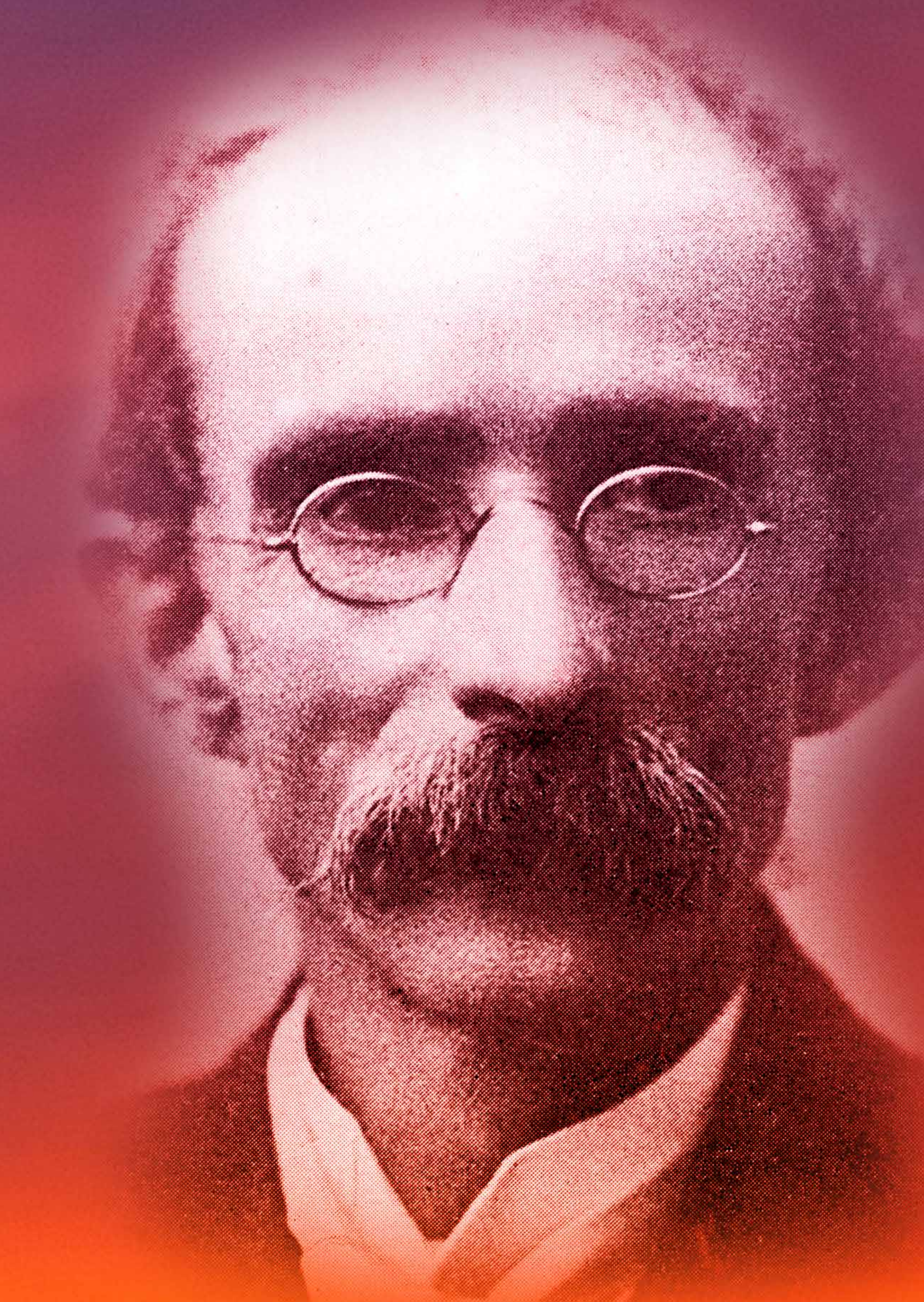
