

Church & State

An Irish History Magazine

And Cultural Review Of Ireland And The World

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Join An Irish Regiment To-Day"—John Redmond MP

**The Great Eoghan Ruadh
A Fairy Tale Of West Cork**

No. 117

Third Quarter, 2014

Editorial

Marching To The British Drum

We must celebrate the Great War whether we like it or not. And we must not discuss what it was about. Contentious argument about mere historical fact would spoil the purity of the event.

If you absolutely must think about it, do so in trite cliches. The repetition of trite cliches is the British mode of thought about the momentous and catastrophic events which the British State feels compelled to bring about in the world at regular intervals. It is an intellectual discipline that has served Britain well.

Trinity College, which has become our premier University even, though it is only a single College, revealed to us about ten years ago that the Great War, which added large tracts of the world to the British Empire, was "*Our War*". The State—Government and Opposition—has now accepted the revelation.

That it was Trinity's War is beyond doubt. Trinity was in 1914 a bitter-ender institution of the crumbling British Empire in Ireland. And it remains as Imperial and British as far as it can manage it.

But what about Our University, which has three or our Colleges. Well it has become British too. It has, however, shown its independence by not becoming British under the second-hand influence of Trinity. It converted under direct instruction by Cambridge and Oxford.

The most hardline British College of what is still called the National University out of habit is Cork. The Cork College came under the dominance of Dermot Keogh. Keogh was a journalist on the *Irish Press*. The *Irish Press* was the Fianna Fail daily paper which Fianna Fail couldn't be bothered to keep in being when the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Times* ganged up against it during a strike 25 years ago.

In 1972 Keogh was overcome by a vision of Fascism. He was present in a professional capacity at a demonstration at the British Embassy in response to the Bloody Sunday killings in Derry. The Embassy was burned down by the demonstrators, with the forces of the State making no attempt to protect it. Keogh noticed that there were individual in the crowd, more thoughtful than others, who made suggestions about the best way of going about the task, and he thought: *This is Fascism*.

He dealt with the Fascist threat by becoming Professor of History in Cork and clamping the subversive activity of thought.

Keogh revealed his revelation in an RTE programme on *The Ages Of The State* about twenty years ago. Politicians, some of them impeccably anti-terrorist, also commented in that programme on the Embassy burning. They thought it was a small price for Britain to pay for its Derry atrocity, and that it acted as a useful safety-valve to let off outraged feeling in the South. But Keogh would have no truck with such practicality, which he probably saw as dangerous frivolity.

UCC was a lively place in the days of Alfred O'Rahilly. Under the dominance of Keogh it became a black hole in Irish intellectual life. A powerful force of gravity operated within, preventing anything from escaping from it. In recent years we

saw the sad case of a young American, accustomed to academic freedom, getting job there and getting to understand what he must do or not do in order to keep it.

Cork College is immensely wealthy, and a large property owner. It is a dominating economic presence in the city. Some years ago it caused books produced without its authority in North Cork to be excluded from city bookshops.

It was therefore a great surprise when the *Cork Evening Echo* allowed a free discussion of what the Great War was and was not about to appear on its Letters' Pages. That discussion has now been going on for more than three months without a single contribution from the College, even though it has a Department which specialises in the War.

This is an indication that UCC War Studies are properly British in spirit, meaning that essentials are dealt with in cliches. In the *Echo* discussions the cliches were taken apart early on and the realities which they camouflaged were brought to light. The College could not participate in that kind of discussion without bringing itself into disfavour with the great war-making state nearby and subverting itself.

War-studies in Ireland cannot be a critical investigation of why Britain makes wars. That would not be a war study, it would be a "*polemic*", and would play into the hands of the Provos. (In fact, of course, it wouldn't. the ground on which the Provos thrived was not ancient memories but the current reality of undemocratic British Government in the North. But Southern academics liked to pretend when they re-wrote Irish history to Oxbridge orders that they were subverting terrorism—and it might even be that some of them sincerely believed it. Humanity is capable of very strange beliefs, as Sophocles noted a long time ago.)

Vincent Browne went on a conducted tour of the British Imperial War Museum for his Radio Eireann programme about ten years ago. His guide was the British military historian Keith Jeffrey, who held some academic position in Belfast at the time, and was on the Board of *Irish Historical Studies*. Jeffrey was articulate about everything to do with the military conduct of the War, but when Browne demanded to be told what it was about, why the British State arranged for all that slaughter to go on, Jeffrey became tongue-tied. One can repeat trite cliches only so many times before bringing out their emptiness. Once should be enough for anybody with a sense of decency. But Browne indiscreetly just keep on looking for something meaningful underneath the cliché. It wasn't polite. And war was something that should only be discussed in polite euphemisms—as used to be the case with sex. And, while sex is no longer sacred, war is.

The exchange of cliches is a much maligned form of discourse. Social life could hardly go on without it. And successfully ambitious public figures in a society whose mode of life was largely made possible by the Imperialist war-making activities of the State can hardly be expected to engage in subversive destruction of the cliches by which people live, and for which they do dreadful things. But, sauce for the goose . . .

The Trinity revisionists—one thinks particularly of Peter Hart and Joost Augusteijn—probed the motives which led people to risk their lives by defending the Dail Government established in 1919 against British military activity which was attempting to destroy it. And they concluded that the Volunteers had nothing profound in their heads to justify what they were doing. The Volunteers were motivated by a handful of trivial cliches—a meaningless jargon—about Freedom.

Augusteijn etc. did not question what was in the heads of the Volunteers who, at Redmond's call, went to kill people for the British Empire. If they had, they would probably have found that even clichés were in short supply.

The beating of the drum always raised cannonfodder in England. Very big drums indeed were beaten in 1914.

There was no beating of drums to raise Republican Volunteers. Only some kind of thought would do it. And, if that thought was in expression reduced to cliché, it was at least a cliché that there was thought behind.

Tom Barry, by his own account, gave no thought at all to what his first war was about. There were undoubtedly hundreds of thousands in the British Army of millions who had no more political thought about the War than Barry had. But Barry had an idea of why he was fighting in his second war, and so had everybody else in his second army.

It was Augusteijn himself, the supercilious Trinity historian, who didn't have a clue.

The *Evening Echo* discussion of the Great War began with a challenge to the clichéd pro-War propaganda of the *Western Front* group of Gerry White, a Free State soldier and a military historian in the British style. Whyte soon retreated from the cut and thrust of free discussion, but on June 24th he had a blockbuster article on the origins of the Great War, co-authored with his colleague, Brendan O'Shea. The article is over two pages long.

The piece begins by agreeing with Jingo British historians that the Serbian assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne was not "*an authentic cause for World War I*" but was "*exploited*" in order to bring war about. They do not say who did the exploiting.

The "*root cause*" of the War, they say, lay in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. They did not mention that that War was an entirely unprovoked invasion of Prussia by France, in the declaring of which the French Emperor exhorted his troops to re-enact the great deeds of their ancestors in Germany.

The French attack, launched from Alsace, miscarried. A Prussian counter-attack was effective but France refused to call off the War. Prussia therefore found itself in possession of a large part of France.

The French Emperor had declared war on a tide of popular French enthusiasm for another war on the Germans. He was captured early in the War. A Republic was declared—the Third Republic. It refused to negotiate an end to the War which was clearly lost, and it called for a *levee en masse*—a rising of the people for—how should it be put these days?—for irregular or terrorist warfare.

(An Irish Republican group went to support France for old times' sake, but found no opportunity for action.)

When the new Republic eventually agreed to negotiate an end to the War, Paris rebelled. The Paris Commune proclaimed a revolution and Marx wrote a pamphlet in support of it for showing the way to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Nevertheless, the Government of the Republic negotiated peace with the Germans, who withdrew. General McMahon, who transferred his allegiance from the Emperor to the Republic, conquered Paris for the Republic, and Communism was scotched with slaughter on a massive scale. About 50,000 were killed by the Republic.

The purpose of the French invasion of Prussia was to stop
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John Minahane: Part 5 is held over to the Autumn issue

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the process of German unification that was happening under Prussian influence. The French hoped, by attacking Prussia, to discourage Bavaria from joining it in a German state, but the effect of the invasion was to accelerate German unification.

The mixed German/French regions of Alsace and Lorraine were transferred from France to Germany in the settlement. In a British war on France in the previous century, one of the war aims was to prevent France from acquiring Alsace. The region itself was able to fit in with either state. After 1870 it fitted easily into the German state, and it found the devolved political structure of Germany, allowing extensive home rule, advantageous as it was a strongly Catholic area and the Third French Republic was a very centralised anti-Catholic state.

If the Franco-Prussian War was the cause of the Great War, it might have been worth mentioning what it was about.

How it was the cause of the World war 44 years later is not explained.

It is mentioned that France kept up an irredentist claim on Alsace-Lorraine—a fact strongly emphasized by Nicholas Mansergh in his propagandist history of the origins of the War. Is it the case that irredentism is a good thing, or at least a neutral thing, when it is not Irish?

We are told that the second Kaiser dismissed Bismarck, the architect of German unity, and "*set about transforming his empire into a 'world power' by acquiring new overseas colonies...*"

It is not mentioned that the reason the German state was called an *Empire* was because a combination of kingdoms, some of which continued to be governed by Kings—Bavaria for instance—and a ruler over Kings is an Emperor. Of course the British Empire was not that kind of Empire, and our understanding has been constricted into British forms.

The German Empire did acquire overseas possessions in the late 19th century, when it would almost have been subversive for a European Power not to. But that is not what made it a World Power.

Capitalist industry developed with remarkable speed in Germany during the generation after unification. This was in no way due to the second Kaiser. The development was in process before unification, and was greatly facilitated by the social arrangements made for it by Bismarck which warded off funda-

mentalist class antagonisms and made provision for civilised living conditions for workers, so that James Connolly could feel that, in supporting Germany against Britain in 1914, he was not only following the Irish national interest but was supporting Socialism internationally.

Socially-oriented German Capitalism developed within the world market, and was so successful that, by 1900, German life depended on the world market.

The Kaiser brought in Navy Law at the end of the 19th century—

"authorising the construction of 19 battleships and eight armoured cruisers", and this "was interpreted by British as a direct challenge to her maritime supremacy and placed the ex-allies on collision course..."

Why so?

It was British doctrine that international trade brought people together. Britain said its existence depended on international trade and therefore it had a powerful Navy to protect it. Germany, by successfully following Britain's example and engaging in international trade, became dependent on overseas trade—a fact carefully noted in specialist British journals around 1900—and decided that like Britain it needed a Navy to protect its trade. Why should this have placed the two countries on a collision course?

Did Germany use its Navy for something else than the protection of its trade?

Britain certainly did. But did Germany? The *Western Front* authors don't say that it did. Why, then, do they say that the building of a small German Navy put the two countries on a collision course?

They don't mention the economic dimension of things at all. They do not

mention that the German Navy was built for the protection of German overseas trade. If they did, they could hardly write about it all as simple-mindedly as they do.

A century ago Hilaire Belloc, an influential British intellectual of the time, wrote that Britain needed absolute dominance at sea in order to protect its trade and run its Empire. He said that Germany had no Empire worth speaking of and didn't need a Navy for that. And he ridiculed as not worth discussion the German claim that a Navy was needed for the protection of German trade. As he wrote that, the Royal Navy had stopped German seaborne trade with the object of starving Germany into submission.

After 1945, when squeamish elements in Britain were criticising the policy of incinerating the populations of virtually undefended German cities by area bombing, Bomber Harris, head of the RAF, retorted that he had killed fewer Germans with his area bombing than the Royal Navy had killed in the Great War by starvation caused by the blockade, which nobody objected to. He said half a million Germans were starved to death by the action of the Royal Navy.

The British view was that the seas of the world were British. When it was making war on somebody, it did not allow neutrals to continue trading with him. When it was subjugating the Boer Republics, the Germans tried to keep on trading with the Boers. The Royal Navy interfered. Germany began to understand the risks of foreign trade in a world dominated by the Royal Navy. It could only continue on the line of economic development on which it had embarked—the line pioneered by the England which was teaching the nations how to

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live—if it acquired the means of protecting its foreign trade. But it was a slow learner. It increased its naval construction a bit, but in 1914 it had come nowhere near being able to challenge British supremacy at sea. Britain therefore was able to impose a starvation regime on it.

An alternative course of action would have been to end its foreign trade by sea, shrink its economy, and revert to something like the system of petty states from which it had emerged in 1870. But how can a successful capitalist development be stopped, and the system be unwound? It hasn't ever happened. And, from the viewpoint of the value system which holds that the free market is the nearest to Paradise that we can ever get on Earth—from the viewpoint of the value system in which we live now—would not a German attempt to unwind its capitalist development have been profoundly immoral: even if its purpose was to ward off the need to do something that would challenge the world dominance of the Royal Navy?

As an act of aggression showing that Germany had war in mind, Whyte and O'Shea cite German recognition of "*the sovereignty of Morocco*". this was "*seen as a direct challenge to French influence and almost resulted in war between France and Germany*".

We need to redefine "aggression".

Germany recognised an existing sovereignty which Imperial France felt it was its right to destroy. And half a dozen years earlier Germany recognised the sovereignty of the Boer Republics which Britain was destroying.

Refusal to recognise the priority of the Imperial right of the French or British Empires over the rights of peoples in actual occupation of a territory is an act of aggression. So be it. It tells us where the *Western Front* stands.

But then we come across a gigantic oversight. The major act of aggression by Germany was its recognition of the Ottoman Empire as a legitimate part of the world order, but Whyte and O'Shea don't even mention it.

There was a well-argued opinion published in the USA during the period of its neutrality that the basic cause of the War was German recognition of the Ottoman State, and the assistance it gave to the Ottoman Government to improve its internal communications, particularly the building of a railway from Constanti-

nople to Bagdad and Basra. This ran counter to the ambition of Britain, France and Russia to destroy the Ottoman state and share out its territory between themselves.

That it was their intention to destroy the Ottoman state is beyond dispute—their difficulty was agreeing on a share-out. And it is beyond dispute that Britain, which had already taken effective possession of Egypt, was intent on establishing a continuous land empire from Egypt to India, across Arabia and Persia. It had already in 1914 divided Persia with Russia, Southern Persia was being marked British red on maps around 1912. Northern Persia was Russian. Between the two there was a buffer zone which it was pretended was an independent state. A secret treaty had been made with local chieftains across the Gulf, in Kuwait, in breach of Ottoman sovereignty. And the Indian Army (i.e. the British Army in India) was ready to pounce on Basra.

Germany, with its conservative foreign policy of recognising existing states, was challenging the progressive policy of Britain etc. to destroy them.

Having overlooked that major act of German aggression, Whyte and O'Shea descend into trivial gossip about the Kaiser.

Bismarck had made a secret arrangement with the Tsar that is known as the *Reinsurance Treaty*. The second Kaiser did not keep up this secret agreement after he sacked Bismarck:

"An inexperienced monarch, but enthusiastic militarist, Wilhelm embarked on a series of policies which would prove disastrous for Germany and Europe."

He did not renew the Agreement with Russia.

"This resulted in Russia entering a military convention with the French Republic".

A "*militarist*" is somebody who prefers war to other available means of achieving an object.

What wars did William fight before the one that overtook him in 1914? And how would his being a *militarist* have led him to forego his agreement with Russia? Is it suggested that he preferred to stand alone, and strengthen the hand of France which had claims on him, so that he might have the opportunity to make war on everybody?

Dogmatically secularist France certainly strengthened its position against Germany, and astonished Europe, by financing theocratic Russia. The Kaiser

certainly acted foolishly when he neglected the military defences of the state—but *militaristically*?

Germany lived in a fool's paradise under the second Kaiser. An illusion of perpetual peace descended on it. Social Democracy became a powerful movement and generated a widespread sentiment of pacifism, while in England during the same period the most influential socialist, Robert Blatchford, moved strongly in the other direction, demanding an even bigger Navy, although the existing Royal Navy was already bigger than an other two Navies combined. German writers who tried to counter the growing pacifist mentality and tell the public they were living in a fool's paradise if they thought the English State would stand idly by while German industry got the better of British industry in the world market created by Britain, on which Britain felt it had proprietary rights—those writers, whose advice was ignored in Germany, were presented by the British propaganda in 1914 as evidence of how mad for war the Germans were.

The Franco-Russian alliance of the mid-1890s was, however, a minor thing compared to what happened next—a thing not mentioned by the *Western Front*.

France remained the official enemy of Britain until the early 1900s—the one against which war plans were kept up to date. Then in 1905 there was the *Entente Cordiale* and Russo/Japanese War. The Japanese were forced into the Imperialist sphere by American warships in the mid-19th century. They decided to be a predator instead of a victim and did rather well at it, encouraged by Britain. They came into conflict with Russia and defeated it. Russia had, during the period of the rise of Japan as an international force, come into conflict with Britain in Asia.

Tsarist Russia was a European civilising force in Central Asia and in its expansion southwards it came into conflict with Britain, which was expanding northwards from India. Afghanistan was the meeting point.

Britain enacted a major reorganisation of its world relationships in the few years after 1900. It took France off the top of its enemy list and took advantage of Russia's defeat by Japan to make a deal with it by which Russian interest was shifted from Central Asia to the Mediterranean. Russia had been told decisively in the 19th century that it

could not have Constantinople: it was now told that it could. The way to Constantinople lay through the Ottoman hinterland in the Balkans—an area in which Russia's Slav ally, Serbia, also had ambitions.

