

COUNTESS CONSTANCE MARKIEVICZ



**Creative
Centenaries**

The story of
Countess Constance Markievicz

Key Stage 3 Learning Resource



Creative Centenaries



The story of Countess Markievicz has been developed by the Nerve Centre's Creative Centenaries project which produces innovative resources around the Decade of Centenaries and important historical events and people from Ireland's history.

This is a Key Stage 3 curriculum linked resource that looks at the part played by influential women to gain parity with men. This story focuses on the actions of Countess Constance Markievicz, socialist, human rights activist and the first woman elected to the House of Commons. It has been produced in 2018 to mark the centenary of the Representation of the People Act and women voting and standing for election for the first time.

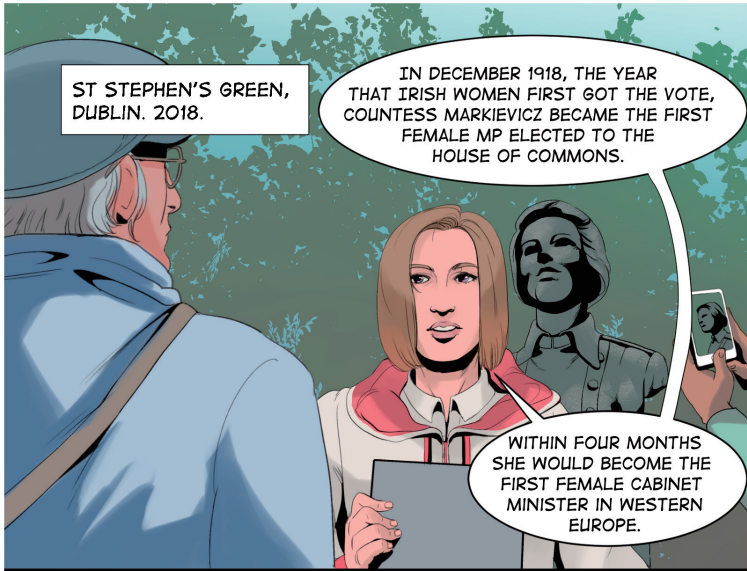
Further graphic novels highlighting the role of other significant women, as well as a suite of animations and interactive resources are all available to access from www.creativecentenaries.org/resources

Artwork by Leeann Hamilton and script by Seth Linder. With thanks to Nicola Ralston and Frances Clarke at National Library of Ireland and Dr Margaret Ward.

www.creativecentenaries.org



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ST STEPHEN'S GREEN, DUBLIN. 2018.

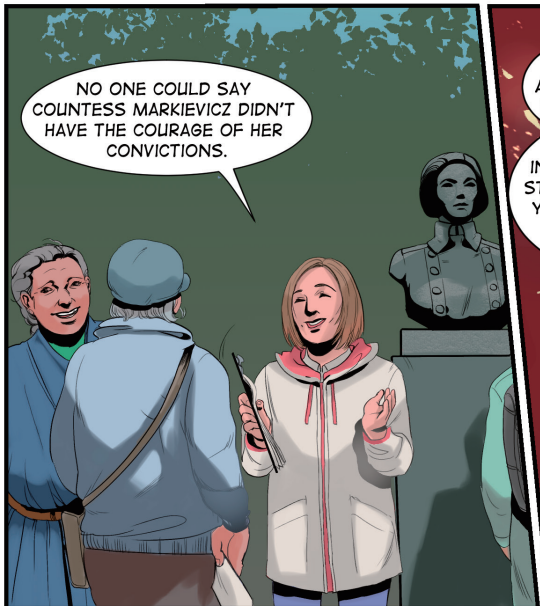
IN DECEMBER 1918, THE YEAR THAT IRISH WOMEN FIRST GOT THE VOTE, COUNTESS MARKIEVICZ BECAME THE FIRST FEMALE MP ELECTED TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

WITHIN FOUR MONTHS SHE WOULD BECOME THE FIRST FEMALE CABINET MINISTER IN WESTERN EUROPE.



