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The Features of the Gaelic Revival in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

(bakalářská práce)

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla úplný seznam citované a použité literatury.

V Olomouci dne .....

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# 1 Introduction

There are about 200 states in the world and each of them has its own specific language (or dialect), culture, customs and traditions. However, it sometimes happens that these features which are typical for each state begin to disappear because of the influence of another nation. One of the countries which underwent such a process was Ireland.

When somebody says Ireland, many people imagine beautiful scenery, the typical Irish green, and Irish traditional music. However, this might be all that most people know about this country and that is why this whole thesis is dedicated to Ireland and its issues.

The position of Ireland, in comparison with other European states, is quite unique. It is an island whose nearest (and the only) neighbour is the United Kingdom. This fact caused many problems between these states because the UK, as a strong country, has influenced the development of Ireland and not always in a positive way. It resulted in the decline of the Irish language and traditions and, moreover, Ireland was gradually turning into Great Britain. The Irish people began to realize that they were losing their identity and decided to change the situation by reviving the Irish culture. Therefore, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the patriots joined forces and started a movement called the Gaelic Revival.

The Gaelic Revival was a cultural, political, literary and linguistic movement whose main purpose was to revive the Irish culture and the overall identity of the Irish people. There are a lot of great names who became involved in this attempt to show that the Irish culture can be as rich as any other. This period is significant because a large number of various publications were written in Irish and because of the changes made in the political world and education that brought the Irish language into schools. The revival did not include only changes in literature but also in culture, sport and politics. Furthermore, the Irish wished to be separated from Great Britain; they wanted to have their own country and not to be under the influence of the British.

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to describe the political and cultural situation in Ireland at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This work will be divided into three parts.

In the first part I will deal with the circumstances which led the Irish to revive their culture and why it actually happened that Ireland was becoming more British. Thus, you will be able to get some information describing the political and social situation in Ireland from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the second part I will pay attention to the Gaelic Revival itself, which means to the revival of each subject which will be described separately. Thus, I will provide facts concerning the revival of the Irish language, literature, games, sports and traditions. I will also mention the institutions and organizations which were established and the festivals and competitions which were extensively organized throughout the whole country.

The third part will conclude this work with the information about to what extent the movement achieved its goals, if it managed to revive the Irish culture and how much these efforts influenced further development of Ireland in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **2 One Hundred Years before the Gaelic Revival**

The whole 19<sup>th</sup> century in Ireland is characterized as a period full of positive and negative events. These events resulted not only in changes in history and politics but also in society and culture as a whole. One of the consequences of such instability was the outbreak of the Gaelic Revival by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is important to look back at the causes which led the initiators to revive the society because after the outline it will be easier to understand the reasons of its creation. This chapter is focused on the actions which precede the revival, so it goes back to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and continues until the outbreak itself (the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century).

### **2.1 The Rebellion of 1798**

As has been already mentioned above, Ireland went through a harsh time and it was difficult for people to cope with it. Even though they tried to solve many problems, they usually failed. Therefore, it is no wonder that the Irish attempted to make their opinions heard through a variety of different means including even uprisings and rebellions. The historians consider the Rebellion of 1798 as one of the first key events, which played a major role in the modern history of Ireland. The revolution lasted for about 6 months and the consequences were immense; more than 30 000 people died and many others were tortured, wounded, arrested, or imprisoned. The major aim of the Rebellion was to achieve independence from British rule.

Some religious groups, such as the Catholics and the Presbyterians, had almost no privileges, even though they were quite numerous and created the majority in Ireland. For example, they were not allowed to vote, to become members of the Parliament, to own land, or to receive a good education. While these religious groups were discriminated against and had limited competence, the Protestant Ascendancy was in power and controlled the whole country. Consequently, this situation led to the fact that those discriminated against often converted in order to improve their social standards and ensure better living conditions.

As a result, people with the same attitudes and opinions began to gather, especially at night, and after a while some secret groups were created. The authorities could observe various rebellions in the streets, like burned houses, which were caused by these revolutionists who fought for their rights.

In 1791 a political organization called the United Irishmen was founded in order to perform changes in the political system but most importantly to create equality and an independent country. The main leader was a Protestant, like many other members, Theobald Wolfe Tone; however, the United Irishmen also included some Catholics.

All these events led to the abolition of the Irish Parliament and to the creation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, passed in 1800 by the law The Act of Union. Joining Ireland to Great Britain did not help to slow its decline. On the contrary, one would think that “two heads are better than one” meaning that Ireland and Great Britain should co-operate and find possible solutions to the problems. Nevertheless, the situation deteriorated and various uprisings and protests were a daily occurrence.

## **2.2 The Great Famine in Ireland, 1845-1849**

The situation in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was not only difficult politically, but the society itself experienced harsh moments. Unfortunately, the 50's were marked by one disastrous event for Ireland known as the Great Famine. Furthermore, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the economic situation was not ideal either due to the Napoleonic war.

The main source of food for Irish at that time was potatoes. They were spread and grown around the whole country. A large number of people became dependent on this crop and in some extreme situations people ate nothing other than potatoes. Growing potatoes was more advantageous than growing wheat for example, because they did not need as much space as other crops.

Irish people were very poor and lived in harsh conditions. Moreover, this country suffered from overpopulation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which also did not improve their situation. They usually owned very small houses, sometimes shared with domestic animals. This along with the lack of land (caused by the overpopulation) led to the fact that the Irish did not have a lot to eat. Even though they received some income from the sale of potatoes, it was not enough to cover their expenses. The Duke of Wellington pronounced the following statement, which characterizes the period: "There never was a country in which poverty existed to the extent that it exists in Ireland."<sup>1</sup>

The situation worsened when the potatoes were attacked by blight. It originated in the USA and Canada and spread as far as Europe. Consequently, a large amount of the main source of nutrition for people rotted and people were not able to feed themselves and

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Trueman, “Ireland in the Nineteenth Century,” *History Learning Site*, 2000-2013: n. p. 17 January 2013. <[http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/ireland\\_in\\_the\\_nineteenth\\_centur.htm](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/ireland_in_the_nineteenth_centur.htm)>.



their families. It follows that the Irish began to suffer from hunger and diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, and typhus started to spread rapidly. What is more, the weather was extremely freezing. “Parish priests desperate to provide for their congregations were forced to forsake buying coffins in order to feed starving families, with the dead going unburied or buried only in the clothes they wore when they died.”<sup>2</sup> Ireland was not able to get over the famine alone so they expected some help from Great Britain. However, the British Parliament remained indifferent and showed a lack of interest in the Irish troubles. That is why the British Parliament experienced a number of attacks and was criticized a lot for this behaviour.

The consequences of the Great Famine are obvious; that is, the population of Ireland decreased by half and a great number of people decided to emigrate to Europe or America. The centre of immigrants in Britain became the city of Liverpool, however, not all of the “travellers” managed to escape and save their lives. Unfortunately, many people did not survive the journey and died on boats. The total number of casualties was about 3 million people. The Irish who stayed in Ireland became desperate and had a great deal of fear about the future. Such a difficult situation increased their hatred for Britain and everything connected with this country. It follows that the Irish started to become more and more patriotic and it led to multiple attempts to separate Ireland from the United Kingdom and become totally independent. This unpleasant event, of course, left its marks on the further development of the Irish culture and nationalism.

### **2.3 Daniel O’Connell (1775-1847)**

While the previous chapter focused on the suffering of the Irish and the fight for survival, the following chapters will concentrate rather on the political situation in Ireland.

Daniel O’Connell, nicknamed the Liberator, was a Catholic, lawyer, great speaker, and mainly a democrat who went down in history as one of the greatest Irish politicians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With his Catholic Association, he promoted the separation of church from the state, freedom, and religious and political equality for the Irish, particularly for the Catholics. His steps were successful and he finally enabled the Catholics to sit in the Parliament and other privileges, e.g. they could become judges, which had not been possible before. In addition, he was also strongly opposed to violence and wanted to solve all problems in a peaceful way. One of his main steps was the attempt to abolish the Act of

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<sup>2</sup> “The Great Famine in Ireland, 1845-1849,” *English Grammar Online 4U*. 10 December 2012. 17 January 2013. <<http://www.ego4u.com/en/read-on/countries/ireland/great-famine#h-1-5>>.

Union and, as a result, he founded a legal organization called the Repeal Association, which ceased to exist after his death. But why was he so successful? O'Connell knew well that the only way to attract as many people as possible is to meet them in person. So he decided to organize mass meetings and demonstrations where he proved his speaking skills and influence he had on people (about million people participated). "He was active in the campaigns for prison and law reform, free trade, the abolition of slavery and Jewish emancipation."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, he was highly criticized for the failure in negotiations with the British Parliament during the Famine, which did not show any interest in this matter. What is more, he was accused of sedition and consequently put in prison. Despite some failures, he was considered, and still is, as one of the greatest nationalists and patriots in Irish history.