And so the powerful alliance against Germany was constructed—an alliance based on mutually compatible expansionist aims, and therefore much more dependable than bits of paper. France wanted Alsace-Lorraine, Russia wanted Constantinople, Serbia wanted Bosnia. Britain a land bridge from Egypt to India across Ottoman Arabia, and all of these could be achieved by war on Germany, its only ally, Austria, and the Ottoman State—which was reinforcing its internal structures with German assistance.

Whether this turn of events could have been prevented if the Kaiser had kept up the secret military agreement with the Tsar is doubtful. But it was negligent of him not to have kept it up. And that was just one of the ways in which he increased the possibility of European War by not preparing for it. He certainly made it easy for England.

Coming to July 1914, the *Western Front* says: "*The possibility of Britain entering the war in support of Belgium failed to deter Germany*".

If saving Belgium from German intrusion had been Britain's object, it could have achieved it by telling the Germans that they would find themselves at war with Britain if they tried to outflank French defences by marching through Belgium. Since Britain did not tell the Germans that, its object clearly was not to prevent German entry into Belgium.

The Germans tried to clarify British intentions but could not get a definite statement of intent from the Foreign Office. The British Government newspapers had discussed the possibility of a German march through Belgium and were strongly of the opinion that it would not warrant British intervention in a war between Germany and Austria on the one side and France and Russia on the other. In the light of Liberal opinion, forcibly expressed, and the absence of a contradicting statement by the Liberal leaders, German leaders concluded that, although Whitehall had not given a clear green light, the fact that it had not given a red light meant that it did not regard Belgian neutrality as an issue on which its neutrality depended.

Today it can hardly be doubted that

the British Government needed a German breach of Belgian neutrality for the purpose of overcoming the Gladstonian opposition of its backbenches to participation in a balance-of-power war in Europe.

The British Parliament, before arranging great celebrations to mark the centenary of the declaration of War, had the decency to pretend to debate the matter. The Dail did not.

The British Parliament furthermore arranged for itself to be lectured about the War by an eminent academic historian, Professor Vernon Bogdanor. The lecture was broadcast repeatedly on the BBC's Parliament Channel. Bogdanor explained that Whitehall had not made its position clear in its *Entente* understanding with France. There had been conversations and arrangements but the Liberal leaders, acting behind the back of their party and against its known sentiments, could not give France a formal commitment to support it in war against Germany. That is what they wanted to do but the possibility of doing it depended on certain events. The position of the British Government had to be ambiguous while it waited on events, and—

"This ambiguity could have had tragic consequences in 1914, had Germany not invaded Belgium. Because Gray {Foreign Secretary} and some other Liberals had taken the view that we ought to go to the aid of France, the vast majority of Liberals did not take that view. As a result of the German invasion of Belgium the ambiguities disappeared" (Bogdanor).

The *Western Front* authors say: "*The slide towards war continued... when Austria and Russia announced a general mobilisation*".

Does anybody now really dispute the fact that Russia mobilised and that other Continental mobilisations followed as a matter of course?

It was generally understood in political and military circles that in the circumstances of the European situation, general mobilisation would be taken for an act of war. The politics of the matter can be argued for ever, but the military actuality that the Russian mobilisation started the war in Europe can hardly be disputed.

White and O'Shea don't dispute it. They just don't mention it.

Britain was not part of the interlocking system of European Treaties. It remained a free agent. But it had made

extensive secret preparations for war on Germany in close alliance with France—a fact not mentioned by O'Shea and Whyte—and the moral/propaganda campaign made possible by the breach of Belgian neutrality enabled it to put its secret plans into operation.

The article then gives an extract from Redmond's speech about how the defence of Ireland could be left to the rival armies of his Volunteers and the Ulster Volunteers. The ridicule heaped on that policy is one of the few things on which we agree with the *Irish Times*.

Siegfried Sassoon

Censored Poem

'Atrocities'

When Siegfried Sassoon published his poem *Atrocities* in 1919, it was shocking in its description of British soldiers boasting about killing German prisoners.

But that version was heavily censored by publishers, with euphemisms such as '*How did you do them in?*' replacing '*How did you kill them?*', and other lines removed altogether.

Actor and director Samuel West read the uncensored version of the poem on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme on 10th July 2014, while British academic Jean Moorcroft Wilson explained why the publishers "*modified*" it.

Atrocities

You bragged how once your men in
savage mood
Butchered some Saxon prisoners. That
was good.
I trust you felt no pity as they stood
Patient, cowed and scared as prisoners
should.

How did you kill them? Speak and don't
be shy.
You know I love to hear how Germans
die.
Downstairs in dugouts, "Kamerad!",
they cry,
And squeal like stoats when bombs
begin to fly.

I'm proud of you. Perhaps you'll feel as
brave
Alone in no-mans land when none can
save
And shield you from the horrors of the
night.

There's blood upon your hands. Go out
and fight.

I hope those Huns will haunt you with
their screams,
And make you gulp their blood in
ghoulish dreams.

You're great at murder. Tell me, can
you fight?

Published bowdlerised version:
You told me, in your drunken-boasting
mood,
How once you butchered prisoners. That
was good!
I'm sure you felt no pity while they
stood
Patient and cowed and scared, as
prisoners should.

How did you do them in? Come, don't
be shy:
You know I love to hear how Germans
die,
Downstairs in dug-outs. 'Camerad!' they
cry;
Then squeal like stoats when bombs
begin to fly.

And you? I know your record. You went
sick
When orders looked unwholesome:
then, with trick
And lie, you wangled home. And here
you are,
Still talking big and boozing in a bar.

We are indebted to Gwydion
Williams and Pat Muldowney for
drawing this story to our attention.

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Eoghan Ruadh Ó Súilleabháin

I Sacsuibh na Séad

I Sacsuibh na séad i gcéin óm dhúthchas,
Fá bharr na gcrabhb cois céidh na
stiur-bharc,
Is mé ag machtnamh ar éag na bhflatha
is na laoch
I bhfearannaibh Chéin do túrnadh,
Le Danair i spéirling chonncais,
Dá gcabhair ciodh tréan mé i bhfionntar,
Ag fearadh mo dhéar go lachtmhar le
léan,
Gan aiteas, gan réim, gan subhachas.

In England of the treasures far from my
homeland / in the shadow of masts by the
quay of the tall ships / while I pondered on
the passing of the nobles and heroes / done
to death in the land of Céin / by savages in a
whirlwind of conquest / Helpless, valiant
though I am in ventures, shedding my tears
copiously in sorrow / without delight, without
power, without pleasure.

Do dhearcas réilteann ghréigeach,
ghreannta,
Ghile, bhí gasta, gnúis-gheal,
Banamhail, béasach, béal-tais, blasta,
Céimeach, cneasta, cùmtha,
Maiseamhail, méinneach, maordha,
measta,
Aereach, abaidh, umhalach,
Na reathaibh ag teacht dob éadtrom
aistear,
Taobh liom seal gur thúirling.

I beheld a lady, Grecian, elegant / bright,
clever she was, of fair appearance / feminine
well bred, soft lipped, elegant / dignified,
modest, well shaped / beautiful, of fair mien,
majestic, estimable / lively, mature, courteous
/ Coming in haste, light of gait / she
descended next to me for a while.

Ba chamarsach léi-si a céibhe dlútha,
O bhathas go féar ag slaodadh ar lúith-
chrith,
A mala ba chaol, a hathadh gan bhéim,
A dearca 's a scéimh ba lonnrach;
Ba dhearg an caor ar úr-lil
'Na leacain ag déanamh conncais,
Is ba bhlasta gach téacs d'aitheasc a
béal
'Na spreagaireacht méar ar chiúin-chruit.

Her thick hair was twisting / from the crown
to the grass, flowing in swift tremors / Her
eyebrow was slender, her eyes were inviting
/ Her face and her appearance were lustrous /
The ember was red on the fresh lily / in her

cheek seeking supremacy / And more elegant
was every verse her voice uttered / than the
plucking of fingers on a gentle harp.

Ba samhail a déid le gné na heala
Ar fraoch na mara cubhar-fhliuch,
A mama ba ghéar nár léanuigh cleasa
Claona cama Cúipid;
A leabhar-chrobh réidh is ró-ghlé do
dhearadh
Béir is barca stiúrach,
Caismirt na gcéadta, faol-choin allta,
Éisc is ealta clúmhach.

Her teeth were of the likeness of a swan's
appearance / on the foam wet fury of the sea
/ Her keen breasts were undefiled by the
tricks of wanton Cupid / Her ready, slender
hand inscribed very clearly / bears and tall
ships / the battles of hundreds, savage wolves
/ fishes and feathered flocks.

A seanga-chorp séimh mo phéin do
dhúbail,
Ó bhathas go féar go néata i gclúid chirt,
Trér shearg mo ghné is do bhalbhuigh
mé;
Do leagadh mo ghéaga lútha
Do dalladh mé d'éis gach cúrsa,
Cé labharas léi go cúthail,
Is d'aithcheas don bhé a hainm 's scéal,
A treabha 's a tréad do thabhairt dam.

Her fine, graceful body doubled my pangs /
From the crown of her head to the grass in
correct proportions / From which my appear-
ance crumbled and I was struck dumb / my
vigorous limbs were enfeebled / I was blinded
after all these events / Though I spoke to her
timidly / and I enquired of the lady her name
and her story / her tribe and her company to
tell me.

Do ghlacas-sa réim tar éis a hagaiill,
D'eistear seal is d'umhluigheas,
Do charas a scéimh, a méinn 's a pearsa,
Céim nár mhasla dúinn-ne;
Ba thapamhail, tréan, gach géag dom
bhallaibh,
Faon níor bh'fada i bpudhair mé,
An tan bheartas gurab aon an bhé do
ghreannuigh
Gnéithe is peacadh drúise.

I took heart after her words / I was silent a
while, and I deferred / I desired her beauty, her
mein and her person / a circumstance that
was no disgrace to me / Every organ of my
limbs was active, strong / I was not long

faint and at a loss / whenever I supposed that
the woman was one who was devoted to /
the forms and sin of lust.

Freagair-se mé an tú an réilteann lonnrach
Thug fearg is maodhm na Trae gan
cionnta,
Nó an ainir thug léan is leagadh na
nGaedheal,
I bhfearannaibh Chéin is Iughoine,
D'fhúig flatha is éigs' na driúic sain,
Faoi an amhadh go tréith ag búraibh,
Nó an gailteann i gcéin tar chalaith do
léim
Ó Eamhain ag laoch 'na lonn-bharc.

"Answer me, are you the illustrious lady /
who brought about the fury and was of
guiltless Troy / or the maiden who wrought
the grief and overthrow of the Irish / in the
lands of Céin and Iughoin / that left the
nobles and bards of those lands / in weakness
under the yoke of churls / Or the lady who
leaped afar over the sea / from Eamhain,
with a knight in his strong ship?"

D'freagair ní haon don mhéid sin chanais
Féin id starthaibh lúb mé,
Is ní chanfad-sa scéal do strae dod
shamhail,
Géag do Chlannaibh Lúiteir,
Danar i méinn, i gcéill 's gcealg,
Réics is gaige ó Lonndain,
Tá i n-arm 's i n-éadach gléasta ag
gearradh
Géag is fasc mo Phrionnsa.

She answered, "I am none of those you relate
/ Yourself in your lying stories / and I shall
not relate a story to a vagrant such as you / a
scion of the clan of Luther / a savage in
mien, in outlook and in treachery / a rake
and a coxcomb from London / who are in
arms and armour arrayed, lacerating / the
limbs of my Prince."

Ná tarcuisnigh mé, a gheal-scéimh na
gcuíl-fhionn,
Dar an leabhar so im ghéag, ní haon
dá gcrú mé,
Acht taistealach tréith tar caise le fraoch
Do stracadh i gcéin ar úrla,
Ag cabhair don té nár bh'fionn liom,
I mbarcaibh na bpiléar ar cubhar-mhuir,
Is gur scagadh mo thréad as caise
d'fhuil Ghaedheal
I gCaiseal ba réacsá cúigidh.

"Do not insult me, O bright countenanced
lady of fair hair / By this book in my hand, I
am not one of their blood / but a feeble
traveler who goes over the raging ocean /
who was torn away by the hair of my head /
Aiding the person I was not of a mind to / In
the gunships on the foaming ocean and my
tribe is of the strain of the bloodstream of the
Irish / in Cashel of the provincial kingship.

Ó'r dearbh gurab aon do récs-fhuil Chaisil
Tréimhse snaidhmeadh liom tú,
Aithrisfead féin duit éachta m'aistir,
Is scéalfad m'ainim ionnraic;
Gairmid éigs' díom Éire mheabhail,
Méirdreach chealg-chúrsach,
Thug masla 'gus béim tré chlaon le
Gallaibh
Do thréid mo bhailte dúthchais.

"As it is true that you are one of the royal
blood of Cashel / for a while I was united
with you / I shall myself relate to you the
exploits of my travels / and I will tell you my
true name / Poets call me deceitful Éire / a
hussy of treacherous ways who gave insult
and injury, through deceit with foreigners /
to the company of my native homesteads."

Ó fhearannaibh Chéin is Éibhir
fhionntaigh,
Tar calaith na dtéad go héascaidh sciúrdas,
Le teachtaireacht scéil ó Chlannaibh na
nGaedheal,
Gur gairid go ndéanfaid conncas,
Go scaipfid gach béar do chomplacht
Na n-amhas do phréamh-stoc Lonndan
Ar beatha na laoch is go gcastar i réim
Mo ghaithle 'n-a réics go Dún Luirc.

"From the lands of Céin and worthy Éibhear
/ over the ocean of ropes I fled easily / with a
message of news from the clans of the Irish /
that soon they would make a conquest / that
they would scatter every brear of the
company / of the mercenaries of the root
stock of London / Here's to the life of the
heroes, and he shall return in power / my
champion, as king, to Dún Luirc."

Do thargair éigse dréachta is feasa
A téacht go treasach trúipeach,
Lannmhar léidmheach laochda ag ladairt
Méith-phiuc galla-phonnach;
A scanadh gach scéil tá a dtréimhse
caithte,
Tré na gcaithfid umhladh,
Is atharrach béas ciodh léan leo a
cheapadh
'gus réim do thabhairt d'úghdair.

"Bards of verse and knowledge prophesy /
his coming, abounding in battle-ranks and
troops / strong, valiant, chivalrous, thrashing
/ fat bucks of foreign manners / from the
examining of every story their time is spent /
by which they must submit / and adopt
different manners, though it bitter for them
to accept it / and yield authority to others."

Caithfead-sa éisteacht tré dhubh-
smachta
Ar thaobh na nGalla brúideach,
Ó theagmhas féin le tréimhse i
nglasaibh,
Céim d'fhúig dearbh dubhach mé;
Aithris mo scéal don éigse ag baile,
Is léighfid aiste chugham-sa,
Do scaipfidh mo léan ciodh léir le lachta
Déar gur dalladh dúr mé.

I must keep silent, perforce / in the land of
the beast like foreigners / since I happen to
be for a while in bondage / a circumstance
that left me truly downcast / Tell my story to
the poets at home / and they will send a
vesre to me / that will scatter my grief, though
full of streams / of tears so that I am blinded
senseless.

Cois abhann an tsléibhe tá an féinics
fionntach
Fearmhail féiseach féastach flúirseach,
Taca re téics do scannadh go glé,
Is eagnach léigheanta ponncach
Do cheapadh gach dréacht gan dúire,
Ná dearmaid glaodhach 'na dhún sain
Is taiscfidh go séimh tú i n-' fharradh
go léighfidh
I rannaibh gach céim dod chúrsa.

By the river of the moor is a worthy phoenix
/ manly, festive, feasting, generous / a support
in clearly analyzing texts / and wise, learned,
subtle / who would compose every verse
without stupidity / Do not forget to call in
his house / and he will protect you kindly in
his company while he reads / in verses every
step of your adventures.

Do dhearb-stoc Gaedheal 'seadh an
glé-ghas gasta
Péarla dearbh dúthchais,
D'eascair d'fhuil éigse is laoch nár
mheathta
I maodhmaibh catha cumhanraigh,
Seanghán seasamhach saor do
phréamh-shliocht Eachaidh,
Is é do ghlacfaidh tú i gcion,
Is tabhair do féin tar aon dom charaid
Mo bhé gan taisce cumhdaigh.

Of the true stock of the Irish is the keen, pure
scion / a true pearl of his native land / who is
descended from the blood of poets and heroes
whi were not cowardly / in conflicts of hard
fought battles / Noble, sturdy Seán of the
root stock of Eachaidh (i.e. an O'Sullivan) /
And give to himself, above any of my
relatives / my lady without store of protection.

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Séamas Ó Domhnaill

Eoghan Ruadh Ó Súilleabháin

1748—1784

Aspects of his Life and Work

Part 13

In the Navy

"A cab combs the snake, tryin' to rake in that last night's fare. And a solitary sailor, who spends the facts of his life like small change on strangers, paws his inside P-coat pocket for a welcome twenty-five cents, and the last bent butt from a package of Kents. As he dreams of a waitress with Maxwell House eyes, and marmalade thighs, with scrambled yellow hair. Her rhinestone-studded moniker says "Irene", as she wipes the whisps of dishwater blonde from her eyes ..."