SHE FOUGHT FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS BUT FOR CONSTANCE IT WAS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT TO MAKE IRELAND INDEPENDENT OF BRITAIN.

NO IRISH WOMAN SHOULD JOIN A SUFFRAGE SOCIETY THAT DID NOT HAVE THE FREEDOM OF THE NATION AS ITS FIRST PRIORITY.

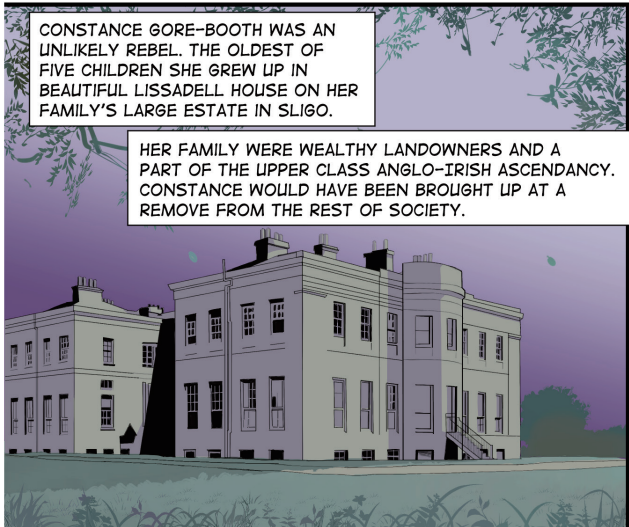


NO ONE COULD SAY COUNTESS MARKIEVICZ DIDN'T HAVE THE COURAGE OF HER CONVICTIONS.



MY ADVICE TO WOMEN?

DRESS SUITABLY IN SHORT SKIRTS AND STRONG BOOTS, LEAVE YOUR JEWELS IN THE BANK AND BUY A REVOLVER.



CONSTANCE GORE-BOOTH WAS AN UNLIKELY REBEL. THE OLDEST OF FIVE CHILDREN SHE GREW UP IN BEAUTIFUL LISSADELL HOUSE ON HER FAMILY'S LARGE ESTATE IN SLIGO.

HER FAMILY WERE WEALTHY LANDOWNERS AND A PART OF THE UPPER CLASS ANGLO-IRISH ASCENDANCY. CONSTANCE WOULD HAVE BEEN BROUGHT UP AT A REMOVE FROM THE REST OF SOCIETY.



THE POET WB YEATS WROTE OF HER AND SISTER EVA:

*The light of evening, Lissadell,
Great windows open to the south,
Two girls in silk kimonos, both
Beautiful and one a gazelle.*

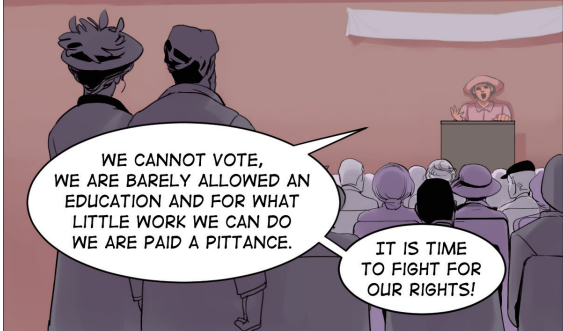
CONSTANCE ENJOYED A LIFE OF WEALTH AND PRIVILEGE AND COULD OUTRIDE AND OUTSHOOT MOST MEN.



THOUGH SHE REGULARLY VISITED HER FATHER'S TENANTS TO HELP THEM IN DIFFICULT TIMES.



CONSTANCE DISLIKED THE POWER MEN HAD OVER WOMEN. TO THE HORROR OF THEIR PARENTS, SISTERS CONSTANCE, EVA AND MABEL FORMED THE SLIGO BRANCH OF THE IRISH WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION IN 1896.



