

Harry Boland Centenary
Glasnevin
Cathal MacSwiney Brugha

We are here today commemorating Harry Boland, who died for Ireland a 100 years ago today, and is buried here.

I follow after Éamon Ó Cuív, who spoke on behalf of his grandfather Éamon de Valera, who led us through the 20s, 30s, and 40s.

What would we have done without Éamon de Valera?

History can be so cruel, as we see with Harry Boland.

But history can be kind also, allowing one of the great leaders continue for so long, when he was needed.

But what if Éamon de Valera had been taken?

Who could have led us through the 20s, 30s, 40s?

Who could have taken his place? Tom Ashe? Liam Mellows?

Harry Boland certainly.

If DeV was the teacher of the Revolution, Harry Boland was the soul of the Revolution.

Forever light-hearted, forgiving, positive, smiling, hopeful, optimistic – in every photograph.

Forever funny, light, never heavy.

And yet also pragmatic, which is why he could have led us through the 20s, 30s, 40s, if we hadn't DeV.

When Terence MacSwiney died, his widow Muriel, my grandmother, was asked to go to America to promote the cause. Muriel had come from a wealthy, catholic, Cork family, but had become a feminist, a republican, a socialist, and a critic of the catholic bishops.

Her speeches began to lose us support amongst the rich Irish-American women.

Harry Boland, the pragmatist, told her to go home and look after her baby, my mother.

Not long later, Muriel was to be possibly the only person who sat at Cathal Brugha's bed as he lay dying, and then who sat at Harry Boland's bed as he lay dying.

The crucifix and rosary beads that Cathal Brugha had when he lay dying, became the crucifix and rosary beads that Harry Boland had when he lay dying. And were buried with him.

Of all that is said about Cathal Brugha, the one that we cherish the most is that Harry Boland wished to be buried alongside Cathal Brugha, Harry Boland: the Soul of the Republic.

The 1916 Proclamation mentions six previous Risings.

If Harry Boland was the Soul of our Seventh Rising, who was its Spirit?

Roger Casement was for Europe, what Ho Chi Minh was for Asia, Nelson Mandela was for Africa, and Mahatma Gandhi was for India.

Casement's Rising was not local.

It was global, against the empires destroying the planet, making it uninhabitable for people.

Commemorations are not just about the past.

Commemorations are also a call for the future.

The spirits of the great men and women buried here call out to us to have an eighth Rising, for the good of all the people on the planet.

We need a true Republicanism, to address the challenges of today:

Governance for the public, of the public, but also by the public.

A response like this would truly honour Harry Boland, Ireland's Great Soul.