## **2.4 The Young Irelander Rebellion of 1848**

The 19<sup>th</sup> century, as it can be seen above, is characterized as a period of changes, reversals, and uprisings. Another of them was the Young Irelander Rebellion, called the Famine Rebellion as well, because of the famine that took place at that time. It was one of the first attempts in which the representatives of this uprising showed a sense of nationalism.

Young Ireland was a group of young politicians, founded in 1842, which first advocated the ideas of David O'Connell but later opposed him. A successful journal called *The Nation* was founded by three young talented people: Charles Gavan Duffy, John Blake Dillon, and Thomas Davis who tried to spread their nationalistic ideas throughout Ireland. These authors and many others contributed to the newspaper with essays, articles and also with poems and ballads which appealed its readers. Their ideology was again based on the ideas of the previous nationalists, that is, to separate Ireland from England and to solve the land problem. Whereas O'Connell was always "fighting" for the improvement of Irish life pacifistically, the Young Irelanders, namely Smith O'Brien, preferred the opposite. The ill prepared uprisings led to its suppression and to arrest, expatriation and even death of two people.

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<sup>3</sup> John Simkin, "Daniel O'Connell," *Spartacus Educational*. 13 January 2013. <<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/PROconnell.htm>>.

## **2.5 The Fenian Brotherhood**

In 1858 John O'Mahony, Michael Doheny and other significant personalities established an organization called the Fenian Brotherhood. James Stephens, a member and main leader of the movement, founded a newspaper *The Irish People*. They were all involved in the Young Irelander Rebellion; that is why they were forced to emigrate and for the most part settled in New York. It follows that the Fenians were Irish as well as Americans. "It differed from all previous national movements in that it drew its support not only from the Irish at home but also from the new Ireland that emigration had created in Britain and the USA."<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, this association became the predecessor of the contemporary IRA (Irish Republican Army), even though the Fenians were not so radical. The members, usually Catholics, believed in the creation of an independent state and in the separation of Church and State. They attempted to attack the Irish police but due to a lack of preparation they failed, just like the Young Irelanders before them, and most of them were arrested.

Despite the failure, their ideology brought some positive changes. Many nationalists "woke up" and started to work out on the improvement of the Irish situation. One of them was a politician and later Prime Minister W. E. Gladstone. Firstly, he managed to separate The Church of Ireland from the state, even though he was criticized for this action. Secondly, his Land Act of 1870 caused the British Parliament to show an interest in the Irish question. Despite his noble intentions, his actions actually produced the opposite of what he had intended. His main aim was to enable peasants to own land and to give them more rights; however, landlords were not willing to respect the law and they increased the rents which tenants were not able to pay.

## **2.6 The Home Rule Movement (1873-1882)**

However, the Fenian Brotherhood was not the last movement of this century. Issac Butt, a politician and barrister, introduced another organization named the Home Rule League. According to the other nationalists, he was not very convincing and his steps were considered to be ineffective. After his death he was replaced by his successors, firstly by William Shaw and later by a more efficient one Charles Stewart Parnell. But what was their theory? Whereas all the previous movements desired to attain total independence for Ireland, this one wanted the same but in a slightly different way. They did not demand to

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<sup>4</sup> T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin, *The Course of Irish History* (Dublin : Mercier Press, 2001) 231.

be separated from the British Isles like David O'Connell or the Fenians wished, they wanted to remain a part of the United Kingdom but with self-government to be able to rule their country and put stress on those issues, which were important for the Irish and not for the British.

## **2.7 Parnell and Land League**

In the 80's there was a chance that Ireland would have to face a similar catastrophe like the Great Famine. The harvest of potatoes was very low and that is why in 1879 Charles Stewart Parnell started the Land League whose philosophy was to help poor farmers. The period of solving the land question was called the Land War, but no violence actually occurred. It all started in the 1850s when Tenant Right League proposed the Three Fs (Fair rent, Free sale, and Fixity of tenure) and many other proposals were made over the next two decades. For instance, in 1870 W. E. Gladstone introduced the Landlord & Tenant Act 1870.

Parnell was a very influential politician who introduced the boycott. It was a new tactic for achieving his goals by ignorant and indifferent behaviour. He was hated a lot for his conduct among the British members of Parliament. However, his method was successful, so he was able to introduce many changes in the land question. One of the greatest changes was the establishment of a Land Court on the grounds of which the tenants had an opportunity to turn to it when they were not treated equally. The situation finally improved and the farmers gradually became owners of their land.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

To conclude, the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Ireland can be described as a century of fighting for freedom, equality, separation, justice and even survival. The nationalists attempted to improve conditions for the Irish and to ensure for them a better life. The inhabitants gathered in groups and made up plans and projects, organized mass meetings and became active in the political domain. A large number of various leagues and movements were established, as well as newspapers and magazines in which authors presented their ideas and ideals. The most purposeful revolutionists were determined to organize a revolt and face the authorities. Despite the fact that in most cases they were arrested and imprisoned, they never stopped believing that one day the steps they made would be useful and meaningful. All the personalities mentioned above contributed to the development of Irish society, culture and mainly to Irish nationalism and uniqueness. Even though the Irish

experienced a difficult time they were still determined to fight for their country, for their honour, and for their identity.

### **3 The Gaelic Revival**

As the previous chapters showed, the society longed for change and for creation of its own nation that would be ruled by the Irish themselves. That is one of the reasons why the Gaelic Revival broke out. This movement managed to influence, or at least made an impression on, several people coming from various social classes. Although it is impossible to set the exact date of its birth, the death of Parnell in 1891 is considered to be the beginning of the revival which actively lasted until the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the reality is that it has not finished yet. But, what was this revival based on? The previous nationalists based their ideology on the separation of Ireland from the UK, the fight for the equal rights and dealing with religious questions, whereas this period of the Irish history put stress on wholly new things; language, literature, customs, and traditions. It also needs to be mentioned that the representatives of the Gaelic Revival were not interested in the political situation but they focused more on the revival of the Irish language. But, what exactly makes up the Gaelic Revival and what were its features? This chapter will answer the questions and will describe all the domains which were involved in the revival of Ireland.

#### **3.1 Douglas Hyde (1860-1949)**

It is obvious that even this period was not exceptional and so many other organizations were established dealing with the Irish problems. The one playing a crucial role in the whole development of the revival is the Gaelic League which came into existence in 1893 thanks to its founder Douglas Hyde and his friend Eoin MacNeill, a professor of Irish. For the sake of the fact that Hyde became an important figure, he deserves a little attention in this sub-chapter.

Douglas Hyde was a very important personality in terms of the promotion of the Irish language. He spoke English and Irish and had great knowledge of other European languages as well. In addition, he taught Irish at university. He was strongly against the Gaelic League becoming a political movement, unfortunately for him, his vision failed. Despite his lack of interest in politics, he eventually became the first president of Ireland in 1938.

He was not only a leader of this movement but he also expressed his thoughts in poems, plays, and essays. One of the most significant was “The Necessity for De-anglicising the Irish Nation.” The aim of this essay is not to say that English has a bad

influence on Irish but he attempted to urge the Irish inhabitants to use their native language in every day speech. In reality, no nationalists wanted English to disappear from the country, on the contrary, they wished to keep it but on the condition that Irish would be saved. He was under the impression that people tended to forget their mother tongue and the Celtic history and traditions. However, a worse thing was that they preferred to speak English and to replace all the Irish words and names with the language of their neighbour, for example, “O’s and the Macs dropped; our Irish intonation changed.”<sup>5</sup> He claims that Ireland is “a nation of imitators”<sup>6</sup> and cannot cope with the fact that people were not proud of being Irish; they were rather ashamed of their identity. The fact that people refused to use Irish in everyday speech caused a majority of them not to know how to pronounce Irish names, even those of some significant authors. Hyde also tries to explain that Irish is as rich in vocabulary and literature as English or any other language and highlights that Irish should be taught in schools. On the other hand, George Moore, who opposed Hyde’s ideas, claims that “a language wears out like a coat,”<sup>7</sup> by which he means that even English would not be as strong in the future as it was at that time. He compares this prediction to Latin – a prosperous language which became almost extinct.

From universal use and journalism the English language in fifty years will be as corrupt as the Latin of the eighth century, as unfit for literary usage, and will become in my opinion, a sort of Volapuk, strictly limited to commercial letters and journalism.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, Douglas Hyde was an author of poetry and literary history. In his masterpiece called *Literary History of Ireland from the Earliest Times to the Present Day (1901)* documented a literary history of Ireland from the very beginning that means from the Celtic period until his era. It is certain that he managed to portray the development of the literature; however, he did not forget to include a chapter dedicated to the language itself: “The History of Irish as a Spoken Language.” In this last chapter of the book Hyde describes the decline of Irish and mentions that people were not willing to speak it because it was a language of peasants. He admits that the majority of the inhabitants could not even speak Irish. One of the reasons was that their mother tongue was not taught in schools and almost everybody spoke only English.