WE CANNOT VOTE, WE ARE BARELY ALLOWED AN EDUCATION AND FOR WHAT LITTLE WORK WE CAN DO WE ARE PAID A PITTANCE.

IT IS TIME TO FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS!

1903.

IN 1898, CONSTANCE LEFT IRELAND TO STUDY ART IN PARIS, WHERE SHE MET FELLOW STUDENT AND POLISH NOBLEMAN, COUNT MARKIEWICZ. THEY MARRIED IN 1900, SETTLED IN DUBLIN IN 1903 AND MIXED WITH THE WEALTHY AT DANCES IN DUBLIN CASTLE.



BUT SHE WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY AWARE OF THE OTHER IRELAND. THIS WAS A COUNTRY WITH SOME OF EUROPE'S WORST SLUMS WHERE MANY STRUGGLED TO FEED THEIR CHILDREN.



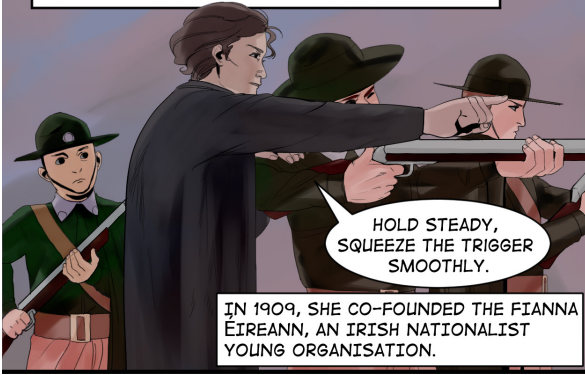
IN 1908, THESE TWO WORLDS WOULD COLLIDE WHEN CONSTANCE WENT STRAIGHT FROM A SOCIETY BALL TO ATTEND HER FIRST MEETING OF THE RADICAL NATIONALIST GROUP INGHINIDHE NA HEIREANN (DAUGHTERS OF IRELAND).



IS SHE A SPY?

SHE WOULD NEVER DANCE AT THE CASTLE AGAIN. ELEVEN DAYS LATER SHE JOINED SINN FÉIN.

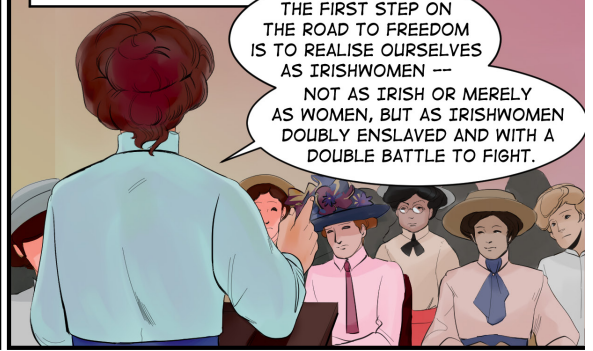
HER SOCIETY DAYS OVER, CONSTANCE JOINED THE NATIONALIST STRUGGLE TO FREE IRELAND FROM BRITISH RULE.



HOLD STEADY,
SQUEEZE THE TRIGGER
SMOOTHLY.

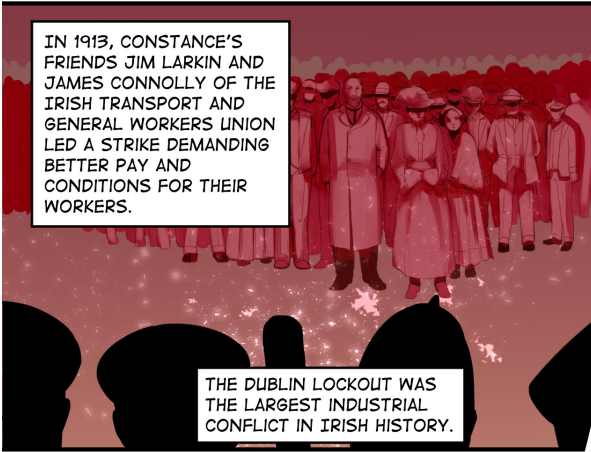
IN 1909, SHE CO-FOUNDED THE FIANNA ÉIREANN, AN IRISH NATIONALIST YOUNG ORGANISATION.

