LO, THY DREAD EMPIRE CHAOS IS RESTORED

Prologue: No Driven Heart, no Driven Head.

I am your native land who bred
No driven heart, no driven head;
I fly a flag in every sea
Round the old earth, of Liberty!
I am the Land that boasts a crown;
The sun comes up, the sun goes down –
And never men may say of me,
Mine is a breed that is not free.

I have a wreath! My forehead wears
A hundred leaves – a hundred years
I never knew the words; ‘You must!’
And shall my wreath return to dust?
Freemen! The door is yet ajar;
From northern star to southern star,
O ye who count and ye who delve,
Come in – before my clock strikes twelve!1

– John Galsworthy

The appeal rang true in 1914 in Australia – in India – in Ireland.

Not five years later. Three terrible bloody events had shown that flag “of Liberty” from what it really was – and the price to be paid for marching under it.

I. GALLIPOLI

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DARDANELLES

The Eastern Question had always been a question of the Straits, between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

On the northern end, Constantinople stood.

On the southern end, the other side of the Sea of Marmara, were the Narrows – the Dardanelles, where only a small slice of water separated Asia Minor from the outjutting Gallipoli peninsula.

At its narrowest spot, the channel was a mere mile wide.

Close it off, and no Russian ship could get to the Mediterranean.

Hold it, and Constantinople must fall, and the Ottoman Empire with it.

It was a land of classical romance.

For at the southern end of the straits was the Hellespont, where Leander had swum and drowned.

Here it was that the Persian emperor Xerxes built a bridge of 300 boats to cross in his ill-fated war on Greece.
Not so far from the place were the ruins of what had once been the topless towers of Ilium, from which Helen of Troy looked forth. 

For England, victory lay through controlling the Straits, and sending a fleet through the Sea of Marmara to take Constantinople.

Constantinople, it was thought, would fall like a ripe apple, \( \text{if} \) the fleet could get through.

Then German forces would be threatened from behind.

Russia could get grain shipments through the Black Sea to feed its armies.

Allied warships could steam up the Danube all the way to Vienna.

Austria would drop out of the war.

Italy, always eager to back a winner, would drop into it.

on the Allies’ side.

Greece would jump in, to get a share of the spoils.

The war would be over almost at once.

And then – it’s party time!

Constantinople would be given to Russia.

The Middle East would become a British colony.

The idea sprang from the mind of the brilliant First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill.

– he was sure that Constantinople could be taken without troops

– the ships would be all it took, with their big guns, to blow every Turkish fort off the landscape

– there was no danger of submarines; the Turks didn’t have any

– there was no danger from Turkish troops; everybody had beaten them, every time, in every war

– there was no real danger from mines, either.³

Churchill was wrong in every particular. He prevailed over admirals who fretted and doubted, out-talking them all into a sullen silence.

³ Robert Rhodes James, Churchill: A Study in Failure, 75-79.
But making a mistake this big took a lot more than one man.

It needed help from the greatest general of his day, the hero of the Boer War and of Omdurman, Lord Kitchener.

Lord Kitchener could see what Churchill closed his eyes to –

that it would take men on shore, and not just ships on the surf, to carry the Gallipoli peninsula.\(^4\)

He committed men by the tens of thousands, but many less than it took to do the job, and without worrying about all the signs that the Turks weren’t the

\(^4\) Robert Rhodes James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure*, 79-82.
B. PLANS FOR GALLIPOLI

The Navy would sail in, smash Gallipoli from the south and west
Then it would work its way up, till it ran the whole Dardanelles.

This would take very little time.

Soldiers would be landed; the navy would use its artillery to give them support.

Three days, and the lower half of the peninsula would be taken.
The mines would be swept out of the Narrows.

Then the Navy could steam into the Sea of Marmara and within shooting range of Constantinople.\(^6\)

---

5 On his behalf, let’s note that Kitchener’s assumption was that the Navy thought it could do the job alone. He was unaware how cold their feet were. But on the other side, it has to be added that by February 1915, Kitchener had no more doubts. He dismissed the idea of using any air force to back up the troops, declared that a powerful fleet would be the decisive factor, and brusquely turned away Sir Ian Hamilton’s warnings that the Navy wasn’t up to the job. Nor did he change his views that the battle could be won, until he paid an official visit in the fall of 1915.