(Tom Waites, "Ghosts of Saturday Night", *After Hours at Napoleone's Pizza House*, 1974).

The story of Eoghan Ruadh includes a period spent in the Royal Navy towards the end of the wars of the American Revolution 1781—1782. At least two of his *aislings* and one English language ballad have been attributed to this time: "*I Sacsuibh na Séad*" is printed above. You can check out the other *aisling*, "*Ar Maidin Inné*" as well as the ballad, "*Rodney's Glory*" in Pat Muldowney's two books of translations available from the Aubane Historical Society.

The context of *Rodney's Glory* is the naval Battle of the Saintes which was fought on 12th April 1782 in the Carribean between the British under Admiral George Rodney and the French under Admiral François-Joseph de Grasse. Fr. Dinneen gives the story in his original edition of Eoghan's Ruadh's songs:

"On the morning of the twelfth of April in that year, 1782, Rodney, who had lately been blundering, was awakened by Sir Charles Douglas, with the intelligence that God had given him the French enemy on the lee bow "ot far from old Fort Royal". De Grasse, the French Admiral, in vain tried to get to the windward. The engage-ment began at seven o'clock, and at close quarters. As the French line got southward under the lee of Dominica, it was gapped by varying winds. Through one of the gaps Rodney's own vessel, the "Formidable" passed, the "Bedford" followed, another leading vessel found also a passage. The ships astern followed. The French fleet were routed, and De Grasse's flagship, the "Ville de

Paris", surrendered to the "Barfleur". Rodney, whose recent manoeuvres had ended in failure, was in ecstasies of delight. He had won a victory, perhaps hitherto unsurpassed in the annals of British naval warfare, and was fully conscious of the importance of his triumph. In an account of the fight, written by himself, we read: "The battle began at seven in the morning and continued till sunset, nearly eleven hours, and by persons appointed to observe, there never were seven minutes' repose during the engagement, which, I believe, was the severest ever fought at sea, and the most glorious for England. We have taken five and sunk another..." (Mundy's *Life of Rodney*).

"Eoghan took part in this battle, and saw his time for a panegyric. The ode he composed on the occasion, though far from being a good specimen of lyric poetry, could, by a few small amendments, be made a tolerable composition, and, apart from its poetical merits, is of considerable historical interest... The ode was sent to the Admiral in the flush of triumph. He was delighted with the composition, and asked the author to be brought to him. An officer named McCarthy, a Kerryman, accompanied the poet in his visit to the Admiral. Rodney was gracious, and offered promotion, but Eoghan only wanted to be set free from service. Ere the Admiral could reply to his request, McCarthy interposed and said, "Anything but that; we would not part with you for love or money." Eoghan turned away saying: "Imireochaimíd beart éigin eile oraibh", "I will play some other trick on you". McCarthy, who understood his remark, replied: "I'll take good care, Sullivan, you will not." The following year Eoghan returned to England, where he seems to have passed to the regular land forces. But he was home-sick, and a genuine patri-otic spirit is revealed in two or three noble *Aislingi* or visions of Erin, which he composed as a red-coat in the land of the Saxon. His British loyalty was no deeper than his uniform, under which beat a noble heart that yearned for his native land, and grieved over all her woes..."

There is no McCarthy officer named

in the List of Naval Officers for that period but it is possible that the Mc Carthy who is mentioned above was an interpreter. The Naval historian, Nicholas Rodger in his book the *Wooden World*, explains that the British Navy was a multinational force:

"There were men from every nation under heaven in the Navy, sometimes swept up in the press, but more often volunteers. Cretans, Danes, Italians, Portuguese, Swedes, Hanoverians, Americans of every colony and every colour, they appear in almost all ships' musters."

According to Eoghan Ruadh's second editor, Risteárd Ó Foghlú, Eoghan sent a copy of his ballad to a man called McCarthy (possibly Eoghan Mhic Thaidg) back home in Ireland. Dear Reader, I have not been able to find out in which manuscripts the English songs of Eoghan Ruadh are to be found. If you know, would you be so kind as to drop me a line to jimaricel@eircom.net.

Whether or not Eoghan Ruadh wrote the ballad, it is clear that the song reflects first hand experience of the battle. For example there is the direct quotation from Rodney, "*Now, for the sake of Old England, we'll show them British valour*". The implication here would be that the writer was physically present aboard the flagship "*Formidable*" within earshot of the Admiral.

The crew list of the "*Formidable*" shows "*Owen Sullivan*" as a deserter in January 1782. If this refers to our poet, then how could he have been present at the Battle of the Saintes in April 1782? The Naval historian, Nicholas Rodger, in his book the "*Wooden World*" (Fontana Press 1986), says that very often men listed as "*Run*" were not really permanent deserters. Often they were just late in returning to their ship from shore leave:

"There were many who had overstayed their leave, either unintentionally or deliberately, profiting by the many good excuses which the latecomer could offer. Men were always returning to their ships, overdue from leave, and sometimes after they had been "run" on the books. But they were seldom either spoken or thought of as deserters" (p. 190).

"The prevention of desertion can be seen as a sort of game, played by elaborate unwritten rules, in which the recruits' object was to regain their liberty, and the Navy's was to keep them long enough to win their loyalty" (p. 201).

"At the end of the war the game was concluded by the issue of sweeping

orders to the Navy Board to take off the "R"s from all deserters except the most serious cases" (p. 202).

According to Hannay (*Life of Rodney*, 1891, pp. 170 - 173), both the British and the French fleets were in their home ports during the Winter of 1781/82. Rodney was in Plymouth and the French Admiral Guichen was in Brest. Both were preparing for the Spring campaign in the West Indies but both were hemmed in by bad weather. In early January 1782 the weather shifted to Rodney's advantage. Even though the bulk of his fleet was not quite ready, Rodney decided to make a run for it with four of his ships. The others could follow later. This meant that he reached the West Indies before his French rival and was able to take command of the British ships already stationed there.

The Ships Registers at the Public Record Office, Kew, London, show that the usual number of "Run" men is less than a dozen per ship. The "Formidable" has 60 names on the "Run" list. It is quite likely that Rodney gave orders to his own crew to put to sea in a hurry when the weather shifted. Many of his crew may have been ashore and were caught unawares. Perhaps those who did not return by the very short deadline were listed as "Run". The press gang would then have been sent out to round them up and put them aboard just in time for the ship to sail. This would mean that the 60 "Run" men could actually have been present at the Battle of the Saintes on 12th April 1782.

A number of years ago I was telling the story of Eoghan Ruadh to some friends of mine in Republican West Belfast and the mention of him being in the Royal Navy did not go down too well at all. It seems from the conversation between the poet and the *spéirbhean* in the song "I Sascaibh na Séad" that Eoghan Ruadh also felt he had some explaining to do to the lads back at home. Generally in *aisling* songs the lady deliberately comes to the poet with a message specially for him. In "I Sascaibh na Séad", however, the woman does not seem to have sought out the poet specifically. She is moving about the pier singing to herself when they stumble upon one another. She is affronted when he dares to address her, thinking him to be a low grade English yob. There is a reflection here of the identification of literature with Gaelic civilization and the Irish nation. The poets are the embodiment of the literary tradition and when they are suppressed or exiled then

the sovereignty, the spirit of the civilization, is also suffering. That is why the *spéirbhean* was found wandering aimlessly on a foreign dockland.

If you compare the two 'navy' *aisling* songs: (a) "I Sascaibh na Séad" and (b) "Ar Maidin i nDé Cois Céidh na Slim-Bharc", you will see that one is a version of the other (I'm not sure which). Take a look for example at a verse from each song:

(a)

Ba chamarsach léi-si a céibhe dlútha
O bhathas go féar ag slaodadh ar lúith-chrith
A mala ba chaol, a hathadh gan bhéim
A dearca 's a scéimh ba lonnrach
Ba dhearg an caor ar úr-lil
'Na leacain ag déanamh conncais,
Is ba bhlasta gach téasca d'aitheasc a béal
'Na spreagaireacht méar ar chiúin-chruit.

(Her thick hair was twisting / from the crown to the grass, flowing in swift tremors / Her eyebrow was slender, her eyes were inviting / Her face and her appearance were lustrous / The ember was red on the fresh lily / in her cheek seeking supremacy / And more elegant was every verse her voice uttered / than the plucking of fingers on a gentle harp.)

(b)

Ba chamarsach léi a céibh go dlaoitheach,
Ó bhathas ag téacht go féar ar shír-chrit,
A mala ba chaol, a dearca ba chlaon,
A pearsa 's a scéimh dob' aoibhinn,
A mama 's a déid mar lítis;
'Na leacain ghil mhaordha míonla
Bhí an sneachta le caor ag caismirt go tréan;
Is nár bhfeasach cia an taobh do scriobhadh.

(Her hair, in locks, was twisting / from the crown of her head to the grass, ever trembling / Her eyebrow was slender, her eyes were inviting / Her person and appearance were beautiful / Her breasts and her teeth were white / in her majestic, gentle, bright cheek / the snow with the ember was struggling strongly / and it was unknown which side would yield.)

Dear Reader, I must apologize for the brevity of this article and I hope to write some more of Eoghan and the navy some other time. Eoghan Ruadh himself sometimes apologized for shortcomings in his work. In a manuscript written in 1770 he writes:

"Síoraím ar gach leagthóir eagnaidhe mo leath-sgéal do ghabháil tream dhiothnas, do bhrídh nach mé is ciontach acht louas lámha is síor

bhourabh croidh is aigne am thíormhilleadh—Ar Eoghan Ua Súillíobháin"

(I entreat every prudent reader to excuse me on account of my haste, seeing that it is not I who am at fault, but hastiness of hand, and the great trouble of heart and mind by which I am oppressed.—Written by Eoghan O' Sullivan.)

I myself however have a happier and beautiful distraction in the person of our son, Kaayo Joseph, who was born on May Day:

Ang Kaayo kag Kaalwan magaupod sa akon sa bug-os ko nga kabuhi. Magapuyo ako sa balay sang Ginuo samtang nagakabuhi ako.

Leanfaidh **Cineáltas** is Buanghrá mé gach lá de mo shaol; i dteach an Tiarna a mhairfidh mé go brách na breithe.

Surely **Goodness** and Mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

RUE BRITANNIA

(after OL' MAN RIVER)

Muddy oul river
that very long liver
dredgin' they should be doin'
saturatin' without ruein'
keeps muddin' along
boastin' it's strong

He don't make nothin'
not even his own coffin
and them that makes nothin'
is soon forgotten
under muddy waters
where nothin' matters

While you and me pay the bills
through finance-capital's will
privatised electric
and water tonnes metric
sea-gas no longer provides
a cheap means of suicide

'Course you're weary,
of cold-callin' leery
wishin' you were that muddy river
no tax no rent never,
but drownin' in the sea
like GB plc

Money-yobs on that river
play hedge-funds with you the giver
they don't build but bet
snort cocaine from dawn till sunset

Don't protest
and risk arrest

Stephen Richards

Pride Prejudice And Panic

During the latter half of May the public square in Northern Ireland was thronged with various righteous, wrathful and occasionally reasonable voices, all swirling around and drowning one another out. The controversy was sparked by the comments of Pastor James McConnell in a sermon at his Church on the Shore Road in North Belfast on 18th May which was broadcast live on line. His remarks were eagerly pounced on by the media, especially the BBC, as entertainment for the masses to help us put our time in before the usual shindig starts up over "contentious parades" in North Belfast over the Twelfth.

What happened was that, no doubt reacting to recent events in Nigeria and Sudan, especially the death sentence pronounced on Meriam Ibrahim, the Sudanese Christian woman who has refused to renounce her faith, Pastor McConnell made some not very nuanced theological observations about Islam ("a

doctrine spawned in Hell" being one of them) and some downright fatuous observations about Muslims as people who couldn't be trusted. He also said that Islam was "heathen", which of course was sort of stating the obvious, if you're a Christian.

Our First Minister, Peter Robinson (a sometime attender of the services at McConnell's Church but not seemingly a past or present member), having thought about it for a couple of days added his considered pennyworth. He suggested that, while Muslims could be trusted to go to the shop for you, he would agree that they could not be trusted in connection with the implementation of Sharia Law. The implication that Muslims were a subservient bunch who could be ordered around to do messages to the shops was the most offensive aspect of this.

The New Apologists

About a week after this (though I'm hazy about exact times and seasons), Robinson did a complete *volte face* and issued one of those statements that pass for apologies, though in reality they're just face-saving, self-serving convoluted forms of words. The trademark words are "if" and "context". Words have always been taken out of context and nobody is ever sorry for saying them, just sorry if some stupid people have chosen to take offence. Political advisers can draft these statements in their sleep, but they must have really been sleeping if they let Robinson come out with the bilge in the first place. (The other great phrase that people in public life use is to say that they "take full responsibility" for this or that piece of horrendous behaviour, as if to do so is a matter for admiration.)

Incidentally I admire the *chutzpah* of Boris Johnson, the exception to every rule. You'll remember that years ago he had to go to Liverpool, like Holy Roman Emperor Henry II to the Pope's Winter Palace at Canossa, to abase himself. The background was to do with some remarks he had made about the city or its inhabitants. He did really eat crow. But on another occasion, on a visit to Portsmouth, he had been asked by a local journalist if he thought there were too

many drugs on the streets of Portsmouth. With his usual breeziness he replied that yes, of course there were too many drugs on the said streets, only to find himself in a firestorm. When challenged, he asked his detractors how he should have responded: should he have said there were too few drugs on the streets of Portsmouth, or that there was just the right amount of drugs?

Robinson then made a big thing of being filmed at the Islamic Centre in Belfast, "a sixty year old smiling public man", which was only slightly nauseating, but then came the announcement that the construction of a mosque in Belfast was going to be part-financed by Stormont. This doesn't apply to other places of worship in Northern Ireland, and I wonder if there is some equality legislation being contravened here.

As I recall, just a few days after that came a grovelling apology from Pastor McConnell himself, which was all the more surprising given his *hier stehe ich* attitude in the preceding days.

Nice People

During this whole process, which took about two weeks or a little more, there was a continual muttering, a disapproving Greek chorus, made up of Alliance Party spokespersons, Church dignitaries, and other guardians of public morals. Anna Lo, a South Belfast Alliance MLA, with reference also (I think) to attacks on the party's East Belfast offices, indicated that she had had it with Northern Ireland and was not only contemplating giving up politics but also relocating. But around that same time came the European Election results and it turned out that she had put in a very creditable performance, in contrast to a poor showing by Alliance in the Local Council Elections. So, many people were relaxed about voting for a candidate from an ethnic minority whereas, many worthy homegrown Alliance would-be councillors were given the proverbial raspberry.

Historically, despite all the tut-tutting about attacks on Alliance offices in East Belfast, the heartland of Loyalism, the party has done very well there. The party holds the seat through Naomi Long, and in 1979 when the violence was at a high level, the late Oliver Napier missed out on Westminster by just a few hundred votes. If, which I doubt, communal sanity is measured by the strength of the Alliance vote, East Belfast must be a charming part of the world.

Neanderthal People

A few words about Pastor McConnell

and be police-booted
stand there and be looted
when old seek no medical attention
suffer that pain though it's wrenchin'
realise you're postcoded
and outmoded

Let me go from what they call home
to the Middle-East and roam
show me that stream called the River
Jordan
where no Palestinian crosses the Israeli
cordon

Muddy oul river
that very long liver
dredgin' they should be doin'
saturatin' without ruein'
keeps muddin' along
boastin' it's strong

He don't make nothin'
not even his own coffin
and them that makes nothin'
is soon forgotten
under muddy waters
where nothin' matters

Wilson John Haire.

8 February, 2014

and his Metropolitan Tabernacle. For those not so familiar with Belfast, the building is easily spotted as one comes in from the north on the M2 motorway, and it's an impressive sight indeed, as can no doubt be easily verified on Google. The name is a direct steal from Spurgeon's big Baptist Church in South London of the 19th century, even if there may not be much common cause between the two preachers. I wonder too if Belfast is really a metropolis.

I don't know how things stand now, but at one stage this congregation, The Church of God at Whitewell, was one of the family of Churches operating under the Church of God banner. The original Whitewell building could be seen very close to the side of the said motorway on the left-hand side as one drove up the Hill Section out of Belfast. I haven't noticed it lately but it may be that the new redbrick Jehovah's Witness meeting place may now stand on that site.

(The Church of God in its Ulster context is not to be confused with the Worldwide Church of God, which is an American cult who at one time had a 'Garner Ted Armstrong' at the helm and a current affairs magazine called *The Plain Truth*. That movement is a whole different ball game and would demand an article all on its own.)

Anyway, the Ulster Church of God was for the most part theologically orthodox (in a fundamentalist as opposed to confessional kind of way), but about twenty years ago there was a big question mark about its commitment to the doctrine of the Trinity—in particular to the orthodox teaching on the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit. I'm not sure if this was all resolved, but no such shadow of heresy seems to attach to the Metropolitan people, judging by the *What We Believe* section of the website.