IN 1909 SHE GAVE A FAMOUS LECTURE, 'WOMEN, IDEALS AND THE NATION', IN WHICH SHE STATED...



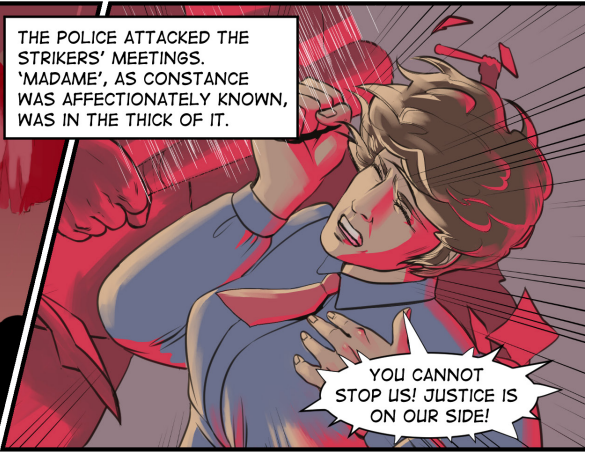
THE FIRST STEP ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM IS TO REALISE OURSELVES AS IRISHWOMEN --- NOT AS IRISH OR MERELY AS WOMEN, BUT AS IRISHWOMEN DOUBLY ENSLAVED AND WITH A DOUBLE BATTLE TO FIGHT.

IN 1913, CONSTANCE'S FRIENDS JIM LARKIN AND JAMES CONNOLLY OF THE IRISH TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION LED A STRIKE DEMANDING BETTER PAY AND CONDITIONS FOR THEIR WORKERS.



THE DUBLIN LOCKOUT WAS THE LARGEST INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT IN IRISH HISTORY.

THE POLICE ATTACKED THE STRIKERS' MEETINGS. 'MADAME', AS CONSTANCE WAS AFFECTIONATELY KNOWN, WAS IN THE THICK OF IT.



YOU CANNOT STOP US! JUSTICE IS ON OUR SIDE!

AS THE LOCKOUT CONTINUED, CONSTANCE WORKED DAY AND NIGHT TO HELP THE WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES. SHE SET UP AND ORGANISED FOOD KITCHENS AND VISITED FAMILIES IN THE TENEMENTS.



SHE HELPED KEEP THOUSANDS OF DUBLIN'S POOREST FROM STARVATION AND JOINED JAMES CONNOLLY'S IRISH CITIZEN ARMY TO DEFEND THE STRIKERS FROM POLICE. BUT THE WORKERS LOST AND AFTER SIX TERRIBLE MONTHS WERE FORCED BACK TO WORK.

IN 1914 CAME AN EVENT THAT WOULD CHANGE IRELAND, AND THE WORLD, FOREVER.



WAR TRANSFORMED HOW PEOPLE LOOKED AT THE NATIONAL QUESTION AND CREATED NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN WHILE MEN WERE FIGHTING AT THE FRONT.

THEY WANT US TO DO THEIR WORK NOW, DANGEROUS AND HARD AS IT IS.

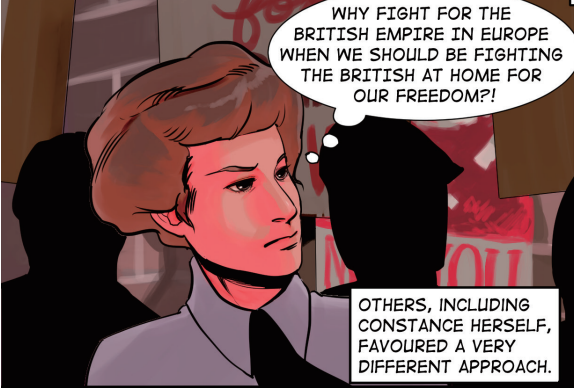
BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE MEN RETURN FROM WAR?