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<sup>5</sup> Douglas Hyde, “The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland,” *Conradh na Gaeilge Shasana Nua*. Albert O'Donnell. 29 January 2013. <<http://www.gaeilge.org/deanglicising.html>>.

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Hyde, “The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland.”

<sup>7</sup> Denis Bwynn, *Edward Martyn and the Irish Revival* (Letchworth: The Garden City Press LTD., 1930) 242.

<sup>8</sup> Bwynn, *Edward Martyn* 242.

They never sing an Irish song or repeat an Irish poem the schoolmaster does not; they forget all about their own country that their parents told them the schoolmaster is not allowed to teach Irish history; they translate their names into English probably the schoolmaster has done the same; and what is the use of having an Irish name now that they are not allowed to speak Irish! Worst of all they have not only dropped their Irish Christian names, but they are becoming ashamed of the patron saints of their own people, the names even of Patrick and of Brigit.<sup>9</sup>

### **3.2 The Gaelic League**

As stated above, the Gaelic League was established in 1893 and influenced further development of the Irish nation and mainly its language. Moreover, since the representatives of the movement were also interested in the Irish culture they created a new bank holiday, Saint Patrick's Day. It may only be thanks to the Gaelic League that Saint Patrick's Day is still celebrated in Ireland. Thus, the 17<sup>th</sup> of March remained a significant day full of festivities and traditions, which has been spreading all over the world.

As has been already mentioned, Hyde was not excited about politics at all and that is why the Gaelic League was rather a cultural movement with one simple aim: to revive the Irish language, literature, and culture. One of the reasons why the Gaelic League became popular with inhabitants was that they did not try to educate people in a "violent" way as one could imagine. On the contrary, the League educated people and increased their knowledge in the Irish language and its culture but in an interesting and amusing way by organizing competitions, meetings, performances or by establishing theatres, clubs and other institutions. Thus, while people were having a good time, they did not often realize that they were simultaneously learning something, so every effort made by the revival was meaningful and fulfilled the expectations. The other reason why the League met with success was that the revival included a wide variety of activities and everybody could find the right one for himself. It ranged from literature to language, music, sports, politics and pure and simply to the whole Irish culture. Hence, nobody could say that the revival was limited. It is clear that the success did not come immediately. It took about ten years until the League was taken seriously and people began to participate more. The objectives of this movement were:

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<sup>9</sup> Douglas Hyde, *A Literary History of Ireland from the Earliest Times to the Present Day (1901)* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901) 635.



1. The preservation of Irish as the national language of Ireland, and the extension of its use as a spoken tongue.
2. The study and publication of existing Gaelic literature, and the cultivation of a modern literature in Irish.<sup>10</sup>

As every movement publishes periodicals, this one was no exception. Its bilingual newspaper of all genres was known as *The Gaelic Journal* and emerged in 1892. But there were many others which appeared during the revival, namely for instance, the *United Irishman* or *An Claidheamh Soluis*.

Another important personality, who contributed immensely to the revival of the Irish language, was a co-founder of the Gaelic League, Eugene O'Growney. He worked as a professor all his life and in 1894 published a book called *Simple Lessons* which was actually an Irish grammar book. The revival of Irish was very important for people because language is an essential element which creates the nation and the country. Of course, there are other features that make every nation unique, for instance, the fact that the inhabitants share the same land or have the same customs and traditions. However, language is a crucial tool for communication, so it plays a very important role. That is why Irish had to be preserved and revived. Irish “was considered to be the national language, while English was seen as a foreign tongue.”<sup>11</sup> The person who provided an overview how to use Irish and ensured that it had a written form was O'Growney. In the preface he affirms, what has been already said, that people do not see the reason why to use their language. Furthermore, they feel embarrassed when speaking it and parents often banned their children from studying Irish. Although there were some anti-Irish people, still a quite large number of inhabitants were interested in the language and wanted to use it correctly. In *Simple Lessons*, O'Growney introduces the Irish alphabet, explains Irish phonetics, grammar rules and supplies many exercises.

The reasons why Irish declined are quite obvious. After the Great Famine the population rapidly decreased from 8 million to 4 million people. Concerning the language itself, “...whereas roughly half the population could speak Irish prior to 1845, only about 14 percent could in 1901. Worse still, only one-half of 1 percent of the population claimed

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<sup>10</sup> “The 1916 Rising: Personalities & Perspectives,” 13 February 2013.  
< <http://www.nli.ie/1916/pdf/3.4.2.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> P. J. Mathews, *The Abbey Theatre, Sinn Féin, the Gaelic League and the Co-operative Movement* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, in association with Field Day, 2003) 25.

to be monolingual Irish-speakers.”<sup>12</sup> Moreover, a great deal of people emigrated in order to find a job in foreign countries.

The changes which have been described above did not only refer to the development of the language and culture. In times of crisis it is important to improve living standards and to ensure a sufficiency of financial means for people. The Irish realized quite quickly that the only way to overcome the difficult situation was to strike out on their own. Ireland has always been an agricultural country rather than an industrious one. It follows that Irishmen started businesses in fields such as fishing, farming, or textiles. They desired not to be dependent solely on imports, so they worked hard on “the creating an Irish national trademark”<sup>13</sup> and on “supporting their home products by purchasing all they possibly could of Irish manufacture.”<sup>14</sup> Manufacturing their own goods resulted in the increase of employment in the country, but on the other hand, not all the areas met with success.

### 3.3 People

There are no statistics about the number of people involved in the revival but it is certain that it exceeded 50 000 members. The most populous group was, of course, the middle-class, but various people were connected with this movement ranging from peasants and shop assistants to scholars and clergy. However, leading figures were usually well-educated people who had a high social status.

At the turn of the century women were not still treated equally, even though they had the right to vote, they were often separated from men at meetings. Not surprisingly, the number of women involved in the revival was low and that is why the Gaelic Revival can be considered as “a male movement.” Nevertheless, some women contributed immensely to the whole revival either literarily or politically, namely Lady Augusta Gregory or Jennie Wyse Power. The movement also promoted women’s rights and brought Irish into being taught at schools, which was great progress. In 1901 they even managed to establish their own movement called *Inghinidhe na hÉireann* (Daughters of Ireland) whose leader was a nationalist Maud Gonne MacBrid. As might be obvious, it was a feminist organization (participants were only women), so they promoted mainly women’s rights. They became very active not only as feminists but they supported the aims of the Gaelic League as well.

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<sup>12</sup> Timothy G. McMahon, *Grand Opportunity: The Gaelic Revival and Irish Society, 1893-1910* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008) 148.

<sup>13</sup> McMahon, *Grand Opportunity* 148.

<sup>14</sup> McMahon, *Grand Opportunity* 150.

They were writers, poets and journalists promoting Irish independence, they were teachers whose mission was to teach Irish and spread this language among as many people as possible, especially among children, and they were politicians, too. They travelled around the country to give lectures and to get some money. In addition, they were lovers of culture and literature, so they collaborated a lot with Irish writers and backed the Irish Literary Theatre. They showed ostentatiously their scorn for English. They criticized all works written in English, from poems to pamphlets and essays, even all the way up to plays. Women began to realize that as Ireland tried to achieve independence, they had the potential to be independent as well. Thus, as *Inghinidhe na hÉireann* many other women's movements were founded, namely *Cumann na mban* in 1913 or Irish Women's Franchise League in 1908. As with each movement, these ones also founded newspapers and magazines, which were in regular circulation, for instance *Bean na hEireann* (The Woman of Ireland). These women usually supported an Irish political party Sinn Féin.

The whole concept of the Gaelic Revival was to not prevent anybody from participating. Everybody could become involved, that is lower class, upper class, the poor, the rich and also all religions. It follows that everybody could subsequently contribute to its development. However, regarding religious groups, in most cases Protestants did not support the Gaelic League because they claimed that it was a political organization and had different interests than merely cultural and national ones. Despite this fact, they participated at least in some movements and organizations, if not in the League itself. On the contrary, Catholics got involved more actively, and despite some disputes with the Gaelic League, they supported the revival.

In conclusion, it was important for the Gaelic League to involve as many people as possible so the majority of centres which were somehow connected with the revival were situated in cities rather than in the country.