I confess I have yet to experience the impact of a Sunday evening evangelistic service at the Tabernacle, but I've been told of the opulent interior, the powerful singing, the acoustic properties of the building, and the compelling messages of the pastor. There is an interesting account given of a typical service that you can read on the *Ship of Fools* website, where the sermon and most other aspects of the overall experience are given one out of ten, but it would be unfair of me to comment.

A major split occurred, I would guess about five years ago, when the Pastor's designated successor, George McKim, found out that the path to the succession was going to be nearly as long as Gordon

Brown's to the Premiership. He accused James McConnell of reneging on a commitment to resign, and with his followers he left to found a new independent congregation in Newtownabbey, called (in seeming defiance of the Biblical principle of the lordship of Christ) The People's Church. It too has apparently enjoyed growth and success in numerical terms.

Meanwhile James McConnell soldiers on, a man possibly in his late seventies by now, with an old-style revivalist Gospel message, but without the media savvy or cool that is increasingly expected by our media; which is both his strength and his weakness. It seems to be a characteristic of a certain type of Ulster evangelist to be oblivious to how weird he seems to the world at large and, even if he weren't oblivious, to be not one bit bothered. This is an admirable trait, but one should perhaps take into account the Gospel imperative to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves. St. Paul wasn't well known for beating about the bush and soft pedalling hard truths in an attempt to spare people's feelings, but he also claimed that he would try to be all things to all men, if he could thereby win some for Christ.

It should be noted that as the Metropolitan Tabernacle has thrived so the star of the Free Presbyterians in Belfast has been setting. I'm informed that Paisley's Church, the Martyrs' Memorial on the Ravenhill Road, has dwindled away to a faithful few. Even before his enforced retirement Paisley was like an extinct volcano, and it's just possible that the same kind of people who would have been attracted there back in the day are now flocking to Pastor McConnell's Tabernacle or its offshoot, where at least there isn't a constant tirade of anti-Catholic rhetoric.

The Man, The Ball, Or Both?

As for what Pastor McConnell said, which can be found in all its gory detail on the internet, it was a bit of a mishmash of a lot of different ideas thrown together, and I'm not sure which could be said to be the most offensive. Offensive if you're a Muslim, but not, I think racist, as Muslims come from many different ethnic groups.

Contempt for Islam may not be very nice, but it's no worse than what Christians have to endure as a constant diet from the BBC and the various New Atheist propagandists. In fairness to Richard Dawkins, he has recently broadened his attacks beyond the Christian constituency and so can now avoid the charge of inconsistency.

Dawkins's objection to all supernatural belief is that it's not true, which is also the orthodox Christian (and the more fundamentalist Christian) critique of Islam. Now, it could be argued that to have the right beliefs will not save us in the absence of the life of faith, of which intellectual conviction is an essential but not a sufficient element; we're told that even the demons are believers in this intellectual sense. Such a dead faith will result in greater judgment than erroneous if sincere belief in something else, such as materialism or Islam.

Having said all that, it's surely better in this one life of ours to believe things that are true, rather than follow mirages. Islam and indeed Christianity and other religions might be of assistance in providing some personal fulfilment and sense of societal obligation, but if they're just graceful illusions then their social benefits start to sound a bit hollow. Western or Islamic civilisation may be admirable things but surely not if they're based on lies. The same applies of course to materialism. Dawkins and Co. might argue that materialists have healthier and happier lives than those who are hag-ridden by fear of a "sky fairy" but they have some searching questions to answer too about their own dogmatic positions.

Impossible Things Before Breakfast

I well remember a contributor to *Church and State* (I forget who) commenting on the traditional beliefs of country people in parts of Cork and Kerry. With one part of their minds they were faithful Catholics, with another they were dismissive of any suggestion of supernaturalism, and with yet another they believed in fairies (or sprites or whatever) and the importance of not offending them. That is the way that human beings behave. Our lives are inconsistent with our professed beliefs and our beliefs tend to be mutually inconsistent, as St. Augustine points out at length in *City of God*.

But reality isn't like that. If, like Pastor McConnell, you're a dogmatic Christian then Islam is a pernicious cult, a heresy, and you're only doing your duty if you point this out. The only advantage Islam has over Mormonism or the beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses is that it's more venerable, and in its early days it managed to raise a considerable army to go forth and conquer much of the known world. For myself I can't see much difference between the angel Gabriel appearing to Mohammed and

the angel Moroni appearing to Joseph Smith. I see them both as false prophets.

Muslims Near And Far

I wonder too if some Christians have over-estimated the threat posed by Islamic belief *per se*. We tend to see the peoples of the Muslim world as being much more focussed in their religious adherence than the flabby pampered Western Christians, who are themselves in a small minority in their societies. But the inside story might be more complex. In Iran in particular, the percentage of the population attending Friday prayers is apparently in single figures. The private behaviour of Middle Eastern oilmen would seem to be no more admirable than that of Texas oilmen. Resentment of Western military aggression and quasi-tribal conflict (as in Iraq) may be more potent motivating forces than pure religious enthusiasm.

Soccer mania may also be beginning to wreak its debilitating influence in the Middle East.

As for the insults directed against Muslims, they were certainly offensive, but no more so than David Cameron's description of UKIP supporters as "loonies, fruitcakes and closet racists" or Harold Wilson's depiction of Ulster Protestants as "*spongers*". These types of comments are incredibly stupid and counter-productive, but they're the price we pay for living in a free society. Christians, just like others, often behave badly. It's no defence to say that the plight of Muslims in Europe in no way compares with that of Christians in nearly all Muslim-majority countries in terms of sheer bloody awfulness. If Christians are, as the New Testament teaches, in-dwelt by Christ through the Holy Spirit, then they're going to be held accountable to a much higher standard.

In Northern Ireland there are at present fewer than five thousand Muslims. Many of them are well-qualified professionals who are making a significant contribution to our society, much more so than the various sets of hooligans who set out to cause trouble every year over contentious parades and whose economic activity is of the purely destructive kind. To try to demonise these people, as McConnell did, or to patronise them, as Stage One Robinson did, is like the man trying to take the mote out of his neighbour's eye while ignoring the beam in his own.

Immigration to Northern Ireland from the Indian subcontinent and from continental Europe has had a generally beneficial impact as far as I can see. I

accept that this may not be true all over the United Kingdom. But the point for me is that in Northern Ireland, maybe in Ireland as a whole, it's fairly easy to be welcoming to the new nationalities that have settled among us. None of them poses a threat to our (however inexplicably) cherished way of life. They have largely been promoters of the civic virtues of hard work and family life. The numbers that have come have been easily assimilated.

Small Is Beautiful

So Alliance, and the rest of us, can all make a show of niceness, and stand in judgment on the racist thugs, the politicians and the evangelists who present an uglier side of our regional psyche. But human nature is not very nice. Belfast isn't Bradford, and it's easy for us to be nice. Even if we leave aside the socially undesirable nature of some aspects of Muslim culture in the big English conurbations (such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages to close kin, "*honour killings*", sexual exploitation of young girls by Muslim—principally Pakistani—gangs, and violent persecution of those who convert to Christianity), and we just suppose that Belfast had the same percentage of Muslims as Bradford, I suspect that this would be a matter of great concern to our indigenous political leaders. The sheer numbers, whether they were Muslims, Hindus, Poles or Jews, would cause massive social dislocation and disorientation. That is human nature.

I remember when I was very young and living in the country near the twin villages of Kells and Connor there was a new Council housing estate built on the southern edge of Kells. It's there yet, Crosshill View. This appeared to our neighbours, and I suppose to us, to be a cosmic disaster. All kinds of lurid tales circulated about the people who were going to be shipped in. They would be the very scum of the earth, no better than gypsies (sorry for the politically incorrect language). No matter that the incomers were white Ulster Protestants of a social standing not much different from the native inhabitants and didn't take too long to integrate. It was the scale of the threatened influx that spooked us all. We were quite happy to adjust to newcomers incrementally but not *en masse*.

When there is large-scale foreign immigration into an already densely-populated developed country such as England one can take it for granted that people are going to behave badly in

response to it. Northern Ireland has been a laboratory for the study of religious-national conflict between two population groups which were both indigenous and which genetically and culturally had many points of overlap. The intensity of the communal conflict was greater than it ought to have been, for reasons that have been analysed at length by Brendan Clifford, Pat Walsh and others. But the point is that each community had some kind of rationale for its fear of the other; and when the overthrow of Stormont became an exciting or fearful possibility then, as Milton says, all hell broke loose.

In Northern Ireland as it stands today no one has any reason to fear a few thousand Muslims, or the various small eastern European populations. The real test of niceness is how we behave in response to a population which has a different agenda and is large enough to have hope of getting its way. Despite the many shining individual examples of forgiveness shown by those who were victims of paramilitary or indeed State brutality, Northern Ireland, communally speaking, didn't pass the test. Blood led to blood and so-called tit for tat killings. However destabilising the form of government inflicted on us was, people still made choices, and it wouldn't be too much of an exaggeration to say that many chose to give way to sectarian bloodlust. Loyalist paramilitaries were inflamed by DUP rhetoric, and Sinn Fein, which today poses as the champion of minorities, has been somewhat ambivalent about the propriety of the national minority in Ireland having any say in its own future. Somehow our politicians don't seem to see the disjunction.

Actions And Reactions

That is just the way it is when communal pressure builds up. There aren't many nice people. If we look back to 1798, I would say the inconvenient truth about the United Irish movement is that it wasn't a United Irish movement at all, except possibly in parts of Dublin. In the North the rising of 1798 was an overwhelmingly Protestant, indeed Presbyterian, phenomenon. In Wexford and Mayo it was a Catholic rebellion. There was no common cause made between Protestants and Catholics in parts of Ulster where the population division was more equal. Indeed the genesis of the Orange Order was a sectarian faction fight around Loughgall, Co. Armagh. The rebels of Antrim and Down felt free to challenge the Protestant Ascendancy Government precisely because the

Catholic population there was comparatively small and not at all politically ambitious.

Among the Presbyterians of north and east Ulster, the strongly anti-Orange sentiment persisted well into the second half of the nineteenth century. In this respect Henry Cooke, who died in 1868, was somewhat ahead of his time, and not really in a good sense, in his Orange/Tory orientation. But Orangeism increasingly gained purchase with the Presbyterian community to the extent that many Ministers became Orangemen, Orange chaplains etc. This was in response to a substantial threat from the 1870s onwards as Protestant Ulster (outside Ballymoney and district!) closed ranks in reaction to the growing threat from the Home Rule movement.

To put it crudely, Catholic rights were very popular in Protestant Ulster as long as there weren't too many Catholics around and as long as they weren't too aggressive in pursuing their own rights. It reminds me of the old jibe that in nineteenth century America the Northerners were very keen on Negro rights but weren't actually very keen on Negroes. Contrariwise, the Southerners didn't mind the Negroes so much but weren't so keen on their rights. An echo of that pattern was heard in the late 1960s when the policy of "busing" American children was introduced as part of a federal school desegregation movement. The highest level of civil disturbance over this policy was in liberal Massachusetts, and particularly in Boston.

Uneasy Mitteleuropa

Czechoslovakia is another study of a failed state which couldn't reconcile its minorities. It could hardly have worked out any differently. An artificial confection, it was like a miniature, more intense, version of Austria-Hungary, but without any governmental tradition to fall back on. The biggest problem was that three million ethnic Germans had been included within its borders. The new Czech Government was resistant to the idea of a "German dimension" in the state, so the Bohemian Germans were treated with enough petty vindictiveness by the new Government to justify some of Hitler's agitation.

This minority population wasn't composed of greater sinners than any other of the people groups involved in the Second World War. In fact one of the most memorable good guys of the conflict, Oskar Schindler, was a Sudeten German. But they were an inconvenient people. Rather than let it be conceded

that the borders were wrong, the post-War Czech Government decided that the people were wrong to have been living there since the 12th century. The borders didn't have to change to be made right: they would be made right if the people were expelled. The expulsion was carried out, with shocking brutality and mass murder in the months after the war ended, not by the nasty Communists but by the nice democratic Czech Government under Benes. At one level this was a case of elemental revenge carried out by one ethnic grouping against another that was too big to be comfortable with, and which had historically been a dominant caste. At another level the ethnic cleansing had been planned by the Great Powers at Potsdam, the Allied equivalent of the Wannsee meeting; the message had been sent out that this could be done with impunity.

So, if the ultimate enormity for a Government is to kill its own people, according to the glib international morality of today, it would appear that some people are fair game. Ethnic cleansing is not always bad. And of course the Czechoslovak state fell apart just a few years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, with the historically more Germanic provinces of Bohemia and Moravia separating themselves off from the economically poorer Slovakia.

Happy Melting-Pots

Ethnic tensions in post-War Europe were held in check by Communist Governments and strongmen like Tito and Ceausescu. Once they disappeared from the scene it wasn't long before the subterranean conflicts, and often the suppressed religious allegiances, rose up with undiminished vigour; which scenario is being played out in Iraq as we speak. I remember talking to a socialist Iraqi exile called Abdul about seven years ago. Abdul was emphatic that Sunnis and Shias would be singing in perfect harmony, were it not for the Americans attempting to play them off against each other. I think this was maybe true in part, but can anyone doubt that the current upheavals are symptomatic of unfinished business from much longer ago? Had it not been for the invasion and subsequent criminal mismanagement, the meltdown wouldn't have happened, but Saddam was just keeping the lid on tendencies that were already latent.

Where do we look for the great multi-ethnic societies that, by and large, work? The only obvious candidates are the US, Canada, and Australia.

Report

A slightly edited version of this letter appeared in the *Irish Independent* in early July

The Past Is The Past

With the halcyon boom times behind us, grim obsessing over our 'shameful' past seems to be the perfect new zeitgeist. Swapping private confession with a priest for secular public confession in print and radio, our feelings of guilt don't seem to change. We combine this with an insular tendency to assume that everything good or bad that happens here is unique, even if we should know rationally that it is not. We are the proverbial teenager who thinks they are the first person ever to ride around town in a shopping trolley.

One recent letter writer claims 'we have no excuse as a society' for the scandals of the past. Actually, we have two—we are not that past society and we did not live in those circumstances. Otherwise we have to accept people living say, five hundred years hence, have the same meaningless right to judge our actions by their particular standards.

Another correspondent made the usual stock-in-trade denunciations of our 'violent roots'—1916 et cetera—while engaging in anguished hand-wringing about the need for 'a national debate on where Ireland is heading'. Those 'violent roots' stretch back to Tudor conquest, the Normans and beyond, and similar can be found in any country one cares to name.

How ironic, to complain about the 'rudderless' state of our nation while castigating the time when young men and women, facing down threats, took the destiny of this country in their very hands. One of the earliest examples here of direct democracy, they had vision, voted for independence, and were willing to back that vote with their lives if need be. It is not their fault or shame that vision was thwarted.

If only we had a dozen such people today! But given our tendency to 'accord prophets no honour in their own town', should we be surprised to see no one rushing to fill the thankless breach?

On one point I agree—as long as we have to put up with listening to endless lectures on our 'shamefulness' or 'worthlessness' as a people, it is unlikely we will see much progress.

Nick Folley

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Communism
Catholic Education
Christian!
Cork Muslim Community
British Political Morality
Abortion
Those 'middles'
WWI Royals
Religion
Firmness!!

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Communism

"Pope Francis has accused communism of stealing its ideas from Christianity, and said its founding thinker Karl Marx 'did not invent anything'.

Commenting on suggestions in the media that his world view is not dissimilar to communist ideology, the pope responded that it was the Church that got there first.

"The communists have stolen our flag. The flag of the poor is Christian. The poor are at the heart of the Gospel", he said in an interview published in June 2014.

He cited the Beatitudes, the opening verses of the Sermon on the Mount, as an example of where Christianity had influenced communism.

"The communists say that all this is communism. Yeah, right, twenty centuries later. So one can say to them: 'but then you are Christian,'...", the Pope said while laughing, according to the interview in Rome daily *Il Messaggero*.

Since assuming the papacy in March last year, Francis has established himself as a global voice on the side of the dispossessed with his critique of unfettered capitalism—earning the label of "Marxist" from conservative commentators in the United States.

It is a label he has frequently rejected.

"Marxist ideology is wrong", he said in an interview with the Italian daily *La Stampa* last year. "But in my life I have met a lot of Marxists who are good people, so I do not feel offended" (*Agence France-Presse*, 29.6.2014).

Catholic Education

Former British Ambassador to the Vatican, Francis Campbell, states *"that Catholic schools must be confident in their identity if they are to enrich the wider society, a Belfast conference has been told"* (*Irish Catholic*, 15.5.2014)

Francis Campbell also warned that Catholic schools and institutions are in danger of losing their distinct identity

unless they put more focus on their unique ethos.

In an address staunchly defending the values of Catholic education at St Mary's University College in Belfast, Mr Campbell insisted that a Catholic education

"is not simply about numbers or the orthodoxy of course content, but about conviction.

"The constant integration of the ethos with the educational philosophy reminds all concerned of the broader goals of Catholic education. Retaining that integration requires constant attention", Mr Campbell said.

The Co. Down native and newly appointed head of St Mary's University College, Twickenham said achieving a balance between ethos and academics at all times is difficult, *"especially with pressures from within a professional educational culture that rightly demands ever more inputs and data to be able to measure impact and value for money"*.

However, he insisted that a Catholic school or university *"needs to be as attentive to its ethos and identity as it is to the essential professional metrics"*.²

Otherwise, *"it runs the risk of cutting itself off from its roots and hence its distinctive offer"*, he claimed.