What he saw appalled him. “You were quite right,” he told the commander on the ground. “I had no idea of the difficulties you were up against. I think you have all done wonders.” When he came home, it was in the side of withdrawal. His one fear was that it would cost many more lives to evacuate. John Pollock, *Kitchener: Architect of Victory, Artisan of Peace*, 430-35, 454-57.

C. THE LANDING

It was the most ambitious amphibious operation of the war.

... and certainly one of the worst prepared.

Its maps were wrong.
It brought too few shells –
    Too few mosquito nets –
    ... and no dentists.  

Its intelligence was long since outdated.

Some officers carried along Baedeker’s tour-guides of the
    Middle East, to make up for all the things the planners
    hadn’t got around to telling them.

How many Turks were defending the peninsula?

    Nobody knew.

How were they armed?

    Nobody was sure.

For hospital ships ... oh, two would be quite enough.

As for grenades, the army used old jam tins to make its own.

---

7 Ted Morgan, Churchill: Young Man in a Hurry, 1874-1915, 481.
Secrecy? There was none. Everybody knew where the army was headed, before the ships steamed off. 8

D. SOMEONE HAD BLUNDERED

Everything went terribly wrong.

The Navy didn’t knock out the forts along the straits.

It had the wrong kind of guns to do the job.

What it needed was howitzers. It had none of those.

But the TURKS did – and they lobbed them into the ships with

---

8 From all of which we should deduce the following: there was something completely wrong in the whole system. It wasn’t just idiots as commanders, or individual screw-ups. And it wasn’t just a problem that you could find in this one campaign – the same gum-ups are happening all along the Western Front. On this point, see the corrective in T. H. E. Travers, “Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army: the 1915 Gallipoli Model,” Journal of Contemporary History, 29 (July 1994): 403-442.
Far from taking out the Turks, the INFLEXIBLE, IRRESISTIBLE, VENGEANCE, AGAMEMNON, LORD NELSON, MAJESTIC, ALBION, and PRINCE GEORGE fought all day and never got through the Narrows, at the neck of the Dardanelles.

They never cleared the mine fields.

The forts took a pounding, a day’s worth, but at sunset, they were still standing.

As long as they did so, mine-sweepers, manned by civilians, were sitting ducks.

The INFLEXIBLE hit a mine and barely stayed above water long enough to get away.

The IRRESISTIBLE hit another mine and had to be abandoned.

In all, the Navy silenced just four cannons out of 176 on the Dardanelles.

It cleared precisely NO mines out of 392.

---

Quite a return on 700 lives lost and three great ships.\textsuperscript{10}

All of a sudden, instead of the army marching up the peninsula to Constantinople, after the Navy had done the sweat-work, the army found that it was going to have to clear out the peninsula, pretty much all by itself.

It was a bleak landscape that met them, dry and empty.

In summer it could have a kind of beauty –

in winter a cold that went to the bone.\textsuperscript{11}

And onto this the imperial armies were thrown.

Their commander, General Ian Hamilton, had been born in the Ionian Islands, not so far out in the Aegean, in the days when England held them.

He limped from a leg wound contracted on India’s Northwestern frontier.

He’d seen action in Afghanistan and Burma and Sudan and the Boer War.

His left hand had been shriveled by a wound at Majuba

\textsuperscript{10} Morris, \textit{Farewell the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat}, 182-83.

\textsuperscript{11} Morris, \textit{Farewell the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat}, 184.
In the first Boer fight for independence.

In the past, he had been Lord Kitchener’s right-hand man, the person that Kitchener only had to give an order to, in one crisp sentence, and he would head off to fight a war, if that was what it took to carry it out.\textsuperscript{12}

In the kind of wars the Empire usually fought, he would have done King and Country proud.

But this was well beyond him – and the Turks were no fuzzy-wuzzies armed with spears.

It was beyond the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps – the ANZACs – 30,000 of them, brought over from Egypt, tanned, rested and ready.

It was beyond the young poets in the ranks...

– John Masefield
– A. P. Herbert
– Compton Mackenzie
– Rupert Brooke – who would die of blood poisoning before he ever saw action.\textsuperscript{13}

General Hamilton’s plan seemed excellent.

