

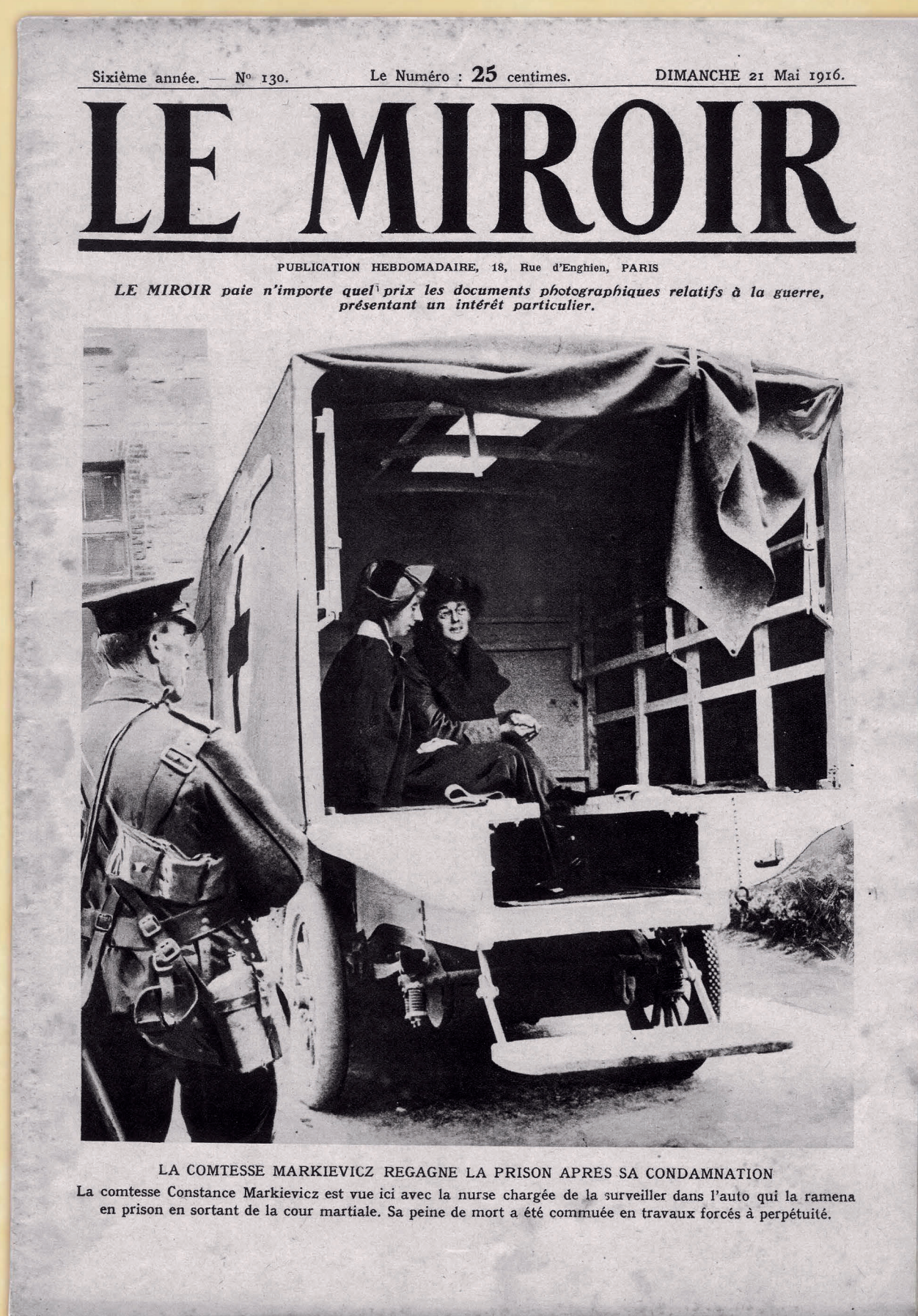
Constance de Markievicz

I gCÚIS NA hÉIREANN

Revolutionary



Surrender of Constance Markievicz and Michael Mallin
© RTE Cashman Collection



Constance Markievicz being transported
back to prison after her Court Martial
© Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Museum

On the 3rd August 1914 the British Government declared war upon Germany. On December 6th at an anti-enlistment meeting in Beresford Place she declared that “any Irishman who joined the British Army” would be regarded as “a traitor to his country”. As the war developed into a stalemate of trenches more and more men were needed to maintain forces in the murderous conditions. As the war progressed the threat of conscription in Ireland emerged. While Ireland was used to the idea of economic conscription (necessity forcing enlistment) the conscription of farmer’s sons and the sons of the emerging middle classes was not something that would be tolerated.

James Connolly had become increasingly militant and there was a fear within the I.R.B. that he would act independently of them and as their own planning of a rising was in an advanced stage they were forced to act and he was either inducted into their ranks or agreed to work with them. A week before Easter 1916 James Connolly flanked by Constance Markievicz and Michael Mallin at a public ceremony at Liberty Hall the Citizen Army flag was replaced by the green Volunteer flag and Connolly according to one account “pledged his hearers to give their lives if necessary to keep the Irish Flag Flying.” On April 15th Constance Markievicz’s poem “The Call” was published in the “Workers’ Republic”. The poem ended with the lines “We are ready and steady without a fear/To die for our native land.”

What the I.R.B. had done was subvert organisations so that their members were in positions of trust and power and able to order and organise, without hindrance, in their preparations. Eoin



Constance Markievicz at Sligo Town Hall (Second from right)
© Kilgallon

MacNeil the leader of the Volunteers was completely ignorant of the preparations that were being made for a rebellion on Easter Sunday 1916. Arms had been supplied by Germany but in a botched landing in Kerry the “Aud” was captured and escorted to Cork where the Captain of the “Aud” scuttled the ship. The arms were to have been supplied to the Volunteers and when MacNeill belatedly learned of the planned rebellion and the loss of the “Aud” he had notices printed in the national newspapers cancelling the manoeuvres that were to disguise the final preparations for the rebellion.

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