Faith-based educational institutions, Mr Campbell argued,

"enrich societies through offering a distinctive approach which complements other providers in the education space".

"But that distinctiveness needs those institutions to be confident about their identity otherwise they erode their uniqueness and diminish their patrimony", he said.

Christian!

"I have heard every University sermon that has been preached in this church for the last fifty years and, thank God, I am still a Christian." (*An Oxford University* Bedell)

Cork Muslim Community

"A rapidly expanding community of Muslims wants to hire a new Imam, or spiritual leader.

"The highly specialised job, which has been advertised by the Cork Muslim Society, comes with a €2,500 monthly salary and an immediate start date. The position is open to men only" (*Irish Examiner*, 23.4.2014)

He was one of the founder members in 2006 of the Irish Council of Imams—a body which represents the 14 or so imams working in Ireland of both the Sunni and Shia traditions.

The new Cork Imam will take on the role of religious Minister to the region's estimated 5,000 Muslims : numbers have been boosted by a steady rise in the number of Saudi Arabian students attending UCC. The number of Muslims here has increased steadily since the 1990s, although most are not Irish nationals. The 2011 census found 49,204 Muslims in Ireland.

Ireland is the best country in the world for adhering to the Koran, according to an Economic 'Islamicity' Index.

Out of 208 countries, Ireland was judged to be the most capable of following its teachings, with Denmark and Luxembourg in second and third place.

The index, which was published in the *Global Economy Journal*, used four main criteria for ranking the various countries. Economic achievements, human and political rights, international relations and the structure of those in power were the main pillars for deciding who followed the fundamental lessons of Islam.

He attributed an *"easy existence"* between the Irish and the Muslims to a history of social similarities.

"Ireland was once occupied and many Irish people suffered from racism attached to being associated with terrorism. Muslims have this confrontation wherever they go," said Dr Selim" (*Irish Independent*, 10.6.2014).

Dublin is one of the top centres for Islamic investment.

British Political Morality

"Balfour: We are probably fools not to find a reason for declaring war on Germany before she builds too many ships and takes away our trade.

"White: You are a very high-minded man in private life. How can you possibly contemplate anything so politically immoral as provoking a war against a harmless nation which has as

good a right to a navy as you have? If you wish to compete with German trade, work harder.

"*Balfour*: That would mean lowering our standard of living. Perhaps it would be simpler for us to have a war.

"*White*: I am shocked that you of all men should enunciate such principles.

Balfour: Is it a question of right or wrong? Maybe it is just a question of keeping our supremacy. (Henry White and Allan Nevins, *Thirty Years of American Diplomacy*, p.257, Harper & Brothers, 1930 from the 2014 publication "*The Great Fraud of 1914-18*", Dr. Pat Walsh, Athol Books)

Abortion

"More than 10 Irish women had an abortion in the UK every day last year.

"New figures from the UK's Department of Health show that 3,679 Irish women had abortions last year, although this was a fall of 7.6% and continued a downward trend.

"The Irish Family Planning Association said the latest figure did not tell the full story as not all women seeking an abortion provide their Irish addresses, while some women travel to other European states to access abortion services.

"Chief executive Niall Behan said: "At least 3,679 women were forced to travel to the UK last year to access a safe and legal abortion because they are denied these necessary health services in their own country" (*Irish Independent*, 13.6.2014).

Since 1980, over 158,252 women have had to make the journey to the UK to access abortion.

Thos 'middles'

"A Middle Class must make up its mind for one of two things—to support an upper or a lower class, and the former is the cheaper of the two." (*George Smythe, M.P.*)

WWI Royals

During the first World War, in a moment of high patriotism, George V changed the name of the royal family from the Germanic Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to Windsor and ordered all his British relatives to adopt British-sounding names. Thus his cousin Louis of Battenberg simply translated his to Louis Mountbatten. When Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm (who was also George's first cousin) heard of the changes he ridiculed the effort by claiming that henceforth Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* would be known in Germany as *The Merry Wives of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha*.

Religion

46% think religion is good—Fewer than half the public believe religion is a good thing for the country, with younger people in particular failing to be impressed.

The finding, from an international survey, shows just 46% of Irish people believe religion plays a positive role in the country compared with a global figure of 59%.

However, religion is held in higher regard here than among our near neighbours, as just 36% of respondents in Western Europe agreed that religion had a positive role to play.

The survey was carried out by international pollsters WIN/Gallup, who interviewed almost 67,000 people of different religious beliefs in 65 countries in all five continents to gauge opinion in the run-up to Easter.

Western Europe was by far the most negative region, with 32% saying religion played a negative role in their country, 26% saying it played no role, and 6% saying they did not know.

Denmark was the least favourably disposed towards religion, followed by Belgium, France, and Spain, while Iceland and Portugal had the most positive responses.

These findings are in marked contrast to those from Eastern Europe, where the responses were 54% positive. The region with the most positive responses was Africa at 76%, followed by the Middle East and North Africa at 71%, the Americas at 68%, and Asia at 60%.

In Ireland, 36% said religion was a negative influence on the country, 11% said it had no role to play, and 8% did not know.

The over, 65s were most favourably disposed, giving a 70% positive rating.

Globally, Muslims and Protestants were most positive about the influence of their religion, while Hindus and people of no religious beliefs were the least positive.

The poll also showed that the more highly educated people are, the less highly they think of religion. Other findings were that no German respondent said they did not know what they thought about the subject while in Japan 44% did not know (*Irish Examiner*, 18.4.2014).

More VOX on back page

"LABOUR Comment" magazine, CORK PUBLIC MEETING

"THE GREAT WAR: THE GREAT FRAUD"
1914-1918

Speaker: Dr. Pat Walsh,
Author of

"The Rise and Fall of Imperial Ireland,";
"Britain's Great War : Pope Benedict's
Lost Peace,"; "Remembering Gallipoli"

THE GRESHAM METROPOLE HOTEL,
MacCurtain Street, CORK

FRIDAY, AUGUST 8th, 2014
Commencing 8.00 p.m.

A Fairy Tale Of West Cork And The Wife Of The Bold Tenant Farmer

On 12th June of this year, Tommy Barker, the Property Editor of the *Irish Examiner*, informed his readers:

"A West Cork estate that includes the ancestral home of motor manufacturing pioneer Henry Ford, and linked to Cheltenham Gold Cup winner Imperial Call, is being offered for sale for €9m. It's one of the most expensive Munster properties offered in many years and, in a motors-marque coincidence, is being sold by the former holder of the Mitsubishi Motors franchise for the UK and Ireland, David Blackburn and family. Lisselan Estate, close to Clonakilty, has over 300 acres alongside the River Argideen with 30 acres of tended gardens, plus an 80-acre, nine-hole golf course. *It includes a 30-acre section of land that had been home to tenant farmer John Ford, and his son William Ford who both emigrated just after the Famine in 1847* {my emphasis—MO'R}. Henry Ford was later born on a Michigan farm, in 1863, and went on to revolutionise the way cars were made on assembly lines, making them affordable to consumers. Originally part of an Irish estate of several thousand acres stretching from the Argideen river near Ballinascarthy to the Atlantic at Inchdoney, *the picturesque house at Lisselan was built 1851-1853 by the Bence Jones family, landlords to the Fords and to many others... Some 165 years after John and William Ford left with hunger and ambition in their family belly* {my emphasis—MO'R}, Lisselan's €9m finery might not be too far from the luxury more current Ford family generations have been reared in. Built in a simple, French chateau style with turret, Lisselan has only ever been sold twice before—first, to Charles Orr Stanley, a radio, radar and later TV pioneer though his firm Pye Electrical, and a director of Sunbeam Wolsely. The Stanley family bought Lisselan in 1930, and sold it 60 years later after enhancing its noted Robinsonian-style gardens. It was taken on by wealthy businessman Mr Blackburn in 1990, who maintained it and added a nine-hole golf course. He regularly opened the gardens to the public. Plans were also made for a Ford Museum on the estate which has a collection of vintage cars."

In fairness to Barker, he obviously decided that if he couldn't say anything

good about the Bence Joneses, he was not going to say anything more about them. In contrast, the lead feature in the Residential Property supplement of the *Irish Times* on that same day, 12th June, was headlined "*Fairy tale of West Cork for €9 million*" and also carried the following subheading: "*Lisselan House, near Clonakilty, was built in the 1850s in the style of a classic French chateau, with magnificent riverside gardens, a golf course and private fishing rights.*" The *Irish Times* Property Editor, Madeleine Lyons, told readers:

"The estate has exclusive rights to a mile and a half of sea-trout fishing... This is a one-off house in an idyllic setting, with 170 acres of lush grassland, farmyard buildings, stables, cottages and lodge houses."

There is also, of course, the golf course with its 2,500 sq ft clubhouse, while Lisselan House itself extends to 10,800 sq ft:

"This is clearly a great house for entertaining. The central book-lined library hall with its floor-to-ceiling bay window, carved wood Adam-style fireplace and wide wooden staircase, is straight out of a Hitchcock movie."

Who would ever think from the *Irish Times* that such a "*fairy tale*" of Lisselan (sic) House's origins was grounded in a reality far more horrific than the fantasy horrors of an Alfred Hitchcock thriller? Unlike the *Irish Examiner* article, the *Irish Times* promotion of the House excluded any mention whatsoever of the Famine or of the hunger in the bellies of the Ford family in 1847. The official address of the property in question is Lisselan House, Lisselane, Co Cork. Apart from what I will quote from the *Irish Times*, it is the official place name spelling of Lisselane that I will use, being closer in pronunciation to the original Irish language place name of Lios Fhaoláin, which can be translated as the fairy fort of Phelan, the little wolf. The Big House spelling of "*Lisselan*" is a self-adopted affectation expressing further phonetic distance from the original Irish. The *Irish Times* "*fairy tale*" indulged in the following rhapsody:

"Perched above terraced gardens

dropping down to the banks of the Argideen river, near Clonakilty, Lisselan House cuts a fairy tale dash. It was built in the 1850s to a French chateau design by William Bence Jones—the single-tower style quite a departure from the more prosaic Big House designs of the day. The story goes that Bence Jones—a landlord and agriculturist who passed on new farming techniques—marked out the foundations with his three daughters. Despite his largesse with learning, he never quite won over his tenants, who during the Land League boycotted him after he continued to charge rack rents over Griffith's valuation. Many tenants left for the US, including William Ford and John Ford, father and grandfather of Henry Ford. The site of the first car-maker's ancestral home is marked today by a thick copse of trees in a wide field on the 315 acre estate... Lisselan's setting is its major attraction and 30 acres of spectacular Edwardian gardens have been progressively developed since the time of the Bence Joneses, who created the formal gardens on both sides of the river and added a fabulous double-height glass and ironwork conservatory in anticipation of the Cork Exhibition of 1902."

So, Bence Jones "*never quite won over his tenants*"! In fairness to that English landlord from Suffolk, who had inherited his West Cork estate from his absentee landlord father, he was multi-denominationally ecumenical enough to care as little for Protestant tenant farmers like the Fords as for Catholic tenant farmers like the O'Regans. That both families survived was no thanks to Bence Jones, who availed of the Great Famine as a Weapon of Mass Destruction in order to consolidate and expand his beautiful estate. I might therefore offer some family history. The following narrative is derived from a limited circulation pamphlet I produced in 2000 entitled *Songs Associated with Work*, consisting of my contributions to an International Folk Song and Ballad Seminar held on the last weekend of March 2000 in Ballyliffin and Clonmany, on the Donegal peninsula of Inishowen, and this is the story behind the first song I sang:

Bold Tenant Farmer

At the opening night Singing Session on Friday, 24th March 2000, I sang a song that I had not originally planned, *The Wife of the Bold Tenant Farmer*. It was partly sung in memory of my mother Kay Keohane O'Riordan (1910-1991) and my maternal aunt and godmother

Máire Keohane Sheehan (1909-1975) of Clonakilty, West Cork. But, although it may appear unusual for a Trade Union official such as myself to say so, it was primarily the well-earned tribute paid to a Clonakilty businessman less than a fortnight previously that had inspired me to launch forth with that song on this occasion. Here, however, I have to declare a personal interest, in that he is a kinsman of mine—my mother's first cousin James P. O'Regan.

This Clonakilty song is about a strong woman. And it was from a strong woman that I first heard it during my childhood. My aunt was not only the leader of the Irish Nurses' Organisation in Cork during the 1940s, she was the election agent for her brother-in-law and my father, Micheál O'Riordan (1917-2006), when he stood as the Cork Socialist Party candidate in the 1946 Cork City by-election. My Auntie Mary, as I would always have addressed her, was also the only female member of the Administrative Council of the Labour Party for a period during the 1960s. At one particular Party Conference in Dublin's Liberty Hall she had to answer a call of nature, but headed by mistake towards the Men's toilet. Party leader Brendan Corish emerged and said "*Mary, you're going the wrong way. This is for the men!*" Her riposte to Corish was: "*Amn't I as good a man as any of ye?*"

Such was the national popularity of that same song during the heyday of the Land War in the 1880s that it spread far and wide beyond its West Cork origins. It acquired more locally centred lines such as "*You'll have the high road for Dungarvan*" in County Waterford and "*You'll have the high road for Dunganon*" in County Tyrone. It also acquired a different air, and it is that new air which was used in the recordings of the song made by Seosamh Ó hÉanaí (Joe Heaney) of Connemara and the Clancy Brothers of Carrick-on-Suir. Clonakilty people, however, always sang the song to the same air as that used for *The Limerick Rake*. But because it was never recorded to that air you now have some Cork people singing it to the different air later used beyond the borders of Cork. Perhaps that is one of the reasons my mother would indicate irritation when as a teenager I preferred to learn the more fun lyrics of *The Limerick Rake*. And on many an occasion when I sang it she would remind me "*That's the air of The Wife of the Bold Tenant Farmer!*" Regrettably, I never set about learning the latter song during her lifetime, and only started singing it in the mid 1990s.

Evictions

During my childhood I had been vaguely aware that my maternal grandfather Laurence Keohane had been evicted with his parents and siblings during the Land War of the 1880s. The 1833 Tithe Applotment for Ballintemple, just outside Clonakilty, lists his own grandfather Timothy Keohane as farming twenty acres. It was on that same farmholding 35 years previously that the remains of Tadhg Ó Donnabháin Asna, leader of the 1798 Rebellion in Clonakilty, were finally laid to rest. I now have only the vaguest childhood memory of hearing my mother speak of the precise circumstances of the eviction of my grandfather's family. There may in fact have been a bank directly involved rather than a landlord. Regrettably, I failed to ask these questions in time when my mother and aunt could have answered them. But in 1999, when I was clearing out the Victoria Street, Portobello, house which had been the O'Riordan family home since my Cork parents moved to Dublin in 1947, I came across a press clipping from the *Cork Examiner* concerning the 1,500 year-old Lisnagun ring fort at Darrara, the townland adjacent to Ballintemple, in whose churchyard the Keohanes themselves are buried, and where we would scatter some of my mother's ashes in 1992.

(The Banner of the Darrara Branch of William O'Brien's All For Ireland League featured a hand painted portrait of Tadhg an Asna seated on a white horse on his way to the Battle of Shannonvale, with images of other United Irishmen armed with pikes in the background). On the side of her press clipping, my mother had left me the following handwritten account of how another Keohane eviction was resisted:

"This is the fort where my father at the age of 10 years blew a bugle to warn another of the Keohane Clan that the bailiff and his aides were on the road to evict them. My father Laurence Keohane, and probably his brothers and father, were lined up in the kitchen of the house to resist eviction. The 'Fear a Tí' (man of the house) ran the bailiff into the fire after he and his troop had broken down the door with the battering ram. The 'Fear a Tí' got six months in jail, all re-told in the 'Southern Star' when his son Tim Keohane died in 1941".

And that report informed us:

"General regret was felt at the death of Mr. Timothy Keohane which occurred at his residence Carhoogarriff, Clonakilty. Though he had attained a

fine old age... he had vivid memories of the Land League days and of the Plan of Campaign. About 1886 his home was subjected to the onslaughts of the agents of the then claimants for exorbitant rents. However, though he suffered much financial loss, victory was his and the house of his ancestors was secured".

It is clear from the above account why my aunt had every inspiration from the story of her father Laurence Keohane to sing *The Wife of the Bold Tenant Farmer* with such gusto.

True Grit

What I never realised until 1999, however, was that the family history of her mother Julianna O'Regan gave an even stronger reason for such passion. In January 1999 TV viewers nationwide were profoundly moved by the distress of my mother's first cousin James P. O'Regan as he surveyed the ruins of his state-of-the-art egg and poultry factory of Shannonvale Foods, after a mystery fire had burned that Clonakilty plant to the ground. But they were also impressed by the fierce determination of Jimmy not to walk away from that disaster but to start all over again as his grandfather and my great-grandfather Michael O'Regan had done in 1885. Jimmy ensured that not a day's wages would be lost by any of the 100 workers in Clonakilty's largest industry. Alternative production facilities were used from North Cork to West Cork, until such time as an even more modern and purpose-built plant could be reconstructed. This was done and the factory re-opened on 11th March 2000, the eve of Jimmy's own 80th birthday. On the birthday itself, 12th March, Clonakilty Urban District Council gave Jimmy a surprise Civic Reception. Jimmy replied with an unscripted speech that provided a fascinating social history of Clonakilty from 1798 to date.

