



■ President Barack Obama presents Springsteen with the Presidential Medal of Freedom last month

■ continued from Page 29

about the likes of Dylan, The Beatles and Van Morrison with great reverence, both in person and in the book. He's seven or eight years younger than those titans, and once upon a time, when they were blazing a trail and he was still at home with his parents, dreaming of playing guitar for a living, that age-gap mattered greatly. Perfectly illustrating the point is how he recounts the time he met Dylan, not just roughly, but down to the particular date after a show on Dylan's *Rolling Thunder Revue*.

There is one area Springsteen touches on for the first time, which is the depression that seems to have dogged him since his youth, most seriously after releasing the worldwide smash hit *Born In The USA* in 1984.

"My depression was spewing like an oil spill over the beautiful turquoise green gulf of my carefully planned existence," he writes in the book.

"If you're writing a book like this, one of the agreements with your reader is you're going to open up your life," he says today. "I don't talk about all of myself, or everything I've done, you know, but you do have to show the reader your mind. "And so, that's been a big part of my life, since I was very, very young. It was a very natural thing to write about. I tried to write about it somewhat humorously. But a lot of people have to deal with it, and I've had a long history of it in my family. [Depression] kicked of came down, and picked off certain people here and there, cousins and aunts and uncles and my father very particularly. It did get passed on to me, although not as extremely as he had to deal with it."

He says writing the book gave him a similar feeling to one of his gigs, although "no-one is applauding when you finish writing, like they are when you finish a song".

"But it is satisfying," he adds. "The entire thing I did over a period of seven years, and I miss getting to perform something, I just have to wait to see how it's received, so I miss that crowning glory, I think."

Springsteen admits he needed a bit of nagging to get on with the job – until something finally clicked and he got into more of a routine with it. Whatever that motivation was, it wasn't a desire to set the record straight, so to speak. "The record is whatever it is," he says. "It is a combination of all the things that people have written about you, good and bad, you know? I didn't have a bone to pick or anything, it was just setting down my experience. Initially, I didn't even think I was writing a book, it was something that maybe my kids would enjoy referring to at some point."

"Then I thought it had more insight about me, so that if you were a fan, you might find it informative too. Then I wanted it to be entertaining, of course, I wanted it to be kind of funny and something that was enjoyable to read. So those were my only goals." He talks about the difficult relationship with his father, his tough upbringing, the relative failure of his early career and his first wife, Julianne Phillips. But the hardest bit to write was about the present, the parts that include his wife Patti Scialfa, whom he married in 1991, their children and friends.

"I read my kids the things that I wrote about them before it came out, so they would feel comfortable with it. Patti and I, of course, discussed that section of the book, I wanted to make sure she was comfortable with everything."

"She didn't change anything," he adds. "She wasn't necessarily comfortable with everything, and some of the things I wasn't sure whether I was comfortable with myself... But she gave me a lot of room to express myself and I appreciate it from her." In conclusion, Springsteen is happy with the book, and in his own humble way, hopes people enjoy it.

"I was trying to write as insightfully as I could, and deliver, on the page, what I feel we've tried to deliver at my shows for 40-plus years."

■ **Born To Run by Bruce Springsteen is published by Simon & Schuster, priced £20.**

Michael Davitt's views in relation to education and sectarianism were progressive and prescient and the Irish National Land League founder gave voice to a strand of secular, anti-imperialist nationalism that had a bearing not just in Ireland but around the world, writes historian **Carla King**

**M**ICHAEL Davitt is remembered as the 'father of the Land League' and forever associated with Home Rule leader Charles Stewart Parnell. But, in truth, he was notably to the left of the land reform movement and Parnell's Home Rule party.

