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## The Mind of Liam Mellows: A Conception of the Workers' and Peasants' Republic during the Irish Civil War

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# The Mind of Liam Mellows: A Conception of the Workers' and Peasants' Republic during the Irish Civil War

## ABSTRACT

*Liam Mellows (1892-1922) is one of the most radical and intellectually coherent thinkers of the Irish Revolution. While several of his contemporaries were preoccupied with solely administrative independence from the Crown, Mellows consistently argued that true re-publicanism and egalitarianism demanded an economic and social revolution at the same time. He drew on the ideals of Wolfe Tone, Patrick Pearse and James Connolly to warn that simply swapping London-based, Crown rule for a regular government in Dublin would result in "a change of masters", swapping English capitalists for a domestic elite. In his writings, especially the "Notes from Mountjoy" and his strategic memoranda written immediately before his execution, Mellows campaigned for state ownership of industry, banking and transport, redistribution of aristocratic estates and the mobilisation of the "men of no property" to create a real "Workers' and Peasants' Republic." This article considers the development of Mellows' republican thought, his critique of the strategy of militarism alone, and his incisive analysis of the class divisions that underpinned the Irish Civil War. Though he was executed by the Free State at the age of 30, the ideas of Mellows are still very much relevant today. His insistence that national separation must be accompanied by economic democracy still resonates in today's discussions of Irish sovereignty, inequality and the socio-legal analysis of society. This article places Liam Mellows at the heart of the transition from cultural nationalism to social emancipation in contemporary Irish political thought.*

## KEYWORDS

*Political History, Class Analysis, Irish Republicanism, Social Relations, Ireland*

## INTRODUCTION

William Joseph 'Liam' Mellows (also known in Irish Gaelic as Liam Ó Maoilíosa) was one of the key figures of the revolutionary Irish Republican and anti-imperialist struggle in the 20th century. His vision of economic nationalism and popular, democratic control of Ireland's institutions and wealth by the ordinary people would form part of his campaign that ended with his execution in 1922. His ideas would become

part of the basis of hardline republicanism.<sup>1</sup> He was regarded as a “highly dedicated, early twentieth-century Irish republican.” Inspired by the Gaelic Revival of the 1890s, he Gaelicised his name as a youth, and would later opine in 1917 that “when Ireland spoke Irish, the days of the British government in this country would be numbered.” He idolised Pádraig Pearse, and, like him, “was unmarried, puritanical in habits and ruminated profoundly over his own actions, putting the cause of the republic above all else.” Several of Mellows' siblings died during his childhood, and this had a profound effect on him, and contributed to a sense of fatalism later noticed in his character by others. He was regarded as a man of great charm and warmth, who made friends easily and was respected by many on the republican side. He was usually comfortable in social situations but didn't like public speaking, and only did so out of a sense of duty. Mellows was always a modest man and often had doubts about himself, believing that at times he was put on too high a pedestal by others. Research reveals a humble, introspective personality, and contradicts the claim that Anti-Treaty republicans were driven by ego or self-importance. In 1911, Mellows became active in Na Fianna.<sup>2</sup> Liam Mellows was also a devout Roman Catholic. Fr. Feeney, a priest from Clarinbridge and Chaplain to the Galway section of the Irish Volunteers would declare that:

*“Liam was an exceptionally religious man. Merely to say that he was a practicing Catholic or that he attended the Sacraments, would convey a poor impression of the depth of his religious conviction. He seemed to me to be a man who was fond of prayer and very familiar with God.”<sup>3</sup>*

### KEY ACTIVITY

As outlined in the ‘Dictionary of Irish Biography,’ in his earlier political activities, Mellows maintained a close association with James Connolly and, during the Dublin lock-out of 1913, he directed two fugitive union members to a residence in County Wexford, where they were secretly sheltered. In April 1912, he was sworn into the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) by Con Colbert, and in November 1913, he was designated as the IRB delegate (and subsequently secretary) to the provisional committee of the Irish Volunteers. Subsequent to the

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Desmond Greaves, *Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution* (Lawrence Wishart 2025).