\textsuperscript{12} Morris, \textit{Farewell the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat}, 185.

\textsuperscript{13} Morris, \textit{Farewell the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat}, 186.
Troops would land at the southern tip of that canine-tooth of a peninsula.

Others would land up the coast, along the Aegean.

They would take the heights – the spine of hills that ran along Gallipoli.

Once those were taken, the Turks would have no place to stand.

Yes. *Once those were taken...*  

The killing went on for 259 days, until January 1916.

But they didn’t capture their objectives by the third day.

Or ever.

The most the Allies won was footholds along the shore.

Two days, and those hospital troopships were overflowing with wounded people. They steamed back to Egypt.

Getting ashore, the Anzacs found easy. Of course, it was the wrong spot, and the maps didn’t give them any idea of where they were, but they landed without being blown to smithereens, and pushed straight to the central ridge of the peninsula.

The British landed other spots, and they didn’t have any trouble at all.

In fact, a lot of places had nobody to stop them with.

---

14 Morris, *Farewell the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat*, 185-86.
On one, the force commander, not in the best of health, had earned his spurs teaching military history.

He never had led men under fire before, and didn’t now

Coming ashore he sprained his knee and had to go back to his ship.

The men didn’t see any trenches or Turks.

So they sat down to wait – and next day, when they looked up at the top of the heights, overlooking the beach, the Turks showed up in a place you could no longer get them out of.

Two beaches were much bloodier.

There, the Turks on the bluffs fired from their trenches and killed and killed and killed before the invaders had a chance to dig in.

And one of them was crucial to the whole affair.

The Navy thought it had silenced the castle fortress.

When the troops landed, they found the truth.

Most of them never lived to get out of the boats.

Whole loads of men floated out to sea again – every man Jack on board killed.

In all, no more than forty soldiers lived to touch dry land – pinned down, helpless.
Regiments poured out of the transports and fell dead in the water within instants.

A measly fraction made it to the beach – by now covered in bodies.

The brigade commander, another of the endless number of imperial Napiers, arrived to take command.

“Go back! Go back!” the men cried. “You can’t land!”

“I’ll have a damn good try,” the general shouted – and was shot dead with nearly every other officer around him.\(^{15}\)

The shooting went on all day, all night. It didn’t get better, and Gallipoli would be like that to the very end.

Just as on the Western Front, the same principle ruled:

If at first you don’t succeed...

pile on more and more and more men.

It’s so much easier than re-thinking strategy or trying new tactics.

\(^{15}\) Morris, *Farewell the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat*, 190. He was Brigadier-General Napier – another of the many Napiers who had planted (and in this case, fertilized) an empire. Lyn MacDonald, *1915: The Death of Innocence*, 360.
Just as on the Western Front, subordinates knew that they were killing men needlessly.

They knew that the orders they’d been sent made no sense.

But they’d been taught to obey, not question.

They obeyed; they fought; they died.

And just as on the Western Front, every time an officer screwed up, the army promoted him.

... because he had good charm.

because he got along with people...

because this was the sporting way to get him out of the way.

The first attack had failed. The second invasion was thrown in four months later, further north.

Three Allied forces made landfall. None of them could budge – not even to come together with the others.\(^\text{16}\)

\(^{16}\) Morris, *Farewell the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat*, 188-91.
The ships never got any closer to Constantinople.

They left the straits, and left Gallipoli, when a German submarine sent torpedoes into one of them.

The troops kept on fighting, but their footholds never grew much beyond that.

Ten thousand Turks were killed in one massive frontal attack on Allied lines.

British troops made an attack of their own, and in one fight, won 500 yards. It took them 17,000 casualties to do it.\textsuperscript{17}

Labyrinths of trenches were dug, with enemy armies within speaking distance of each other.

Barbed wire stretched along the slopes and over the beaches.

Artillery fire pummeled the trenches and machine gunning made the wire too hot to break through.

Reinforcements were always landing – always dying.

\textsuperscript{17} Morris, \textit{Farewell the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat}, 191-92.
Ships were always coming to drop men off and leave them.

British and Australian submarines moved through the sea of Marmara to torpedo Turkish ships.

Nothing changed. The peninsula stayed in Turkish hands.