### **3.4 The Irish Literary Revival**

Edward Martyn was another nationalist, especially a literary and artistic person, who contributed a lot to the development of the Irish language not only literally but also financially. He was one of the co-founders of the Irish Theatre (later the Abbey Theatre) and was also involved in the rediscovery of Irish music and folk traditions. He claimed that

“everybody can contribute; some by learning the language, some with sums of money, some by having their children taught their language.”<sup>15</sup>

The beginning of the revival of Irish literature can be dated to the period of Young Ireland. In the 40’s the newspaper *The Nation* was established in which the authors expressed their attitude towards their native country and the situation at that time. It was typical for this period to publish mostly political and nationalistic pamphlets, poems, and essays.

Authors involved in the literary revival were usually collectors of folk traditions, Irish legends, music, ballads, or poems. Their main goal was to attract audiences of “common” people, therefore a new kind of play was introduced, i.e. a peasant play. Perhaps, owing to the fact that these plays depicted their real life and included Irish topics succeeded immensely. Consequently, a play became a major genre. The majority of them were performed in English, but still there were some in Irish, too. Playwrights were often inspired by a Norwegian writer Henrik Ibsen and by other European literature. It follows that also plays written by foreign writers were performed in theatres.

Edward Marty was a close friend of W. B. Yeats and George Moore. They all joined forces and established the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899. It was opened with Yeats’s *Countess Cathleen*, which achieved a great deal of success. They had an excellent idea to found an Irish theatre where Irish plays would be performed. Of course, the beginning was hard due to a lack of professional actors and finances. However, they eventually found the way to pay expenses. As for the actors, they usually came from “the street,” in most cases they were amateurs with little or no experience. Most of the plays were set in Ireland. Besides *Countess Cathleen*, other plays were performed in the Abbey Theatre, such as *The Heather Field* or *Maeve* by E. Martyn, *The All Alone* by H. B. O’Hanlon, or other playwrights participated like Eimar O’Duffy, Thomas MacDonagh, his brother John and many others. Actors could not be considered as professionals for a variety of reasons. They were usually average people who devoted their free time to acting after their work. One can imagine that this hobby was time-consuming and they could not be well prepared for the performance, which was too visible on the stage. Actors did not remember the script, were nervous because they were not used to acting in front of so many people and when playing in Irish, it usually resulted in a disaster because of their poor knowledge of the language.

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<sup>15</sup> McMahan, *Grand Opportunity* 243.

There were two points of view on Irish literature, which divided writers in two opposed groups. One claimed that Irish literature would be real if all articles, books, plays, poems, and others were written in Irish. Whereas the other group advocated that the texts written in English by Irish writers have to be considered national because it is impossible to separate them in one go when both nations lived together for such a long time. It was suggested that dividing English literature from Irish literature is not a good step. On the contrary, they should rather cooperate, work together, and learn one from another and focus on the creation of new genres and introduce new topics. If they followed this simple rule they would make excellent literature. Similarly, Yeats claimed that even literature written in English can be considered as Irish. According to him, a good work is a work composed in a mother tongue. If an author writes in a language which he does not know properly he can never succeed.

Another problem was with the Irish language itself. Either actors performing plays in Irish failed because their speech was not fluent and they made a lot of mistakes, or actors were successful and the problem was on the side of the audience because they did not understand a word. It was very difficult to deal with this issue and it was almost impossible to find a suitable audience. If one went to the theatre to see a play in Irish that was not well performed, he clearly would not intend to go there again. As a consequence, the only way to improve the situation was to gather talented people or students studying acting and create a class which would get together regularly and practise lines and behaviour on the stage to make the Irish theatre more professional. Plays were not performed only in theatres. It was important to appeal as many people as possible and that is why they used various festivals, namely the Oireachtas, where visitors could see some Irish plays.

Concerning the writers themselves, they were not skilled enough to write a good play.

We have no suitable, stageable plays, and the plays we do have lack polish and theatrical expertise because our playwrights do not have a precise knowledge of stagecraft, something very important for the writing of plays. That is why most of our 'plays' are stories and not plays.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Philip O'Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881-1921* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994) 313.

Nonetheless, of course, there was also a positive criticism. The works which were considered well written were made especially by W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, by Lady Gregory *The Rising of the Moon*, and by J. M. Synge *Riders to the Sea*. But again, these were written and performed in English, which did not benefit the revival of the Irish language (according to some reviewers). “Our only regret about Britain’s books is that they are not in Irish.”<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, the Abbey was not understood as Irish theatre by many revivalists asking how it could be Irish theatre when no Irish could be heard inside. At least a few translations of foreign authors were made and subsequently performed on the stage. It was better than nothing, as the Irish writers would say. It follows that they drew inspiration from the English literature, and thus, works written in English by Irish writers began to emerge. “In 1901 the first play to win an Oireachtas prize was *Suípéar Dhiarmada Mac Pháidín*, not a translation, but rather an adaptation by Máire Ní Shíthe of MacManus’s story “Jerry MacFadyeen’s Supper.”<sup>18</sup> Many people were disappointed with the literary situation and regretted that Irish literature was not as the same level as English one: “It is a great pity that we have no one at all able to compose stories in Irish as he (Seamus MacManus) is able to do in English.”<sup>19</sup>

However, one of the best translations made was Yeats’s play *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*. In addition, this play was considered the most successful, admired and very well written work for the Gaelic League.

As has been already stated, there were many authors who supported the development of Irish literature. However, according to the critics, some of them deserve more attention than others, for example: W. B. Yeats, J. M. Synge, E. Martyn, Lady Gregory, P. Colum, George Moore, and G. B. Shaw, too. Even though they were criticized for not writing in Irish, their works were either set in Ireland, or they depicted life there or they simply covered Irish topics. Some authors who did not live in Ireland, who, for example immigrated to the USA, also supported the Irish Revival by contributing articles, essays or other kinds of writing to newspapers (*An Claidheamh Soluis*). It follows that the revival did not concern only people living in this country.

The literary revivalists seemed to be dissatisfied with the development of the literary situation. There were many complaints either about writers, their works or about

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<sup>17</sup> Philip O’Leary, *The Prose Literature* 350.

<sup>18</sup> Philip O’Leary, *The Prose Literature* 324.

<sup>19</sup> Philip O’Leary, *The Prose Literature* 349.

the audience and readers. Here is another quote which proves this fact: “It is a great pity that this book [The Land in An Claidheamh Soluis by P. Colum] was written in English, for it has nothing to do with English or the Galtacht; it is Gaelic from start to finish.”<sup>20</sup>

Although Yeats was criticized too, on the other hand, he was also admired. The following praise written about him by Pearse does not need any other comment.

The most beautiful piece of prose (Cathleen Ni Houlihan) that has been produced by an Irishman in our day. We may not all agree with his theories on art and literature, but we cannot forget that he has spent his life in an endeavour to free our ideas from the trammels of foreign thought, or that it was through his writings that many of us made our first acquaintance with our early traditions and literature. He has never ceased to work for Ireland.<sup>21</sup>

When somebody says Ireland, the first thing that often comes to people’s mind is Celticism. The Celtic myth, folklore, traditions and all Celtic history is what makes Ireland and represents its identity and typical features of this country. Therefore, writers like Yeats did not produce only new and modern works which would appeal people. He found important to draw inspiration from the ancient literature, which characterizes this nation. He, as well as other revivalists, collected folklore and ancient legends, and as a result, he tried to weave them together and make a wholly new form.

In conclusion, the national revival could succeed: firstly, if the authors produced interesting and attractive works for people, and secondly, if the people were familiar with their performances beforehand. In this case, it was Yeats who provided all the information about new releases and ensured that people were informed as soon as possible. He also increased the popularity of plays, which had been considered as a poor genre. The very last remark which will conclude this chapter will be about the opera because the revival was not aimed only at literature but also at other genres. “And it must be remembered to its high credit that the Gaelic League was the first to produce an original opera by an Irishman in the Irish language.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Philip O’Leary, *The Prose Literature* 350-351.

<sup>21</sup> Philip O’Leary, *The Prose Literature* 333.

<sup>22</sup> Bwynn, *Edward Martyn* 277.

### 3.5 Schools

Education was another issue, which still needed improvement. Many scholars had a tendency to found schools or at least classes in which participants would gain a range of knowledge concerning Irish culture and mainly its language. They were established, obviously, in big cities but as well in small communities where this kind of education became very popular. The whole concept was not aimed only at education itself but it was also accompanied by after-school activities, such as competitions, concerts and other sorts of entertainment which deepened the participants' knowledge in this domain. There is an English saying: "If Mohammed doesn't go to the mountain then the mountain must go to Mohammed," which can be directly applied to this issue. Even though many schools were established and teaching Irish became more and more noticeable across the whole country, teachers still had to commute long distances to their students to give them lessons. The problem was that teachers did not have enough experience with the language and even if they were good speakers the number of them was not sufficient to meet the demand. Consequently, the Gaelic League insisted that teachers be educated and taught Irish to be able to pass all the necessary and mainly correct information on to their students. The situation demanded the training for them because it was not surprising that teachers were often only one unit ahead than their students. As a result, "30 per cent of students took the Irish exam,"<sup>23</sup> which was great progress. It should be highlighted that not only children went to school, even adults started to attend courses where they could study Irish.