The UDC Chairman stated that Jimmy had worked with his own grandfather as a Post Office employee and had waged a successful re-instatement struggle in that employment. He did not elaborate. But Jimmy himself did. That struggle was waged five years before Noel Browne as a young Minister for Health could seize the resources of the Hospital Sweepstakes in order to rid the country of the lethal social scourge of tuberculosis that had wiped out too many of his own family as of so many others. Over a number of years Jimmy O'Regan had been among those to experience the bitter pain and devastation of TB as an

exterminator of families. First a sister, later his mother and later still a brother had all been wiped out, as also had been first cousins of his, my own mother's teenage brother Laurence Keohane Jr.

Jimmy's speech to Clonakilty UDC did not play on such losses but rather spoke of his own fight back. It was in 1943, while a young Post Office worker of 23 years of age, that Jimmy himself contracted TB. He was promptly dismissed from his employment for having what was described as "*an incurable disease*". Jimmy was determined to prove that it was not. He waged his own personal battle against the disease itself as well as his struggle for reinstatement. The sheer effort of will involved in waging each of these battles undoubtedly reinforced the other. Jimmy won on both counts. He was cured of TB, and after an eleven month campaign was also reinstated in his Post Office employment. Having won his case and established the principle of his right to work, he then refused to darken their door.

As independent as ever, he went on to work for his father's egg and poultry business, T. O'Regan and Sons, which he would eventually take over and rename Shannonvale Foods. (Tadhg an Asna's 1798 military engagement outside Clonakilty is known as the Battle of Shannonvale). It was around the time of Jimmy's 1943 victory over the Post Office authorities that he had also been instrumental in ensuring publication by the Labour Party of a pamphlet by R.M. Fox entitled *Labour in the National Struggle*. This pamphlet was sponsored by Big Jim Larkin and the Workers' Union of Ireland and, in an introduction on behalf of the Party's Propaganda Department, Roddy Connolly—the son of James Connolly—wrote:

"To a young worker in West Cork goes the credit for the selection of the subject matter for our first pamphlet. JP O'Regan of the Clonakilty Divisional Council of the Labour Party, the youngest member of the organisation in his district, in response to a routine circular from the Head Office, urged the need of pamphlets dealing with the history of the Labour movement, more especially showing 'that the party was national as well as constructive in its outlook'. He deplored that the 'general public is not conversant with Labour principles' and partly blamed the teaching of history in the primary schools, where proper credit is not given to the work of James Connolly and other Labour thinkers and leaders in our national life. As a result, the young people especially, seeing nothing

national in the Labour Party, incline towards other Parties."

Unfortunately, Labour Party did not develop as a Party that could hold the young Jimmy O'Regan. But that Party's loss was Clonakilty's gain. It was as an Independent candidate that Jimmy was first elected to the Urban District Council in 1947 and it is as an Independent that he continued as Ireland's longest-serving Councillor. Moreover, he was elected as Chairman of Clonakilty UDC on no less than eleven different occasions. The respect which he commanded from fellow councillors right across the political divide—whether they be Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour or Sinn Féin—was shown by the tributes paid by all parties to Jimmy on 12th March 2000.

Victory

It was Jimmy's grandfather and my great-grandfather who had commenced business as an egg dealer in 1885. But not until talking to Jimmy's sister Phyllis in the wake of the January 1999 fire did I become aware of the O'Regan family history before that. Lisselane lies to the north east of Clonakilty and had once been the centre of a 3,800 acre estate owned by William Bence Jones. During the course of the Great Famine this landlord doubled the personal demesne component of his estate from 500 to 1,000 acres by the wholesale eviction of small tenants crushed by that Famine. This was the childhood experience of my great-grandfather Michael, when the O'Regan family was evicted by Bence Jones in 1848 from their holding in the townland of Carrig, which is situated the other side of the Clonakilty-BallinacCarthy road from the Croppy's Crossroads. (Phyllis O'Regan tells me that when walking past the well-manicured lawns of Lisselane House a century later with her cousin Máire Keohane-Sheehan, my aunt and godmother sardonically remarked: "*Weren't we awful fools to let Lisselane go!*")

Although more than a century and a half has elapsed since the O'Regans were cleared off the Lisselane Estate, they left their mark behind in the form of a place name still in use—Regan's Boreen. More importantly, despite Bence Jones's deserved reputation as a great exterminator, the O'Regans survived the Great Famine. Over the next few decades they migrated around the Clonakilty area before finally securing a farm tenancy west of the town at Bealad, not far from Michael Collins's birthplace at Woodfield, near Sam's Cross. A lifelong

friendship would later be formed between my aunt/godmother and the Big Fellow's older brother Johnny, otherwise known either as Seán or by his nickname, Shafter Collins. (See the August 2013 issue of *Irish Political Review*, for my mother's memorandum, "*Eyewitness to Collins's Last Exit from Clonakilty*").

It was on that Beald holding that Jimmy's father Tim (Tadhg) O'Regan was born, as also Julianna, my own maternal grandmother. But childhood eviction was also to be the experience of that generation during the Land War of the 1880s. Once more evicted, Michael O'Regan began work as an egg dealer and set up home with his family in Clonakilty town itself. Their home was at Fax Bridge, formerly the venue of faction fights of old, but now the scene of the mass rallies held by the local Land League leader Father John O'Leary as he successfully led the boycotting of Bence Jones.

It was in that same house that Julianna continued to live after marrying my stonemason grandfather Laurence Keohane, and it is there that my mother and her siblings were born and reared. Since it is the victory over Bence Jones that is celebrated in the ballad of *The Wife of the Bold Tenant Farmer*, no wonder it was loved by the O'Regan and Keohane families! The song celebrates the confrontation between Mrs. Mary Walsh of BallinacCarthy and Bence Jones. (See also <http://www.failte.com/southernstar/page13.php> and <http://www.failteromhat.com/southernstar/page26.php> for a detailed account of the famous press controversy of 1881 that raged in the London *Contemporary Review* between Bence Jones and the Clonakilty Land League leader Father John O'Leary.)

On the weekend of 11th and 12th March 2000 when, as member of the extended O'Regan family, I shared in the celebration of the life of Jimmy O'Regan with the citizens of Clonakilty and the workforce of Shannonvale Foods (who are primarily my fellow members of SIPTU), I reflected that among the reasons why any of us were present that day was that my great-grandfather Michael O'Regan had the resilience to survive the Great Exterminator—which had in fact been an unholy alliance between the Bence Jones Big House and the Great Famine—and that this gene of resilience has in turn been reincarnated in his grandson James P. O'Regan. And so it was that when Jimmy McBride first called on me to sing in Inishowen less than a fortnight later, on the night

of 24th March, and introduced me as a Dubliner, I replied "Yes, but!" Clonakilty was still calling! So, I proceeded to sing:

THE WIFE OF THE BOLD TENANT FARMER

One evening of late as I happened to stray
Bound for Clonakilty from sweet
Timoleague,
'Twas at Ballinascarthy some time I
delayed;
I wetted my whistle with porter.
I kindled my pipe and I spit on my stick,
I kept the coach road, like a deer I did
trip,
I cared for no bailiff, landlord or Old
Nick,
I sang like a lark in the morning.

I scarcely had travelled a mile of the road
When I heard a dispute at a farmer's abode
'Twas the son of a landlord, an ill-
looking toad,
And the wife of a bold tenant farmer.
He said: "What the devil's come over
you all?
Not one penny of rent at each time that
I call.
But by next October, I'll settle you all;
For you'll have the high road for your
garden."

"You caffler," the bold tenant wife
then replied
"You're as bad as your daddy on the
other side.
But our National Land League will
pull down your pride,
It's able to brave every storm."
"Its branches extend to each county
and town,
Protecting the tenants, their houses
and ground.
I owe you twelve months and I'll give
you one pound,
If you'll clear our receipts in the
morning."

When she spoke of the Land League,
his lips they grew pale,
Saying: "What good have they done,
sure they're all stuck in jail?
And the rent that you owe, you must
pay the next gale,
And believe me, we'll give you no
quarter."
"Your husband I saw in the town just
last night,
Drinking and shouting for poor
tenants' rights.
But the month of October, we'll put
you to flight,
To follow your friends o'er the water."

"If my husband was drinking, well
what's that to you?
And sure if he spent it on mountainy dew
I'd sooner he'd spend it nor give it to you,
For your old mossy land is no bargain."
"We all joined the Land League on
last New Year's Day,
And I think in my heart we were not
going astray.
With the whole people with us, we'll
carry the sway,
Now marshalling all in good order."

"Here's to Father O'Leary, the pride of
our isle,
He's the boy that can title you ruffians
in style.
John Dillon and Davitt rank next in
the file,
Take care you don't tread on their corns!"
I then stepped from the bush where in
ambush I lay,
And as he passed by me I heard him to
say:
"I wish to my God I was ten miles away,
From the wife of the bold tenant farmer!"

I shouted "Hurrah" and she shouted
"Hurroo"
He showed us his back and like
lightning he flew.
So, God save the Land League and
Old Ireland too,
Agus fágaimís siúd mar atá sé!
(Translation: And let's leave that as it is!)

Postscript

Nine months after the March 2000
re-opening of Shannonvale Foods, James
P O'Regan passed away that Christmas
and was buried on St. Stephen's Day,
26th December 2000, in the same
Clonakilty graveyard where lie the

remains of my distant relative Jim
Hurley, a member of the ambush party
at Béalnabláth, side-by-side, by mutual
agreement, with the remains of Michael
Collins's brother, Shafter, following their
deaths within eleven days of each other
in February 1965. (See the June 2012
issue of *Irish Political Review*.) Jimmy's
last surviving sibling, Phyllis O'Regan,
died on 23rd August 2013. The funeral
oration on 26th August was given by
her niece (and Jimmy's daughter), Cllr.
Philomena O'Regan, who—due to Local
Government 'reform'—was at that
precise juncture the very last Mayor of
Clonakilty town.

Phyllis, however, chose not to be
buried in Clonakilty, but in the ancestral
O'Regan family grave in Kilmaloda
Church of Ireland churchyard, outside
Ballinascarthy, and close to her grand-
father's childhood home prior to Bence
Jones's Great Famine eviction of the
O'Regan family. In that churchyard lie
the remains of both landlords and
tenants, Protestants and Catholics, finally
accorded an equality in death. At
Phyllis's funeral I inadvertently stepped
back from the O'Regan grave and stood
on another family grave, something
which I generally try my very best not
to do in cemeteries, out of respect for
the dead. So, I was initially annoyed
with myself, and then surprised and
delighted at what next met my eyes. For
in addition to a headstone detailing
various members of the Walsh family
buried in that grave, there was another
stone memorial with a simple inscription
that said it all:

**"Herein lie the remains of the
Wife of the Bold Tenant Farmer"**
Agus fágaimís siúd mar atá sé!



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Editorial

History Ireland chances its arm

Germany's Great War Aims

History Ireland in its July issue tells us editorially that Germany was an aggressive and expansionist state in 1914: "the *Fischer thesis* of the early 1960s that Germany's war aims were aggressive and expansionist was solidly based on archival evidence". It doesn't tell us what the aggressively expansionist aims were on the part of Germany that were the cause, or a cause, of the European War or the World War. And that's a pity. We would be happy to join the chorus if only we were told which state Germany was aggressively expansionist against.

With regard to that part of the world which was organised in states, Germany's foreign policy was one of conservative recognition of them. It sought to create a stable international structure for itself by supporting the continuation of the states that existed. That was not the policy of the states with which it found itself at war in August 1914. All of them had expansionist aims and all had acted aggressively for the realisation of their aims.

Germany itself was on the receiving end of an expansionist aim. France had an irredentist claim against it over the nationally-mixed region of Alsace-Lorraine, which it had lost because of its aggression of 1870. It pursued its aim cautiously, but was commended by Nicholas Mansergh for never ceasing to brood on it. It became more active in its resentment after Britain gave it encouragement around 1905

Nicholas Mansergh was a British academic and administrator. He waged a covert campaign against Irish neutrality in the 2nd World War and took time off from his work in the Ministry of Information—as Britain called its Propaganda—to come to Dublin to deliver a series of lectures at the Queen Alexandra Collage for girls on the origins of the First World War. In these lectures, subsequently published as a book, he praised the stubborn persistence of irredentist resentment in France over territory they had lost entirely through their own fault.

That was certainly a contributing element to the War.

We know of no state that Germany

was demanding a piece of. And we know of nobody who was demanding a piece of Britain, except for the Irish who wanted their own bit of it, or of anybody demanding a piece of the Tsar's state, except the Poles who wanted Poland.

The *Fischer thesis* solidly-based on archive evidence was one-sidedly based on the German archives. They were thrown open to researchers without prior sifting by the State, because the State fell into enemy hands. The British State archive let's you know what the State wants you to know.

The German Government formulated war aims after it found itself at war. It has not been shown that it had aims in pursuit of which it brought about the European War—which is the meaning projected onto the *Fischer thesis*.

The *History Ireland* editorial continues:

"But that [Germany's alleged aggressive and expansionist war aims] was inevitable given that Germany, only unified a generation before, was a late arrival in a world already carved up between the other imperial powers..."

We are still not told what the expansionist demands were that Germany asserted aggressively, and went to war for.

If territories acquired in Africa towards the end of the century are meant, they don't count as a factor making for war in Europe. It was virtually obligatory on European states to take control of parts of Africa. Bismarck was abnormal in his lack of interest in that, or any other, kind of territorial expansion. When African territory was acquired, it was not taken from any other European state. And, by European consensus, parts of Africa not claimed by a European state were fair game.

The editorial continues:

"Imperial Germany should not be conflated with Nazi Germany; while there was undoubtedly a democratic deficit at executive level, in other respects it was a more progressive society than the UK, with a broader franchise and a more developed welfare system".

It would be useful if the *"democratic deficit"* was spelled out. It was a British notion in 1914 which Redmondite ideologues, particularly Tom Kettle and Robert Lynd, played a central role in inventing. On the strength of it Germany was declared to be an *"autocracy"*.

An autocracy is a dictatorship. The difference in executive structure between Germany and Britain was that the Kaiser was personally active in the conduct of his Government, while in England the Prime Minister exercised the powers of the King and reported regularly to him. This came about because the monarchy brought in from Germany in 1714 was not English speaking. The Royal Prerogative did not lapse. Its capacity for arbitrary action was transferred to the Prime Minister, and was exercised regularly by him. War was declared by the Prime Minister on the authority of the Royal Prerogative. The decision did not lie with Parliament. All Parliament was required to do was raise the money to pay for the War.

The British Government had made careful preparations for war against Germany over many years. It had made them secretly, denying in Parliament, when John Dillon tried to open up the matter, that it was making them. Then, in 1914, it put its plans into effect. Parliament might have made it a short war by refusing to fund it. It did not refuse.

The same was the case in Germany. The Kaiser did not have independent funding for the War. But, as the British Left used to be fond of saying, the German Social Democrats betrayed the cause by *"voting war credits"*.

In Britain the Labour Party was too small to have a decisive influence. A few of its leaders spoke against the war, and at the public meetings had to be shielded from working class wrath by the police. The party apparatus, run by Arthur Henderson (who executed James Connolly and remade the Labour Party for the 1918 Election), supported the War, and joined the War Coalition when they were invited.

It was the Liberal Party that did what the Social Democrats did in Germany. It had been systematically deceived by a leading group which held the major Offices of State, but it fell into line—urged on by Redmond's warmongers—when their leaders declared war.

The difference in formal Executive structure between the British and German States is something to which *History Ireland* might have given some consider-

ed thought if it had reviewed T.D. Williams' *The Genesis Of National Socialism*. This is the major piece of Irish writing on the historical development of Germany. It was written by Williams when he was a child prodigy. He wrote nothing of comparable substance as Professor. When the *Belfast Historical & Educational Society* published it, *History Ireland* solicited a copy for review. It was not reviewed. The publishers were not surprised. The revisionist Establishment would undermine itself if it relaxed its administrative regime of thought control.

The Editor (Tommy Graham) says: "*the rediscovery of our First World War heritage has been a necessary and positive experience...*"

When was it lost? The "*rediscovery*" of the fact that the Home Rule Party acted as a gigantic siphon, sucking Irishmen into Britain's war in vast quantities, has now been going on for thirty years and more. And the fact was well known in the pre-revisionist era before that.

There has been no "*rediscovery*" of a fact. There has been a change of opinion in Establishment circles about a well-known fact. It used not to be regarded as a good thing that 200,000 Irishmen went off to kill Germans and Turks for the British Empire and that 50,000 of them got themselves killed while doing so. It is now. That's not *rediscovery*. That's just changing sides.

There is one piece of genuine rediscovery of "*our First World War heritage*" that might be made but dare not be mentioned. That James Connolly supported Germany in the War on socialist grounds.

A glance at the Contents of this special *re-discovery* issue of *History Ireland* shows that it isn't there. But there is an article on Ireland's Imperial War Memorial as a *Gem Of Architecture*. And we notice that there is an article on the Imperial War and the Irish War in the Empire as "*A seamless robe of Irish experience*". Does that mean that Connolly should have his statue at Islandbridge?

