chun suíochán i bparlaimint i Westminster, áit ar fhan sé ar feadh 30 bliain. Ar feadh a ghairm bheatha, bhí ról mór le rá ag Burke i saol polaitiúil na tíre

agus ba mhinic a ghlac sé seasaimh neamhchoitianta mhalartacha ar cheisteanna an lae.⁷

Chomh maith leis an daonnachta atá le feiceáil ina bhrón faoi chailliúint a mhic, tá go leor cúiseanna ann le meas a bheith againn ar Burke. Ar an gcéad dul síos, is maith liom a umhlaíocht. I saol an lae inniu buailimid go rómhinic le ceannairí a mhaíonn “is mise an t-aon duine atá in ann é a shocrú”. Ní bheadh aon am ag Burke don chineál seo bródúlacht. Creidim go raibh dearcadh Burke bunaithe ar a oiliúint mar dhlíodóir. Ní réitíonn dhlíodóirí cásanna *de novo*. I gcónaí, lorgaíonn siad réamhshampla nó fasach. Mhínigh Burke cén fáth go bhfuil sé seo amhlaidh: “We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that the stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and of ages.”⁸ Tagann an tuisceant, de réir Burke, le himeacht ama agus le rannpháirtíocht ó dhaoine difriúla. “I have known, and, according to my

⁷ Ós rud é gur i Sasana a chaith sé an chuid ba mhó dá ghairm bheatha, an féidir linn breathnú ar Burke mar “Éireannach”? Glacaim leis an tuairim a léirigh an staraí, Michael Brown: “In Burke’s case there was clearly a layering of identities onto each other. Burke’s Irish birth and education placed him within that nation However, his career also supplied him with an English and a British political identity, which both complicated and problematized his Irishness.” Michael Brown, “The National Identity of Edmund Burke” i *Edmund Burke’s Irish Identities*, Seán Patrick Donlan, a chuir in eagar (BAC, 2006) l 201 ag l 220.

⁸ *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).

measure, have co-operated with great men, and I have never yet seen any plan which has not been mended by the observations of those who were much inferior in understanding to the person who took the lead in the business.”⁹

Ar an dara dul síos, is maith liom an bhéim a chuireann Burke ar an bhfíric go bhfuil ár n-am ar an domhan seo neamhbhuan agus, mar sin, gur gá go nascann na glúnta lena chéile tríd an stair agus trínár ndualgais don saol atá le teacht. Is “sealbhóirí sealadacha agus cíósóirí saoil” (“temporary possessors and life renters”) sinne atá beo inniu – agus ní “máistrí” – ar an bpobal polaitiúil. I sliocht sna *Reflections*, a eascraíonn go soiléir óna oideachas dlíthiúil, thug Burke rabhadh dóibh siúd who “think it amongst their rights to cut off the entail or commit waste on the inheritance, by destroying at their pleasure the whole original fabric of their society: hazarding to leave to those who come after them a ruin instead of an habitation”. Sa sliocht céanna, cáineann Burke any “facility of changing the state as often and as much and in as many ways as there are floating fancies or fashions”. Is é toradh ghníomh den tsórt sin ná, mar a deireann Burke “the whole chain and continuity of the commonwealth would be broken; no

⁹ *Ibid.*

one generation could link with the other; men would become little better than the flies of a summer.”¹⁰

Is mar gheall ar sleachta mar seo go ndeirter gur frithghníomhaí (reactionary) a bhí i Burke. Ach is dóigh liom go ndéanann sé seo éagóir air. Is iomaí cás nach raibh tuairimí Burke ag teacht le dearcadh tipiciúil an ochtú haois déag; agus aon áit nach raibh siad ag teacht le chéile, d’fheadaimis a rá gur tuairimí “forásacha” (progressive) a bhí ag Burke. Cháin Burke na péindlíthe. Chuir sé síos orthu mar: “a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people, and the debasement, in them, of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man”.¹¹ Seachas na péindlíthe a cháineadh, thacaigh Burke le pholasaithe a chuirfeadh ar chumas na hÉireann a tionscal agus a tráchtáil féin a fhorbairt. Thacaigh sé freisin leis na Meiriceáaigh agus iad i gcoinne moltaí an rialtais cáin a ghearradh orthu cé nach raibh aon ionadaíocht acu i dteach na parlaiminte i Westminster. Labhair Burke go láidir in aghaidh trádáil na sclábhaithe agus ag deireadh a ghairme, bhí sé i gceannas ar an gcomhrac chun cúis a chur i

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *A Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe, Bart, MP on the Subject of the Roman Catholics of Ireland* (1792) from *The Best of Burke: Selected Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, Peter J Stanlis a chuir in eagar (Washington DC, 1963) l 319.

leith Warren Hastings, an tArd-Ghobharnóir ar Bengal san India, mar gheall ar mí-úsáidí a raibh sé agus an East India Company freagrach astu.