Besides festivals which took place immensely (see chapter "Festivals"), Gaelic Leaguers organized some processions as well. Their organizers made the first step in introducing Irish as an obligatory subject. There was the need "to push for Irish to become an essential subject in the National University."<sup>24</sup> They finally succeeded and managed "the incorporation of Irish in the elementary and intermediate school curricula."<sup>25</sup> The Leaders established schools for teachers as well in which they had an opportunity to learn Irish properly. Unfortunately, less than 50% of them took advantage of this opportunity.

The highest priority to study Irish was put on a young generation because it is easier for children to start learning a new language than for adults. Of course, we can also find adults among students but this group was not so numerous. The other problem was with the emigration of the original inhabitants. Revivalists feared that if emigration had

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<sup>23</sup> P. J. Mathews, *The Abbey Theatre* 41.

<sup>24</sup> McMahan, *Grand Opportunity* 194.

<sup>25</sup> McMahan, *Grand Opportunity* 213.



been increasing their efforts would prove to be useless. For this reason they asked themselves if it was possible to revive a culture without its representatives.

One of the most important institutions established during the revival was the National University of Ireland founded in 1908. The biggest attention was paid to Irish as a subject at schools, however, this new goal met with two opposing sides. On one hand, some revivalists fought for Irish to become a compulsory subject because they thought that it was important to know the language of the state in which they lived. Then, if scholars had to study Irish, it would ensure that the language would not die out, so the language and its culture would be preserved. “The for-Irish” wished to bring their language into all levels of education system and faced harsh criticism for this position. On the other hand, “the anti-Irish” could not imagine Irish as an obligatory language, not even as an optional one. Namely, Robert Atkinson and John Mahaffy despised this language and opposed Douglas Hyde. The main argument between them was about if Irish should be educated or not. These two professors claimed that Irish and Irish literature does not deserve any attention. According to Mahaffy, Irish literature is “silly and indecent.”<sup>26</sup> Moreover, they “chose to categorize Irish as a patois rather than a language”<sup>27</sup> and pronounced that Irish did not have “perfectly definite spelling, definite declensions, definite form, a definite syntax”<sup>28</sup> like, for example, Greek. Briefly, they did not see any reason why there should be put some emphasis on its revival, and, from their point of view, they found it useless and pointless. Another criticism on Irish was made with regards to its written form. In comparison with English, which has a long written tradition (written history, novels, poems, articles in newspapers, and other documents...), Irish lacked it. That is why, Douglas Hyde focused on printing “anything” written in this dying language.

### **3.6 Festivals**

One effective method for attracting people’s attention is certainly through organizing public events, and Ireland was obsessed with this novelty. Festivals of various themes took place, such as musical, dance, literary, and theatrical, namely for example the Feis Ceoil, the Oireachtas, the Glens, the Wexford festival, or Feis na n-Deisi. Not surprisingly, the centre of entertainment was Dublin as well as Belfast and other big cities. Among many of them, the Feis Ceoil is considered to be one of the greatest music

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<sup>26</sup> P. J. Mathews, *The Abbey Theatre* 37.

<sup>27</sup> P. J. Mathews, *The Abbey Theatre* 38.

<sup>28</sup> P. J. Mathews, *The Abbey Theatre* 38.

festivals, which was introduced in 1896 for the first time whose seat became the capital of Ireland. The founders wanted to raise public awareness of Irish music and get people involved in its development and continuation. The Feis Ceoil consisted, and still does these days, of organizing competitions, performances, and various concerts. During more than 100 years of its existence this annual festival has gained great popularity and from one year to another the number of participants has been gradually increasing. Almost every great musician who won a reputation was present at this festival, including for instance James Joyce. Organizers added some accompanying programmes as well, such as reciting poetry in Irish and singing Irish songs. These small performances were usually made by schoolchildren to prove their knowledge in the Irish language. All the efforts in this domain led to the spreading of the Irish culture among people but while some thought that such festivals became popular and successful, others felt that they had lost their aim. There was a great deal of emphasis put on Irish culture but almost no attention was dedicated to the Irish language itself. The interesting point is that the competitions and festivals were not only targeted at the Irish. It was important to spread Irish culture among as many people as possible, which means among the Irish speaking Irish, among the Irish not speaking Irish and also among the British and other nationalities. Besides music competitions, revivalists also organized other kinds of competitions in which children as well as adults proved if they could use Irish properly and correctly. Competitions also covered topics from history, geography and contestants could come across the questions asking about current events, so it was not only about exact dates from history. “Occasionally, as at the Galway feis in 1906, there were also events in which competitors translated a short story from English into Irish, composed a song or poem in Irish, or wrote a one-act play in Irish.”<sup>29</sup> If someone wanted to participate in a competition he had to sometimes go through an examination. “When adults opted to compete only in a musical or dancing event, many committees required that they display some elementary knowledge of Gaelic prior to competing.”<sup>30</sup> Regarding the turnout of contestants, it is obvious that men were usually determined to participate but women were not behind at all. “Women became more engaged in the movement after being largely absent from its ranks in its earliest days”<sup>31</sup> and over the years the number of female contestants increased rapidly. Another character of competitions was the division of participants. “Feis planners generally divided

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<sup>29</sup> McMahan, *Grand Opportunity* 167.

<sup>30</sup> McMahan, *Grand Opportunity* 167.

<sup>31</sup> McMahan, *Grand Opportunity* 169.

competitions only into junior and adult categories.”<sup>32</sup> The competitions were not focused only on literature and language. The novelty was that a new theme was made up: industrial competition. It consisted of products made by people which were subsequently exhibited. Such competitions became successful immediately from one simple reason: “One reason for the success of festival exhibitions in securing entries was that, unlike musical or dance competitions, industrial exhibitions did not require participants to show any familiarity with Gaelic.”<sup>33</sup>

The influence of the competitions on the further development of the language was significant. People who participated in them did a great deal of work. They wrote essays on various themes regarding not only Ireland itself but also other issues were included. For instance, they examined some Irish authors or famous authorities, usually people who already succeeded in a certain branch which brought them some fame. These people expanded on their thoughts and such writing made them think about various matters. There was significant progress in philosophy because contestants started to pose philosophical questions, which had not been typical before. Participants improved the situation in the literature by writing poetry, short stories or (usually one-act) plays. Due to writing in Irish, they helped to spread this language among the general public. Moreover, they created new works, new literature, and new genres and some new modern topics appeared as well. Everybody could see the opinions of the Irish and the way they saw the world at that time. It is clear that not all the festivals were preserved but a great deal of them carry on the tradition and are run until nowadays.

### **3.7 Sinn Féin**

Sinn Féin (English translation is “Ourselves”) is a still existing political party, which was established in 1905 by politician and nationalist Arthur Griffith. He was a member of the Gaelic League and the Irish Republican Brotherhood who contributed to the journal *The Nation*. This is a Republican Party which is left oriented. Griffith founded a newspaper called *United Irishman* that existed until 1906 and also a magazine with the same title as the political party *Sinn Féin*. The members behaved radically in the way that they were determined to use force if needed. Sinn Féin was a wing of the IRA. It follows that their ideology was based on the idea that Ireland should be separated from Great Britain in order to gain independence. Griffith attempted to solve problems in the same

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<sup>32</sup> McMahan, *Grand Opportunity* 169.

<sup>33</sup> McMahan, *Grand Opportunity* 173.

way as Daniel O'Connell that is by boycott. These were the ideas of the party: "...a withdrawal from Westminster, the establishment of a national assembly in Ireland, refusing to pay British taxes, creating independent Irish courts and an Irish civil service, taking control of local authorities and boycotting British products."<sup>34</sup> Sinn Féin was the only party which collaborated with women and took them seriously. The members participated in creating the Republic of Ireland and some of them were also involved in the IRA (which was later responsible for some terrorist attacks).