THE LEADER OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENTARY PARTY, JOHN REDMOND, CALLED ON THOSE SEEKING IRISH FREEDOM TO JOIN THE BRITISH ARMY IN RETURN FOR THE GRANTING OF HOME RULE WHICH WOULD ENABLE SELF-RULE FOR IRELAND.

WHY FIGHT FOR THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN EUROPE WHEN WE SHOULD BE FIGHTING THE BRITISH AT HOME FOR OUR FREEDOM?!

OTHERS, INCLUDING CONSTANCE HERSELF, FAVOURED A VERY DIFFERENT APPROACH.



AT EASTER 1916, PATRICK PEARSE AND JAMES CONNOLLY ORGANISED AND LAUNCHED AN ARMED UPRISING WITH THE AIM OF IRISH INDEPENDENCE. MEMBERS OF THE IRISH VOLUNTEERS AND THE IRISH CITIZEN ARMY TOOK PART IN THE FIGHTING WHICH WAS LARGELY CENTRED ON DUBLIN, WHERE SOME 1,200 VOLUNTEERED IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES.

THE REPUBLIC GUARANTEES RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL LIBERTY, EQUAL RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL ITS CITIZENS.

THIS IS HOW WE WILL FREE WOMEN!



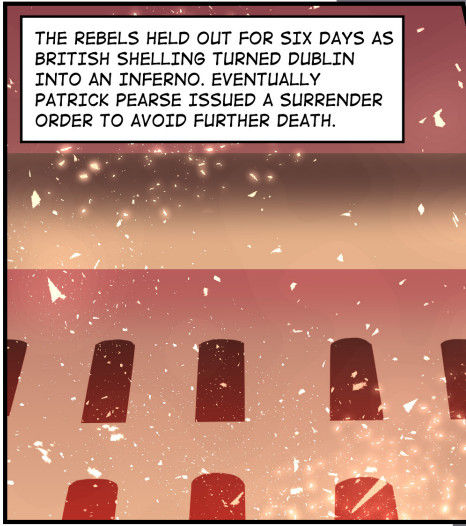
CONSTANCE WAS POSTED TO ST STEPHEN'S GREEN UNDER COMMANDANT MICHAEL MALLIN.



FIRED ON BY BRITISH ARMY SNIPERS FROM THE SHELBOURNE HOTEL, THE REBELS IN ST STEPHEN'S GREEN SUFFERED SEVERE CASUALTIES.

RETREAT TO THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS!

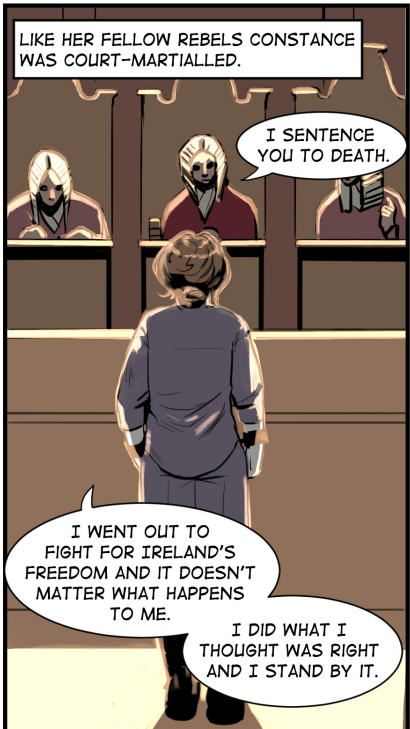




THE REBELS HELD OUT FOR SIX DAYS AS BRITISH SHELLING TURNED DUBLIN INTO AN INFERNO. EVENTUALLY PATRICK PEARSE ISSUED A SURRENDER ORDER TO AVOID FURTHER DEATH.