And those hills, so beautiful for the sea, became the most hateful place on earth, the dead lying in heaps, the masses of flies rising and falling around them in clouds –

intense sun

dust storms

and the stink of rotting carcasses

Soldiers fought each other from a few hundred yards apart.

The lines never broke.

The heights were never taken.

The Anzacs fought their way up the cliffs over their beaches,

---

but never got all the way to the top. 19

It made for the most brutal kind of war.

Australians shot any and every enemy they saw.

Burial details, under flags of truce? Easy to bag.

Men coming across lines to surrender? Strike them down

And so things remained, till the Turks got up close.

When they saw them in person, the Aussies discovered that a Turkish soldier was like himself: all guts.

They liked it. As the Turks retreated, after one failed raid on their lines, Australians shouted,

“Saida – play you again next Saturday.”

When there was a truce to bury the dead, enemies saluted and swapped cigarettes and photographs.

From now on, Turks were “Jacko” or “Abdul.”

... because they played the game.

That doesn’t make the loss in life any less senseless – and didn’t make it easier

19 Morris, *Farewell the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat*, 192-93.
to forgive the men who’d sent the soldiers there.

“Winston’s name fills everyone with rage,” one officer would write in his diary. “Roman emperors killed slaves to make themselves popular, he is killing free men to make himself famous.”

More than one soldier wished Churchill could have been there with them, and died in the agonies that so many of them died.

When there was a government shake-up, he was shaken out.20

In the end, after months of stalemate, the Allies evacuated Gallipoli.

The army was out of the trenches by Christmas.

This, at least, England did well.

The withdrawal from the forward trenches was done quietly –

the gathering of supplies, guns, and horses, and their removal was done with real discretion.

Only when they looked on empty beaches, the stores burning, the ammunition abandoned, did the Turks understand.21

20 David Fromkin, A Peace to End All Peace, 159-62.

21 Morris, Farewell the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat, 196-97.
Half a million men landed on the peninsula.

Over half were killed or wounded.

Australia didn’t lose the most.

30,000 British soldiers died there –
three times the body count for Australians and New Zealanders together.

But ten thousand men’s still no picnic.

Australia mourned, and Australia remembered.

The Australian and New Zealand Army corps – the Anzacs – were
honored at home.

To be an “original Anzac’ still is about the highest honor any
Aussie’s family could have.

And the day of the first landing, April 25th, is “Anzac Day”
there still.

II. THE EASTER REBELLION

Visions of revolution stirred in the hotter heads.
The Irish Republican Brotherhood had been ready for action since the 1850s, and it was still ready.

Just after the war began, its secret Supreme Council decided that there must be an insurrection in Ireland before peace came.

They found just the man to lead it in a young schoolmaster Patrick Pearse, half-English and all poet.

He had John Brown’s faith: that without the shedding of blood, there could be no liberty for Ireland – and it didn’t have to be English blood.

The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.

Or, in Pearse’s words, “from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations.”

In Germany, the conspiracy trusted to Roger Casement, struggling to get help for an uprising and recruiting volunteers for an Irish brigade among soldiers taken prisoner in France.

Just about none took up his offers.

They may have been Irish, but they were Tommy Atkinses all – the men that won an empire.

Germany was friendlier, and arranged to work out two details:

---

– it would send a shipload of guns, breaking through the British blockade

– it would give Casement taxi service back to Ireland, by U-boat, in time to join his revolution.

All through 1915 the plans sharpened their focus.

The uprising would take place on Easter, 1916.

It would be led by a tiny splinter of the Irish Volunteers followers of a onetime civil servant from Ulster, the co-founder of the Gaelic League, Eoin MacNeill

German zeppelins would keep British defenders distracted, by a bombing raid over London and by U-boat attacks in Dublin bay.

The Reich would even send several army officers to help make the revolution run on time.

If all went well, the revolutionaries would seize Dublin Castle proclaim a Republic

and make Pearse its president.

The only thing lacking was common sense – that and the slightest sign that anyone in Ireland wanted a revolution.

The biggest voice for a republic came from the Sinn Fein, a political party with just about no support.
But *it* wanted nothing to do with any uprising.

It still wanted to give Home Rule a chance.