### **3.8 The Gaelic Athletic Association**

Up to now the whole Irish Revival may seem to have been a cultural, literary and political revival, but it was not all. Even sportspeople became interested and tried to make up, revive and preserve yet existing Irish games. However, it does not mean that literature was put aside. It may have been noticed that most branches collaborated together and influenced one another. Nevertheless, a person who was responsible for improvements and changes in the sports world was called Michael Cusack. The problem was that typical Irish games, such as football or hurling, were influenced a lot by other nationalities. Some of them were becoming too English and were losing their origin and tradition rooted in Ireland. Thus, Cusack and his collaborators set the rules of Gaelic games to avoid some misunderstanding between Irish and English games. Due to the fact that he was an athlete, and athletics was not very popular at that time, he focused his greatest attention on the revival of this sport. The beginning of the GAA dates back to 1884 when they had the first meeting. They propagated themselves in newspapers to draw people's attention by which they could invite them for some sports events, matches, or games. As literary revivalists established theatres, spread literary works among people and organized meetings to be in contact with people, sports revivalists did a similar thing. They established various clubs in cities which were usually marked by high attendance. The Irish GAA often came into conflict with the English IAAA (Irish Amateur Athletic Association) when they had different point of view of the rules, meetings and competitions.

### **3.9 The Irish Agricultural Organisation Society**

As has been already described, the economic situation in Ireland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was not favourable. The weather was not ideal for growing crops, harvests were poor and,

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<sup>34</sup> Richard Cavendish, "The Foundation of Sinn Féin," *HistoryToday*, volume: 55 Issue: 11 2005, 10. March 2013 <<http://www.historytoday.com/richard-cavendish/foundation-sinn-fein>>.

as if it was not enough, potatoe blights appeared. Consequently, incessant disputes between landlords and tenants together with already mentioned factors resulted in problems with trading, so incomes were not sufficient for farmers and merchants. What is more, people tried to deal with the situation by going on strike and using boycotting tactics. However, when Land Acts were passed, the situation improved noticeably. A Land Court and Irish Land Commissions were established, land was divided among people, farmers were allowed to buy land and to own it and they did not have to pay such unaffordable rents for it. It follows that they were able to set up some small businesses. In addition, in 1894 another organization came into existence and it was the Irish Agricultural Organization Society. It was established by Horace Plunkett and its aim was to improve the conditions for farmers and to teach them how to make a profit. Nonetheless, the IAOS was not aimed only at agriculture but it was interconnected with the Gaelic League, which means with literature and culture as well. These branches, as many others, collaborated together and wanted to make life for people living in the village better and happier. The IAOS supported education so they were responsible for founding libraries in the country and their own journal the *Irish Homestead*, in which a man could find articles from an agricultural world as well as from a literary one.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter was dedicated to the whole Gaelic Revival where all the branches were described and explained. As is obvious from the previous information, the revival of the Irish culture involved perhaps everything ranging from the language, literature, culture, music, sport, and marginally politics. A large number of people became interested in the revival and started to establish various movements, organizations, meetings and leagues to encourage the rebirth of Irish. Many festivals and sports events were founded in that period and have remained in existence until today. It follows that the revival of the Irish culture was successful and that people still care about it. What is more, education was spread among the Irish by establishing schools and various classes where everybody, not only children, could take advantage of learning either Irish or they could attend other courses focused on the Irish culture. Besides education, a literary world also flourished. At that time many successful theatres were established where people liked to go. New plays were introduced (some in Irish, some in English) and the authors from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century became well known and nowadays they rank among the most successful and famous writers not only in the UK but also in the whole world. All these institutions and

organizations extensively helped to revive Irish and ensured that Irish did not become extinct because this language still exists today and people speak it. However, the situation in the political world was not solved yet. People still were not satisfied which will lead to very important changes in the future (see chapter 4).

## **4 Aftermath of the Gaelic Revival**

As has been already described, the social and political situation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was unstable. To sum up, this period is characterized by dissatisfaction of tenants and lower class people, disagreement about religion (between Protestants and Catholics), and last but not least between the British and the Irish. This discord caused repeated attacks and uprisings, which in most cases were not successful.

Regarding the land question, the situation changed and improved at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With passing Wyndham Land (Purchase) Act in 1903 tenants gained more rights and they could also buy land under better circumstances. What is more, it was not only advantageous for tenants but this act ensured equal conditions for landowners as well.

This chapter will provide information about the consequences of the Gaelic Revival at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **4.1 The Easter Rising 1916**

It was a step in the right direction that tenants and landowners reconciled, but it was not enough. The Irish still were not satisfied with the fact that they were under the British rule. They wished to be separated and to be independent. The most discussed issue was the Irish Parliament which they wanted to have in Dublin and not in London. The movement which fought for such a change has been already explained (see chapter 2) and is called Home Rule. But not everybody agreed with having Parliament rule from the capital because some feared that Catholic members would prevail so they started to protest against this proposal. However, the idea of creating their own nation, which would become totally independent from the British rule was still top priority.

It all started in 1800 with the Acts of Union when Ireland was joined to Great Britain and formed the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Since that time many nationalists began to protest against this law and fought for the absolute independence. For example, the Repeal Association founded by Daniel O'Connell in 1840, the Young Irelander Rebellion in 1848, the Fenian Brotherhood, or the Home Rule Movement. All of them had one thing in common, that is to separate Ireland from Great Britain and to set up the Republic of Ireland. In addition, the Gaelic League itself (even though it was not politically involved) promoted everything which was anyhow associated with Ireland over

Britain. It follows from this enumeration that there were good assumptions that Ireland would become an independent republic.

The rebellion planners brought together an army composed of the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Irish Citizen Army. About 3000 Irish people participated (in comparison to the British where the number was considerably higher). It all started on the 24<sup>th</sup> April on Monday and the resurrection ended six days later on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 1916. The rebels declared the Irish Republic. Even though the insurrectionists occupied important places in Dublin, Britain took an indifferent stance in the beginning. Nevertheless, the British eventually started to fight and tried to suppress the rebellion. The British army was successful and managed to bring the uprising to an end partially also due to the fact that the Irish surrendered. However, the consequences were not as the Irish had imagined. Not only that they did not win and Ireland was not proclaimed as a republic but, all in all, nearly 500 people died and a large number of participants were wounded, put in prison or executed. Some names, who led the rebellion, should be mentioned; for example, Patrick Pearse, Joseph Mary Plunkett and Thomas MacDonagh. Although the nationalists did not succeed this time, they did a big thing. The Easter Rising became a predecessor of the War of Independence which ended as the Irish had desired for such a long time: they managed to establish their Parliament in Dublin but, furthermore, the Republic of Ireland was created and the Irish eventually became independent from Great Britain. However, the island was not able to remain as one state, so it was divided into two parts. The north became a part of Great Britain (the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and the south became a republic. The state has remained divided all the way up to the present day.

## **4.2 The Gaelic League in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

It should be also pointed out that the Gaelic League as the main movement of the Gaelic Revival was not self—sufficient at all. It was dependent on other branches such as the Gaelic Athletic Association or the Irish Literary Movement firstly financially (because the Gaelic League lacked money), secondly “mentally” because if these three organizations had not collaborated, they would have probably come to an end. There were several ways how the revivalists gained money; either from performances in theatres, from festivals, competitions, matches, or from charity and collections. It was not unusual for the people involved in the revival to beg in the streets.



As has been already said, the Gaelic League was a movement which was strictly against being a political organization. Even though Douglas Hyde and Eoin MacNeill made many efforts to prevent this, they failed. Many members got interested in politics, so in the 1920's the Gaelic League changed its vision to be neutral and eventually became active in the political world. The members, such as Eoin MacNeill, who became a commander of the Irish Volunteers, wanted the League to collaborate with political parties; or Patrick Pearse, who was also involved in Easter Rising. Pearse stopped co-operating with the Gaelic League and decided to leave it. "He blamed the Gaelic League for having failed in uniting Ireland by peaceful means..."<sup>35</sup> on the contrary, "Pearse was convinced that Irish independence could only be achieved by means of violence."<sup>36</sup>

As follows from Pearse's citation, the Irish longed for independence. It was the only thing they were interested in, so the Gaelic League stood aside. Thus, the Gaelic League had two options; either to remain politically passive which might possibly lead to the end of the movement, or to adapt and listen to the demands of the people. So the Gaelic League joined forces with Sinn Féin, which fought for the independence for Ireland. This situation caused Douglas Hyde to decide to resign from his presidency of the Gaelic League whose successor became Eoin MacNeill. However, after Hyde abandoned the League, it started to lose its popularity which proves that he was a skilled leading figure who understood his work.

It would be difficult to decide whether in essentials Hyde's lifework has met with success or with failure. Irish is now indeed in evidence everywhere in Ireland: on public signboards; in printed parliamentary reports; in schools; in windows of book shops; in newspapers and periodicals. Hyde must not be blamed for the fact that Irish did not become the general language of the Irish people. The decision to speak Irish instead of English had always been a personal decision and was entirely up to every individual.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, after the failure of the Easter Rising the popularity of the Gaelic League began to decrease because of a loss its leading members. It was no longer as popular and influential as it had been before. They stopped organizing meetings and it looked as if it was going to end. Fortunately, in 1918 the situation improved for a while

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<sup>35</sup> Georg Grote, *Torn Between Politics and Culture: the Gaelic League, 1893-1993* (Münster: Waxmann, 1994) 115.