BEFORE BEING TAKEN PRISONER, COUNTESS MARKIEWICZ REPORTEDLY KISSED HER REVOLVER BEFORE HANDING IT TO THE BRITISH ARMY OFFICER, CAPTAIN HARRY DE COURCY-WHEELER, WHO WAS MARRIED TO HER FIRST COUSIN.

SHE DECLINED HIS OFFER OF A LIFT TO DUBLIN CASTLE, SAYING SHE PREFERRED TO MARCH WITH HER COMRADES.



LIKE HER FELLOW REBELS CONSTANCE WAS COURT-MARTIALLED.


I SENTENCE YOU TO DEATH.

HELD IN A CELL AT KILMAINHAM GAOL, CONSTANCE LISTENED TO SHOTS FROM THE NEARBY YARD WHERE THE LEADERS OF THE RISING WERE EXECUTED.

FOURTEEN MEN INVOLVED IN THE EASTER RISING, INCLUDING THE SEVEN SIGNATORIES OF THE PROCLAMATION, WERE EXECUTED HERE.


I WENT OUT TO FIGHT FOR IRELAND'S FREEDOM AND IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TO ME.

I DID WHAT I THOUGHT WAS RIGHT AND I STAND BY IT.



HER SENTENCE COMMUTED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT, CONSTANCE WAS SENT TO PRISON IN ENGLAND WHERE SHE WAS DENIED VISITS AND SET TO WORK SEWING AND CLEANING.

THE NEXT YEAR AN AMNESTY SAW THE RELEASE OF ALL REPUBLICAN PRISONERS.



THE EXECUTIONS OF THE REBEL LEADERS HAD DRAMATICALLY CHANGED IRISH PUBLIC OPINION. THE PRISONERS WHO HAD BEEN JEERED ON THEIR SURRENDER WERE NOW CHEERED BACK AS HEROES WHEN THEY RETURNED TO DUBLIN.


NONE WAS MORE POPULAR THAN 'MADAME' MARKIEVICZ, NOW A HOUSEHOLD NAME.

KILKENNY BY-ELECTION,
AUGUST 1917



ONLY AN IRELAND FREE OF BRITISH RULE CAN PROVIDE JUSTICE FOR HER SONS AND DAUGHTERS. SUPPORT SINN FÉIN AND SEND THE BRITISH HOME!

MANY IRISH PEOPLE HAD GROWN WEARY OF THE TERRIBLE LOSSES AND HARDSHIPS CAUSED BY THE WAR. SEEKING CHANGE, AN INCREASING NUMBER WERE DRAWN TO SINN FÉIN'S ANTI-WAR REPUBLICAN MESSAGE. CONSTANCE WAS A STRONG PRESENCE AT PUBLIC RALLIES AS SINN FÉIN WON KEY SEATS IN 1917.



COUNTESS MARKIEVICZ WAS IMPRISONED IN ENGLAND AGAIN IN MAY 1918. THIS DIDN'T STOP HER FROM STANDING FOR THE DUBLIN SEAT OF ST PATRICK'S IN THE GENERAL ELECTION THAT DECEMBER.

SINN FÉIN WON A LANDSLIDE VICTORY IN IRELAND AND CONSTANCE BECAME THE FIRST WOMAN ELECTED AS AN MP TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS. LIKE ALL SINN FÉIN MPS SHE REFUSED TO TAKE HER SEAT IN THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT.

WHEN CONSTANCE WAS RELEASED AGAIN IN SPRING 1919, SHE RETURNED TO AN IRELAND INCREASINGLY TORN BY VIOLENCE. IRISH VOLUNTEERS WERE ATTEMPTING TO WEAKEN BRITISH CONTROL THROUGH COUNTRYWIDE ATTACKS ON THE ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY (RIC).



JUST WEEKS AFTER HIS ESCAPE FROM PRISON IN ENGLAND, SINN FÉIN LEADER, ÉAMON DE VALERA, BECAME PRESIDENT OF DÁIL ÉIREANN, THE REVOLUTIONARY IRISH PARLIAMENT SET UP IN DUBLIN AFTER THE 1918 ELECTION. CONSTANCE BECAME PART OF HIS FIRST CABINET, ONE OF THE FIRST FEMALE CABINET MINISTERS IN EUROPEAN HISTORY.