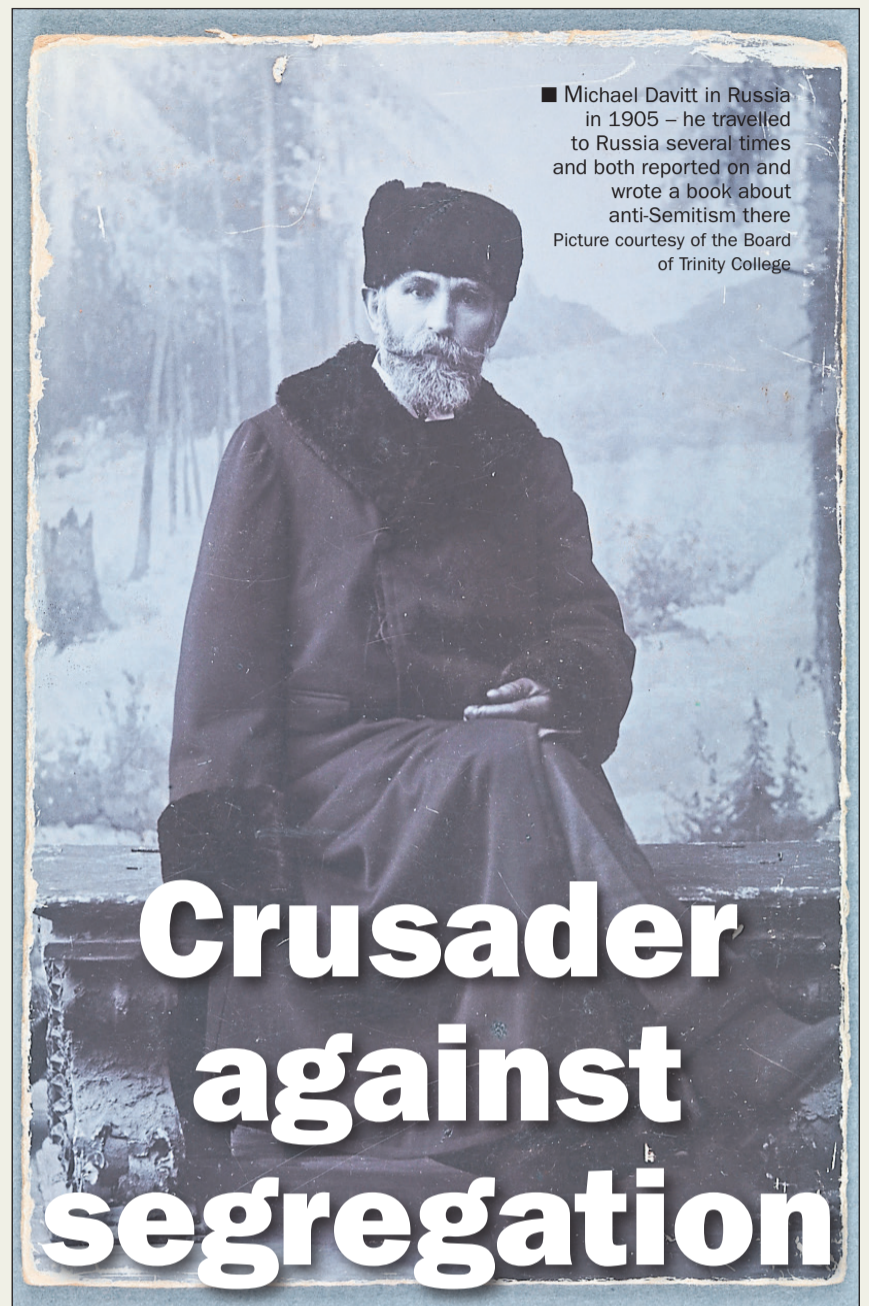
Davitt was born in Co Mayo at the start of the Famine but, following his family's eviction in 1850, grew up among an Irish community in exile in Haslingden, an industrial town in the north of England. This was a period of anti-Irish animosity, when families had to barricade their doors on a Friday night against attack. In 1868 Davitt helped to defend the town's Catholic church during the 'Murphy Riots'. Nevertheless, he attended a Wesleyan school and grew up both more in touch with the British working class and less sectarian than many of his associates in the nationalist movement.