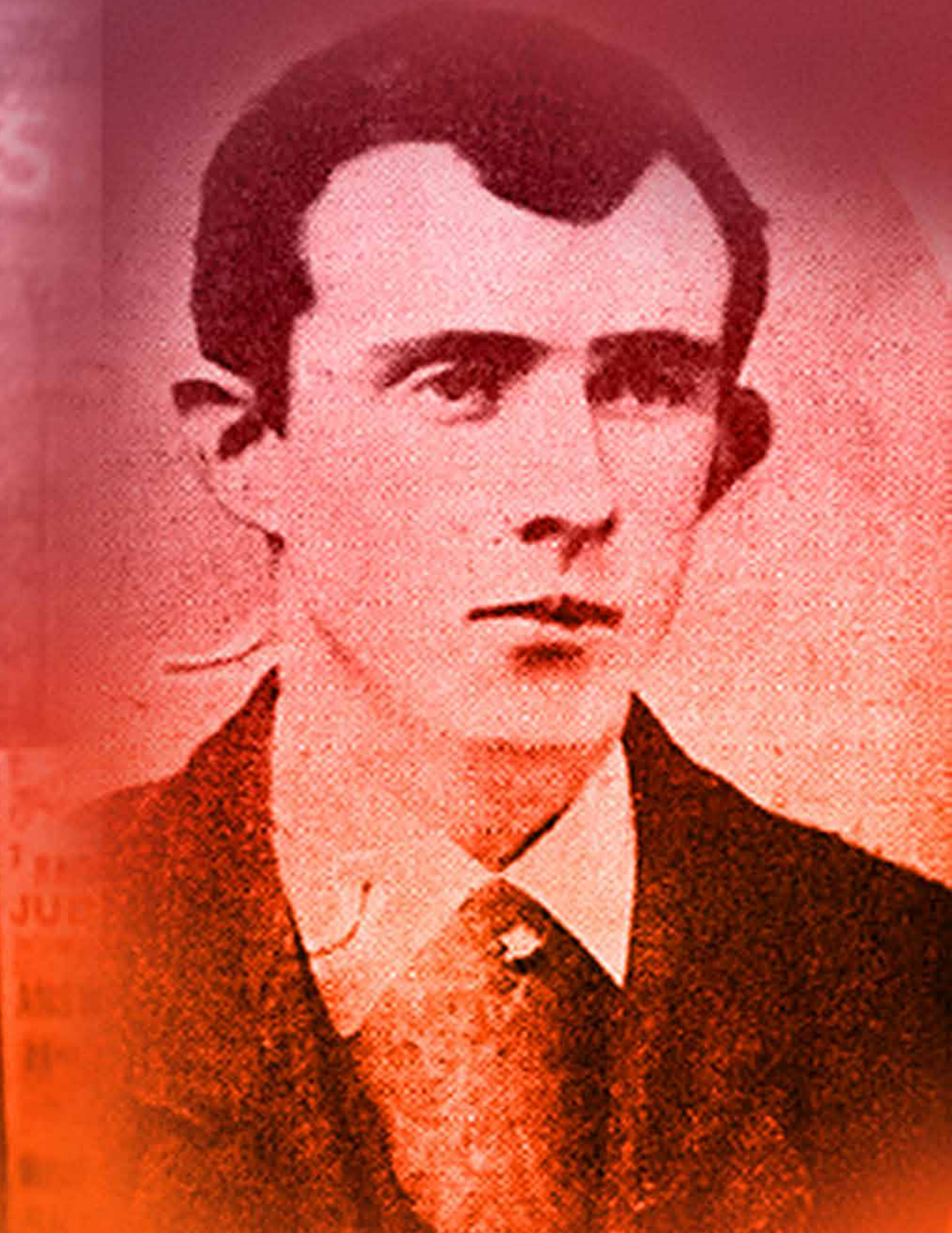