<sup>36</sup> Georg Grote, *Torn Between Politics* 115.

<sup>37</sup> Georg Grote, *Torn Between Politics* 120.

and it grew a little bit in popularity. However, a suitable and competent leader never appeared. Because of the fact that the Gaelic League was in decline, there were many efforts to “keep the movement alive,” but it was already so politically oriented that it could not collaborate with other cultural organizations. The Gaelic League was not saved, but on the other hand, other organizations and movements drew inspiration from Hyde’s work and tried to continue in preserving the Irish language and culture. Concerning the language itself, they did not manage to achieve what they had wished. By the end of the century Ireland became very attractive for tourists and this fact did not help the development of Irish at all, because people had to adapt, so they started to use English more. It resulted in the establishment of billboards and signs written in English because they had to meet the demand to earn a living wage.

Thus, what were the consequences of the Gaelic Revival on the further development of Ireland in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? It is not easy to answer this question because there are, as usual, two opposing sides. One claims that this movement was meaningful and managed to revive the Irish culture, the other thinks the opposite and finds it useless and not as successful as it was predicted. Whether it was successful or not, the critics have to admit that all the branches connected to the Gaelic Revival did amazing work. They were able to get over the unfavourable political and social situation at that time and start something which was absolutely original, unparalleled and exceptional. It was for the first time, to such a large extent, that somebody noticed the decline of the Irish language and started to solve the Irish problems. What is more, the things that they did are unforgettable and each Irishman should appreciate them. The revivalists made every effort to improve the situation in the decline of Irish because people stopped speaking their language, stopped using it orally as well as in a written form and, furthermore, they started to forget it. Only a few people could speak Irish properly without mistakes, but these were mainly rural inhabitants. It follows that the timing was appropriate to improve this situation. To manage to revive the language it was important that people would start using it. Thus, a large number of institutions were set up where people had a chance to speak or at least hear Irish at schools (or some classrooms), theatres, sports centres or some festivals and competitions of various themes. The whole concept of reviving Ireland cost not only a lot of money but also a lot of efforts were made to preserve the national “treasure.” The most noticeable event which is typically Irish and was established during the revival is Saint Patrick’s Day. It is not celebrated only in Ireland (also in the USA) but this holiday has been spreading around the whole world, so on the 17<sup>th</sup> March the colour, which prevails on

this day in most cities, is green. People began to realize that not only British and American festivals influence the traditions of other nations but also such a small country as Ireland has a festival, which has been becoming world-known.

Although the leaders of the revival managed to spread Irish across the country and teach the inhabitants some of it, Irish has never been spoken fluently in everyday speech by everybody. After the establishment of the Irish Free State, Irish became an official language but there are still more speakers of English than of Irish. However, the positive thing is that “a greater percentage of the people of Ireland now declare themselves to have a knowledge of Irish than at any time since the foundation of the Gaelic League. The language itself is being generally accepted now as a normal part of the social fabric.”<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, “scarcely a home in Ireland has not, at this stage, accepted the reality of Irish at school, on radio and television.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Georg Grote, *Torn Between Politics* 134.

<sup>39</sup> Georg Grote, *Torn Between Politics* 134.

## 5 Conclusion

The aim of this bachelor's thesis was to describe one period in the history of Ireland, which might have changed the attitude of the Irish towards their country and it was the Gaelic Revival.

The question why the Gaelic Revival was needed is easy to answer. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a very tough period with which many people did not manage to cope. On one hand social problems, on the other hand political ones. The Irish suffered from hunger which caused the deaths of about half of the population, which is an extreme number. They lived in horrible conditions with no food to eat and, moreover, nobody came to help them. Some left the country to survive and that is why there are big communities of Irish immigrants around the world nowadays. Regarding the political situation, there were discussed mainly the following two themes: how to be separated from the union with Great Britain (the Act was passed in 1800) and how to solve the dissensions between landowners and tenants. The first problem was that the nationalists wanted Ireland to become an independent state, separated from the British. They wished to have their own parliament in Dublin and to rule themselves. They did not want to submit to their neighbour any more. The second issue concerned the country itself which dealt with unequal rights of tenants. The landowners took advantage of their situation and made demands on tenants that they were not able to fulfill. Fortunately, after passing bills trying to solve this situation, both sides finally agreed on the requirements and began to get along a little bit better with each other. The nationalists also fulfilled their dreams. Ireland was finally separated from Great Britain and in 1922 became the Irish Free State (in 1949 Ireland was declared a republic). In fact, nothing went smoothly so the 19<sup>th</sup> century is significant for its uprisings and protests, which appeared to a great extent.

It may seem that troubles in politics and culture were quite distant one from another, but it was not true. People involved in the cultural revival were also interested in politics and vice versa, so it is impossible to perceive them separately. They collaborated with each other, even though not everybody found it appealing.

The Gaelic Revival was an attempt to restore the Irish identity which wanted to make people at least think about the situation at that time. People tended to speak English instead of Irish, started to acquire British traditions instead of keeping their own ones and as each country in the world develops and progresses somehow, Ireland began

to stagnate, or even worse, to decline. And that was the moment when the Irish started to revive everything connected to Ireland. It was important for the people to realize the position in which Ireland was at that time and that it had to be improved, if not their language would have become extinct; but not only their language but also their traditions and customs. Briefly, the main goal of the Gaelic Revival was to return the Irish their identity and dignity.

It is obvious that the greatest emphasis was put on the language itself. It was important first to teach or reteach the inhabitants the language they forgot and after that they could focus on other subjects. Although Irish has always been subordinate to English, the circumstances changed when the Irish Free State was established. Since 1922 Irish has been an official language (as well as English), and so laws and documents were written in Irish. It was also taught at schools so there has been an increase in the numbers of people speaking Irish. What is more, they started to use it correctly.

As stated above, the revivalists focused mainly on Irish. They collected money to be able to establish schools throughout the whole country. They did not concentrate only on large cities but also on villages because, in fact, people could speak good Irish there. Thus, teachers were sent to schools to lecture on Irish and on Irish culture as well. It follows that also history, geography and traditions were taught. Their aim was not to pass on exact dates to the students; on the contrary, the teachers provided them with an overview of important historical events, explained them what the Irish culture includes and reminded them of typical Irish features. The fact that adults got to like such courses meant that it was worth holding them. In reality, the revival did not cover only schools and courses, but for the reason that the language had to be used naturally, many theatres and other institutions were founded. When people came to see a play in Irish, they saw that the language could be used in a practical way (even though the plays were not well performed in the beginning). The same worked for festivals and competitions. Studying Irish at school could be perceived as a forced form for some people. However, going to a festival or participating in a competition was viewed as fun, so these free-time activities became immediately popular. What is more, when attending them people did not realize at all that while listening to music or poetry they were learning some Irish, too. It was a kind of entertainment for them, but for the revivalists it meant much more; the spreading of the Irish culture among people.

Throughout the whole revival many movements were set up, among which the most important and influential was the Gaelic League. It came into existence in 1893 and its founder and leader was Douglas Hyde. The League played the most important role and became a centre of the Gaelic Revival. However, there was one problem which influenced its further progress. Hyde did everything in his power in order to ensure that it would not become a political organization. He wanted it to be only a cultural movement and did not want to interfere in politics. Unfortunately, its members did not follow Hyde's wish and eventually the Gaelic League began collaborating with politicians. This fact outraged its leader and that is why Douglas Hyde decided to leave. Since that time, his movement began to decline and never again attained the popularity which it had before enjoyed.

The Gaelic League dealt mostly with the issues concerning Irish, besides, other movements were established. To name some, for example the Irish Literary Movement or the Gaelic Athletic Association (the GAA) or the Irish Agricultural Organization Society. Thus, the language was spread among people by writing articles, pamphlets, in a small extent some books as well, but plays were the most essential. During the revival, names like W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory or Edward Marty appeared which are nowadays considered as one of the greatest writers. They and many others contributed with their works to the promotion of Irish literature and ranked among the world reputable artists.

As has been already mentioned, the revival did not concentrate only on the Irish language and culture but also on the promotion of traditions, music and sports. And that is why the leaders of the GAA set the rules in some sports and held matches and competitions and founded sports clubs throughout the whole country. They put emphasis on their own national sports such as football, hurling or handball.