The purpose of this article, by an English academic, is to lose the significance of the Irish War by merging it into Britain's World War—without saying a word about what Britain's purpose was in launching that War, which added large tracts of the world to the Empire and beat down a commercial rival.

It has become the revisionist fashion

to treat the Irish Wars, both the Rising and the War in defence of the elected Government of 1918, as being somehow incidents in the Great War, caused entirely by it—as if there was not war in the offing already long before the prospect of European War had arisen. It is probable that the Home Rule conflict, which had disturbed both the country and the state for three years, would have led to war of one sort or another whether a Home Rule Act was forced down the throats of the Ulster Unionists or not. The opportunity for World War allowed the Government to escape from its Irish dilemma. But the abandonment of Home Rule did not abort the development which had already begun in Ireland. It only altered the circumstances in which that conflict worked itself out.

The *History Ireland* article asserts that war is a common ground of experience, and implies that the mere fact of killing and being killed overrides the purpose for which it is done. Ulster Unionist historian Philip Orr shocked a Radio Eireann interviewer by saying that in the Unionist mind the Great War was an incident in the Home Rule conflict.

The mere fact that Unionists and Redmondite nationalists killed Germans and Turks in the same Army, and were killed by them, did not establish a common ground of experience between them. Experience is not something objective, detached from purpose. How an event is experienced is shaped by purpose.

Ulster Unionists would have rallied to the flag in 1914, whether or not there had been a Home Rule conflict. It accorded with their long-established idea of themselves to do so. But they saw that the Home Rulers were enlisting for the purpose of getting an edge on them in the Home Rule conflict, and they were

determined that that would not happen.

Killing and dying for the British state is normal for the Ulster Unionists. It was part of the way of life of an Imperial people, and it didn't put them *ologhning*.*

There was not a comparable coherence to nationalist participation. Native Ireland was pulling itself together again after having been almost broken by England, and so it was incoherent, volatile and unstable, not able to take these things in its stride.

But an element had finally developed within native Ireland that was capable of acting coolly and deliberately for the achievement of a large purpose—capable of acting in the English manner, one might almost say. This element made war on England in 1916. The native populace at large was astounded by the event, but on reflection a large number of them decided that they could do it too. They voted rebelliously and then defended what they had voted for by fighting their own war without Imperial authority.

What one gets in all of this is a wide range of very different experiences. They could only be reduced to a common experience by removing mind and purpose from the meaning of experience with a view to indoctrinating the Irish with mindlessness.

We can see that the Editor, who used to be a socialist revolutionary out of sight to the Left of us, has tried to say something in his editorial. But why bother? He must continue to fill the magazine with the revisionist and imperialist pap required by the influential sponsors that he can't do without.

* Weeping and wailing.

Editorial

The Redmondite Loyal Orders Have A Soiree

Mary Kenny wrote in the *Irish Independent* on June 30th about an "*important soiree*" to be held at the Irish Embassy in London's Belgravia (exclusive district far removed from the places where the oft-mentioned Irish *Diaspora* live) on July 1st. She urged us to by there promptly as it would be "*an event involving historic perspectives*" and would be filmed by the BBC. Speakers were to include Lord Bew,

founder of the failed Boston Tapes project, which succeeded in damaging only those dissident Republican simpletons who were gulled into giving evidence against themselves with a spurious guarantee of lifetime secrecy.

The purpose of the *soiree* is, it seems, to show that Redmond and Carson were brothers behind the armies with which they confronted each other, and to denounce the Christian Brothers yet again.

The *soiree* will be "*moderated*" by St. Fergal Keane of the BBC, descending from Paradise for the occasion.

Kenny's colleague, Liam Collins, "*remembers how the Christian Brothers imparted a particular loathing of Redmond and his party*".

We have searched for the Anti-Redmond poison injected into constitutional Ireland by the Brothers, but all we could find was wholehearted support for Redmond in peacetime and then in wartime. If samples of the anti-Redmond poison is made available to us we will make it available to our readers.

The *soiree* is being held on the hundredth anniversary of the Home Rule Bill being "*signed into law*", thus becoming an Act. It must have had the shortest lifespan of any Act there ever was—the blink of an eye perhaps. The Bill was made an Act, and in the next breath it ceased to be an Act and reverted to the effective status of a disputed Bill. That was the condition on which the Unionists agreed to the pretence of its enactment. It was put in the Statute Book so that Redmond would recruit Irish cannon fodder for the British Army at war, but it was instantly negated as an Act. It was an Act that would not be implemented—not until after the War, when Irish cannonfodder would no longer be required. And, after the War, it would only be implemented after substantial amendment to meet Unionist demands. And anyway, the practical meaning of "*after the War*" was in another world.

"Redmond stands accused of bringing Ireland into World War I... Historians will debate and dispute on whether Redmond made a grave error...: whether he would have been wiser to withhold any direct military commitment. Yet it is evident that the tide of history has now turned more sympathetically towards Redmond..."

So it has. Governing circles in this State, which has failed to establish even the rudiments of an arms industry, are eager to slide the state back into war behind the back of the electorate. So, to develop the militarist mentality, we have Departments of War Studies in, for example, Cork University. And Irish War Studies is of course British in orientation. The remarkable war fought in Ireland recently is not studied.

Redmond despatched more Irishmen to the battlefronts than any other Irish leader, before or since. And he did it openly, shamelessly, without equivoca-

tion. So he is the man for our time, showing the direction we should take.

"Todd Andrews... spat at John Redmond in the streets of Dublin. The Redmondites were out of fashion then. Their crime was—as Daniel O'Connell's had been—to advocate the constitutional route to Irish independence, rather than the more fiery revolutionary path of physical force..."

For this statement to make sense, it would have to be shown that Britain provided a constitutional path to independence which people with "*impassioned romantic ardour*" preferred not to take. But every British statesman of that generation and previous generations had said with unmistakable clarity that Irish independence was constitutionally out of the question. There were not two paths to independence, of which Redmond took one and Connolly the other. By British decision the only path to independence was the warpath.

What the other path led to was willing participation in the British Empire and its wars as a subordinate—going into the Empire with heads high and accepting the consequences as cheerfully as a Cockney.

And Daniel O'Connell's constitutionalism isn't quite understood. He forced his way into Parliament with a credible threat of civil war if he was presented with the Anti-Catholic Oath at the door. Then he tried the constitutional road to Repeal of the Union and found it didn't exist. Tales can be told about this because care has been taken that his Collected Speeches do not exist. When the parliamentary road was found to be *a cul de sac* he raised the country against Parliament with Monster Meetings and, at a final gigantic meeting at Clontarf, he intended to present an Irish Government to the assembled people—the *Council of 100*.

In the 1829 contest of wills Parliament gave way. In 1843 Parliament deployed the dragoons and O'Connell gave way.

Is "*constitutional*" really the word for the tactic of bring the state to the verge of civil war by rousing the populace to a defiance of Parliament?

On Redmond's recruiting for the British Empire in the Great War, Mary Kenny thinks that—

"in truth, what moved many Irishmen was outrage at the invasion of defenceless Belgium (my uncle, Kevin J. Kenny, devised an advertising slogan that touched a nerve at the time—'Fight for Catholic Belgium')..."

Belgium was certainly Catholic but it wasn't defenceless.

It was a state composed of hostile communities whose point of unity was religion. It was not a national state. It existed as a convenience to British foreign policy. When Britain became a Great Power actively intervening in European affairs, it decided that the tract of territory across the Channel where the Rhine reaches the sea should be prevented from becoming part of any major European state. In the 1820s, when it was all-powerful after the defeat of France, it masterminded the construction of Belgium through a Catholic secession from the Netherlands.

Catholic Belgium was perhaps defenceless little Belgium for a while, but in 1914 it was a great Empire, immensely wealthy on the fruits of slave labour in Africa. And it was far from defenceless. Its army was bigger than the British army. It had an arms industry. And its frontier was fortified.

Casement described the Belgian regime for Africans—working labourers to death at a high rate of attrition, outside any semblance of law, with discipline enforced by punishments described as inhuman when non-Europeans did them. Casement's report on Belgium was commissioned by the British Foreign Office. Its publication proved to be a nine-day wonder. The Foreign Office marginalised its influence. A pretence was made that Belgium had undertaken extensive reforms. And then the next thing was that defenceless Belgium contested the issue with the German Army as it attempted to outflank the French fortifications by marching through Belgium.

Belgium was a large Empire operating a vast slave labour operation in which its activity was not noticeably Catholic.

It was rewarded in 1919 for the part it played in 1914 in enabling Britain to enter the War. Its African possessions were increased. Central Africa is still suffering the consequences of what *defenceless little Belgium* did to it.

It was one thing for Mary Kenny's uncle—a Redmondite militarist, we assume—to think up recruiting slogans without much concern for the complicated truth of things. It is another thing for Mary to peddle the same thing a hundred years later.

"It is fitting that Redmond appears with Edward Carson on an Irish stamp this year. They certainly were not allies in parliament—as we know, Carson vehemently resisted Home Rule almost

to the point of treason. And yet when Redmond died in 1918, Carson wrote: 'I cannot recall to mind one single bitter personal word that ever passed between John Redmond and myself'

"Redmond's younger brother Willie had died on the Western Front, fighting alongside the Ulster regiments. Shortly before he was killed in 1917, Willie wrote to a friend: 'My men are splendid and we are pulling famously with the Ulstermen. Would to God we could bring this spirit back with us to Ireland.'

"And perhaps, a hundred years later, this spirit has been animated—that of seeing our history as part of a varied, complex tapestry, not just a single partisan threat..."

If the spirit of the Somme, in which Redmondite and Ulster Unionist Imperialists killed Germans alongside each other, has finally brought home, in what way was it present in Belgrave Square? The only Ulster Unionist she mentions is the sinister Lord Bew. And Lord Bew is not only an Ulster Unionist (adviser to Lord Trimble when he was trying to undo the Good Friday Agreement from within), but was/is a member of the Official IRA whose contortions were such that it didn't know whether it was coming or going.

The Redmondite/Unionist alliance in the Great War was a cultivated illusion. Carson had his Army there, Redmond did not. The UVF became the Ulster Division. Redmond wanted to have his National Volunteers formed into an acknowledged Irish Division, but the War Office wouldn't allow it. Therefore it was pretended that a division with a large Redmondite membership was an Irish Division, equivalent to the Ulster Division.

Willie Redmond possibly believed the line in 1914 that, if Redmondites joined Ulster Unionists in killing Germans, this would somehow bring out the Irishness which Redmondites insisted was latently present in Ulster Unionists. If so, he knew before he died that it was not so.

The Redmondites who shepherded Irishmen into the British Army all saw their illusions, or deceptions, exposed—except for T.P. O'Connor who became just a smug British Imperialist.

Whatever sense of affinity developed in the trenches, between soldiers wrenched out of civil life and dedicated to the relentless business of killing and trying to survive in foreign countries, evaporated on the journey home. There was no spirit of camaraderie in Belfast in 1919 between the demobilised Ulster

Division and the demobilised 'Irish Division'.

Redmond did not live to see this, but it is apparent that he knew the way the wind was blowing.

He had been reluctant about the forming of Irish Volunteers in response to the Ulster Volunteers in 1913. When the Volunteer movement took off, he demanded control of it, and got it.

In August 1914, when declaring support for the War on Germany, he tried to limit commitment to it to the defence of Ireland against the unlikely event of German invasion. His Volunteers were to defend Ireland as a National Army, releasing the British garrison for the Front. The offer was politely ignored by Whitehall and was ridiculed by the *Irish Times*. Then he was given the sop of the Home Rule Bill being signed into the Statute Book by the King, on the condition of a guarantee to the Unionists that it would not be implemented, and he started recruiting for the Imperial Army. He had hoped that his recruits would be formed into an Irish Army in the British service, but that was refused.

Perhaps that was the reason for the great Volunteer Review of Easter 1915.

The speeches at that Review indicated an awareness on the part of the Redmondites that their conflict with the Ulster Unionists had only been deferred by the War, and that the pre-War conflict would resume when the War ended, with both sides having acquired battle experience. (See Dr. Pat Walsh's *Imperial Ireland*.)

But Redmondites didn't survive the Great War. The 1916 Insurrection happened, made possible by Redmond's insistence on maintaining his own Army at home while recruiting for the British Army at the Front. He had split the Irish Volunteers in September 1914, taking most of the Volunteers with him. But then his National Volunteers, by remaining active at home, provided the cover for the much smaller Irish Volunteers in their preparation for war on Britain. There was a rupture of relations between the leaders of the two Volunteer armies but not between the rank and file, and the Castle had to reckon on repercussions in the National Volunteers, and recruiting, if it rounded up the Irish Volunteers. And so it happened that an Irish Army could prepare openly for war on Britain, and could march through Dublin, occupy public buildings, declare independence, and fight a War.

It was Redmond's half-baked policies that made it possible.

And this nonsense about Carson and treason: It's time the West Britishising Dublin middle class grew up and tried to understand what Britain is. Carson was a leading member of the Opposition party at Westminster. That party was equal in size to the governing party. The Liberal Party was the Government, supported by the votes of the Irish Party, which was committed in principle to never taking part in a Westminster Government. The Unionist Opposition held that it was unconstitutional for basic changes to be made to the system of government by a party which had failed to win two elections in 1910 and was in Office with the support of a party which refused to participate in the constitutional governing of the state. That argument made sense to the British electorate.

The Unionist Party offered to end its opposition to Home Rule if the Liberals called an election and won it. The only British Constitution is a majority in Parliament. The only Court of Appeal in a deadlock is the electorate. The minority Government refused to appeal. There was never any question of half of the British membership of the Commons being prosecuted for treason. That's just silly, as Monty Python would say.

Mary Kenny was an Irish radical in the 1970s. She went through a phase of being a member of the British Establishment. Now she's Irish again. This toing and froing hasn't done much for her understanding of either.

PS: The *Irish Times* (June 2) carried a brief report of a speech made at the Embassy *soiree* by John Bruton, a former Taoiseach of the state established by violence, in which he condemned violence as being damaging to the Irish psyche, but one gathers from the report that he neglected to say that it is only violence not authorised by the British State that damages the Irish psyche.

He said: "*it must be remembered that one third of the soldiers who died fighting during Easter week had been Irish*". Clearly he means the British soldiers, and that means that they died with their psyches undamaged.

He said,

"If violence had 'not been introduced into nationalism in Holy Week, of all weeks', there would not have been a civil war..."

This is puzzling. Surely the event which he calls the *civil war*, the Treaty War, must be a good thing to his mind. Collins, having tried to maintain an elected Government by violence not

authorised by Britain, saw the evil of his ways and he set up a new state by violence authorised by Britain—the state in which Bruton became Taoiseach by accident. He did nothing to destroy that state during his period as Taoiseach. Is he a damaged psyche, or does he think that the Treaty War waged on British authority healed the psyches that had damaged themselves by un-British violence in the earlier years?

Or maybe he thinks that nationalist Ireland is a lunatic asylum and when his turn came to be head lunatic he thought, *Why not him as well as another?* (Or does he think Joyce was just as bad as the nationalists?)

"Padraig Pearse rejoiced in violence. He rejoiced in the prospect of unionist arming. I think he was wrong about that. He was a romantic."

Are we wrong in thinking that Pearse was a Home Ruler until Unionism armed against Home Rule, and that he did not so much rejoice in the prospect as respond to the fact.

And where does being a romantic fit in? Does he mean that the state of mind is what matters, and that routine, matter-of-fact organisation of violence in the British manner is ok?

"*Asked if Pearse had 'justified' the existence of the IRA, Mr. Bruton said: 'I suppose so, yes...'*" That the British decision to govern the North outside the system of British democracy could have had something to do with it is a thought no loyal Redmondite could entertain.

Bruton agreed that the idea that violence was not a bad thing in all circumstances was not exclusive to Irish Republicans influenced by Pearse, but—

"I don't think that that belief was particularly strong in England at the time but it was the case in other

countries, and it played a role in the willingness of countries to take part in the war..."

We don't know about other countries. We only know about Ireland and England. Poetry was written in Ireland in 1914 inciting people to violence. It was not written by Republicans, of which there were then very few; It was written by Redmondites, of which there were a great many. Some of it was not very elegant but all of it was heartfelt.

In England there was a lot that was both elegant and heartfelt. Did Bruton not become familiar in the course of his superior education with Rupert Brooke's famous exclamation of joy at the prospect of going off on a killing spree?

Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,
And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,
With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,
To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,
Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary,
Leave the sick hearts that honour could not move,
And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary,
And all the little emptiness of love!
Oh! we, who have known shame, we have found release there,
Where there's no ill, no grief, but sleep has mending,
Naught broken save this body, lost but breath;
Nothing to shake the laughing heart's long peace there
But only agony, and that has ending;
And the worst friend and enemy is but Death.

Prime Minister quoted the following bloodthirsty remarks made by his exultant First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill: "My God! This is living History. Everything we are doing and saying is thrilling... Why, I would not be out of this glorious, delicious war for anything the world could give me. I say, don't repeat that I said the word 'delicious'—you know what I mean."

John Bruton describes himself as a life-long Redmondite, and it would be quite unrealistic to expect him ever to revise his views on Pearse. But might we not reasonably ask him to revise somewhat his views on England's war?

Manus O'Riordan

War is Peace! The title of this glorification of war is *Peace*.