<sup>2</sup> Kerron Ó Luain, ‘Book Review: Liam Mellows, Soldier of the Irish Republic - Selected Writings, 1914-1922 ’(The Irish Story2020)  
<<https://www.theirishstory.com/2020/03/13/book-reviewliam-mellows-soldier-of-the-irish-republic-selected-writings-1914-1922/>> accessed 14 June 2026.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Deported 1916 Galway Prisoners Commemorated in Wales ’(Moore Institute - University of Galway10 October 2016)  
<<https://mooreinstitute.ie/2016/10/10/deported-1916-galway-prisoners-commemorated-wales/>> accessed 14 June 2026.

Volunteer schism in September 1914, he was appointed to the executive committee of the Irish Volunteers and dispatched to Galway to reconstruct the organisation. Having been deported to Staffordshire, England, he returned to Ireland shortly before Easter 1916, disguised as a priest, and orchestrated a brief revolt in County Galway. Mellows persisted in his efforts to procure armaments and assumed the role of trustee for the funds generated through the 'external loan' in the United States of America (USA). He harboured a disdain for the USA, which he called a "soul-less place," and returned to Ireland in October 1920. In 1921, he was re-elected (albeit, unopposed) for Galway and opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty, unwilling to forsake the republic for what he described as "the fleshpots of Empire." He lost his parliamentary seat in the 1922 'pact' election, but was appointed to the Anti-Treaty IRA's army executive in April 1922. Mellows was designated to both the Dáil and army committees that endeavoured, however ultimately failed, to reach a compromise in the weeks preceding the Civil War. He was designated 'Minister for Defence' in the alternative republican administration and commenced the formulation of a socialist agenda for an independent Ireland.<sup>4</sup> He was executed on 8 December 1922 with three other IRA leaders, which formed part of the Irish Free State's policy of counter-revolution.<sup>5</sup>

As pointed out by 'History Ireland,' Liam Mellows was a pivotal leader in the establishment of the Anti-Treaty IRA, and he was part of a core leadership alongside figures such as Liam Lynch and Rory O'Connor, who were resolutely opposed to the Treaty solution. Despite his modest physical stature, Mellows's charismatic demeanour had an immediate effect on regular rural volunteer recruits, primarily from the poorer "small farmer class." His candid reflections in a six-page letter to a potentially uncritical admirer sharply contrast with the frequently formulaic tone of the Bureau of Military History witness statements gathered from former Volunteers in the 1950s, which often sanitised the experiences of ordinary activists. Mellows says of the Volunteer recruits he organised:

*"Many of them are poor - almost all are. Most of them are unheard of, and yet their work for Ireland deserves to be known. It will never be, in our day anyway, in all probability, but it is to them the thanks of future generations of the Irish people will be due. They gave their all in silence, seeking no reward and getting none."*

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<sup>4</sup> Marie Coleman and William Murphy, 'Liam Mellows', Dictionary of Irish Biography (Royal Irish Academy 2009) <<https://www.dib.ie/biography/mellows-william-joseph-liam-a5795>> accessed 14 June 2026.

<sup>5</sup> Mícheál Mac Donncha, 'Liam Mellows: The Revolutionary Legacy' [2022] An Phoblacht <<https://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/28481>> accessed 14 June 2026.

He declined to engage in the persistent disputes among comrades, remaining fundamentally a solitary figure, never attempting to endear himself to the rural populations he encountered. Mellows was also eager to redirect accolades to others.<sup>6</sup>

### THE MIND OF MELLOWS

A 1932 feature titled 'Political, Economic and Social Reconstruction - A Plan Outlined,' which appeared in the IRA-linked 'An Phoblacht' newspaper, listed Liam Mellows alongside figures such as James Connolly and Pádraig Pearse as "those who took the side of the people against their oppressors and social enemies." The paper declared that:

*"Each of these had a keen understanding of the root basis and power of British Imperialism and its allies in Ireland, whether natives or planters... Pearse's writings displayed a deep passion against the economic and social injustices which abound. He was deeply touched by the poverty of the people, and came out strongly on the side of the workers. We are justified in believing that had Liam Mellows not been murdered, he would have made contributions both in thought and leadership to the movement for social emancipation as great as he did to that for National Liberty."*<sup>7</sup>