In fact, its leader, Arthur Griffith, didn’t even want a republic.

His idea was to have two parliaments, tied together by a common loyalty to the King.

Even Eoin MacNeill didn’t want to start a fight, unless there was a chance of winning.

So the revolutionaries didn’t tell him about the uprising.

They had to do all their planning behind his back.

And as the fatal day approached, everything fell apart.

Admiralty intelligence had known the whole plot from early on.

... down to the number on the U-boat that was going to carry Casement

and the very day of the Rising.

They sent out trawlers and destroyers to catch up with the ship of arms, a Norwegian trawler, the Aud.

The Aud scuttled itself off Queenstown, when the pursuers closed in.

Casement tried to cancel the revolution, but got word out too late.
He landed on Ireland’s shores, to join what he knew was a doomed cause, and worse, a waste of good manpower.

The police pinched him in no time at all and carted him to England, where he got the royal treatment:

a cell in the Tower of London. 23

As for the German diversions and German officers ... they never showed up.

So here on April 22nd, 1916, Easter morning, came a rising of no more than a thousand people.

They never took Dublin Castle.

The best they could do was raise the green Irish flag over the Post Office.

A crowd of rebels occupied the Four Courts.

Still more seized a flour mill. Their leader was a math teacher, Eamon de Valera.

And a fourth group with a genuine countess among them holed up in the College of Surgeons.

The fighting came as a complete shock to England.

The Admiralty had learned in advance.

They even passed the message on to Dublin.

It got lost in the bureaucracy.

Many of the top officials weren’t even around when the fighting started. They had gone twelve miles off to Fairyhouse, where the Bank Holiday races were under way.

The Army commander had taken the weekend off at his home in England.

The rebels read a declaration of a Provisional Government for an Irish Republic, but the crowd found it hard to hear.

There was so much noise behind them of breaking glass.

With the police occupied elsewhere against rebels, a mob was kicking off the republic by looting the shops up and down the street.
The British army had immense numbers to surround Dublin with.

And the revolutionaries got no help from the folks in town.

To them, it was stabbing Britain’s back in war time.

It wouldn’t further Home Rule; just the opposite.

In time the cordon closed around the last fighters, besieged in the Post Office.

There was no escaping, and not all of them wanted it.

They fought bravely, all the same...

Jim Connolly, with visions of a revolution of the proletariat
and a worker’s republic in Ireland

Padraic Pearse, glowing at the prospect of going out as a
martyr, and giving his cause the romance that it
would need to catch fire across Ireland

Joseph Plunkett, sabre at his side, dying of tuberculosis – if
he were only given long enough

and big Michael Collins, and a number of others, men
and women.

On April 29th, Pearse led the survivors out to surrender.

A seven-day Rising had all the looks of a seven-day wonder.
450 people killed, with 2,614 wounded and nine missing.

Of the 1500 or so rebels, only 64 were killed.

It was bystanders and civilians who got hurt the worst.

The first reaction to the rebellion was ugly indeed.

Ireland hated it, and especially the people of Dublin, who had seen their city burned, wrecked, and paralyzed by a group of fanatics.

The rebels were set upon by angry women and pelted with tomatoes. They were lucky to be prisoners of the British army; otherwise the Dublin crowd would have torn them to pieces.

Let’s not forget that most of the soldiers sent to roust them out were Irishmen themselves. They could sing “God save Ireland!” in the trenches, while waiting to meet the Germans at Cambrai, and shout the “Wearing of the Green.”

They wore armbands with gold harps and the words “Erin go bragh” sewn on them.

But when taken as German P. O. W.’s, Irish soldiers hissed and booed out every effort to turn them into an Irish Brigade to set their country free, or help out the Easter Rebellion.

The Fusiliers that captured the rebels didn’t want military trials or jail terms for their Irish enemies.
They wanted them marched out and shot, every one.

In the trenches where the Royal Munster Fusiliers faced the Germans, the Germans tried to goad them with news of how Dubliners were being killed for rising up for liberty.

And the Fusiliers struck up “God Save the King.”

A smart British governor would have done the daring thing –

Put the revolutionaries behind lock and key and let them live on prison fare for the rest of their lives.

They were nobody’s martyrs. They were pests, representing nobody but themselves and doing nobody’s work but the Kaiser’s.