CONSTANCE WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN USING HER MINISTERIAL POSITION TO SUPPORT FEMALE WORKERS.

IT WAS A DANGEROUS TIME. THE BRITISH DECLARED THE DÁIL ILLEGAL IN SEPT 1919, RISKING ARREST, THE CABINET MET 'ON THE RUN' AND AS MINISTER FOR LABOUR, CONSTANCE OFTEN HAD TO DISGUISE HERSELF TO EVADE CAPTURE BY THE POLICE.



ONE OF THE INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES SHE CONSIDERED WAS AT LISSADELL HOUSE, WHERE HER BROTHER JOSSLYN FACED A STRIKE BY UNIONISED WORKERS. SHE URGED HIM TO SEEK A JUST SOLUTION.



'REMEMBER YOU COME FROM A FAMILY OF TYRANTS AND USURPERS!'

GOVERNING IRELAND BECAME EVEN MORE DIFFICULT AS THE CONFLICT AGAINST BRITAIN ESCALATED.



THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY (IRA) INTENSIFIED ITS ATTACKS ON THE RIC AND BRITISH ARMY...

...AND REINFORCEMENTS WERE BROUGHT IN FROM BRITAIN. KNOWN AS THE AUXILIARIES AND THE BLACK AND TANS, THEY BECAME NOTORIOUS FOR ILL DISCIPLINE AND ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS. VIOLENCE RAGED UNTIL...

...A CEASEFIRE WAS AGREED IN JULY 1921. IN DECEMBER 1921, IRELAND AND BRITAIN SIGNED A PEACE TREATY IN WHICH IRELAND WAS PARTITIONED TO CREATE NORTHERN IRELAND, WHICH REMAINED PART OF BRITAIN.

MANY REPUBLICANS OPPOSED THE TREATY INCLUDING THE MILITANT WOMEN'S ORGANISATION CUMANN NA MBAN, LED BY CONSTANCE...

SUCH STRENGTH OF OPINION LED TO A BRUTAL CIVIL WAR WHICH ENDED WITH THE DEFEAT OF THE ANTI TREATY FORCES IN 1923.

CONSTANCE WAS JAILED AGAIN IN 1923 AND AFTERWARDS WAS AN ABSTENTIONIST FROM THE DAIL AS A MEMBER OF SINN FÉIN. SHE JOINED FIANNA FÁIL WHEN IT WAS FORMED IN 1926 AND WAS A MEMBER OF ITS FIRST EXECUTIVE BUT DIED BEFORE THE PARTY TOOK THE DECISION TO ENTER THE DAIL.

MEN! MEETING AFTER MEETING YOU JUST TALK ABOUT PROBLEMS.

THERE ARE PEOPLE FREEZING TO DEATH OUT THERE!

CONSTANCE'S SUPPORT FOR THE POOR OF DUBLIN NEVER WAVERED.

SHE EVEN DUG TURF FROM THE WICKLOW HILLS TO KEEP THEIR FIRES BURNING.

HER DEDICATION WAS NOT FORGOTTEN. WHEN SHE DIED IN 1927, 300,000 PEOPLE LINED THE FUNERAL ROUTE TO GLASNEVIN CEMETERY. AT HER FUNERAL SHE WAS HAILED AS IRELAND'S 'JOAN OF ARC'.

THROUGHOUT HER LIFE CONSTANCE FOUGHT TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF THE POOR, TO WIN RIGHTS FOR WOMEN BUT ABOVE ALL TO GAIN INDEPENDENCE FOR IRELAND.

THAT WAS HER CHOICE. WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE?

COUNTESS CONSTANCE MARKIEVICZ

The first female MP elected to the House of Commons and the first female cabinet minister in western Europe, Countess Markievicz was one of the most remarkable public figures of her time.

