

## Letter to Fr. O'Dowd, Gowel, Co. Leitrim from Jimmy Gralton following his deportation in 1933

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New York City, U.S.A.  
n.d. (late 1933)

Dear Father,

Some time ago you stated in a sermon that you had gained a "noble victory" in Gowel; that you did not want the credit for that victory, but shared it with Father O'Donoghue of Carrick-on-Shannon.

Now let us analyse this supposed victory of yours, and see what is noble about it. Let us see if there is anything connected with it that a decent minded man might be proud of.

You started out a crusade against Communism by demanding that the Pearse-Connolly Hall be handed over to you. You knew the cash that paid for the material was given to the people of Gowel by P. Rowley, J.P. Farrell and myself. You also know that the labour was furnished free, and that it belonged to all the people of the area, irrespective of religious or political affiliations. But despite this you, with the greedy gall of a treacherous grabber, tried to get it into your own clutches. I put it to you straight, Father: is there anything noble about this? The people answered 'No' when they voted unanimously that you could not have it.

The hall was in my name; you knew from experience that you could not frighten me into transferring it to you, so you organised a gang to murder me. You bullied little children, manhandled old women, lied scandalously about Russia, blathered ignorantly about Mexico and Spain, and incited young lads into becoming criminals by firing into the hall. You did all these things because you could not close it, although you bragged Sunday after Sunday that 95% of the people were behind you. You are a noble man, father; so is Father O'Donoghue for that matter. He went to Dublin but he did not succeed in having me expelled from the Drumsna Fianna Fáil club. Sure, he managed to have a few pounds relief money put at your disposal. By the way, Father, how many lads came to you cap in hand for the job? Answer: none.

The last act (perhaps) in your "noble victory" was the deportation order, but you were only the local stoolpigeon. By this time 95% of the people were with you, if your word is to be taken for it. Still, with all these people behind you, you did not come out in the open, but carried on like a thief in the night, and with the connivance of the government tried to railroad me quietly out of the country. Here again your "noble victory" went astray, for it was only after six months, and after the case had got considerable publicity on two continents, that I was finally placed aboard ship.

You want to share this 'victory' of the Irish capitalists and British imperialists with Father O'Donoghue, but why stop here? Surely you got assistance from other sources? How

about the Executive Council, the Knights of Columbanus, the firing squad, the petrol gang, the *Standard*, the gombeen press, the cads like Andrew Mooney and MacMorrow? And why forget the C.I.D. and the spies? In short, the whole motley crew who helped Buckshot Forster, Bloody Balfour, and the Tans to their “noble victory.”<sup>1</sup>

Father, another such “victory” and you will be of no further use to the criminal ruling class in Ireland (in Gowel at any rate) - even the cloak of religion can no longer cover the imperialist hooligan that hides behind it.

Yours very sincerely,

James Galton

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<sup>1</sup> The Executive Council was the cabinet of the Free State government; the Knights of Columbanus were a secret Catholic society that played a part in organising Galton’s deportation order; the *Standard* was a right-wing Catholic newspaper that specialised in red-scaring; Mooney, a Leitrim County Councillor and MacMorrow, a member of the Leitrim Board of Health, both spoke out in favour of the deportation; the C.I.D. was the Garda special branch (political police); ‘Buckshot Forster’ was William Edward Forster, British Chief Secretary for Ireland (1880-82) during the Land War; ‘Bloody Balfour’ was Arthur Balfour, Chief Secretary (1887-91), who oversaw the implementation of the notorious coercion acts; the Tans were the Black and Tans, the infamous police auxiliary force unleashed on Ireland in 1920.