In his article 'Labour and the Irish Republic', which featured in a November 1920 edition of 'The Watchword,' Liam Mellows, who had been Commandant of the Western Division of what would ultimately become the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the 1916 conflict, put forward a radical vision of Irish independence that went far beyond simply separating administratively from Great Britain. Mellows cautioned that the nebulous use of the terms "freedom," "independence," and "Republic" was in danger of rendering these words meaningless. He contended that the mere declaration of a 'republic' in name would not be the cure-all for Ireland's problems; more radical, transformative acts were necessary if the Ireland was to attain genuine liberty. He described the ongoing Irish revolution as having three dimensions: intellectual, political, and economic. On the intellectual plane, he insisted that Ireland "must be Irish" and must free itself from "the domination of alien thought" as thoroughly as from the presence of what he regarded as alien armies of occupation. Politically, the Crown forces and officials would leave, and the Irish Republic would be recognised internationally, thus paving the way for considerable domestic progress. Such a policy would enable an Irish government to concentrate on internal development: on

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<sup>6</sup> Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution '(2011) 19 History Ireland  
<<https://historyireland.com/liam-mellows-and-the-irish-revolution/>> accessed 14 June 2026.

<sup>7</sup> Political, Economic and Social Reconstruction - A Plan Outlined 'An Phoblacht' (7 May 1932).

the encouragement of industries, the expansion of employment, the exploitation of natural resources, the stopping of emigration, the reform of education, and the establishment of direct international connections. Yet, Mellows cautioned that such progress, while going some way in enriching and prospering the nation, would not constitute genuine freedom if the underlying economic system stayed the same. Most importantly, he argued that a political revolution without an accompanying economic revolution would achieve nothing more than “a change of masters.” In one of the most memorable passages of the article, Mellows declared:

*“Instead of British capitalists waxing rich on the political and economic enslavement of Ireland, as at present, we would have Irish capitalists waxing rich on the political freedom, but continued enslavement of Ireland.”*

Ireland, he insisted, sought no new masters, be they foreign or native. To detach ourselves from Imperial tyranny, only to be enslaved by internal tyranny within a generation, would be short-sighted. He asserted that the Republic must, therefore, be built by the people themselves. He further remarked that “it is they who must own Ireland. It is they who are freeing Ireland; and it is for the people - all the people - that it is being done, not for any section or group.” Mellows pointed out that a good example of this view was the “Program of Democratic Policy” adopted by the new Dáil Éireann at its first session in January 1919. In so many words, he outlined how the initiative supported the view that “the soil of Ireland and all that grew upon it and lay under it, as well as all the wealth and wealth-producing processes in the country, should belong to the people.”

In his parting analysis, Liam Mellows viewed the Anglo-Irish conflict as it stood in 1920 as more than a mere rivalry between two peoples. It was, in his view, a great clash “of two systems of civilisation”: the feudal system of England, disguised in industrial capitalism, and the ancient democratic traditions of Irish civilisation, of which there still survived and were being awakened relics. For him, the successful conclusion of the revolution would therefore bring about not only a new political era, but a new economic order, in which the Irish people would own and control the resources and wealth of their country collectively.<sup>8</sup>

A feature published in the ‘Irish Workers Weekly’ in 1939, titled ‘Liam Mellows’ Road to Freedom,’ reflects, in an overview, the revolutionary socialism of Liam Mellows, with particular reference to his political development in the latter part of his life. It pays tribute to all four

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<sup>8</sup> Liam Mellows, ‘Labour and the Irish Republic: Success of Irish Revolution Will Usher in New Era for Labour’ *The Watchword* (20 November 1920).

Republican leaders executed in Mountjoy Jail in December 1922, but singles out Mellows as the figure who “in the shadow of death came nearest to the working people” and whose writings form “part of the heritage of toiling Ireland.” It chronicles Mellows’ revolutionary activist background, from organiser of the Fianna in pre-conflict days, leader of the Galway effort in Easter Week 1916, periods on the run in England and America, to his final role in the Civil War. It notes his intellectual development after 1916, when he “learned a great deal” by “reading and re-reading Connolly’s writings” and drew further lessons from the Russian Revolution. The article argues that his speeches in America clearly reveal his Communist leanings, and laments the absence of a strong revolutionary working-class party that could have more thoroughly integrated his ideas in the critical period of the Treaty crisis and the advent of the Civil War.