To conclude, we can say that Ireland was a country without a language or culture, in the other words it was an "empty and bland" state which had forgotten about its "Irishness" and lost its identity. However, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ireland realized that all it had lost should be returned and restored. As a result, the Gaelic Revival emerged and a movement was launched. We can agree that everybody who was involved in this movement did a lot of work which panned out. Despite the fact that the Irish language is not used as much as English, they still managed to make people speak it. It follows that it was (and still is) spoken more than in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which is a great success. The most positive thing is that the festivals and competitions, which were held at that time, were not forgotten and continue to be held right up until the

present day. Furthermore, they became very reputable and people participate in them in great numbers. Thus, we should be grateful to the revivalists for their efforts and we may realize that preserving culture of any country is very important because it incorporates us into a certain society and creates our identity. A national and cultural identity has been returned to the Irish and now it is up to them if they will be able to keep it. I hope they will continue reviving their culture and that Irish will “beat” English some day.

## 6 Résumé

Cílem mé bakalářské práce bylo charakterizovat národní obrození v Irsku, jehož proces započal na konci 19. století a pokračuje dodnes.

Devatenácté století bylo pro Irsko velmi těžkým obdobím. Země musela čelit mnoha problémům, které způsobily její nestabilitu. Jednak to byly politické neshody, jednak Irsko postihl hladomor, který neměl ve světě obdoby. Byl způsoben plísni objevující se na bramborách, a to znamenalo katastrofu, protože lidé pěstovali převážně tuto nenáročnou plodinu, která jim zajišťovala příjem a potravu. Ale nyní byly brambory napadeny plísni, a proto Irové přišli o svůj hlavní zdroj obživy. Začali umírat hladu a ti nejodolnější a nejodvážnější se rozhodli zemi opustit. Velký hladomor způsobil úbytek obyvatel Irska na polovinu; z 8 miliónů zbyly pouze 4, v důsledku úmrtí a emigrace. Hladomor je dodnes považován za největší tragédii, která Irsko v historii postihla.

Zatímco se Irsko snažilo vzpamatovat z jeho následků, narůstaly neshody mezi vlastníky půdy a jejich uživateli. Nájemci museli odvádět stále větší poplatky, které pro ně byly neúnosné, a tak se postupně zadlužovali. Naštěstí byl v roce 1903 přijat zákon, který umožňoval nájemcům koupit pronajaté půdy, což vedlo ke zlepšení situace.

Dalším problémem se stala snaha Irů získat pro svou zemi nezávislost na Velké Británii. Nepřáli si být neustále pod nadvládou svých sousedů, chtěli spravovat sami záležitosti ve své zemi, mít parlament v hlavním městě a hlavně vládnout sami sobě. Tato touha se jim nakonec vyplnila v roce 1922, kdy vznikl Irský svobodný stát.

Přesto toto období nebylo pro Irsko šťastné. Ve velké míře docházelo k různým vzpourám a povstáním kvůli nespokojenosti obyvatelstva. Velká Británie značně zasahovala do dění v zemi, s čímž se Irsko nedokázalo smířit. Nejenže bylo ovlivňováno politicky a jejich práva tak byla potlačována, pro Iry byla v důsledku horší ztráta identity a jedinečnosti. Lidé přestávali používat rodný jazyk a ve velké míře upřednostňovali angličtinu. Tradice se přestávaly dodržovat a Irové si postupně osvojovali zvyky svých sousedů. Například co se týká sportu, už si neuvědomovali, že nehrají podle svých původních pravidel, ale podle pravidel britských. A k těmto proměnám docházelo i v jiných oblastech života společnosti. Irsko se postupně proměňovalo na VB, čehož si nacionalisté začali všimnout a podnítily proces „odangličťování“ a vznik hnutí the Gaelic Revival (Irské národní obrození).



Obrozením prošel nejen jazyk, ale i literatura, sport, kultura a tradice. Avšak největší důraz byl kladen na obrodu irštiny. Protože počet lidí mluvících tímto jazykem rychle klesal, bylo zapotřebí ho oživit a navrátit k běžnému užívání. A proto se Douglas Hyde, zakladatel the Gaelic League (Gaelské Ligy, centrální organizace Irského národního obrození), rozhodl, že založí školy a třídy, ve kterých by se mohla irština vyučovat, v celé zemi. Nicméně výuka neprobíhala dnešní formou. Obrozenci se snažili oslovit co největší počet lidí, dětí a rovněž dospělých, proto byly hodiny vedeny zábavnou a nenásilnou formou, díky níž se účastníci naučili nejen jazyk, ale také se dozvěděli mnoho informací týkajících se irské kultury nebo historie. Cílem bylo vést výuku zábavným způsobem a šířit ji po celé zemi. Ale irština se nevyučovala pouze ve školách, protože Hyde přišel na způsob, jak lidi pobavit a také je něčemu naučit. Proto pořádal festivaly a soutěže, které byly tematicky různorodé, a kterých se mohl zúčastnit kdokoliv. Během hudebních vystoupení nebo soutěží v přednesu básní měli návštěvníci možnost neustále vnímat irský jazyk a mnohdy si ani neuvědomovali, že takto získávají vědomosti. Nezpochybnitelným faktem je také to, že většina těchto volnočasových aktivit je pořádána i dnes a je velmi oblíbená mezi Iry, ale i mezi cizinci, kteří každoročně přijíždějí, aby se mohli kochat irskou hudbou.

Všechny zmíněné aktivity napomáhaly obrození irského jazyka, ale nebyl to jediný způsob, jak v této oblasti dosáhnout úspěchu. Protože Irové mají rádi kulturu, začala se zakládat divadla a psát divadelní hry. I přesto, že většina her byla napsána v angličtině (protože lidé irštinu moc neovládali), autoři se mohli chlubit úspěchy. Začátky nebyly jednoduché, jak by se snad mohlo na první pohled zdát. Když dramatikové, dnes světově proslulí, William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory nebo Edward Martyn napsali novou divadelní hru, chyběli herci, kteří by měli zkušenosti a uměli hrát. Většina z nich byli dobrovolníci a tomu odpovídaly jejich výkony. Lidé proto odcházeli z divadla zklamání. Avšak později se the Abbey Theatre, se sídlem v Dublinu, vypracovalo a proslavilo natolik, že dnes patří mezi nejvýznamnější divadelní scény.

Jak už bylo zmíněno, the Gaelic League se stala nejdůležitější organizací Irského národního obrození. Podporovala jakoukoliv změnu, která by pomohla pozdvihnout irskou kulturu, bohužel se celou dobu potýkala s finanční tísň. Její členové proto vybírali peníze na akcích, které Liga pořádala, nebo na ulici, také vznikaly dobrovolné sbírky. Poměry nebyly příznivé, ale dokázali je zvládnout. Aby bylo obrození jazyka a kultury úspěšnější, většina hnutí a organizací spolupracovala. Situace se změnila k horšímu ve dvacátých letech 20. století, kdy se Liga postupně stávala politickou

organizací. Douglas Hyde byl striktně proti tomu, přál si, aby to byla organizace kulturní. Bohužel dalšímu vývoji nemohl zabránit. Liga začala spolupracovat s politiky a to přimělo jejího vůdce Ligu opustit. Ta postupně zaznamenala úpadek a nikdy už nedosáhla takového rozkvětu jako za působení Douglase Hyda.

Závěrem bych chtěla říci, že i když irští patrioti nedokázali zcela naplnit cíle, které si stanovili, Irské národní hnutí se setkalo s úspěchem. Lidé si uvědomili, že se nemohou vzdát svého jazyka a že je třeba ho používat v každodenní konverzaci. I když počet mluvčích zdaleka nepřevyšuje 50% (anglický jazyk stále převládá), je důležité ho uchovávat, protože právě jazyk je jedním z faktorů, který Iry charakterizuje. Díky Gaelské Lize se podařilo uchovat a znovu objevit irské tradice, byl zaveden Den svatého Patrika, kdy 17. března slaví Irové státní svátek a připomínají si patrona své země. Podle mého názoru je Irsko zemí, která se může chlubit tím, co dokázala navzdory tomu, čím si prošla. Ukázalo se, že Irové mají národní cítění a umění být soudržní. Vytvořili si vlastní divadla, hry, tradice, kulturu a také vlastní výrobky, což dokazuje, že i když je Irsko poměrně malý stát, žijí zde lidé, kterým záleží na udržení jejich identity a důstojnosti.

## **Annotation**

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The theme of this thesis is the Gaelic Revival in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the beginning it deals with the historical background and then it focuses on the revival of the language, literature, festivals and whole culture. The thesis also presents how the revival influenced the nation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and what impact it had on the political scene.

## **Anotace**

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Tato bakalářská práce nese název Národní obrození v Irsku v 19. století. Na začátku se věnuje historickým událostem a poté se soustřeďuje na samotné obrození a to v jazyce, literatuře, a kultuře. V závěrečné části je také popsáno, jak toto obrození ovlivnilo irský národ ve 20. století a jaký mělo dopad na politickou scénu.

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