REVOLUTION 1916 THE ORIGINAL & AUTHENTIC EXHIBITION



THOMAS CLARKE
(1858-1916)

T. S. Ó CLÉIRIGH



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(1858-1916)

Thomas Clarke was born on March 11th 1858 on the Isle of Wight in England the same month as the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) was formed by James Stephens in Dublin. The son of James Clarke, a British Army sergeant, Thomas eventually settled in Dungannon, County Tyrone, where his father was posted and he spent his childhood from age seven there.

IRB organiser John Daly spoke in Dungannon in 1878 and Clarke attended the meeting and was later sworn into the IRB by Daly. After rioting in 1880 where Clarke fired a rifle at police he chose to emigrate to the USA in 1882 to avoid capture. He joined the American arm of the IRB, Clann na Gael, and volunteered to take part in its bombing campaign in England.

The 'Dynamite Campaign' was thwarted by informers and Clarke, under the assumed name of Henry Hammond Wilson, was promptly captured and sentenced to penal servitude for life. Tom suffered the harsh conditions applied to the Irish prisoners: continuous harassment; sleep deprivation; silence rule; hard labour; and meagre rations.

Many fellow prisoners were driven insane. John Daly also joined him and other Fenians imprisoned in Britain. Clarke developed the mental fortitude to survive, translating the Bible into shorthand twice to stay alert. After serving 15 years Clarke was released during the amnesty of 1898 and he visited his mentor John Daly in Limerick in 1899, where he struck up a friendship with his niece Kathleen.

Unable to find work in Ireland Clarke again headed to the USA where he and Kathleen married and he became right hand man to the Fenian John Devoy. Clarke was granted US citizenship in 1905, but Devoy sent him back to Dublin in 1907 where the IRB was being reformed. Setting up base on Parnell Street with a tobacconists shop Clarke inspired the younger Seán MacDiarmada who became very close to him.

After the Howth Gun Running in 1914 Clarke visited his old mentor John Daly in Limerick and presented to him proudly one of the I.G.Mod 71 Mauser Rifles landed at Howth. A black Mauser rifle, the only one of its kind, was given to Clarke in recognition of his status.

In May 1915 Clarke, MacDiarmada, Pearse, Plunkett and Ceannt became the secret Military Council of the IRB. When agreement was reached with James Connolly and the Irish Citizen Army regarding the Rising, he too was included on the Council. Thomas McDonagh would be co-opted near the eve the Rising also.

When John Devoy informed Clarke of the death of O'Donovan Rossa it was Clarke's idea to arrange for the old Fenian to be brought home for burial in Ireland. The funeral on the August 1st 1915 provided an opportunity for a mass mobilisation of the Volunteers and the wider republican family. When Pearse asked Clarke how far he should go with his oration, his response was *"throw caution to the wind and make it hot as hell"*.

In recognition of his role for years Thomas was given the honour of being the first signatory of the Proclamation. During the Rising Thomas Clarke was in the GPO with the rest of the Military Council, and was at the last meeting of the Provisional Government in 16 Moore Street before the surrender. He wrote on the wall. *"Day six of the Irish Republic"*

The prisoners from the GPO and Four Courts were held out overnight at the Rotunda as 'G' Men (detectives) and informers identified people of interest. It was here that a drunken British Captain Lee-Wilson degraded Thomas Clarke and his brother-in-law Edward Daly by stripping them naked in front of the others, a scene witnessed by a young Michael Collins.

Thomas Clarke was tried by Military Court Martial and was the second man executed after Pearse on May 3rd 1916.

"I and my fellow signatories believe we have struck the first successful blow for Irish freedom. The next blow, which we have no doubt Ireland will strike, will win through. In this belief, we die happy."

Rugadh Tomás Ó Cléirigh ar Márta 11ú 1858 ar Inis locht i Sasana, san mí céanna inar bhunaigh James Stephens Bráithreachas Phoblacht na hÉireann i mBaile Átha Cliath. Mac le Sáirsint in Arm na Breataine, James Clarke, a bhí ann agus shocraigh Tomás síos sa deireadh i nDún Geanainn, Contae Thír Eoghain, áit a lonnaithe a athair agus áit inar chaith sé a óige ó aois a seacht ar aghaidh.

Tar éis dó éisteacht le eagraí an mBráithreachas John Daly ag labhairt i nDún Geanainn in 1878, chuir Daly Tomás faoi mhionn don eagras rúnda. I ndiaidh ciréibeanna in 1880 inar scaoil Ó Cléirigh uarchar leis na póilíní shocraigh sé ar éalú ar imirce go Meiriceá sa bhliain 1882. Chláraigh sé le géag Mheiriceá den Bráithreachas, Clann na Gael agus chuaigh sé go Sasan chun páirt a ghlacadh ina bhfeachtas buamála ann.

Ach bhí spiadóirí ago obair sa *'Feachtas Dinimite'*, agus gabhadh Ó Cléirigh, faoin ainm Henry Hammond Wilson, go gasta agus daoradh pianseirbhís saoil air. D'fhulaing sé i ngeall ar na coinníollacha diana a cuireadh i bhfeidhm ar príosúnaigh Éireannacha - an síorchiapadh, an easpa codlata, riail an chíunais, an dian saothair agus an chiondál bhocht. Chuaigh go leor príosúnaíthe as a meabhair. Timpeall an ama céanna cuireadh John Daly i ngéibheann freisin.