Special attention is paid to Mellows' writings from Mountjoy Jail. It says that Mellows was editing ‘Poblacht na h-Éireann’ along with Frank Gallagher at the time, and that if his later suggestions had been more widely disseminated, “the history of Ireland would read different.” Its immediate programme for the Republican movement was, as outlined by the feature:

*“Nationalisation of all heavy industries, rail and water transport, State ownership of banking, confiscation of the ranches, a shorter working day, compulsory rationing of all housing accommodation, full maintenance of the unemployed, ‘universal arming of all workers in town and country to defend their rights.’”*

The ‘Irish Workers Weekly’ gives Mellows’ last testament as a touchstone for contemporary politics. It appeals to labour organisations to accept “that there is no social emancipation for the workers inside an unfree nation,” and exhorts culturally nationalist bodies to understand, “that today the nation can rise to full freedom only on the struggles of the working masses.” Liam Mellows is regarded here as a link between the purely national and social revolutions. His lessons are directed at members of the Labour Party, the IRA, the Communist Party, Sinn Féin and the Republican Congress alike.<sup>9</sup>

Clear context is provided in a source from March 1933, when the IRA-linked ‘An Phoblacht’ paper ran a feature titled ‘The Programme of Mellows,’ referring it to “the basis for unity and freedom,” and described it as “what we failed to do in 1922.” Written in Mountjoy Jail on 26th August 1922, and later published in the ‘Irish Independent’ on 26th September 1922, Mellows set out his strategic recommendations to IRA General Headquarters in the early months of the Irish Civil War. It was

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<sup>9</sup> Liam Mellows ‘Road to Freedom’ Irish Workers Weekly (9 December 1939).

passed on to the 'Irish Independent' as a captured item, and it underscores Mellows' resolve to imbue the Republican guerrilla enterprise with clear political and social ingredients. 'An Phoblacht' reprinted it so that their readers "may know what Liam Mellows advocated in 1922, and what we, incidentally, advocate today." Mellows criticised what he viewed as the narrow, purely militaristic perspective adopted by some volunteer Republican officers, who, influenced by an earlier campaign against "politicians," judged situations "in terms of guns and men." He argued for a more holistic approach, stating that "every situation and advantage - no matter of what nature - should be availed of to gain victory."

A key recommendation was that a "Provisional Republican Government" be established immediately, even if its operations were severely circumscribed, to counter the Pro-Treatyite Provisional Government and to reaffirm the legitimacy of the Republic outside of the Dáil process. He demanded that the 1919 "Programme of Democratic Control" of the First Dáil be translated into concrete policy. Mellows supported the social programme of state control of industry, transport and banking, and the redistribution of land for the benefit of workers and farmers. He pointed out that the IRA Executive had already drawn up schemes for the confiscation and redistribution of demesnes and ranches. He advocated making these known to sustain the allegiance of "the landless and homeless Irish Republican soldiers" and to keep "Irish Labour for the Republic."

The great breakthrough is Mellows' appeal to the wider social base of the revolution. Republicans must assert the principles of Wolfe Tone and rely on "the men of no property." He remarked:

*"The 'stake in the country' people were never with the Republic. They are not with it now - and they will always be against it - until it wins!"*

Mellows also outlined a detailed propaganda strategy. On imperialism, he called for explanations of what imperialism is, what empires are and what the British Empire really was. He referred to the dangers of Ireland following "the footsteps of all the rotten nations in Europe today." On the Catholic Hierarchy, he launched a sharp historical critique, noting its consistent opposition to popular movements from the 1798 Rising, through the Easter Rising and War of Independence, and condemned its support for the Treaty as "abandonment of principle, justice and 'honour'," which he saw as a grave danger to both the Republic and Catholicism in Ireland. The memorandum stressed the need to reaffirm

the Republic by popular vote when possible, while in the meantime, the Provisional Republican Government should “carry on.”<sup>10</sup>

This is an important first-hand source that throws light on Liam Mellows’ radical republican ideology in the final weeks before his execution. It shows his belief that military resistance alone was not enough; victory required a unified socio-economic agenda based on state control of the principal industries and resources, land redistribution and mobilisation of the working and landless classes. It underscores the longstanding republican claim that the Irish struggle was not merely anti-Crown, but anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist (which he saw as intertwined), directed to a fundamental change in Irish society. Mellows draws attention to the continuing tensions within republicanism over strategy, class politics and the relationship of the national and social revolutions.