Instead, the British government botched the clean-up.

It went after dissidents of all kind, revolutionaries and mainstream types, arrested, jailed, court-martialed, and transported to England well over three thousand suspects.

---

Most were released after questioning; but what a great way to turn loyal nationalists into rebels!

In wartime, England had every right to hang the ringleaders of an uprising.

And what are 16 executions, in a war where 25,000 Irish soldiers lost their lives fighting for the Empire, and where a single day of battle on the Somme cost Britain 60,000 casualties?

It wasn’t the punishment. It was the way the army did it.

... trial by secret court martial

... sending them off to death without giving them a chance to confess to their priests or see their loved ones one last time –

And worst of all, spreading the executions along, a couple a day, for ten days, long enough for public sympathy to build.

There was no image worse that Connolly, wounded and faint from the loss of blood, carried in a chair, to the place where the firing squad ended his life.

... unless it was the Prime Minister himself.

Irish nationalists, horrified to watch the executions turning loyalty into savage hate, begged Asquith to order the killings to stop.
Asquith agreed. There would be no more killings, he told them – they could be sure of that.

But the firing squads kept on their work.

III. AMRITSAR

A. Rewards Unpaid?

For the Indians, the Great War wasn’t – like it was for Irish nationalists – the great opportunity to take advantage of England’s distress.

It was the chance to cash in on England’s gratitude.

Goodness knows, the Empire had enough to be grateful for.

Hadin’t a million Indians served in this war?

Was some form of independence too little to ask?

Extremists wanted freedom, outright.

Moderates wanted to be granted the longer leash of Dominion status ...

the next Australia, or Canada.

They were paid at bargain rates, instead.

England gave them dyarchy.
Essentially, it was a down-payment on full self-government.

In the provinces, the people could elect Indian administrators.

But at the central level, the government would stay in British hands, with no input from the natives beyond a little nagging by Indians on the legislative council.  

In the long run, it was supposed to found the government on the confidence of the people of India.

B. Officers’ Mess

Amritsar was in the Punjab, a fine ancient city.

For the Sikhs, it was above all cities the holiest.

There stood the Golden Temple, the greatest shrine of the faith.

Pilgrims came from all over to the holy place beside the pool.

---

25 Lawrence James, Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 456-60. The Montagu-Chelmsford bill in basics created two levels of elected government. One of them would have eight provincial assemblies. Indian officials there would handle education and agriculture and health and the state budget. The other government would be a viceregal legislative assembly.

But the Viceroy and provincial governors would essentially run all matters of revenue and taxes. They would handle everything related to security. And they would have a say in the assemblies, choosing one member in five on them. They also had an absolute veto.

Not all Indians could vote for the assemblies. You had to be an adult male. You also had to own a certain amount of property. The electorate would be about five million – which meant at least 5 million literate Indians were disfranchised, and so were most former servicemen.
But most of the city was a lot more dirty than holy.

Narrow unpaved streets of mud tumbled into each other.  There were bazaars and beggars and open drains.

In early 1919, Amritsar was also seething with bd temper.

Indian nationalism was awake again.

Not just here, but all over.

Amritsar had seen speechifying and demonstrations.

Mobs had killed five English people.

An English woman missionary riding her bicycle through town had been set on and attacked.  

If there was a place to make an example, the British military decided, it must be here.

They got the excuse fast enough.  All public assemblies were forbidden.

But the crowds met anyhow, cramming into a public enclosure –

A courtyard and sometime garden, called the Jallianwalla Bagh.

On all sides the houses walled it in.

---

26 Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 472.

27 Bagh means garden, but there were no more than a few trees, and a great many refuse dumps.  It was customarily used as a fairground and a public meeting place.  A wasteland was its real character. See Robert Payne, *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi*, 338.
You could get in through two gates at the southern end and a tiny passage at the northwest corner – no other way.

On April 13th the protestors met. A speaker on top of a pile of rubble roused the ... rabble by reading a poem on behalf of liberty.

It was an excited, noisy crowd, big enough to crowd the square thickly.

But it wasn’t exactly a revolutionary crowd.

The occasion was a religious festival.

April 13th was a very important day in Sikh religion.

Many people there were from the countryside, and had come in for the entertainment.