Bhí Burke glan in aghaidh rialtas a bhí bunaithe ar theoiric. Sna *Reflections*, léirigh sé a thuairim gur gnó an-phraiticiúil í gníomhaíocht an rialtais. Ní thagann tuiscint cheart ó smaointe teoiriciúla faoi “chearta an duine”; a mhalairt ar fad, tagann tuiscint ó thaithí nach féidir a fháil ach le himeacht aimsire. Inniu, thabharfaimis pragmatach (pragmatist) ar Burke. “It seems to me,” a dúirt sé, “a preposterous way of reasoning, and a perfect confusion of ideas, to take the theories which learned and speculative men have made from [the practice of] government, and then, supposing it made on those theories which were made from it, to accuse the government as not corresponding with them.”¹² Is rud praiticiúil é an rialtas “made for the happiness of mankind, and not ... to gratify the schemes of visionary politicians”.¹³ Ní raibh aon am ag Burke dóibh siúd who “split and atomize[...] the doctrine of free government, as if it were an abstract question concerning metaphysical liberty and necessity, and not a

¹² *Speech on the Representation of the Commons* (1782) from *The Best of Burke: Selected Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, Peter J Stanlis ed (Washington DC, 1963) 1 399.

¹³ *A Letter to Sheriffs of the City of Bristol* (1777) from *The Best of Burke: Selected Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, Peter J Stanlis ed (Washington DC, 1963) 1 241.

matter of moral prudence and natural feeling”.¹⁴ I bhfocail eile, bhí Burke i bhfabhar torthaí praiticiúla seachas teoiricíocht theibí. Mar a scríobh sé sna *Reflections*: “What is the use of discussing a man's abstract right to food or medicine? The question is upon the method of procuring and administering them. In that deliberation I shall always advise to call in the aid of the farmer and the physician, rather than the professor of metaphysics.”

D’fhéadfadh frithghníomhaí nó coimeádach cur i gcoinne athrú polaitiúil toisc nach féidir leis nó léi glacadh le hathrú. Is cinnte nach raibh sé seo amhlaidh i gcás Burke, a d’admhaigh go soiléir go raibh gá le hathchóiriú. “A state without the means of some change,” a scríobh sé sna *Reflections*, “is without the means of its conservation”. Ba é an nuálaíocht an rud a dhiúltaigh Burke ina dtarlaíonn sé go “[a]l the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off”.¹⁵ Cosúil le gach pragmatach, ní raibh Burke ag súil go n-eascródh athrú polaitiúil as teoiricíocht fhealsúnach. A mhalairt ar fad, tagann an t-athrú chun cinn ón “cut and thrust” i bpolaitíocht laethúil.

Cad a dúirt Burke faoin mbráithreachas? I gcás Burke, is freagracht mhorálta é an bráithreachas. Cruthaíonn ár mbreith ag am agus in áit ar leith

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 1 242.

¹⁵ *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).

freagracht dóibh siúd atá inar dtimpeall. Ní roghnaímid an fhreagracht sin, b'fhéidir nach n-aontaímid léi, ach tá sí ann mar sin féin. “[O]ut of physical causes, unknown to us, perhaps unknowable, arise moral duties, which, as we are able perfectly to comprehend, we are bound indispensably to perform.”¹⁶ Síneann ár ndualgas morálta amach, ar shlí gur féidir cur síos air mar rud bráthartha. Mar is gnách, cuireann Burke an smaoineamh in iúl go galánta: “To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ, as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love of our country and to mankind.”¹⁷

Mhúnláigh Réabhlóid na Fraince polaitíocht Wolfe Tone agus Edmund Burke araon. Cheadaigh Tone prionsabail na réabhlóide agus rinne sé iarracht iad a thabhairt go hÉirinn; cháin Burke an foréigin iomarcach. Ní haon ionadh go raibh tuairimí éagsúla acu faoi phrionsabail réabhlóideacha na saoirse agus an chomhionannais. Bhí Burke amhrasach faoi theoricíocht ar ábhr na saoirse; agus mar an gcéanna maidir le comhionannas. (“Believe

¹⁶ *An appeal from the New Whigs to the Old* from *The Best of Burke: Selected Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, Peter J Stanlis ed (Washington DC, 1963) pp 647-648.

¹⁷ *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

me, Sir, those who attempt to level never equalize.”¹⁸) Agus bhí níos lú measa ag Wolfe Tone ar theoiricíocht ná mar a bhí ag Burke. I gcás Tone, níor chiallaigh saoirse ach saoirse ó riail na Breataine. Ach in ainneoin na ndifríochtaí a bhí eatarthu – difríochtaí móra go minic – bhí an bheirt Éireannach iontach seo ar aon intinn maidir le prionsabal an bhráithreachais. Feictear dom go raibh an bráithreachas lárnach dá smaointe polaitiúla agus ní fheicim aon difríocht phraiticiúil ina dtuiscint faoi.

Mark de Blacam

¹⁸ *Ibid.*