D'fhorbair Ó Cléirigh a neart intinne chun teacht slán tré mar shampla leagan gearrscíofa a dhéanamh faoi dhó den Bhiobla. I ndiaidh 15 bliana scaoileadh soar Ó Cléirigh mar chuid den mhaithiúnas ginearálta 1898. Thug sé cuairt ar a chomráidí John Daly i Luimneach an bhliain dár gcionn áit a d'fhás cairdeas idir é agus neacht John, Kathleen.

Ní raibh Ó Cléirigh in ann obair a fháil in Éirinn agus d'fhill sé ar na Stáit Aontaithe, áit ar pósadh é féin agus Kathleen. Chomh maith bhí sé ina ghiolla gualainne ag an bhFinín John Devoy. Bronnadh saorántacht Mheiriceánach air i 1905 agus dhá bhliain ina dhiaidh chuir Devoy ar ais go Bhaile Átha Cliath é chun cuidiú leis an ath-thógaint an Bhráithreachas a bhí ar bonn. D'oscail sé siopa tobac ar Shráid Parnell agus ba spreagadh mór é do Seán Mac Diarmada, a bhí níos óige ná é ach a d'éirigh go mór eathartha.

I ndiaidh Tuirlingt na nGunná i mBinn Éadair i 1914 thug Ó Cléirigh cuairt ar a shean-mheantóir John Daly i Luimneach agus ba le bród a bhronn sé ceann de na raidhfíilí I.G.Mod 71 Mauser air. Bhíothas tar éis raidhfíilí dhubh Mauser, an t-aon cheann dá chineál, a bhronnadh ar Ó Cléirigh in aitheantas ar a stádas.

I Bealtaine 1915 b'é, Mac Diarmada, Mac Piarais, Pluincéad agus Ceannt Chomhairle Mhíleata rúnda an Bhráithreachas. Nuair a thángthas ar réiteach le Séamus Ó Conghaile agus le hArm Cathartha na hÉireann maidir leis an Éirí Amach glacadh leis air an Chomhairle agus b'amhlaidh le Tomás Mac Donnachadh tamall beag ina dhiaidh sin.

Nuair a thug John Devoy le fios do Thomás Ó Cléirigh go raibh Ó Donnabháin Rossa marbh, b'é Ó Cléirigh a mhol go bhfillfeadh an sean Finín abhaile ionas go gcuirfí in Éirinn é. Thug an tsochraid ar an Lúnasa 1ú 1915 an deis sluaite móra Óglaigh a thabhairt le chéile agus nuair a d'iarr Mac Piarais ar Ó Cléirigh cé chomh fada agus ba chóir dó dul ina óráid, séard a dúradh leis ná *"throw caution to the wind and make it hot as hell"*.

B'é Tomás Ó Cléirigh céad sínitheoir Forógra na Poblachta in aitheantas dá ról thar na blianta. Le linn an Éirí Amach bhí sé in Ard-Oifig an Phoist leis an gcuid eile den Chomhairle Mhíleata agus ag an gcruinniú deiridh den Rialtais Shealadaigh i 16 Sráid Uí Mhórdha roimh an ngéilleadh. Scriobh sé ar an mballa: *"Day six of the Irish Republic"*

Coinníodh na príosúnaíthe ó Ard-Oifig an Phoist agus na Ceithre Cúirteanna thar oíche lasmuigh don Rotunda a fhad is a bhí bleachtairí agus brathadóirí ag roghnú súid a shíl siad a raibh tábhacht leo. Ba anseo a mhaslaigh Captaen Lea-Wilson arm Shasana, a bhí ólta, Tomás Ó Cléirigh agus a dheartháir céile Edward Daly trína gcuid éadaí a bhaint díobha os comhair na ndaoine eile, radharc a chonaic Micheál Ó Colleáin, a bhí ina fhear óg ag an am.

Chuir armchúirt mhíleata Tomás Ó Cléirigh faoi thrial agus ba é an dara fear a cuireadh chun báis ar an 3 Bealtaine 1916.

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