In December 1933, the *Cumman na mBán* editorial section of ‘An Phoblacht’ featured a reflective tribute to Liam Mellows, written eleven years after his execution by the Free State at Mountjoy Jail in December 1922. The author portrays Mellows as a revolutionary who had a clear and radical vision of Irish freedom, which went far beyond the simple cutting of the tie with England. While some martyrs of the independence struggle had relied on the assumption that political independence would automatically bring about a new social order, Mellows deliberately sought to define the economic and social content of the Republic for which he fought. It pointed out that Mellows, writing from his prison cell about three months before his death, called for concrete expression to be given to the social programme of the Proclamation of 1916 and the Declaration of Independence. He outlined the broad foundation of the Republican economic order he had in mind:

*“Under the Republic all industry will be controlled by the State for the workers’ and farmers’ benefit.”*

He further elaborated that under the Republic:

*“All transport, railways, canals, etc., will be operated by the State for the benefits of industry and agriculture, not for purpose of profit-making by loans, mortgages, etc. That the land of the aristocracy (who support the Free State and the British connection) will be seized and divided amongst those who can and will operate it for the nation’s benefit, etc.”*

Following the description of such ideals, the ‘An Phoblacht’ feature is a biting critique of the performance of the Fianna Fáil government, made up in part of men who once claimed to share Mellows’ ideas in 1922. It

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<sup>10</sup> The Programme of Mellows: What We Failed to Do in 1922 ‘An Phoblacht (25 March 1933).

accuses the government of plotting industry in the interests of British combines and Irish capitalists. The approval of foreign-owned cement factories is cited as an example of this supposed treachery. It asserts that, despite all the cosmetic changes (from red to green pillar boxes, uniforms changing colour, coins with pigs and hens, from "Ireland" to the "Irish Free State"), the basic economic and social conditions of the Irish people did not change fundamentally. It argues that British economic dominance was not broken by political change and that the Fianna Fáil government had committed itself to protecting existing vested interests, both British and Irish, and to maintaining private ownership of the means of production. For the author, this was not the achievement of the Republic for which Mellows had fought, but a continuation of capitalist exploitation. It ends with a call to action, declaring "let us pledge ourselves to take up Mellows' [sic] unfinished work and start to build the foundations of the Republic for which he worked and died."<sup>11</sup>

This article provides a useful primary source for an understanding of the more hardline republican critique of the Irish Free State and early Fianna Fáil governance. It highlights the ongoing contradiction in Irish republicanism between political nationalism and demands for radical social and economic change. Mellows appears as a man whose socialist ideas - emphasising state control of industry, redistribution of land and production for use rather than profit - continued to inspire those who felt that the Irish Revolution was not complete without a basic reshuffling of society. These ideas served as a reminder to more hardline republicans of the need to explicitly define the meaning of the Republic, so that one form of exploitation was not replaced by another.

In his writings preserved in what would later become the 'Book of Cells', Liam Mellows gave a scathing critique of reformist Labour leadership and reasserted his vision of a socially transformative Republic. He paid tribute to the great work done by Labour in the fight for independence, but censured the failure of some of its leaders to give a radical turn to the revolution. He opined:

*"Labour played a tremendous part in the establishment and maintenance of the Republic. Its leaders had it in their power to fashion that Republic as they wished, to make it a Workers' and Peasants' Republic. . . . The existing Republic can be made the Workers' and Peasants' Republic if the Labour movement is true to the ideals of James Connolly and true to itself."*

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<sup>11</sup> Cumann na mBán, 'The Plan of Liam Mellows' An Phoblacht (9 December 1933).

Furthermore, in his seized notes to fellow members of the Anti-Treaty IRA leadership, Mellows offered a concise, binary definition of the opposing sides in the Irish Civil War:

*“The position must be defined. Free State - capitalism and industrialism and Empire; Republic, workers, Labour.”*

These statements sum up Mellows' conviction that the struggle was not simply between rival political factions, but between two irreconcilable social and economic systems. He encouraged Republicans to clearly explain the Republic as the instrument of workers' and peasants' power, based on James Connolly's socialist-republican vision, rather than letting it be taken over by propertied or imperialist interests.<sup>12</sup>

Mellows asserted that “the unemployment question is acute. Starvation is facing thousands of people.” According to the ‘Irish Democrat,’ in order to define the class standpoint of the IRA, Liam Mellows also called for control of workshop conditions to be vested in a Joint-Council representing all of the workers' trade unions concerned and the Republican State. He also campaigned for the full maintenance of the unemployed at prevailing trade union rates, until useful work at such rates of wages could be provided. The ‘Irish Democrat’ feature, remembering the executions of four key Anti-Treaty IRA leaders, being Liam Mellows, Rory O'Connor, Joe McKelvey and Richard Barrett, asserted that:

