



# The Seven: The Lives and Legacies of the Founding Fathers of the Irish Republic

By Ruth Dudley Edwards

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On the morning of Easter Sunday, 23 April 1916, the seven men who made up the Military Council of the secret Irish Republican Brotherhood gathered in Dublin's Liberty Hall. By noon, the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, in which they declared themselves to be the provisional government of an entity that claimed the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman, had been taken to the printers. Each man knew full well that in putting his name to this document he had signed his own death warrant. Carnage, destruction, humiliation and posthumous glory followed. As did an Ireland that would have satisfied none of them – partitioned, sectarian, mean-spirited, hostile to challenge or creativity and governed by narrow self-interest.

Increasingly, there is recognition that it's time for an honest discussion of the Rising and its legacy. While not everyone agrees that what they did took Ireland in the right direction, there is no doubting that their proclamation and subsequent initiation of an armed rebellion profoundly changed the course of Irish history. A major contribution to the discourse, this is the first work to properly scrutinize Ireland's founding fathers, examining how they came to espouse violence, how their lives converged and whether they had a coherent vision for Ireland or were, as some now allege, a collection of ill-assorted fanatical misfits and failures. Brilliant and thought-provoking, The Seven sets out to answer the fundamental questions of who the founding fathers really were and whether they were right or wrong.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

"The leaders of the 1916 Rising are generally regarded by Irish nationalists as heroes and they are honoured as the founding fathers of the Irish Republic. A minority take the view that the Rising was unnecessary and undemocratic. In a timely re-assessment, the respected historian Ruth Dudley Edwards looks at the legacy of seven leaders of the Rising, including the legacy of violence which has blighted Ireland in the century since. Her book deserves a wide readership both by traditional nationalists and by those who believe it is time to reassess the legacy of the Rising."

**—Seán Donlon, ex-head of the Irish of the Irish diplomatic service**

"No one has done more to reinvigorate debate about the 1916 Rising than Ruth Dudley Edwards. With this important book she presents us with the conclusions of a lifetime's research and reflection on the meaning of the Easter Rising."

**—Lord Bew, Professor of Irish History and Politics, Queen's University, Belfast**

"A provocative, personal, fascinating, and utterly readable contribution to a hugely important debate."

**—Richard English, author of *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA***

"Highly entertaining and engagingly irreverent."

**—New York Review of Books**

"Written with great verve and zest, as well as judicious tough-mindedness, Ruth Dudley Edwards's *THE SEVEN* is an overdue reexamination of the remorseless nationalist faith that led not only to the Easter Rebellion but to the Troubles beyond. For anyone keen on understanding why the question of Irish identity and Irish nationhood remains so vexed, Ruth Dudley Edwards's study is essential... The Easter Rebellion has inspired fine historians, from F.S.L. Lyons and J.J. Lee to Charles Townshend and Lord Bew. Now, to their illustrious company, we can add Ruth Dudley Edwards."

**—Edward Short, *The Weekly Standard***

"The folly, the courage and the tragedy of the Easter Rebellion have never before been presented with such clarity and brilliance. At times, it reads like the work of fiction that it is not, as Ruth Dudley Edwards, with a novelist's unerring narrative skill, interweaves the lives of the seven signatories of the Proclamation from their disparate beginnings to their common end. To have brought such dazzling freshness to a very familiar story is an extraordinary achievement. Nothing less than a masterpiece."

**—Kevin Myers, *Irish Independent* columnist and author of *Watching the Door***

"A fine, well-researched and beautifully-written ground-breaking book by a leader in her field."

**—Andrew Roberts F.R.S.A., bestselling author of *Napoleon the Great***

"...a probing and detached appraisal of the seven revolutionaries who placed Ireland on a fateful course in 1916. It seeks to explore and explain rather than condemn or disparage. Connolly, Pearse, Clarke and the others obtain more sympathetic treatment from Ruth Dudley Edwards than many of their hagiographers are

likely to provide."

**—Tom Gallagher – Emeritus Professor in Peace Studies, University of Bradford, author and commentator**

"Ruth Dudley Edwards offers astute pen portraits of the leaders of the 1916 Rebellion. Her analysis of how these complex men, idealistic but also uncompromising, led a rebellion is a superb introduction to this period of momentous change in Irish history."

**—Colm Tóibín, bestselling author of *Brooklyn* and *Nora Webster***

#### About the Author

Ruth Dudley Edwards is a historian, journalist and an award-winning biographer. A leading commentator on Irish affairs in the media, she has contributed to almost every national newspaper in the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom, as well frequently appearing on radio and television. Her last work of non-fiction, *Aftermath: The Omagh Bombing and the Families Pursuit of Justice*, won the Crime Writers Association Gold Dagger for Non-Fiction in 2010. Ruth was born in Dublin and now lives in London."

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