Constance Georgine Gore-Booth was born in 1868, the eldest of five children. Her father, Henry Gore-Booth, owned the beautiful Lissadell estate in Sligo, where she grew up. Life could not have been more comfortable. She rode horses, hunted and wanted for nothing.

But Constance was not like most other women of her class. Even as a child she was concerned with the welfare of her father's tenants and when she was older she began to look outside her privileged existence. At 25 she went to London to study art at the highly respected Slade School of Art and when she returned to Sligo, she helped set up a local women's suffrage group with her sister Eva.

In 1900, while studying art in Paris, she married a fellow student, Count Casimir Markievicz, who was Polish. A widower with a young son, he and Constance had a daughter Maeve. The couple settled in Dublin in 1903. Here Constance became a central figure in artistic and Celtic Revival circles and acted in plays at the newly formed Abbey Theatre.

Her life changed dramatically in 1908, when she attended her first Sinn Féin meeting. She also joined Inghinidhe na hÉireann (Daughters of Ireland) and helped found Bean na hÉireann (Woman of Ireland), the first women's nationalist journal in Ireland. She formed Fianna Éireann, a republican version of the Boy Scouts.

Jim Larkin and James Connolly, leaders of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, were great influences on her. She worked tirelessly to help the strikers' families during the Dublin Lockout of 1913. She joined Connolly's Irish Citizen Army during the failed strike and marched with the army during the Easter Rising of 1916, when she was part of the group that briefly held St Stephen's Green.

After the failure of the Rising she was sentenced to death, which was later commuted to a life sentence. The following year an amnesty saw the release of all Republican prisoners and

she returned to a hero's welcome in Dublin. Constance was elected to Westminster as the Sinn Féin member for St Patrick's (Dublin) at the general election of 1918. She thus became the first woman ever elected to the House of Commons, though as a Sinn Féin member she did not take her seat. However, when the first Dáil Éireann (Irish Parliament) met in 1919 she became Minister of Labour, the first woman minister of any European parliament.

She lost her seat in 1922 but was re-elected the next year. She held her seat until her death in 1927. Over 300,000 people lined the streets of Dublin for her funeral, testimony to the great affection the people held for her.

Further Information

VISIT

Lissadell House in Sligo is the childhood home of Constance Markievicz (née Gore Booth) and is open to the public:

www.lissadellhouse.com

ONLINE

PRONI have digitised the Lissadell papers, related to the Gore-Booth family, available online at:

www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/introduction-lissadell-papers



Record a podcast with Countess Markievicz

Students will imagine a scene where Constance Markievicz is being interviewed for a radio broadcast in 1925. In groups, students will research some of the main achievements and incidents from her life and script an interview between Markievicz and a fictional interviewer, imagining the types of questions and answers that would have been given. Students will assume the role of both characters and use audio recording software to create their podcast.

Key Stage 3 Curriculum Links

Key Elements	Cross Curricular Skills	Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities	Areas of Learning
Personal Understanding; Mutual Understanding; Moral Character; Citizenship; Cultural understanding; Media Awareness; Ethical Awareness	Communication; Using ICT	Managing Information; Thinking, Problem Solving, Decision Making; Being Creative; Working with Others	The Arts; English (with Media Education); Environment & Society



Create a series of tweets about Markievicz's election victory in 1918

Imagine you are reporting on Constance Markievicz's election victory in 1918. Research the main facts and figures about the election, including number of votes won. Compose five tweets covering Markievicz's election journey from her standing for election to winning her seat and subsequently refusing to take it. Think of a hashtag for your tweets and ensure you limit each tweet to 280 characters.

Key Stage 3 Curriculum Links

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Class discussion

Do you think Countess Constance Markievicz's more revolutionary approach was a deciding factor in obtaining equality for women in Ireland? Think about her involvement in social campaigns and in the Easter Rising. Could these events have had a deciding factor in how the role of women was viewed in Ireland.