Formed in 1879 initially in Connacht, the Land League was aimed first to bring down rents and ultimately against the whole landlord system. It rapidly spread around Ireland but made slower progress in Ulster. Davitt, together with Parnell and John Dillon, who was to become Parnell's successor as leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, sought to attract Presbyterian tenant farmers to the Land League in Fermanagh and Tyrone in 1880-81, arguing that the fight against landlordism was theirs too, but the campaign met with failure. In fact, it sparked off resistance from the Orange Order which expelled any of its lodges that supported the Land League.

After 1882, as the Home Rule movement under Parnell's leadership turned away from the land organisation, Davitt remained a radical, supported particularly in the industrial populations of northern England, Scotland and Belfast. He was very concerned about increasing sectarianism among Catholic nationalists. This came to a head over education questions in the early 20th century. The Liberal and emerging Labour parties favoured non-denominational education, while the Conservative Party and Catholic Church wished to support voluntary Anglican and Catholic schools. Davitt, a strong advocate of non-denominational schooling, came into conflict with the Catholic hierarchy.

He held that children of different religions should be educated together in publicly funded and state-regulated schools, with religious instruction provided separately.

This was to be the last battle of his life, which became embittered when the leading newspaper of the day, the *Freeman's Journal*, refused to publish



■ Michael Davitt in Russia in 1905 – he travelled to Russia several times and both reported on and wrote a book about anti-Semitism there. Picture courtesy of the Board of Trinity College

his letters or those of his supporters – while Davitt himself was denounced by Catholic clergy in Lenten Pastorals in 1906.

Davitt criticised the Irish Party leader John Redmond's opposition to a proposed vote of £4,500 to Queen's University Belfast. He was keen to build bridges between the Home Rule Party and moderate unionists and seized an opportunity offered by the publication of the 'Maghermore Manifesto' in July 1905.

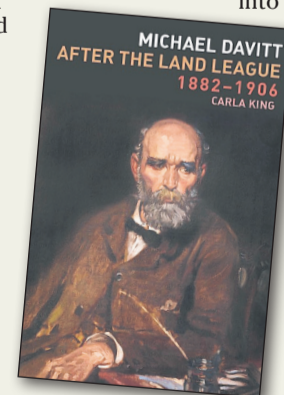
Three years earlier a working class movement had emerged within Belfast unionism, led by TH Sloan, a shipyard worker and Orange populist, who became an Independent Unionist MP. He joined forces with Lindsay Crawford, an Antrim-born Dublin journalist, to found the Independent Orange Order in 1902.

The 'Maghermore Manifesto' was a polemic aimed at attracting anti-clerical nationalists and reforming unionists. It called on Irishmen of all creeds to unite on a basis of nationality, focused not on religion but on Irish interests and argued for compulsory land purchase and a national university

for Ireland. Davitt was struck by the manifesto and contacted its author, Crawford – ultimately subscribing the significant sum of £20 toward circulation of the manifesto. Davitt was so outraged by the *Freeman's Journal's* attempt to muzzle him over the education question that he planned to start a paper of his own, to be called the *Irish Democrat*. He hoped that it might serve as a rallying point for a new kind of more radical politics in Ireland but this avenue was closed by his death in May 1906.

In the 24 years between his leadership of the Land League and his death, Davitt travelled widely internationally, including to the United States, Hawaii, Australia and Russia, where he came into contact with such figures

as Leo Tolstoy, Randolph Hearst and Teddy Roosevelt. Supporting himself with journalism and lecture tours, he continued to seek to advance the causes of the marginalised and disenfranchised throughout his life.



■ **Carla King is the author of Michael Davitt – After the Land League 1882-1906, newly published by UCD Press (www.ucdpress.ie).**

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