Many, if not most, were entirely unaware that by meeting they had broken the law.

Then, all at once, the armored cars rolled up, in front of the south entrance.

Apparently the commander had had a notion of making a show of force. He would roll the armored cars through the crowd.

Then soldiers would drive everybody else out.28

---

28 Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 472-73, 478. Yes, but why did he do it? Some historians think that when he saw the crowd and heard the speaker haranguing it, he thought it was being incited to violence and panicked. *They can think that.* General Dyer gave that explanation, and lots of others, none
It would have been a terrifying proof of what mechanized warfare could do.

Trouble was, the officer didn’t know the landscape.

The armored cars wouldn’t fit into the courtyard.

Everything would have to be done personal, like.\(^{29}\) Sepoys pushed into the square and took the higher ground.

Some were Ghurka riflemen, some Baluchis.

They were all along the top of the garden, with of which worked all that well with the rest. He insisted that:

\begin{itemize}
  \item a) he was firing in self-defense
  \item b) he wanted to break the people’s morale
  \item c) he had planned the shootings long before he ever got to the Bagh
  \item d) “I had made up my mind. I would do all men to death.”
\end{itemize}

These last words may have been the ones that persuaded the British commissioners set up to look into his actions that he should be relieved of command and never permitted another one.

\(^{29}\) Robert Payne, \textit{The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi}, 338-339.
loaded rifles on the ready.

When the crowd saw what was about to happen, they made for the exits, or looked for places to hide – and there weren’t any.

The speaker told them: don’t be afraid. They won’t shoot! Besides, they’re only armed with blanks.

He had hardly got those words out before they did shoot – and no blanks, either.

The Ghurkas fired at point-blank range – volley after volley into the crowd.

Panic broke loose. The people rushed to get to the gates –

Clambered at the high walls –

Trod each down to escape –

Tried to shelter behind each other –

Lay flat on the ground.

And all the while the Ghurkas kept re-loading and shooting.

They paid special attention to the exits, killing whoever tried to get away, till the dead clogged the gates out and kept anyone else from escaping.

For six minutes the shooting continued.

Then the soldiers picked up their weapons and left.
The armored cars headed back to their barracks.

By then, something between 379 and 800 people lay dead. 1,500 were wounded.

The dead were left to their kin – or, in many cases for the jackals.

This was the work of Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer.\(^\text{30}\)

It wasn’t a mistake. It was deliberate – an act of terror to make the Indians dread to defy the Raj ever again.

Along with it went the “crawling order.”

 Indians coming into the street where the European woman had been attacked were made to do so only on their stomachs.\(^\text{31}\)

\(^\text{30} \) Dyer was Irish, though he was born in Simla. He had a very fine war record, having earned his salt on the Northwest Frontier, and in Persia and Burma. But everywhere, he had been a rough man who knew his own mind, and his temperament wasn’t made better by having suffered injuries that left him in constant agony. Robert Payne, *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi*, 338; Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 471.

\(^\text{31} \) Robert Payne, *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi*, 340. Actually, the general meant them to go on all fours, but the soldiers on the spot interpreted it a little bit lower still.
Dangerous criminal offenders – that is, people who...

were out after curfew

refused to salaam a commissioned officer

showed disrespect to Europeans
tore down official proclamations

were picked up, condemned without trial, and given public floggings.

An entire marriage party was given a flogging.

Seventy years before, the Empire had done worse things.

Not now. He was forced to resign.

But he had plenty of apologists, especially in the army and among his superiors.

The Sikhs, who had no truck with the Indian protestors, made him one of their Brotherhood.

The House of Lords put through a resolution of support.

The MORNING POST’s readers subscribed a 25,000 pound testimonial

---

32 Lawrence James, Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India, 477-81.
CODA: NO DRIVEN HEART, NO DRIVEN HEAD?

Amritsar, Dublin – the Dardanelles. There, not in the killing fields of Flanders, the unwavering faith in Empire died.

Could the people of India ever say again of themselves:

And never men may say of me,
Mine is a breed that is not free.

Could the Irish ever say,

a hundred years
I never knew the words; ‘You must!’

It gives entirely new meaning to Galsworthy’s line:

Freemen! The door is yet ajar.

Time to look hard for the Exit!