*“In Mellows, the Irish people lost the most clear-sighted leader, a great revolutionary, a sterling upholder of Republican democracy, an enemy of capitalism and champion of the working class.”<sup>13</sup>*

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The social fractures that mirrored the two main sides of the Civil War have been well documented. As outlined in a feature by RTÉ, the pro-Treaty Free State's victory was perceived by some as a triumph of bourgeois Ireland against the “men of no property.” The ‘pre-Truce’ Sinn Féin movement advocated for cross-class national unity against the purported ‘sectional’ interests of labour, land-hungry commercial farmers, and economic interests. The collapse of such unity following the Treaty has thus prompted discussions regarding a potential social or class rationale for the Civil War of 1922-23. The predominant class interpretation is provided by the socialist-republican tradition, which perceives the triumph of the Irish Free State as a bourgeois ‘counter-

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<sup>12</sup> Brian O'Neill, ‘Liam Mellows and the Road to Freedom’ Irish Workers Voice (7 December 1935).

<sup>13</sup> ‘Fifteen Years Ago Mellows Showed the Way to Freedom’ Irish Democrat (4 December 1937).

revolution' against a republican cause inherently associated with the socio-economic interests of the "men of no property." The term originates from the works of Theobald Wolfe Tone, referenced by anti-Treaty martyr Liam Mellows in his renowned 'Jail Notes.' Mellows was assigned the responsibility of developing strategies for a social and political strategy to rejuvenate the IRA's declining campaign. He referenced a plan for extensive land and resource redistribution in a worker-controlled state proposed by the-then Communist Party of Ireland. Historians have typically affirmed a comprehensive depiction of a pro-Treaty faction predominantly backed by the middle classes, large agrarians, commercial interests, the Church leaders, the commercial press, and other foundational elements of the Irish establishment, in contrast to an anti-Treaty movement that resonated more with the lower echelons of society, particularly small farmers in the west, agricultural labourers, and segments of the working and lower-middle classes in urban areas.<sup>14</sup>

Mellows' notes and memoranda provide a compelling, but ultimately tragic, counterpoint to this class analysis. He sought to prevent the revolution leading to "a change of masters" by insisting that the Republic must deliver economic as well as political sovereignty - through state control of industry, banking and transport, land redistribution, and mobilisation of the "men of no property." During the Civil War, the Anti-Treaty IRA leadership failed to convert these ideas into a coherent popular programme in time to widen its base at the height of the conflict. Despite his own devout Catholicism, his brutal assault on the Catholic Hierarchy in Ireland for its political support of the Free State and his demand for a Provisional Republican Government with a clear social programme exposed the tensions between military resistance and socio-economic change. By his execution and that of other radical voices, the most articulate exponent of a "Workers' and Peasants' Republic" was effectively silenced. The pro-Treaty forces built up an economically conservative state which, for the most part, preserved the existing individualistic, non-egalitarian and Anglicised set of socio-legal and property relations.

## CONCLUSION

Liam Mellows remains one of the most intellectually intriguing figures of the Irish Revolution. A devout Catholic, a committed Gaelic revivalist and a gifted organiser, he developed into a clear-sighted advocate of republicanism who understood that political independence without economic democracy would amount to little more than "a change of

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<sup>14</sup> Gavin Foster, 'Class Warfare: Was There a Social Basis to the Civil War Divide?' RTÉ (13 June 2022) <<https://www.rte.ie/history/pact-election/2022/0427/1294722-class-warfare-how-the-civil-war-divide-reflects-social-fractures/>>.

masters.” His writings from Mountjoy Jail – notably the demand for state ownership of industry and transport, redistribution of land and the mobilisation of the “men of no property” – offered a radical vision of a “Workers’ and Peasants’ Republic,” based on the ideals of Theobald Wolfe Tone, Pádraig Pearse and James Connolly. Despite all of his achievements and roles held, Mellows was only thirty years old when he was executed and was not able to develop and implement these ideas further. Nonetheless, his critique of imperialism, native capitalism and the limits of a purely militarist approach still resonates. In an Ireland still wrestling with questions of sovereignty, economic control and social justice, Mellows’ works are a stark warning against domestic elite capture of the national project and an inspiration to those who believe that an Irish Republic must ultimately belong to its working people and their dependants. He remains a principled and selfless link between national liberation and social emancipation.

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