Does he not know Julian Grenfell's embracing of death in war in his famous recruiting poem, *Into Battle*, published in *The Times* in 1915:

"...And life is colour and warmth and light
And a striving evermore for these;
And he is deaf who will not fight,
And who dies fighting has increase..."

Brooke and Grenfell, who both died in the War, were upper class aesthetes writing for their peers. But the ruling class did not forget the masses. The Prime Minister's son, Herbert Asquith, wrote a famous poem, *The Volunteer*, about an office worker who was half-way through his life without ever having lived, but who, by enlisting for the War, gained a glorious moment of life before he was killed:

"From twilight to the halls of dawn he went;
His lance is broken, but he lies content
With that high hour in which he lived
and died..."

How little our Anglophiles know of England!

Lynne Kelleher story in *Irish Examiner*, 3 April 2014

Soldiers For Empire

"From 1700 to the end of the First World War, almost 2m Irish men died fighting for British kings and queens, according to a new RTÉ documentary.

A Sovereign People reveals how King George V personally requested Irish soldiers to fight in the war due to the myth around the 'Fighting Irish'. Lar Joye, director of the military collection at the National Museum, said the Irish had earned a mythical reputation in Britain and America. He said: "*There is a huge tradition throughout the 19th century of the Irish joining the British army*". There is this naive belief that the Irish make wonderful soldiers, good fighters and the kind of people you want in a tight spot. You see it also in the American armies during the American civil war. There is this kind of myth about the Fighting Irish. "*The king believed the Irish would flock to join the British army during World War One to prove they were part of the British Empire*." ...When Queen Victoria visited Ireland in 1900, almost 40% of the British army was made up of Irish born recruits. "At the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, it is guessed that about 50% of the British army on that battlefield were Irish born," said Mr Joye..."

The following letter was submitted to the *Irish Times* on 6th July but not published

Bruton's Paddywackery

In his Paddywhackery performance at the Irish Embassy in London, John Bruton stated that "Padraig Pearse rejoiced in violence" and he went on to complain of "the damage done to the Irish psyche". Your report (July 2) quotes him as adding: "I don't think that that belief was particularly strong in England at the time."

In the recently published blockbuster, "Margot Asquith's Great War Diary 1914-1916", the wife of the then British

Wilson John Haire

Review *The Age Of Titanic, Cross-currents Of Anglo-American Culture*
by John Wilson Foster, ISBN 1 - 903582-37-7,
published by Merlin Publishing, Dublin (2002)

Titanic Crossroads

A character in James Joyce's *Ulysses* says: '*Shite and onions not Hamlet again!*', there being obviously too many productions of the play around at the time. I thought the same to myself when coming across yet another book on the Titanic. But this book is different. I do say: *Shite and onions not Ulysses again* whenever I listen to UK radio and hear yet another dramatisation of it or a reading from it. The English Establishment do like this image of Ireland with its distorted view of its history and people.

Pat Maloney, Editor, *Church and State* and Editor of *Labour Comment*, sent me this book on the Titanic I would expect as something of interest to me as an ex-Belfast shipyard worker, so I thought I might say something about it, though it looks like the RMS TITANIC will never be forgotten and those ships lying at the bottom of the seas and oceans, numbering thousands upon thousands, since 1912, when Titanic went down, will be forgotten. But the book does tell you in the long run why the Titanic won't ever be forgotten: it sank at the cross-roads of history.

Unfortunately for the author he was probably in the process of researching and writing this book when in 2001 the World Trade Centre (9/11) was destroyed by hijacked aircraft. So back then, and being so close to the event, he was wondering, in his introduction, which tragedy would be remembered long into the future with 3,000 dead from 9/11 compared to the Titanic's 1,500 dead. Since that time, we now know, people mostly remembers the Titanic. How big a work and how many times can you write about 9/11 before someone asks why it really happened. At least with the Titanic you have a white, icy, translucent villain crossing icicles with a ship's captain on his off-day.

9/11s have been a feature of American foreign policy since the 19th Century, when they took it upon themselves the right to chastise any nation in the world they cared to punish through the Monroe

Doctrine. How many have died in their Imperial wars must be a shocking figure. Along with England's foreign policy and colonialism, that figure must outnumber the dead of two World Wars, certainly outdoing the Nazi's reign of terror over barely five years. And it is still going on from both nations. So it must be more pleasant to concentrate on the Titanic.

The book doesn't so much go into the mechanics of the Titanic's sinking but rather examines the culture that sprung up around the disaster. It was commented on by every major writer of the day including George Bernard Shaw, Arthur Conan Doyle, H.G. Wells, Virginia Woolf, Bram Stoker, Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, T.S. Eliot, Rudyard Kipling and many many others. Thomas Hardy wrote a poem about the ship, called *The Convergence of the Twain*.

Hardy was not exactly sympathetic to some of those on board when he imagines the ship at the bottom of the ocean "*With sea-worms crawling over mirrors meant to reflect rich faces*".

The beginning of the 20th Century was one of tremendous industrial expansion, with hundreds of new inventions, of electrification, of universal cooking and heating gas being installed in homes, of the phonograph, the telephone, the possibility of air travel, celluloid film, pneumatic tyres, the internal combustion engine, the digging of the Panama canal and submarines, to mention just some. The Titanic itself had installed every modern means of communication and every modern appliance that could be operated by electricity within its eleven storey height. The death of this most modern of ships caused consternation for the industrialists and I-told-you-so from the machine-breakers. Joseph Conrad called the sinking as nothing more than a: "*holed, helpless, big tank, a monstrous salmon tin in which heroic death was unlikely if not impossible*". Obviously not as exciting as the white man in barbaric Africa carving out territory for himself.

Of course Britain had already planned and organised for its war on Germany by 1912, and such a major coming war must have been felt in the country as a whole. With the Titanic sinking, there was a certain foreboding of the doom to come, and so it happened in 1914 with the changing of history beyond imagination and the birth of the Soviet Union in 1917.

The author is a true-blue Ulster Unionist, and so he has a right to be, in considering his lack of sectarianism and his respect for the Catholic population. But he does think the struggle for Irish freedom was a romantic one, meaning I suppose, it wasn't necessary, though he does appear to respect the result of it all. It was he who invited me out to the University of British Columbia, when he was a lecturer there, for Irish Week in 1979, paid for by the British Council. I learnt later the British Council might be a sinister organisation. I can't say they were very pleased in having to fund my air-fare and accommodation in Vancouver.

Maybe they found out something about me they didn't like. A British Council official briefly interviewed me at Heathrow Airport, much to my surprise. He was quite a nasty feline sarcastic upper-class element who reminded me of a possible retired M16 agent portrayed in most British fiction as eccentric but doing their bit for the flag nevertheless. I was then invited to board the plane. I can't say I was anything other than amused, after all UBC might not like it if I didn't appear with that coven of Ulster Unionists, whom I was unaware of

Indeed Irish Week turned out to be Ulster Unionist Week and I recognised individuals from the old Stormont regime still alive and kicking. They were pleasant enough but I felt like their token Catholic. I wasn't as well developed then on the two-nations theory, that is, I was finding it hard to take it in fully, considering the circumstance of the place I was born in, I even reversed my views for a while after experiencing a bit of the 1970s Belfast, which was the worst period of the 30-year war with dead assassinated Catholics littering the Ulster landscape.

Irish Week turned out to be mostly a venue for American would-be-authors from across the Canadian border. I can't remember a lot of Irish literature being discussed, although those of us there had to read out our own contributions to a mixture of US and Canadian acade-

mics, plus those struggling authors who persecuted us for a writing formulae even at the breakfast table. (I wouldn't have minded finding one myself)

The Ulster Unionist message was more or less broadcast at every meeting and workshop by that considerable delegation from Belfast, which included senior civil servants. I couldn't see any of it getting through to the bewildered Canadian and American audience. Maybe I was biting the hand that fed me but I detached myself from the Ulster Unionists and joined up with two Inuit sisters who were students there and who were covertly campaigning for their people at this event.. They gave me a grand tour of Vancouver in their huge 1960s American car to see the various squalid small neglected ghettos lived in by the Inuit who had come down from the far North to the big city. I heard of the injustices perpetrated against them under Canadian law, so I forgot Ulster Unionism for a while and now I have almost forgotten that I am writing about the mostly cultural story of the Titanic by John Wilson Foster.

The author must be rare among academics for his love of the industrial world and his enthusiasm about the industrial world outside the UK. He glories in the mechanics of making a ship and explains its machinery as good as an advanced engineer, though he is a bookish man. He is in wonderment about the development of Germany at the beginning of the 20th Century and recognised it as an advanced industrial nation. He quotes Modvis Eksteins, a Canadian historian of Latvian background, when he says of Germany during that time:

"Germany has a cult of "technicism" that encouraged technical education and resulted in a greater number of patents taken out by German industries between 1886 and 1900 than by their British counterparts."

This book has been scrupulously well researched and is a mine of information about the beginning of the 20th Century, not only about the Titanic, but about the industrial level of the US, the UK and Germany. As well as that, he examines the work of many authors going back into the 19th Century and gets their pro or anti attitudes about the developing industrial world. You begin to see another side of them which seemed to halt their development and gives a clue as to why many of them are no longer remembered or read.

8 April, 2014

Congress Urges Government Action On Israeli Attack On Gaza

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has urged the Irish Government to take immediate action to help end the ongoing Israeli bombardment of Gaza, take action to "stop Israeli war crimes" and help broker an immediate ceasefire agreement, at EU level.

In a letter to the newly-appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Charlie Flanagan, TD, Congress General Secretary David Begg, condemned the Israeli action which, to date, has killed 98 Palestinians and wounded almost 700. More than 70% of the victims are civilians, according to the United Nations.

"This is the third occasion in five years that the Israeli government has demonstrated to the world that it believes it can act with impunity when it comes to the killing of Palestinian civilians. You will also be aware that Israel has mobilised 40,000 reserves with a view to a ground incursion into Gaza—ostensibly to target rocket launchers.

"The collective punishment of a civilian population and the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force against the people of Gaza by the Government of Israel is a profound breach of international humanitarian law," Mr Begg said.

He urged Minister Flanagan, to take a number of steps, including to summon Israel's Ambassador to Ireland and "*demand an immediate cessation of Israeli bombing and shelling of Gaza*".

Congress also urged the Minister or official representatives to make every effort to visit Gaza in the coming days.

11 July 2014

Available from Athol Books:

Great War, first published in monthly instalments in 1914-18, edited by *Brendan Clifford*. 52pp (A4). €10, £8

The Fighting Irish And The Great War, "Lest We Forget" by *Brendan Clifford*. 16pp A4. €6, £5

Ireland In The Great War, The Insurrection Of 1916 Set In Its Context Of The World War by *Charles James O'Donnell (1849-1934)*, introduced by *Brendan Clifford*. 116pp. €10, £8

The Rise And Fall Of Imperial Ireland. Redmondism In The Context Of Britain's War Of Conquest Of South Africa And Its Great War On Germany, 1899-1916 by *Pat Walsh*. 594pp. €40, £33

LET NO MAN WRITE MY EPITAPH

(I've done it myself)

Now that the poppies pop again,
they anticipate that one-hundred year
anniversary
of corner-shop adversary.
Did those blind-obedient
patriotic men
slink out of the slums for a breather,
led by warrior-gents
(as war spread like fever)
from solid houses
in Upper Holloway
to die like their own house-flies.
Isn't war terrible
chanted
Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brooke
and Siegfried Sassoon,
haunted,
by trench warfare
but not of Empire.
Two lived long enough
to see the `16 leaders
involuntarily expire.
Much like Seamus Heaney
after he wrote his piece
for this hundred-year celeb Meany:
`A demobbed, mysterious
khaki-clad figure
intrudes on his rural idyll.'
But the soldier is not exactly
of the Wild Geese,
more homicidal
against Germany's developing
commercial vigour.
So now we have Heaney's
epitaph.
Beloved of Britain's
liberal press.
to excess.
it was pay-back-time
and for them he damned
the land of the Rhine..

Wilson John Haire

26 October 2013

The Genesis Of National Socialism by *T. Desmond Williams*. Introduction, and Appendixes on Neutrality and the Origins of National Socialism by *Brendan Clifford*. 398pp. €30, £25

Irish Bulletin, a full reprint of the official newspaper of Dáil Éireann giving news and war reports. €36, £30 paperback, €55, £45 hardback

Volume 1, 12th July 1919 to 1st May 1920. 514pp.

Volumes 2, 3rd May 1920 to 31st August 1920. 540pp.

NEW:

Puritanism And The Theatre, by *Brendan Clifford*. 156pp. €15, £12

Firmness!!

"A prompt and firm refusal to enter into any one-sided bargains and arrangements, and the most unbending determination to uphold British rights and interests in every part of the globe, is the surest and quickest way to win the respect of the German Government and the German nation." (*Sir E. A. Crowe, 1907*)

Predestination

This Aunt Sally comes second-hand from Carroll Professor Roy Foster and others, who attribute to Irish Republicans a false understanding of the nature of human activity in the world—a teleological understanding in which the end is predetermined supernaturally and will inevitably come about.

Teleology of that kind is meaningful only in the context of a theological conception of the world. And that is a feature of Protestantism rather than Catholicism. Reading the future from the *Book Of Revelation* was for centuries a Protestant preoccupation. Isaac Newton did it. The Presbyterian bourgeoisie of Belfast, in their United Irish phase, did it.

I never came across Catholics who did it. Catholicism shapes understanding by means of the paradoxical idea of free-will. I have known Protestants who in their understanding of themselves were puppets in the service of the pre-determined end. The paradox of Catholicism is that, though it has a God who omniscient and omni-potent, it does not have predestination. It dooms the individual to free-will. And, in the world of free-will, one has purposes to be achieved, not predestined ends to be served.

Of course purpose does set an end to be achieved. But the end which purposeful activity sets itself to achieve is utterly different in kind from the theological conception of an end set for the world and everything in it at the moment of its creation, which cannot fail to be realised. (*Brendan Clifford, Irish Political Review, April, 2014*)

Priest Abuse

An Irish priest who was expelled from the priesthood in 2004 by Pope John Paul II for abusing children in the US has been excommunicated by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin.

The Archbishop imposed the Church's most serious sanction on Clive Lynn in February when it emerged that the former priest was refusing to abide by the terms of his dismissal, which prevented him presenting himself as a priest.

It is the first excommunication imposed by the Archbishop in his 10 years as leader of the largest diocese in Ireland.

Lynn was born in Dublin in 1933 but studied in Scotland, where his seminary rector had doubts about his suitability. He moved to Austin, Texas, and it was after ordination in the US that accusations against him began to emerge (*Irish Independent, 18.4.2014*).

C of I

A Census of Church of Ireland parishioners has found 15% of people who affiliate themselves with the Church regularly attend services.

The Census, carried out via questionnaire across three weeks last November, found average attendance at services on Sunday was 58,000 people—15% of those reporting as Church of Ireland in the 2011 national censuses.

Most recent national Census information for the North and the Republic show 249,000 in the North and 129,000 in the South claim affiliation with the Church of Ireland.

Smurfit

"Former Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid vetoed a prestigious honour for Jefferson Smurfit, founder of the Smurfit Group, because of his faith.

"McQuaid objected that Jefferson Smurfit, the father of Michael, was born into Protestantism and only converted to Catholicism to further a relationship with the girl who became his wife.

Michael Smurfit, whose autobiography was published last week, claims the snub, which occurred during the 1950s, 'still angers and upsets' him and has driven him to acquire awards and to achieve success" (*Irish provincial edition Sunday Times, London, 6.4.2014*).

Jefferson created the paper and packaging empire that became Ireland's first multinational company. He became a Catholic because he wanted to continue a relationship with Ann Magee, a convent girl from Belfast whom he went on to marry.

In the 1950s, Jefferson was chosen by Pope Pius XII to become a member of the Knight of the Order of St Gregory for services to the church. The honour is one of the most esteemed in the Catholic Church and is bestowed upon "*gentlemen of proven loyalty to the Holy See who, by reason of their nobility of birth and the renown of their deeds or the degree of their munificence, are deemed worthy to be honoured by a public expression of esteem on the part of the Holy See*".

Other Irish beneficiaries include John Hume, Peter Sutherland, Feargal Quinn, and entertainers Frank Patterson, John McCormack and Frank Carson. Jefferson was chosen by Pope Pius XII because of work carried out by the Educational Company of Ireland, part of the Smurfit Group, which made prayer books for the Irish market.

In the appendix to the book, Michael lists 20 honours he holds, including Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, and the Legion d'Honneur from the French Government. Other awards come from such diverse countries as Venezuela, Poland and Egypt Michael himself feels he has had to battle against the "*Protestant ascendancy*" in Dublin. The book documents how Smurfit was "*resented*" for acquiring companies owned by members of the minority Protestant community.

Howard Kilroy, one of Michael Smurfit's business partners, said the latter felt Catholics were disadvantaged in business. "*I think he believed that the Protestant community corralled a lot of the opportunities in Ireland between the 1940s and 1960s*", Kilroy said.

Despite Jefferson's conversion to Catholicism prior to his marriage, Magee's father refused to attend the wedding, describing the groom as one of "*King Henry's bastards*".

Members of Jefferson's family in turn resented how Magee had persuaded him to become a Catholic.
