Abstract

When Parnell was criticised in 1880 for making inflammatory speeches in the US and told he would not dare to speak so openly in Ireland, he said the reverse was true. In Ireland the people were so beaten down one had to try to rouse them - while outside of Ireland they needed cold water to douse them.

Certainly the Land League coffers were kept full by the contributions of the Irish in the US - rising middle classes as well as day labourers and domestic servants. These monies raised across America - by first Parnell and then Davitt's speaking tours - were crucial in funding the national struggle for land and food security. But other diasporic communities were also involved. Davitt records a fundraising drive in Australia gathering a staggering 25,000 pounds in one year.

Throughout the period of civil unrest the diaspora kept themselves informed of the unfolding dramatic events in Ireland. Diasporic newspapers played a large part in keeping the land struggle to the fore of their readers consciousness, in fundraising, and in informing the non-Irish communities of their side of the story - against the dominant British 'law and order' message. Readers, for example, of the NZ Tablet - a Catholic newspaper - read of Parnell's arrest and his own response to it within three days of the event.

Nor were they just passive readers or generous financial supporters. Diasporic communities and leaders - from left to right - in America, Canada, England, New Zealand and Australia actively sought to shape, sustain or strangle the revolutionary land movement.

The Land War was as much a global process and phenomenon as was the Global Irish nation, the Irish catholic church and the transnational Ladies Land League.

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